



Year 3 Annual Implementation Report

# Texas GEAR UP State Grant Evaluation

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEIS	Academic Excellence Indicator System
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
AP	Advanced Placement
APR	Annual Performance Report
ASPR	Annual Strategic Planning Report
AVID	Advancement Via Individual Determination
AYD	Academic Youth Development
CIS	Communities In Schools
CTK	Community TechKnowledge
DAP	Distinguished Achievement Program
DGB	Data Governance Board
ECLA	Early College Leadership Academy
ED	U.S. Department of Education
ELA	English Language Arts
ELL	English Language Learners
EOC	End-of-Course
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FY	Fiscal Year
GEAR UP	Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs
GPA	Grade Point Average
GUIDES	GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System
HB	House Bill
IGC	Individual Graduation Committee
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NOGA	Notification of Grant Award
PBL	Project-based Learning
PD	Professional Development
PEIMS	Public Education Information Management System
PSAT/NMSQT	Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test
PSAT 8/9	Preliminary SAT for Grade 8/9 students
PSAT-10	Preliminary SAT for Grade 10 students
PSM	Propensity Score Matching
QED	Quasi-Experimental Design
RHSP	Recommended High School Program
SG	State Grant
STAAR®	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness
STAAR® EOC	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness End-of-Course
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TAPR	Texas Academic Performance Report
TCPP	Texas College Preparation Program
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TEKS	Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills
TELPAS	Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System
TG	Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation
THECB	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
TSI	Texas Success Initiative
T-STEM Centers	Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Centers



UT	The University of Texas
UT-Austin	The University of Texas at Austin
UT-IPSI	The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives
UT-Tyler	The University of Texas at Tyler

## Highlights

Year 3 of the evaluation focused on evaluating the implementation of the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grant (SG) program when participating students were in Grade 9. The evaluation also compared Year 3 implementation to that of Years 1 and 2. The Texas GEAR UP SG was designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education through state and local partnership grants. In Year 3, the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort of students transitioned from seven middle schools (Grade 7 and Grade 8) to six high schools (Grade 9).

## Implementation

- Level of student participation in support services (i.e., tutoring, mentoring, counseling/advising) was similar in Year 3 as compared to Year 2 with levels in both these years much higher than in Year 1 (81% in Year 3 and 78% in Year 2 versus 39% in Year 1). Similar trends over time were found for level of student participation in any Texas GEAR UP SG activity (97% in Year 3 and 99% in Year 2 versus 81% in Year 1). In each year, there were differences across participating schools in these levels of implementation.
- By Year 3, the percentage of students enrolled in four or more advanced courses was much higher than in Years 2 and 1 (24%, 14%, and 0%, respectively).
- Collectively, schools appeared to be on track to meet Project Objective 1.1 (30% of all students completing Algebra I by Grade 8 and 85% by Grade 9). Within the Grade 8 cohort, 43% of students were enrolled in Algebra I. Within the Grade 9 cohort of students, 92% had either completed the course in Grade 8 (31%) or were currently enrolled in Algebra I (61%).
- As a group, Texas GEAR UP schools met Project Objective 4.1 (75% of students involved in student support services) with 81% of Grade 9 students participating.
- Overall, parent engagement in at least one event increased in Year 3 with 49% of parents attending at least one event versus 38% in Year 2. However, schools remained unable to meet Project Objective 7.3 (50% of parents attend at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events) with only 3% of parents having this level of participation in Year 3. This was down from Year 2 when 7% of parents attended at least three events.
- In Year 3, 55% of students participated in Texas GEAR UP SG activities in summer 2014, exceeding the Project Objective 4.2 goal of having 30% of students participate in summer programs. Types of activities included workshops, family events, educational trips, and parent events. These activities, most of which focused on the transition to high school, were very well received by students and parents, based on site visit data.

## Student Plans, Knowledge, and Perceptions about Postsecondary Education

- Students had higher educational aspirations than educational expectations. The gap between aspirations and expectations decreased from Year 1 to Year 2, but widened slightly between Year 2 and Year 3 when aspirations continued to rise but expectations remained level.
- More than half (57%) of students responded that participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities in Year 3 helped them make the decision to go to college, up from 51% in Year 2.
- In Year 3, the percentage of students' knowledge about the SAT (46%) and ACT (38%) had increased from Year 2 by ten percentage points. This is trending towards the goal of Project Objective 4.4 (by Year 5, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of and demonstrate the necessary academic preparation for college).

- Affording postsecondary education remained the most common reason reported for not expecting to pursue college. The percentage of students who reported this concern was similar in Years 3 (46%) and 1 (48%), while it was slightly lower in Year 2 (39%).
- On average, students perceived their experiences with Texas GEAR UP SG activities (e.g., staff, events) to be *mostly effective* on an effectiveness scale, with continued positive feedback about interaction with College Preparation Advisors. Students who attended summer programs also perceived them as effective.

### Key Facilitators and Barriers

- As in Year 2, College Preparation Advisors were viewed as key to the success of Texas GEAR UP SG. Their established rapport with students, along with continuity in Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators, also facilitated the program's transition from the middle schools to the high schools.
- Four of the six high schools noted some success with new strategies for parent involvement, including establishing a regular parent meeting time and offering lunch at events; identifying a parent liaison and creating a Parent GEAR UP room at the school; and offering a series of highly interactive trainings (Parent Universities).
- The perceived lack of effective communication was also identified as a barrier in a range of contexts, from communication with parents to communication between Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center and schools.
- School staff reported that one challenge for Texas GEAR UP SG students was the perceived need to improve skills that support academic achievement, such as planning, organization, and collaboration skills.

### Potential Promising Practices

- Two schools engaged in near-peer mentoring to support Texas GEAR UP SG success. For example, one used successful Grade 12 students to mentor Grade 9 students regarding the college application process.
- Two schools reported improved tutoring by strategically targeting instruction to content area.

## Executive Summary

### Overview

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) awarded the Texas Education Agency (TEA) a \$33 million federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant in federal fiscal year (FY) 2012. 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 state and local partnership grants. Through the Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG), six participating high schools are providing services to a cohort of students and their parents from Grade 7 (the 2012–13 school year) through their first year of postsecondary education (the 2018–19 school year). This report focuses on implementation in Year 3 of the Texas GEAR UP SG (the 2014–15 school year), the cohort’s first year in high school (Grade 9).

In order to meet the federal purpose of the grant, the Texas GEAR UP SG program includes nine project goals and 27 corresponding objectives, provided in Appendix A of the report. Three objectives are related to advanced coursework, student support services, and summer programs. Other goals intend to increase data-driven instruction (through teacher professional development [PD]), community collaboration, and access to postsecondary information. Outcome goals include on-time promotion, improved high school completion at a college-ready level, college attendance, and college retention. In addition to meeting goals at campuses selected to participate in the program, there are objectives to provide statewide information and professional learning for educators in order to promote college readiness across the state.

Participating schools and their districts are listed in Table ES.1; throughout this report, schools are identified by letter (e.g., School H, School I) in order to protect confidentiality.<sup>1</sup> In these districts, program staff, including Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators and College Preparation Advisors, facilitate and provide Texas GEAR UP SG services, with support from TEA, statewide collaborators (including the Support Center, which serves as the technical assistance provider), and local stakeholders.<sup>2</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG services are intended to impact teachers through the provision of PD and schools/districts through changes in academic rigor (paired with student support services). Finally, the Texas GEAR UP SG program is intended to make a statewide impact, primarily through the provision of the website (i.e., <http://www.texasgearup.com>), where coordinated information and resources regarding postsecondary opportunities for students and their parents throughout Texas are made available.

**Table ES.1. Profile of Texas GEAR UP Schools**

District	Middle School (2012–13; 2013–14)	High School (2014–15)
Edgewood Independent School District	Brentwood, Garcia, Wrenn	Memorial, Kennedy
Somerset Independent School District	Somerset	Somerset
Lubbock Independent School District	Dunbar	Estacado
Manor Independent School District	Decker, Manor	Manor, Manor New Tech

<sup>1</sup> Texas GEAR UP High Schools are labeled High Schools H through M, as Year 3 implementation reflects the transition of the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort from seven middle schools to six high schools. The seven Texas GEAR UP Middle Schools were identified as Schools A through G.

<sup>2</sup> The term Texas GEAR UP SG staff is used throughout this report and includes the coordinators, College Preparation Advisors, and data clerks. These are staff located in the districts or at the who have key responsibilities to the project either for the district or at the school.

## Evaluation of Texas GEAR UP State Grant

The evaluation of the program examines implementation and outcomes (including the relationship between the two) and identifies potential best practices over the seven-year grant period. Evaluation objectives include the following:

- Provide ongoing formative evaluation of implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG (facilitators and barriers, promising practices, and recommended corrections).
- Explore implementation status, mix of implementation, and relationships between implementation and student outcomes.
- Determine the impact on parents, school, and community alliances.
- Examine access to and use of statewide resources.
- Examine student outcomes.
- Understand cost and sustainability.

The external evaluation is a longitudinal design that spans seven years and follows a cohort model. Table ES.2 illustrates the timeline and grade level associated with the Texas GEAR UP SG the cohort that the evaluation focuses on primarily (primary cohort). Appendix B includes additional details about the evaluation design, including the cohort approach.

**Table ES.2. Evaluation Timeline**

Grade in School by Grant Year							
	Grant Year 1 2012–13	Grant Year 2 2013–14	Grant Year 3 2014–15	Grant Year 4 2015–16	Grant Year 5 2016–17	Grant Year 6 2017–18	Grant Year 7 2018–19
Primary Cohort	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	First Year of College

This third implementation report focuses on formative feedback regarding Year 3 implementation, and also provides relevant comparisons to implementation in prior years (primarily Year 2 but also Year 1 as relevant). Each of these annual implementation reports was informed by analysis of student- and campus-level data from statewide databases, interviews with TEA and its collaborators, review of grantee annual strategic planning reports, GEAR UP federal annual performance reporting (APR) data, student and parent surveys, and qualitative site visit data.<sup>3</sup> In making comparisons between Year 2 implementation and Year 3 implementation, this reflects the same general length of time for program implementation. However, readers need to be aware that comparisons to Year 1 should be interpreted with caution due to differences in the length of implementation.<sup>4</sup>

Readers should also use caution in interpreting findings associated with the transition from middle schools to high schools. Year 3 was the first year that Texas GEAR UP SG was in the high schools, therefore it was an adjustment for teachers and administrators. In addition, the high school environment differs from middle school with regard to how students move through the schools and course expectations. Additionally, some high school students entered the Texas

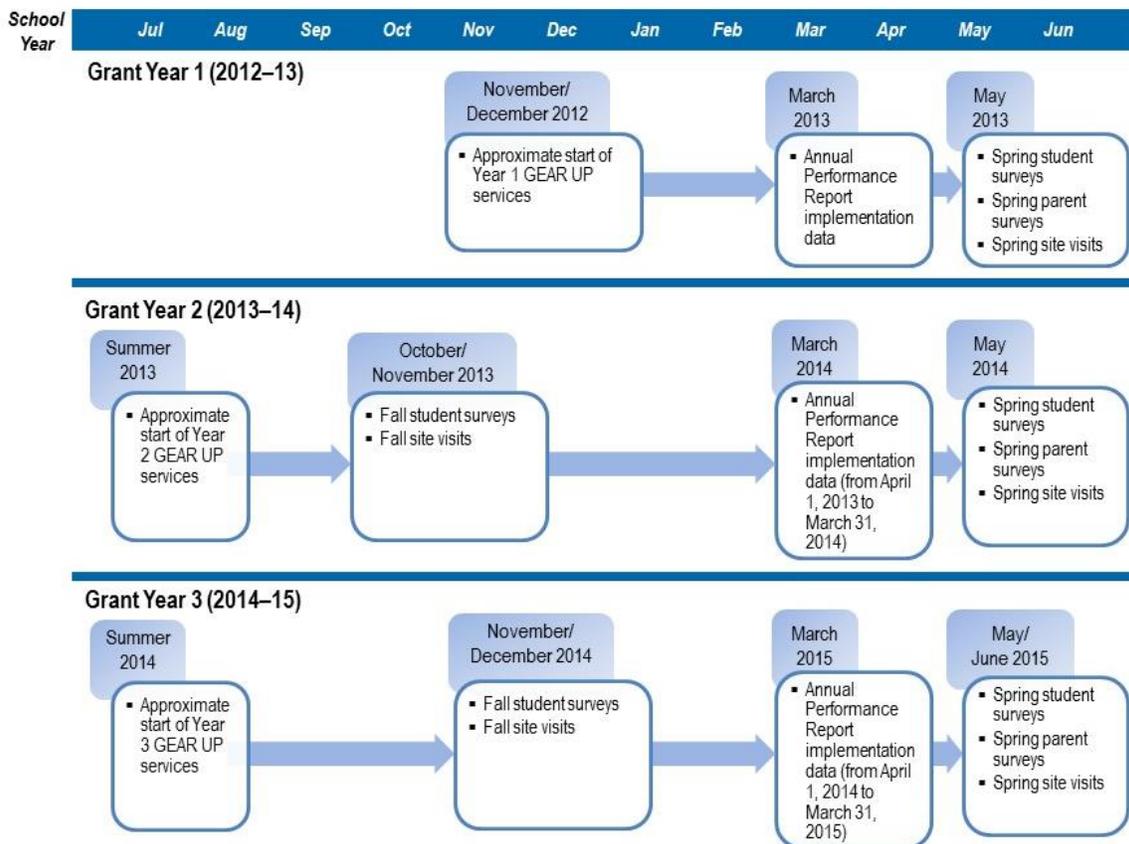
<sup>3</sup> TEA’s collaborators on the Texas GEAR UP SG during Year 3 include the Support Center staffed by personnel from the University of Texas at Austin’s Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI), AMS Pictures, Community TechKnowledge (CTK), UT-Tyler T-STEM Center, TG, GeoFORCE (all of which were collaborators in Year 2) as well as Raise Achievement, which was added in Year 3. Abriendo Puertas and the College Board no longer have formalized collaborations with TEA to implement this grant. Districts can work with these former collaborators directly.

<sup>4</sup> See prior implementation reports for Year 1 (O’Donnel et al., 2013) and Year 2 (Briggs et al., 2015) for additional information.

GEAR UP SG for the first time, having transitioned to a participating high school from a non-Texas GEAR UP SG middle school.

Districts submitted implementation data in line with federal APR reporting requirements. Therefore, APR data reflected implementation from the date of each district’s notification of grant award (NOGA) through March 31, 2013 in Year 1, from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014 in Year 2, and from April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015 in Year 3.<sup>5</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG Year 3 implementation activities that occurred through summer 2015 are not discussed in this report in order to keep the time periods comparable. Data gathered during late spring 2015 and data associated with participation in summer 2014 programs are discussed in this report. While forming ideas about the program, readers should keep in mind when data were collected because this report does not capture the entire school year of activities. Figure ES.1 provides an overview of the timing of implementation data collection in each grant year.

**Figure ES.1. Implementation Timeline and Evaluation Implementation Data Collections: Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3**



## Key Findings

Key findings presented in this executive summary are organized into two categories: (1) implementation data findings and (2) student and parent survey findings. Findings were

<sup>5</sup> APR data used in the Year 3 report are from summer 2014 and the 2014–15 school year, but only through March 31, 2015, due to federal reporting requirements. Other data (such as surveys and site visits) are collected in the late spring, but still do not capture all activities occurring in the remainder of the school year or summer 2015.

considered key if they were aligned to the project goals and objectives set by TEA (see Appendix A). Relevant project objectives emphasized in this report include the following:

- Project Objective 1.1: By the end of the project's second year, 30% of cohort students will have completed Algebra I in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. By the end of the project's third year, 85% of students will have completed Algebra I.
- 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 3.1: All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and project-based learning (PBL).
- Project Objective 3.2: Teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.
- Project Objective 4.1: By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on results of teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data.<sup>6</sup>
- 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, the necessary academic preparation for college.
- 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 limited English proficient (LEP) students, will attend at least three college awareness activities.
- 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.

In addition, there are several near-term objectives relevant to Year 3 Texas GEAR UP SG implementation to some extent. These objectives are referenced as appropriate and will take on a more prominent focus in forthcoming implementation reports. Near-term objectives are as follows:

- Project Objective 1.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Plan plus Endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average.

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<sup>6</sup> While Project Objective 4.1 emphasizes student support services in Grade 8, the evaluation will continue to examine the level of implementation during each high school year. Similarly, data associated with Project Objectives 7.1 and 7.2 are examined each year, not only in the first year. Vertical teaming (also referred to as vertical alignment) refers to teachers from a given subject area participating in collaborative meetings in which they coordinate instruction and learning objectives across grade levels.

- Projective 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 Objective 5.1: By the end of the project’s fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT.<sup>[1]</sup> 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.

Interested readers should view the full report for additional information on all key findings. Select evaluation questions relevant to Year 3 implementation—addressed in the report—include the following:

- How was Texas GEAR UP SG implemented overall and at each of the six participating schools? To what extent has implementation changed over time?
- What were student, parent, teacher, and school staff perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation?
- What facilitators and barriers were associated with implementation?
- What practices implemented by grantees were perceived by grantees (students, parents, and staff) to be effective, and therefore a potential best practice?
- What were 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 information or opportunities do parents perceive as most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness? To what extent have these perceptions changed in Year 3?
- In what ways were trained teachers implementing data-driven strategies? Differentiated instruction? PBL?
- How many collaborations have schools formed with business alliances, government entities, community groups? What were perceptions of those collaborations?
- In what ways and how often did collaborating organizations offer opportunities for career exploration to students or information about scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness and readiness?
- What types of information regarding college readiness were made available through the state? What steps, if any, did the state office take to communicate to schools and families about the information available?
- How did TEA and schools budget for and spend money to support implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG?
- To what extent did grantees sustain activities initiated with the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort with follow-on cohorts of students?

In prior years, implementation varied across schools, although by Year 2 participation by students in Texas GEAR UP SG was high across schools. For example, 78% of all Texas GEAR UP SG students in Year 2 received student support services. Schools made progress toward enrollment in the number of advanced courses, with 10% of students enrolled in four or more advanced courses in Year 2. Parent involvement was more challenging, with only 7% of parents participating in at least three events and 38% attending at least one event in Year 2.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG initially indicated a goal aligned with students taking ACT PLAN by the end of project’s fourth year. However, ACT has replaced PLAN with ACT Aspire. Similarly, the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) has been replaced by the PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT) and PSAT 10.

Schools have shown varied levels of teacher PD implementation (in Year 2, two of seven schools held five vertical teaming events). Year 3 findings reflect overall higher implementation (with continued variability across schools); this includes slightly higher levels of overall student participation in Texas GEAR UP SG student support services (81%). Districts also reported substantially higher levels of student enrollment in four or more advanced courses (24%), mixed progress in parental attendance (3% attended at least three events but 49% attended at least one event), and more vertical teaming events were held.

## Implementation

### LEVEL AND MIX OF IMPLEMENTATION

#### Key Takeaway:

Overall, the Year 3 level of implementation was similar across all schools to implementation in Year 2, but was much higher than in Year 1, although variability in the mix of implementation among schools remained as the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort transitioned from middle school to high school. Three high schools implemented all 18 strategies tracked in Year 3.

The federal GEAR UP program encourages grantees, including the Texas GEAR UP SG, to engage in a wide range of implementation practices (referred to here as the “mix of implementation”) in order to support project objectives. Table ES.3 provides a high-level overview of the range of implementation activities engaged in to any extent by the six high schools in Year 3. All six high schools implemented the core Texas GEAR UP SG activity types in Year 3: advanced course enrollment, student support services (e.g., tutoring, comprehensive mentoring, counseling/advising), college visits, parent events, teacher PD, and community alliances. High schools in District 2 had fewer strategies in place in Year 3 than all other schools (15 and 16 compared to 17 to 18 in the remaining schools). One school from District 3 continued to show overall high levels of implementation in Year 3 (School G demonstrated successes in Years 1 and 2 and High School M demonstrated success in Year 3), and mix of implementation improved across all schools.

**Table ES.3. Overview of Implementation Strategies by School, 2014–15**

	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
<b>Implementation Strategies</b>						
Advanced Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
AP Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Summer Programs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Tutoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Mentoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Counseling/Advising	X	X	X	X	X	X
College Visit	X	X	X	X	X	X
Job Site Visit/Job Shadowing	X	X	X			X
Educational Field Trips	X	X		X		X
Student Workshops/Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Counseling/Advising	X	X	X			X
Parent Event on College Preparation/Financial Aid	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent College Visit	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Professional Development	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vertical Teaming Events*	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Alliances	X	X	X	X	X	X
Use of Statewide Services	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Total Number of Strategies Implemented (Out of 18)</b>						
	18	18	17	16	15	18

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2015; fall 2014 and spring 2015 site visit data.

Notes: An “X” indicates that a school reported implementing the strategy, although it does not capture the level of implementation (such as the number of students served) for each strategy. “AP” = advanced placement. Asterisk indicates a new implementation category captured in Year 3.

In addition, Table ES.4 includes indicators regarding whether each school was on target to meet relevant project objectives. At least some schools were on track to meet each objective, except for parental involvement in which all schools were far from meeting the project objective in Year 3. Most schools (all except for High Schools H and I) were on track to meet Project Objective 1.1 regarding Algebra I completion in Grade 9. Only School L was on track to meet Project Objectives 2.2 and 2.3, based on student enrollment in pre-AP and AP courses. Although all schools met Project Objective 3.1 regarding teacher training, only two schools (High Schools K and M) met the annual objective for five days of vertical alignment (Project Objective 3.2). Four of the Texas GEAR UP SG high schools met the objective related to student support services (Project Objective 4.1) and summer programs (Project Objective 4.2). In order to meet near-term objectives (Project Objectives 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 5.1 and 5.2), each Texas GEAR UP SG high school will need to increase its emphasis on advanced course enrollment/completion and preparation for college entrance exams (both test-taking and successful scores).

**Table ES.4. Evidence of School Progress Meeting Project Objectives, 2014–15**

Project Objectives	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
1.1: 85% of students will complete Algebra I by the end of Grade 9. <sup>a</sup>			X	X	X	X
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. <sup>b</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
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.					X	
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.					X	
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.	X	X	X	X	X	X
3.2: In each grant year, teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation.				X		X
4.1: 75% of students will receive student support services by the end of Grade 8.			X	X	X	X
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.	X	X	X			X
4.3: By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average. <sup>c</sup>						
4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college.	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) or Preliminary SAT10 (PSAT 10). By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT. <sup>d</sup>					X	X
7.1: 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.	X	X	X	X	X	X
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.	X	X	X	X	X	X
7.3: 50% of parents will participate in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events each year.						
8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.	X	X	X	X	X	X
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.	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2015; fall 2014 and spring 2015 site visit data.

Note: An "X" indicates that a school is making reasonable progress toward an objective, although it does not capture the completion or attainment of an objective.

<sup>a</sup> Progress toward the earlier objective related to Project Objective 1.1 (30% of students will successfully complete Algebra I by the end of Grade 8) are in Chapter 2.

<sup>b</sup> AP = advanced placement. Near-term objectives related to Project Objective 2.1 include the following: Projective Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including students identified as LEP, 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. Schools rated as being in progress toward Project Objective 2.1 are assumed to also be making progress toward these objectives in the later years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation.

<sup>c</sup> Middle Schools D, F, and G are expected to exceed the state averages for Grade 8 to Grade 9 on-time promotion. Eligibility data on anticipated promotion from Grade 9 to Grade 10 were not yet available from Texas GEAR UP SG high schools. State averages for retention and promotion typically lag by at least one year and are not yet available.

<sup>d</sup> ACT Aspire is the preliminary ACT and PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 are preliminary to the SAT. PSAT 8/9 is also preliminary to the SAT and while not in the project objective is tracked in the data. The following near-term objective also relates to Project Objective 5.1: 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. Schools rated as being in progress toward Project Objective 5.1 are assumed to also be making progress toward this objective in the later years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation.

## ALGEBRA I AND OTHER ADVANCED COURSE ENROLLMENT

### Key Takeaway:

Texas GEAR UP SG schools are helping students to be academically prepared for college. In Year 3, 92% of Grade 9 students were either currently enrolled (61%) or had already completed Algebra I (31%). Additionally, 24% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses, an increase of 14 percentage points from Year 2 in which only 10% of students were taking that many advanced courses. In Year 1 no students were taking four or more advanced courses.

Successful completion of Algebra I is a key early outcome; Project Objective 1.1 is to have 85% of students complete Algebra 1 by the end of Grade 9 and the Texas GEAR UP SG schools are on track to meet this objective.<sup>7</sup> Another reason for the importance of focusing on advanced course enrollment in Year 3 is Project Objective 2.2, which states that 60% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students are to have successfully completed a pre-AP or AP course (i.e., advanced course) by the end of Year 5 of the grant. Only School L was on track to meet Project Objective 2.2 with 87% of students enrolled in a pre-AP or AP course. Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students have continued to make progress in advanced mathematics in Year 3 with the addition of increased enrollment in advanced courses in subject areas other than mathematics (namely, English language arts [ELA], science, and social studies). This is a key step toward meeting multiple Texas GEAR UP SG project objectives, including helping students to be academically prepared for college and meeting the necessary entrance criteria.

## STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES: TUTORING, MENTORING, AND COUNSELING

### Key Takeaway:

In Year 3, 81% of students participated in either tutoring, mentoring, or counseling (78% in Year 2). The average amount of time spent in tutoring was much greater in Year 3 (12.6 hours, compared to 9.2 hours in Year 2), but only 51% of students participated in tutoring (compared to 63% in Year 2). The majority of the students participated in counseling (69%), nearly double the percentage from Year 2 (36%). Only 10% of Grade 9 students were receiving comprehensive mentoring in Year 3 (compared to 14% in Year 2).

These findings show both positive and negative trends regarding the implementation of student support services in Year 3. Data reflect consistency in the overall percentage of students participating in at least one type of student support service even as implementation shifted to high schools. Although the percentage of participation in tutoring was lower in Year 3, the higher average number of hours may indicate an increased focus on providing comprehensive services for those who needed it most. Mentoring continued to be the least utilized student support service.

<sup>7</sup> APR data were used to calculate these percentages. The data do not provide an update on Grade 8 students who completed the course but are no longer in the Grade 9 cohort. As reported in the second annual implementation report (Briggs, et al., 2015), 43% of Grade 8 students were enrolled in Algebra I, suggesting that schools will meet Project Objective 1.1 that 30% of Grade 8 students complete Algebra I.

## STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COLLEGE VISITS AND JOB SITE VISITS

### Key Takeaway:

Overall, 35% of Texas GEAR UP SG students participated in a college visit in Year 3. This activity occurred at all six of the Texas GEAR UP SG high schools. Across schools, there were 34 college visits in Year 3 (compared to 20 in Year 2). Additionally, four schools also participated in job site visits, which included 7% of students overall.

In addition to student support services, college visits and job site visits represent other successful activities offered to the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students in Year 3. Given that all six high schools engaged in college visits in Year 3, it seems that high schools continued to support college visits (all seven middle schools engaged in this activity in Year 1 and Year 2). This may reflect district-level support for this type of activity. Although overall participation was relatively low for job site visits, more districts began to implement this strategy in Year 3. For instance, Districts 1 and 4 did not engage in this activity in Year 1 or Year 2 but began doing so in Year 3. Survey data indicated that students found these activities to be, on average, *mostly effective*, a perception consistent with students' views on other Texas GEAR UP SG activities.

## PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT WITH TEXAS GEAR UP SG

### Key Takeaway:

Only 3% of parents were involved in three or more events in Year 3, compared to 7% in Year 2. However, all of the six high schools had at least some parents attending three or more events. Additionally, 49% of parents attended at least one event, an increase of 11 percentage points since Year 2. High schools offered more events in Year 3 as well.

As was the case in prior years, no school met Project Objective 7.3 of having 50% of parents attend at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events annually. As of March 31, 2015, 3% of parents from all schools had participated in at least three events. In Year 3, Texas GEAR UP SG high schools implemented 159 parent activities, compared to 51 in Year 2. In addition to offering more activities, the Texas GEAR UP SG will need to continue to work on overcoming the challenges in engaging parents, including challenges consistent with prior years and those that have emerged in the high school setting, in order to meet the project objective by the end of Year 3 and in each of the future program years.

## TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND VERTICAL TEAMING

### Key Takeaway:

Schools improved the amount of teacher professional development offered in Year 3, but only two high schools had held the five days of planned vertical teaming events by March 31, 2015.

Overall, Texas GEAR UP SG improved the amount of teacher PD offered in Year 3, reflecting progress towards Project Objectives 3.1 and 3.2. Texas GEAR UP SG schools are required to offer teacher PD each program year on the topics of advanced instructional strategies, vertical teaming, and college access/preparation. All Texas GEAR UP SG schools provided some GEAR UP-supported PD in Year 3; ranging from 8 offerings at High School L to 32 at High School M. In Year 3, only two high schools had held the five days of planned vertical teaming events by the APR submission of data through March 31, 2015, the end of the evaluation period. It is important to note that all schools held at least some vertical teaming events.

**SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION: YEAR 1 THROUGH YEAR 3**

In the report, differences in implementation from across time points are highlighted. Table ES.5 summarizes some of the key implementation data comparisons among the first three years of Texas GEAR UP SG.

**Table ES.5. Summary Comparison of Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 Implementation Data**

Implementation Area	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>Level and Mix of Implementation</b>	Varied across districts. One middle school (from District 3) implemented the widest range of activities.	Variability remained; however, overall, implementation was higher. Two middle schools (Districts 1 and 3) implemented a wide range of activities.	District 3 continued to implement a broad range (and have high percentages of student participation) but additional districts also demonstrated successful mix of implementation.
<b>Student Participation in Texas GEAR UP SG Student Support Services</b>	39% of students participated.	78% of students participated.	81% of students participated.
<b>Student Participation in Any Texas GEAR UP SG Activities</b>	81% of students participated.	99% of students participated.	95% of students participated.
<b>Number of Advanced Courses</b>	0% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses.	10% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses.	24% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses.
<b>Enrollment in an Advanced Mathematics Course</b>	22% of students were enrolled in advanced mathematics.	43% of students were enrolled in advanced mathematics, including Algebra I.	45% of students were enrolled in advanced mathematics, including AP Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry.
<b>Enrollment in Other Advanced Courses</b>	20% of students were enrolled in advanced ELA/writing; 21% of students were enrolled in advanced science. <sup>a</sup> One middle school had no students in advanced ELA/writing or science courses.	21% of students were enrolled in advanced ELA/writing; 21% of students were enrolled in advanced science; 20% of students were enrolled in advanced social studies. Two middle schools had 0-1% of students in advanced ELA, science, or social studies courses.	39% of students were enrolled in advanced ELA/writing; 38% of students were enrolled in advanced science; 35% of students were enrolled in advanced social studies. All high schools had at least 19% enrollment in each content area.
<b>Student Knowledge of and Academic Preparation for College</b>	N/A	N/A	85% of surveyed students plan to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement.
<b>Endorsement Selection</b>	N/A	N/A	Most students (82%) selected one endorsement while 8% selected two or more endorsements. 71% of surveyed students understand how their endorsement will help them prepare for college.

Implementation Area	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>Parental Attendance at Three or More Texas GEAR UP SG Events<sup>b</sup></b>	No parent at any middle school attended three or more events; 5% of parents participated in at least one event.	7% of parents attended three or more events; 38% of parents attended at least one event.	3% of parents attended three or more events; 49% of parents attended at least one event.
<b>Teacher Professional Development and Vertical Teaming</b>	Most middle schools had already designed and scheduled PD for the school year.	Two middle schools held five days of vertical teaming events.	Two high schools held five days of vertical teaming events.

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2015; Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in Year 1 and Year 2 occurred in seven middle schools; In Year 3, implementation occurred in six high schools within the same four districts. N/A reflects areas that the evaluation did not specifically focus on, but are topics of interest for Year 3 implementation.

<sup>a</sup> ELA = English language arts. In Year 1, evaluation data did not include advanced course taking for social studies.

<sup>b</sup> Parental attendance is defined as any adult household member attending an event associated with the given student.

**Key Takeaway:**

Although students’ educational aspirations and expectations increased in Year 3, the gap between aspirations and expectations widened from Year 2 to Year 3. Students do not expect to achieve as high of an educational outcome as indicated by their aspirations. However, students’ reported knowledge of college-related terms/concepts, especially the SAT and ACT, increased from Year 2 to Year 3.

Consistent with prior years, there continued to be multiple indicators in Year 3 that students both need and want financial information as it relates to postsecondary education. With continued implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG activities, students may gain knowledge and information about the financial aspects of college and may view affordability as less of a barrier to educational aspirations.

**Student Surveys**

Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students completed surveys in fall 2014 and spring 2015. 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. Although parent surveys were administered in spring 2015, low response rates prohibit the use of these data in this report.

**EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS**

Students’ aspirations continued to increase on a similar path from prior years with a four percentage point increase from spring 2014 to spring 2015 (compared to a five percentage point increase between spring 2013 and spring 2014). Students’ educational aspirations were significantly higher than educational expectations and the gap between them widened from Year 2 to Year 3.<sup>8</sup> Of students who do not plan to go to college, the greatest percentage selected *concerns about cost* as a main reason for not continuing onto postsecondary education (46% across schools); this was also the case in Year 2 (48% of students selected this option).

<sup>8</sup> The term significant is used in making comparisons to refer to statistical significance.

## KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COLLEGE

Evaluation survey data indicated that Texas GEAR UP SG served schools where the students generally understood the importance of college (65% of students rated themselves as *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable*) more than the requirements to get accepted (50% of students rated themselves as *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable*). Students also reported that they continued to need information on specific aspects of college requirements, as only 46% indicated they were *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about the SAT (38% for the ACT). Students' average perceived knowledge of each of the relevant items differed significantly across schools. Only 34% of students selected GEAR UP staff or events as a source for college information (compared to 46% in spring 2014). This implies that Texas GEAR UP SG may need to provide more information to a higher portion of students (and perhaps with greater frequency) in order to get students the information they need about college requirements.

## FINANCIAL UNDERSTANDING OF COLLEGE

Concerns about the ability to afford postsecondary education remained the most common reason reported for not expecting to pursue postsecondary education, and only 13% of students reported feeling *extremely knowledgeable* about financial aid and the costs and benefits of pursuing postsecondary education. However, the percentage of students who reported that they had conversations with someone from GEAR UP or their school increased in Year 3 (67%, compared to 61% in Year 2). On average, students reported that they were *slightly knowledgeable* or *knowledgeable* about specific financial aid terms. Continuing efforts to increase students' knowledge of the financial aspects of college (through conversations with students, events, and other activities) remain an important area of focus; this should include information about specific financial aid terms and the actual costs of attending.

## PERCEPTION OF TEXAS GEAR UP SG ACTIVITIES

On average, students found each type of activity that they participated in to be *mostly effective*. Year 3 was the second year that College Preparation Advisors worked with Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students, and 62% of students found them to be either *very effective* or *mostly effective*. A small percentage of students reported using the GEAR UP website in Year 3 (18%), although this was a slight increase from Year 2 (15%). Summer programs continued to be perceived by students as valuable; 85% of students who participated in a summer 2014 GEAR UP program indicated that they had a better understanding of the benefits of college after attending the program.

## Key Facilitators and Barriers: Implementation

### Connecting Texas GEAR UP SG to Existing Efforts

#### Key Takeaway:

Situating Texas GEAR UP SG in the context of existing school/district efforts and the priorities of other programs is a way to strengthen the implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG through strategic collaboration.

The shift to high schools in Year 3 introduced new opportunities for Texas GEAR UP SG to integrate their programming with other school/district priorities, as well as related initiatives occurring with their local collaborators. It may be that the notion of college preparation resonates with more stakeholders in the high school setting. This included efforts to align goals and create opportunities to “divide and conquer,” such as how Texas GEAR UP SG staff worked with school counselors to perform complementary supports to students regarding endorsements.

## Barriers of Communication and Advanced Planning

### Key Takeaway:

Barriers in Year 3 were similar to prior years, including the need to have clear, frequent communication about expectations and program details, as well as the challenge of implementing various program components (such as teacher professional development) with sufficient advanced notice.

Various stakeholders indicated they hoped to improve lines of communication in future years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation. This includes TEA and state collaborators setting clear expectations of Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators and College Preparation Advisors. Parents and school staff also would like Texas GEAR UP SG staff to provide them with information about events with more advanced notice; this is particularly the case for teachers who select their PD early in the year and may not be able to commit to additional PD on short notice.

## Potential Promising Practices

The following six potentially promising implementation activities were identified in Year 3.

### NEAR-PEER MENTORING

At High School I, two activities were exemplary opportunities for Grade 9 students to be mentored by Grade 12 students at their school. The Senior Panel provided an opportunity for successful Grade 12 students to share with Grade 9 students about what it was like to apply for college and what they wish they would have known when they began high school. A teacher at this school also shared the activity of having her Grade 12 students write letters to Grade 9 students to offer advice about what they did right and wrong throughout their time in high school. Similarly, High School M worked with students at a local university to provide mentoring services and plans to solicit support from upperclassmen to sustain mentoring going forward.

### PARENT UNIVERSITIES AND SYMPOSIA

High School K offered Parent University—a learning experience for parents to gain information on a specific topic (such as financial aid). In some cases, Texas GEAR UP SG staff coordinated the Parent University with the college access organization at the school. The format of these parent events (which included having rotations of discussion items related to the topic) was more interactive compared to parent events in the past; Texas GEAR UP SG staff received positive feedback from many parents. High School M held a parent symposium on a Saturday that included a speaker from the Texas GEAR UP conference and various sessions that parents could attend. Because of parents' previous feedback about a lack of variety in information presented at parent events, this symposium provided new and different information that parents chose.

### REPORT CARD DRIVE-THROUGH

High School H tried out a unique approach to parental involvement by doing a report card drive-through in which they met parents in the parking lot to distribute report cards and have a quick conversation about student progress specifically and Texas GEAR UP SG events/programs more generally. This was well received as a way to reach many parents in a manner that was convenient and accessible for them. Conducting the activity as a drive-through did not take up much of the parents' time, nor did it require them to find childcare.

### STRATEGICALLY DESIGNED TUTORING

High School K strategized a few approaches to offer tutoring. Six tutors provided support across multiple subjects (mathematics, ELA, and science) in the classroom. Teachers reported the usefulness of having “an extra hand” in the classroom for students. They indicated that the

tutors were most effective when they worked with students who needed remediation or extra support during class time. Additionally, the school hired a student teacher as the afterschool tutor because the individual was already familiar with the students and the course content, and had a demonstrated ability to work with a larger group of students. Similarly, at High School M, providing content-specific tutors proved to be a useful approach to help bolster students' areas of need, specifically related to ELA, in preparation for state exams.

### GEAR UP CONFERENCE ENHANCEMENTS

Each year, the Texas GEAR UP SG hosts a Texas GEAR UP conference that brings together GEAR UP programs from across the state to network and share best practices. In Year 3 of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, there were added components of the statewide conference that site visit participants and collaborator interviewees noted as being particularly effective. For example, involving parents in the conference was an effective approach to helping them become more invested in the program and aware of how they can support the GEAR UP mission at their school. Additionally, many parents and educators liked the GEAR UP Lounge as a central location to network, share ideas, learn first-hand about newly created statewide resources, and seek out supports. AMS Pictures set up the GEAR UP Lounge to introduce statewide resources to attendees.

### EXTENDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Instead of a typical one-day PD session that may not be sufficient to help teachers to sustain changes in their instructional practice, High Schools H and I had curriculum specialists available to support teachers' implementation of PBL. Site visit participants spoke about how it was a useful complement to the three Saturdays of PBL training they received. It was also anticipated to be a way to sustain the practices they learned over time by having the curriculum specialists provide feedback, guidance, resources, and ideas regarding the application of PBL in teachers' classrooms.

## Recommendations

Based on the range of data analyzed to date, several recommendations with regard to program implementation are made. These include the following:

- **Continue Progress on Student Perceptions.** Data from Year 3 indicated minimal changes in students' educational aspirations and expectations, agreement that college is important, disagreement that it is too early to think about college, and plans to attend college. In order to progress on these important aspects of the program, TEA and its statewide collaborators are encouraged to provide districts with additional strategies related to increasing awareness and knowledge of college opportunities available to students. Efforts that include targeted outreach to those most at risk might also be a useful strategy. Ongoing attention to helping students set high aspirations and gain confidence that they can expect to achieve will help accelerate progress in this area.
- **Seek to Better Understand and Potentially Model High School M Implementation.** In Year 3, High School M engaged in the full range of implementation encouraged by the Texas GEAR UP SG program. Student survey data reflected the ways in which these actions may be positively influencing students' perceptions. Successes included strong implementation of mentoring, counseling, college visits, student events, and parent events. High School M had high levels of involvement, high percentage of involvement, and high amounts of time in these areas (see Chapter 2 for details). Notably, High School M also had high rates of student self-reported understanding about the importance of college and knowledge about college readiness in many cases (see Chapter 3 for a full list). High School M also had the highest percentage of students indicate that Texas GEAR UP SG participation was influencing their college plans and that they had engaged in discussions

with Texas GEAR UP SG or school staff about college entrance requirements. Although there were some exceptions to these generally favorable findings related to High School M, collectively, the findings suggest that this school may serve as an example for specific aspects of Texas GEAR UP SG, as well as being an overall case of success. However, it is important to note that there may be external factors to consider, such as an environment that is particularly receptive to Texas GEAR UP SG services or related programming that reinforces Texas GEAR UP SG goals. During future site visits, the evaluation team will seek to better understand why Texas GEAR UP SG appears to be so successful at this school.

- **Identify Strategies to Reach Out to Parents.** Similar to prior years, all schools need to identify strategies to improve parental engagement with Texas GEAR UP SG activities, and TEA needs to encourage the Support Center to provide additional leadership in this area based on what was learned regarding why parents do and do not attend events.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, there was minimal attention devoted to the Parent and Community Engagement Coordinator, a Support Center staff member intended to support schools in this effort. The evaluation team will continue to collect data on these efforts and about parents' perceptions to inform how they might be engaged differently going forward.
- **Increase Statewide Implementation Efforts.** Although statewide efforts have made significant teacher and student resources available through the Texas GEAR UP website, use within at least the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort continues to be low.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, TEA has identified its Texas Gateway for online resources as a strategy for providing GEAR UP-related teacher PD statewide, but has not yet fully implemented this strategy.<sup>11</sup> TEA and its collaborators will want to continue to focus efforts on these statewide project objectives. Consistent with prior years, TEA has experienced some success with implementing the statewide coalition and conference opportunities, and TEA and Texas GEAR UP SG staff should use these conferences as an outlet for communicating and educating about other statewide resources as they become available. One Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator suggested having a section of the website dedicated to GEAR UP parent activities that have occurred nationwide so the staff can get an idea of what has worked well for other school districts then tweak it to fit their own.
- **Expand and Deepen Sustainability Efforts.** Throughout this report, some early progress toward sustainability emerged, such as how some schools intended to bolster their collaboration with a university to continue mentoring programs in the long term and change the college-going culture so that teachers continue to have high expectations and academically rigorous instruction. The early practices of District 3 in their approach to involving the city council in their advisory council may be a particular practice to monitor as an example of how to gain local support for continued funding and buy-in for efforts initiated through Texas GEAR UP SG.

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<sup>9</sup> The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI) Office for College Access manages and staffs the Support Center, which provides a range of services to the Texas GEAR UP SG through a contract with TEA.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.texasgearup.com/>

<sup>11</sup> TEA's Texas Gateway was previously referred to as Project Share and provides an online, interactive learning environment for Texas teachers. See <http://www.texasgateway.org/> for additional information.

# 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 (ED). 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 provide services to a primary cohort of students from Grade 7 (the 2012–13 school year) through their first year of postsecondary education (the 2018–19 school year).<sup>12</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG services are intended to serve individual students and their parents, as well as to support 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 parents regarding postsecondary opportunities. TEA contracted with ICF International to provide an external, third-party evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, including the annual implementation reports.

Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013) focused on implementation that occurred in the 2012–13 school year, and Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015) focused on implementation that occurred in the 2013–14 school year. This third annual implementation report focuses on implementation events that occurred in summer 2014 and during the 2014–15 school year. These annual reports provide a snapshot of how the six Texas GEAR UP SG participating high schools located in four districts, TEA and TEA's Texas GEAR UP SG collaborators are implementing the program. In order to maintain confidentiality, the report references districts by the same number (District 1 through District 4) as used in prior implementation reports. High schools are identified by different letter designations (High Schools H through M) than used in the prior report because this report focuses on high schools as opposed to prior years' focus on middle schools (Schools A through G). A separate, forthcoming comprehensive report examines outcomes and the relationship between implementation and outcomes in the first two years. In addition, a short brief focused on the transition from middle school to high school at the Texas GEAR UP SG schools is also forthcoming.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the relevant research literature on student success and college readiness, along with an understanding of these issues in the context of the state of Texas. The GEAR UP program, in general, and the Texas GEAR UP SG are described. Next, a summary of key findings from Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013) and Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015) is provided as a point of comparison for the Year 3 implementation data presented in this report. Specific prior year findings will be presented throughout the report where comparisons are appropriate. Finally, this chapter provides an overview of the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation. Appendix B provides more detailed information regarding the evaluation methodology.

## 1.1 College Readiness Challenge

### 1.1.1 The National and Texas College Readiness Challenge

The federal GEAR UP program is focused on supporting college readiness for students who may not otherwise pursue postsecondary educational opportunities. It is estimated that by 2020, more than 55% of Texas jobs will require some type of postsecondary credential (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2014). However, college enrollment and completion

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<sup>12</sup> Additional information about the cohort evaluation design of Texas GEAR UP SG is included in Appendix B.

continues to reflect wide gaps based on students' family income. In 2013, the immediate college enrollment rate of high school completers from high-income families was 80%, compared to 49% of students from low-income families (Kena et al., 2015). Data show that only 9% of youth from the lowest income quartile attain a college degree by age 25, compared with 80% of youth from the highest income quartile (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011). Hispanic youth immediate enrollment in college (60%) was also significantly lower in 2010 than that for either White or Black youth (71% and 66%, respectively). According to the Pew Hispanic Center (2012), Hispanics represent about one quarter of all public school students nationwide, but make up only 16% of those in higher education. Postsecondary graduation rates also lag for minority students. In 2014, 60% of first-time degree-seeking students who enrolled in Texas public universities in fall 2008 earned a postsecondary degree within six years. In Texas, of the total Hispanic population in 2013, 12.5% have earned a bachelor's degree or higher within six years, compared to the percentages of African-American and White populations earning a bachelor's degree or higher: 22.3% and 35.9%, respectively (THECB, 2015).

While 52% of Texas students had immediate enrollment in a postsecondary institution following high school graduation, many of these students do not enter college ready, decreasing the likelihood that they will earn a credential (THECB, 2015).<sup>13</sup> Although improving enrollment is a critical first step, students must also be prepared at a level that will move them from enrollment to graduation. In spite of improvements in recent years regarding college and career readiness in Texas high schools, a large portion of students continues to rely on developmental education to prepare them for college-level material.<sup>14</sup> In fall 2013, 11% of students who attended a four-year public institution required developmental education (a five percentage point decrease from fall 2010) and 34% of all statewide college students required developmental education (a seven percentage point decrease from fall 2010; THECB, 2014). Community and technical colleges are particularly likely to encounter students with a need for developmental education courses. Of all public community and technical college students, 49% required developmental education, a six percentage point decrease from 2010. 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 require such coursework to have graduated with a degree (THECB & TEA, 2012).<sup>15</sup>

The Texas GEAR UP SG, which began in 2012, provides an opportunity to support schools serving high percentages of low-income students in new approaches to college readiness. This includes influencing student motivation. Based on findings from the annual High School Survey of Student Engagement, student engagement and motivational factors play a critical role in determining a student's ability to succeed in college (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010).<sup>16</sup> Nationally, students are motivated by a desire to go to college and get a good job. For example, the 2009 survey asked more than 42,000 high school students across 103 schools in 27 states about their views regarding academic motivation. When asked why they go to school, students' most common responses were "Because I want to get a degree and go to college" (73%) and "Because I want

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<sup>13</sup> The 56% of Texas students who had immediate enrollment in a postsecondary institution includes enrollment both inside and outside the state of Texas. 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).

<sup>14</sup> Developmental education is remedial classes/interventions that college students need to be eligible for credit-bearing courses.

<sup>15</sup> They were 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 graduation from a four-year college.

<sup>16</sup> The High School Survey of Student Engagement is a comprehensive survey on student engagement and school climate issues. Please see <http://ceep.indiana.edu/hssse/index.html> for additional information.

to get a good job” (67%). ED suggests that GEAR UP programs, including the Texas GEAR UP SG, engage in a range of implementation activities that encourage and build on students’ motivations to set postsecondary education as a goal, provide academic and social support to students, educate students about postsecondary enrollment, and prepare them for the financial costs associated with postsecondary attendance.

Understanding high school graduation in Texas is important because it is a necessary milestone toward college enrollment. The Texas high school Grade 9 four-year longitudinal graduation rate slightly increased from 88.0% for the Class of 2013 to 88.3% for the Class of 2014 (TEA, 2015a). The graduation rates for students in the Class of 2014 identified as being economically disadvantaged (85.2%) did not change from the graduation rates of students in the Class of 2013 identified as being economically disadvantaged (85.2%), and still lagged relative to the state overall for the Class of 2014 (88.3%). These trends reinforce the need for Texas GEAR UP SG to support schools with high percentages of students identified as being economically disadvantaged. English Language Learners (ELL), Hispanic, and African-American youth are also targeted by the Texas GEAR UP SG. TEA data indicate concerns with the graduation rates for these student populations; rates are improving over time, but are still below state averages. In other words, progress for various groups continues to lag amidst overall progress. For example, students identified as ELL at any point between Grades 9 and 12 had a much lower high school graduation rate (71.5%) than the state average (88.3%) for the Class of 2014. Both Hispanic and African-American groups continued to lag behind White, non-Hispanic youth in the state as well, with a Class of 2014 graduation rate of 85.5% and 84.2% respectively (compared to 93.0% for White, non-Hispanic).<sup>17</sup>

In addition to high school graduation, one way to prepare students for enrollment in higher education is to offer dual-credit (college and high school) courses and expose students to the rigorous content in advanced placement (AP) classes. Ideally, academic rigor in AP courses exposes students to the typical demands of a college course. Participation in AP courses is another area where various student groups continue to lag in Texas, although progress has also been made (TEA, 2013a; TEA, 2013b). The number of Class of 2014 Texas high school graduates who took at least one AP exam during high school increased by 3.1 percentage points from the previous school year, with a total of 39.1% of students; This is 3.4 percentage points higher than the national average (35.7%; TEA, 2015b). For low-income students, Texas is the only state in the U.S. that achieved equitable participation in AP exams in 2014, which is the percentage of defined K–12 students who are identified as eligible for free or reduced-price lunches (51.1%) equaling the percentage of students (51.0%) who take an AP exam (TEA, 2015b). Although participation is equitable, performance for some student groups is low. According to a 2014 College Board data release, the student groups with the lowest mean AP scores in Texas were Blacks, Other Hispanics, and Mexican Americans, with the average scores on a five-point scale at 1.95, 2.05, and 2.24, respectively; this is compared to 2.89 for White students and 2.58 overall in Texas (College Board, 2014).<sup>18</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG, which stresses academic rigor and student engagement in AP courses, has the potential to be part of the effort to help reduce achievement gaps between student groups on AP exams.

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<sup>17</sup> Hispanic (Class of 2013: 85.1%, Class of 2009: 73.5%) and African-American (Class of 2013: 84.1%, Class of 2009: 73.8%) youth in the Class of 2013 had improved graduation rates compared to the Class of 2009. Both Hispanic and African-American groups continued to lag behind Asian-American (Class of 2013: 93.8%, Class of 2009: 89.7%) and White, non-Hispanic youth in the state as well (Class of 2013: 93.0%, Class of 2009: 92.4%).

<sup>18</sup> Scores reflect the following scale: 5 = extremely well qualified, 4 = well qualified, 3 = qualified, 2 = possibly qualified, and 1 = no recommendation. Each college decides what scores it will accept. Reported means are averages across exams.

### 1.1.2 Texas House Bill 5 and the Texas GEAR UP State Grant Grade 9 Class of 2014–15

The Texas Legislature passed and the governor signed HB 5, 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, in June 2013 (LegiScan, 2013). The passage of HB 5 initiated substantial changes to the assessment and graduation requirements in the state, including the establishment of a new high school program—the Foundation High School Program—to create a rigorous, but flexible, educational program for students that promotes both college access and career readiness.<sup>19</sup> The Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort, students who began high school in 2014–15, are in the first cohort of Grade 9 students who are required to graduate under the new requirements laid out in HB 5. Both TEA and districts statewide worked to address the practicalities associated with the purpose and goal of the HB 5 legislation from June 2013 to the start of the 2014–15 school year. One challenge faced by TEA and the districts related to HB 5 was ensuring that students receive clear information about graduation requirements, including understanding endorsement requirements and how to earn Algebra II credit which is required for admission at most Texas public universities and colleges.

Prior to HB 5, in order to graduate from high school under either the 26-credit Recommended High School Program (RHSP) or the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP), students were required to successfully complete four courses in each of four foundation subject areas: English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies. These course requirements were in line with college entrance requirements. The Foundation High School Program, however, requires a minimum of 22-credits including four credits in English (I, II, III, and one advanced English course), three in mathematics (i.e., Algebra, Geometry, and one advanced mathematics course), three in science (i.e., 1) Biology, 2) Chemistry, Physics, or Integrated Physics and Chemistry), and 3) an advanced science course), and three in social studies (i.e., U.S. History, U.S. Government (one-half credit), Economics (one-half credit), and either World History or World Geography). Completing Algebra II is not required under the Foundation High School Program.

Additionally, under the Foundation High School Program, students are required to select an endorsement upon entering high school. An endorsement is earned by completing a coherent sequence of courses that gives students the flexibility to focus on their interests. Essentially, the endorsements provide the basis for entering a career pathway, similar to a major in college. Completing an endorsement requires students to earn 26 credits to graduate. Students are also permitted to choose, at any time, to earn an endorsement other than the one the student previously selected at the beginning of Grade 9. After a student's sophomore year, a student may choose to graduate without earning an endorsement. Students are generally discouraged from graduating with the Foundation High School Program without the addition of an endorsement and cannot do so without consent from a parent or guardian.<sup>20</sup> Although five endorsements have been identified under HB 5, schools are not required to offer all five endorsements. The five endorsement areas include business and industry; arts and humanities; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); public services; and multidisciplinary studies. Students may select more than one endorsement.

Given the focus of Texas GEAR UP SG on postsecondary education, it is worth examining Foundation High School Program requirements relative to college entrance requirements. In particular, the Foundation High School Program does not require students to complete Algebra II in order to graduate while many colleges require Algebra II completion in their entrance

<sup>19</sup> For additional information on Texas high school graduation requirements please see <http://tea.texas.gov/graduation-requirements/hb5.aspx>. Students who are in Grade 9 in 2014–15 but who were already in high school in the prior year(s) may select to graduate high school under prior graduation plans.

<sup>20</sup> This permission cannot be provided until after the student completes Grade 10.

requirements. Specifically, students who select no endorsement may not complete Algebra II and some endorsements provided under HB 5 do not include the requirement to complete Algebra II. In order to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement under the Foundation High School Program students must exceed the minimum Foundation High School Program requirements. Students must complete at least one endorsement and must complete Algebra II as one of the four mathematics credits. In addition to better meeting college entrance requirements, another advantage of graduating with a distinguished level of achievement is that it is a requirement to be admitted to a Texas public university under the state's Automatic Admission Policy.<sup>21</sup> In August 2014, TEA published a Graduation Toolkit to support students, parents, and schools in understanding the new graduation requirements.<sup>22</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG participating schools/districts engaged in their own activities to introduce students to the new graduation requirement and endorsements, as described in Chapter 2 and in the Case Study Reports (Appendix E).

In addition to graduation requirements, it is worth noting that HB 5 reduced the number of State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR<sup>®</sup>) end-of-course (EOC) exams from 15 to 5. HB 5 requires students to pass five STAAR EOC assessments in order to be eligible for graduation: Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History. In addition, prior to HB 5, English I and English II STAAR EOC exams assessed reading and writing separately. In 2013–14, however, reading and writing were combined in a single EOC exam. This change is not anticipated to affect students' postsecondary educational opportunities, as these exams are not typically utilized as part of college entrance requirements.

In the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, SB 149, which further revised the state's assessment graduation requirements for students enrolled in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade for the 2014–15, 2015–16, or 2016–17 school years was passed. SB 149 states that any student who fails STAAR EOC in up to two courses may receive a high school diploma if the student has qualified to graduate by means of an individual graduation committee (IGC). The decision is at the discretion of the IGC.<sup>23</sup> While the primary cohort is not currently expected to be impacted by this legislation, comparison cohorts from prior years will be.

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<sup>21</sup> In 1997, during the 75th Legislative Session, Texas introduced the Automatic Admission policy (Texas Education Code [TEC] § 51.803) for students applying for admission to college. Students graduating in the top 10% of their high school class were eligible for automatic admission into Texas public colleges and universities. Graduating with a distinguished level of achievement and in the top 10% of their class are generally eligible for automatic admission. .

<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.51.htm#51.803>

<sup>22</sup> The TEA Graduation Toolkit is available online at <http://tea.texas.gov/communications/brochures.aspx>.

<sup>23</sup> See

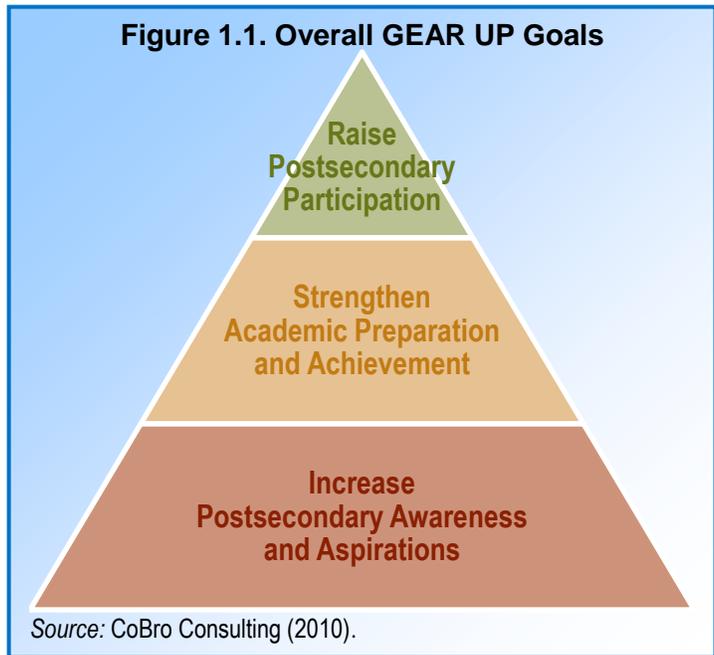
[http://tea.texas.gov/About\\_TEA/News\\_and\\_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA\\_Letters/Assessment\\_Graduation\\_Requirements\\_as\\_Amended\\_by\\_Senate\\_Bill\\_\(SB\)\\_149/](http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/Assessment_Graduation_Requirements_as_Amended_by_Senate_Bill_(SB)_149/) for additional information. . For more information about the IGC review, see TEA's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document at <http://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769821193&libID=25769821294>.

### 1.1.3 About the Federal GEAR UP Program

TEA’s application for and receipt of a federal GEAR UP SG is in line with the general state focus on promoting college readiness and access discussed in the prior section. The federal GEAR UP program seeks to improve postsecondary enrollment and completion for low-income students. The GEAR UP program addresses the 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. These goals are presented as a pyramid, with each goal building on previously attained goals (CoBro Consulting, 2010; see Figure 1.1). Although the goals build on each other, the strategies associated with each goal can occur throughout the implementation of GEAR UP (e.g., implementation activities to increase college awareness and postsecondary aspirations occur across grades). The goals include the following:

**1. Increasing postsecondary awareness and aspirations.** This goal is focused on increasing GEAR UP students’ and parents’ knowledge of postsecondary educational options, the preparation needed to succeed at the postsecondary level, and parents’ financial literacy regarding postsecondary education. Ideally, aspirations and expectations for postsecondary education are aligned and influence decisions (e.g., to complete Algebra I in Grade 9, 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 toward meeting a plan for graduation at the distinguished level of achievement). Texas GEAR UP project objectives, such as 85% of students completing Algebra I by the end of Grade 9 (Project Objective 1.1) and 60% of students completing an AP/pre-AP course by the fifth year (Project Objective 2.2), 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 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 participation in summer programs are of particular interest to the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation. In the

summer prior to Grade 9, this included summer programs on the transition to high school. 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.

#### 1.1.4 Overview of Texas GEAR UP State Grant: High Schools

TEA was awarded a federal GEAR UP grant in April 2012 with a start date of July 2012. As described in prior implementation reports (Briggs et al, 2015; O'Donnell et al., 2013), 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 (six high schools at the time of this report) with a high population of low-income youth. In addition to district Texas GEAR UP SG services, statewide supports are provided through existing and newly developed TEA college and career information, which provide a rich array of resources and tools for educators, students and their parents to help provide guidance regarding postsecondary education.<sup>24</sup>

TEA based the selection of districts to participate in the Texas GEAR UP SG grant on data from the 2009–10 school year related to poverty and the risk of dropping out of school.<sup>25</sup> At that time, all seven Texas GEAR UP SG middle schools in the four selected districts had greater percentages of students identified as being economically disadvantaged and at risk compared to the state averages (i.e., those students identified as being at risk for dropping out of school based on having one or more of 13 factors).<sup>26</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 group of students in the 2009–10 school year was African American. Both Hispanic/Latino and African-American

<sup>24</sup> This includes the statewide website at <http://www.texasgearup.com>.

<sup>25</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>26</sup> TEC § 29.081 criteria for at-risk status include each student who is under 26 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 of 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 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) to have dropped out of school; (10) is a student of limited English proficiency; (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 (See <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/2015/glossary.pdf>; <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.29.htm#29.081>).

students are historically underrepresented in higher education (Editorial Projects in Education, 2013; Pew Hispanic Center, 2012). Table 1.1 shows a list of the schools who participated in the Texas GEAR UP SG in each school year. Appendix F, related to implementation findings, presents demographic data for students. As previously mentioned, schools will be identified by a letter and districts by a number in order to mask the school and maintain the confidentiality that was promised for the site visits.

**Table 1.1. Profile of Texas GEAR UP SG Schools**

District	Middle Schools (2012–13; 2013–14)	High Schools (2014–15)
Edgewood Independent School District	Brentwood, Garcia, Wrenn	Memorial, Kennedy
Lubbock Independent School District	Dunbar	Estacado
Manor Independent School District	Decker, Manor	Manor, Manor New Tech
Somerset Independent School District	Somerset	Somerset

### HIGH SCHOOL OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO TEXAS GEAR UP SG STUDENTS

Some Texas GEAR UP SG districts also offer high school options with a particular focus on college readiness. In Manor Independent School District, Manor New Tech High School (opened in the 2007–08 school year) offers project-based learning (PBL) focused on college and career readiness in STEM with students selected for enrollment by lottery. All Grade 9 students at this school, who have to apply to attend and are then selected, are considered part of the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort and most attended one of the two Texas GEAR UP SG middle schools in the district. Additionally, in the 2014–15 school year, Manor Independent School District started an early college high school program in association with a local community college. Students applied to be part of the early college high school, and through the program will take dual-credit courses during each year of high school to earn their associate’s degree (60 college credit hours) by the time they graduate from high school. In the 2014–15 school year, students in the early college high school program took dual-credit classes at Manor High School. In Grade 9, the main goal of the program was to have the enrolled students pass the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) test.<sup>27</sup> In later years, they will travel to the community college for classes. Manor High School students who are enrolled in the early college high school program attend school at the Manor High School campus, and are still included in the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort.

The remaining three districts participating in Texas GEAR UP SG also have alternative high schools focused on postsecondary readiness options currently available for students or planned for the near future. In some cases these students will no longer be included in the primary cohort if they attend the alternative high school option. Specifically, some students in Grade 9 who are focused on postsecondary education may select one of these alternatives as an alternative that will facilitate this goal. This means that the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort will lose some students who might otherwise have counted towards achieving the postsecondary enrollment goal. Following is a description of the postsecondary education alternatives available to students in the Texas GEAR UP SG participating districts:

<sup>27</sup> The TSI is used to determine readiness for college coursework and identifies needs for any developmental coursework. Students must pass TSI before taking community college courses unless such requirement was waived. For more information see <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=C92F1DAA-D49E-03F0-0750060AA756E807> and <http://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769823287&libID=25769823385>.

- Somerset Independent School District (in collaboration with two other districts) established a selective enrollment Early College Leadership Academy (ECLA) that offers opportunities for students to earn an associate’s degree in liberal arts along with their high school diploma. Year 3 of the Texas GEAR UP SG was the first year of operation for this program. Some Texas GEAR UP SG students in this district (who attended Somerset Middle School in 2013–14) may have attended this school (instead of the Texas GEAR UP SG high school) in 2014–15 and are no longer part of the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort. These students are not reflected in the data in this report and will be excluded from future reports unless the students return to the participating high school.
- Lubbock Independent School District is planning to initiate an early college high school in collaboration with two local universities for the 2016–17 school year. This would allow the opportunity for Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students to earn dual credit in their junior year. Forthcoming evaluation activities will follow progress on the establishment of the early college high school in this district.
- Edgewood Independent School District has a Touch of Life Technology (TOLTech) Texas STEM academy, housed at one of the district’s middle schools (which is not one of the former Texas GEAR UP SG middle schools in this district).<sup>28</sup> Both middle school and high school students attend the TOLTech Academy. However, it is unclear the extent to which any Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students participate in this program as it was not discussed during any site visits.

### TRANSITION FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL

In Year 3 of Texas GEAR UP SG, students transitioned from middle school to high school.<sup>29</sup> This expanded the opportunities for students to prepare for college, such as being exposed to juniors and seniors who were applying for college and interacting with school staff who may be more familiar with college requirements. Various sections in this implementation report discuss activities to support that transition and students’ perceptions about how they adjusted to the high school setting.

College Preparation Advisors, first introduced when the primary cohort was in Grade 8, also transitioned to continue serving students in the high school.<sup>30</sup> In prior years of implementation, the College Preparation Advisors provided one-on-one counseling to students as well as supporting Texas GEAR UP SG activities more generally and were identified in AIR #2 as a potential best practice (Briggs et al., 2015). College Preparation Advisors may have had some contact with administrators and teachers from the high schools for vertical alignment activities and/or summer transition programs.<sup>31</sup> However, Year 3 reflected a transition for the program to establish relationships with and support from teachers, administrators, and staff at the high school. Throughout this implementation report, it is important to keep in mind that implementation activities, the barriers and facilitators faced, and potential promising practices

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<sup>28</sup> Touch of Life Technologies, or TOLTech, creates career-long education solutions for health care students and professionals. More information about the organization is available at <http://www.toltech.net>.

<sup>29</sup> Students not promoted to Grade 9 (i.e., retained in Grade 8) are no longer part of the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort. However, it is anticipated that they will continue to receive support services through Texas GEAR UP SG programs that are sustained in the middle schools.

<sup>30</sup> In one district, there were three College Preparation Advisors (one in each of the middle schools) in prior years and, in Year 3, there is one College Preparation Advisor in each high school and a third College Preparation Advisor that serves both high schools.

<sup>31</sup> Vertical alignment (also referred to as vertical teaming) refers to teachers from a given subject area participating in collaborative meetings in which they coordinate instruction and learning objectives across grade levels.

reflect some departure from prior years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation as the program is being implemented in a new context.

In order to understand how the cohort was impacted by the transition from middle school to high school, the cohort was examined in two ways. First, the percentage of Texas GEAR UP SG students in the Grade 8 primary cohort who continued to attend a Texas GEAR UP SG high school was calculated (See Table 1.2). Overall 79% of Grade 8 students remained in the primary cohort in Grade 9. Second, the percentage of students at each high school in the Grade 9 cohort who had attended a Texas GEAR UP SG school in Grade 8 was calculated (See Table 1.2). Overall, 72% of Grade 9 cohort students attended a Texas GEAR UP SG school in Grade 8. Most of the Grade 8 cohort continued into Grade 9 and most of the Grade 9 cohort had been in the Grade 8. Still, the transition from middle school to high school introduced new students into the cohort. In the comprehensive reports, length of time in cohort will be associated with outcomes.

**Table 1.2. Percentages of Students within Texas GEAR UP SG Schools in the Primary Cohort in Both Grade 8 and Grade 9 by Middle School and High School, 2013–14; 2014–15**

Middle School	n	Percentage of Grade 8 Students Attending a Texas GEAR UP SG High School	High Schools	n	Percentage of Grade 9 Students Who Attended a Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School
A	271	77.1%	H	475	66.9%
B	310	68.4%	I	474	64.1%
C	233	82.8%	J	197	67.5%
D	199	66.8%	K	572	72.2%
E	271	83.0%	L	117	87.2%
F	325	87.7%	M	320	85.0%
G	318	85.8%			
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,927</b>	<b>79.4%</b>	<b>Overall</b>	<b>2,155</b>	<b>71.6%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2014.

### TEXAS GEAR UP STATE GRANT COLLABORATORS

In Year 1, TEA collaborated with five organizations: Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center (a technical assistance provider, herein referred to as the Support Center); AMS Pictures; Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) Centers; Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TG); and the College Board. In Year 2, TEA retained five of these collaborators, the Support Center, AMS Pictures, TG, T-STEM Centers, and College Board, and added three new collaborators: Abriendo Puertas, Community TechKnowledge (CTK), and GeoFORCE.<sup>32</sup> In Year 3, Abriendo Puertas was no longer a collaborator; TEA continued collaboration with six organizations (the Support Center, AMS Pictures, TG, T-STEM Centers, CTK and GeoFORCE), and began working with one new collaborator: Raise Achievement. Beginning in Year 2, the Support Center manages the contracts with all collaborators with the exception of AMS Pictures who report directly to TEA. Beginning in Year 3, districts were permitted to work directly with College Board on any desired services. Data collected in Year 3 clarified the role of existing collaborators (primarily telephone interviews with each organization as supplemented by site visit data) and offered information about new collaborators.

**Support Center:** The University of Texas at Austin’s Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI) Office for College Access manages and staffs the Support Center. The Support Center

<sup>32</sup> The College Board no longer had a formalized relationship with the Texas GEAR UP SG during Year 2 or Year 3. However, TEA provided grant funds directly to districts to purchase services directly from the College Board.

includes seven full-time staff who focus on Texas GEAR UP SG in addition to the seven College Preparation Advisors; the Support Center supervises College Preparation Advisors and provides them with week-long training. TEA program staff described the Support Center as being an extension of the state education agency by providing technical assistance related to grant administration/compliance and encouraging school and district buy-in. TEA and Support Center staff collaborate frequently (weekly by phone, monthly in person, and as needed); the Support Center communicates with schools at a similar frequency. As in prior years, the Support Center provided monthly and quarterly reports to TEA that are formatted similar to the ED required Annual Performance Report (APR) and house the GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System (GUIDES); these data support TEA in aligning reports to project objectives, providing student- and teacher-level implementation data for the evaluation, and serving as formative information for TEA and the districts.<sup>33</sup> In Year 3, improved use of these data to drive decisions about implementation included the ability to examine trends in data at a deeper level (such as using past attendance data to strategically target parents for event attendance). Another source of data to support implementation in Year 3 was the use of a student questionnaire to help Texas GEAR UP SG staff know more about individual student needs.<sup>34</sup> The Support Center continued to ensure that the districts complied with grant requirements by providing guidance and feedback on each districts' Annual Strategic Planning Report (ASPR). Support Center staff visited each school monthly and engaged in calls/email, as needed, in between; these interactions were similar in frequency across districts.

The Support Center also managed the communication with other collaborators (except for AMS Pictures who interacts with TEA directly). Similar to Year 2 of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, the Support Center was responsible for supervising, supporting, and training the College Preparation Advisors, as well as the planning and execution of the Texas GEAR UP conference. The Support Center offered more intensive support to gain parental involvement in Year 3; for example, they supported a parent in applying for, and winning, the national GEAR UP parent-of-the-year award. Another example was how the Support Center facilitated a student-parent athlete symposium in an effort to help parents understand how athletics relate to college.

**AMS Pictures:** At the end of Year 1, AMS Pictures launched the revised and publicly available Texas GEAR UP website at <http://www.texasgearup.com>. In Year 2 and Year 3, AMS Pictures continued to create resources for the website and market it to Texas GEAR UP SG grantees, as well as the population throughout the state. Similar to Year 2, AMS Pictures has supported Texas GEAR UP SG by gathering and disseminating resources for implementing GEAR UP, identifying challenges, and creating an outlet for sharing ideas to address issues. One example of their work is the filming and interviewing they did with students from one of the Texas GEAR UP SG high schools who were designing a video game. Students, teachers, and a member of the Texas GEAR UP SG staff then spoke with AMS Pictures about the activity. Year 3 included expanded use of social media to reach students and teachers. Another addition in Year 3 included having the GEAR UP Lounge at the statewide conference. The GEAR UP Lounge took place in a designated room where AMS had placed statewide resources for participants to review. The GEAR UP Lounge also provided opportunities for networking as reported by parents and educators participating in site visits who had attended the conference. Throughout the life of the grant, AMS Pictures will visit schools to highlight practices identified by their

<sup>33</sup> See <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/performance.html> for additional information on the information required to be submitted annually by grant award recipients.

<sup>34</sup> The term Texas GEAR UP SG staff is used throughout this report and includes the coordinator, College Preparation Advisors, and the data clerk. These are staff located in the district or at the school who have key responsibilities to the project at either the school or for the district.

research as being successful, as well as interact regularly with the Support Center regarding both the website and the conference (e.g., selecting a theme, visuals, promotion). AMS Pictures also began to work on the development of statewide teacher resources to be introduced on TEA's Texas Gateway for online resources.<sup>35</sup>

**T-STEM Centers:** In Year 3, the University of Texas at Tyler (UT-Tyler) took the place of Texas Tech in supporting Texas GEAR UP SG through PD and mobile labs for students. Examples of PD that the T-STEM Centers offered Texas GEAR UP SG schools in Year 3 included sessions focused on enhanced rigor in Algebra classes and training on PBL. The STEM mobile labs offered students the opportunity to use various science tools and resources not otherwise available to them.

**GeoFORCE:** Similar to Year 2, GeoFORCE continued to support Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 3 by providing an experiential outreach program housed at the University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin) and supported, in part, through TG Public Benefit.<sup>36</sup> It is a long-term college access initiative based on geosciences in which 42 students from the six Texas GEAR UP SG high schools participate in summer residential geological programs. In summer 2014, students went to Florida and, in summer 2015, they planned to go to the Grand Canyon. The program is intentionally designed to increase in rigor over each year with the goal of encouraging students to seek out a college major in a STEM field by focusing on social skills and independence in the first year (summer 2014 for Texas GEAR UP SG students), science skills in the second year (summer 2015 for Texas GEAR UP SG students), and college considerations in the third year (summer 2016 for Texas GEAR UP SG students). Through a related project that GeoFORCE is working on, dual-credit science courses may be available to Texas GEAR UP SG students, as well as other students in Texas, in the near future, with the intention that they will be available by the time Texas GEAR UP SG students are in their junior or senior year. Although GeoFORCE offers teacher workshops several times a year, teachers at Texas GEAR UP SG schools have not yet participated in any of those sessions, which is a goal for Year 4. GeoFORCE is also exploring grant opportunities with the Support Center to identify ways to sustain similar services with the cohorts of students that follow the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort of Grade 9 students.

**CTK:** As in Year 2, CTK supported Texas GEAR UP SG as a software provider, offering their database tool to track implementation data and student progress over time. This includes granular data about program implementation, student progress data, and longitudinal trends. In Year 3, CTK worked with the Support Center to expand the functionality of GUIDES (a version of their platform with customized tools built in). CTK also trained Texas GEAR UP SG staff (coordinators, College Preparation Advisors, and data clerks) on how to use GUIDES. Technical and customer service support in using the system is also their responsibility.

**Raise Achievement:** Raise Achievement, an independent consulting company, conducted a Year 3 formative needs assessment for the Support Center at each site to inform strategic planning. These site visit interviews with Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators and College Preparation Advisors included discussions about barriers and successes, including looking at the root cause of why particular students did or did not participate. These findings were shared with Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators. Raise Achievement also provided districts with feedback on their ASPRs and, at the time of the phone interview, was in the process of compiling qualitative reports for the Support Center to offer strategies regarding how to reach Texas GEAR UP SG goals. A Raise Achievement task in process at the time of the interview was an

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<sup>35</sup> Prior to 2016, TEA's Texas Gateway was referred to as Project Share; it provides an online, interactive learning environment for Texas teachers. See <http://www.texasgateway.org/> for additional information.

<sup>36</sup> See <http://www.jsu.utexas.edu/geoforce> for additional information about this program.

internal needs assessment, which included plans to conduct interviews with the Support Center, collaborators, TEA project staff, and College Preparation Advisors focused on how the Support Center could better support Texas GEAR UP SG.

## 1.2 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Year 1 and Year 2 Key Findings

The first Texas GEAR UP SG implementation report (O'Donnel et al., 2013) provided an overview of implementation with the Grade 7 students in the 2012–13 school year and the second Texas GEAR UP implementation report (Briggs et al., 2015) focused on implementation with the Grade 8 students in the 2013–14 school year. This report focuses on implementation with Grade 9 students in the 2014–15 school year. A primary source of data for each report is data collected for the APR that reflects student participation in Texas GEAR UP SG services and events through March 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. The Texas GEAR UP SG will continue to serve the primary cohort through the seven-year grant period, which will continue through the students' first year of postsecondary education in the 2018–19 school year. Interviews with TEA and its collaborators on the grant, district ASPRs, GEAR UP federal APR data, student and parent surveys, and qualitative site visit data informed all three implementation reports. Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013) and Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015) provide additional details about the Year 1 and Year 2 findings summarized here.

### 1.2.1 Prior Years: Level and Mix of Implementation

The national GEAR UP program encourages grantees to engage in a wide range of implementation practices in order to support project objectives. The level and mix of implementation varied across schools in both Year 1 and Year 2 (see Table 1.3 for an overview of Year 1 and Year 2 implementation strategies by middle school); however, the level of implementation was higher across all schools in Year 2. In both Year 1 and Year 2, School G implemented the widest range of GEAR UP practices as intended. School A made marked progress by implementing 11 more strategies in Year 2 than in Year 1. School D struggled somewhat in Year 1 compared to other schools and continued to face challenges in Year 2 in comparison to other schools (School D implemented the lowest number of activities in Year 2). Overall, schools made excellent progress in implementing between 58% and 84% of the strategies. Across all schools, 81% of students participated in some sort of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activity when the mix included workshops/events, parent events, a college visit, or student support services in Year 1; this number rose to 99% in Year 2, reflecting remarkable progress in the extent to which Texas GEAR UP SG students receive any GEAR UP service. Schools D, E, F, and G were all on track with providing support services to at least 75% of students, a Year 2 goal for Grade 8 students.

**Table 1.3 Overview of Texas GEAR UP SG Implementation Strategies by School, Year 1 and Year 2**

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G
<b>Implementation Strategies</b> An X in a white cell indicates strategies implemented in both Year 1 and Year 2. An X in a grey-filled cell indicates strategies that schools implemented in Year 2 but not in Year 1.							
Advanced Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Algebra I Summer 2013 Support*		X			X	X	X
Student Support Services: Tutoring	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Mentoring	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Counseling/Advising	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Other Activities				X	X	X	
College Visit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Job Site Visit/Job Shadowing					X		X
Educational Field Trips*	X	X	X	X	X		
Student Workshops/Events	X	X	X		X	X	X
High School Knowledge Activity*	X		X		X		X
Parent Events	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Counseling/ Advising*						X	
Parent Event on College Preparation/Financial Aid*	X	X	X			X	X
Parent College Visit*	X	X	X		X	X	X
Parent High School Visit*	X		X				X
Teacher Professional Development <sup>a</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Alliances	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Use of Statewide Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Total Number of Strategies Implemented by Year</b>							
Year 1 (out of 12)	4	6	5	5	8	7	11
Year 2 (out of 19) based on total of X's above	15	14	15	11	16	15	16

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2014; fall 2013 and spring 2014 site visit data.

Note: An "X" indicates that a school reported implementing the strategy, although it does not capture the level of implementation (such as the number of students served) for each strategy. An asterisk (\*) notes new implementation categories captured in Year 2. Grey-filled cells are strategies that schools implemented in Year 2 but not in Year 1.

<sup>a</sup> School D did not report any vertical teaming or Texas GEAR UP SG-specific teacher professional development (PD). Schools A and C did not report providing any training on project-based learning using grant funds. In all other cases, PD provided at the school included advanced instructional strategies, vertical teaming, differentiated instruction, Texas GEAR UP SG-specific training, and project-based learning (PBL).

### 1.2.2 Prior Years: Advanced Course Taking and Student Support Services

Successful completion of Algebra I is a key early outcome measure that sets a grant project objective of having 30% of students completing Algebra I by the end of Grade 8 and 85% of students completing the course by the end of Grade 9 (Project Objective 1.1).<sup>37</sup> Grade 7 students' enrollment in an advanced mathematics course averaged 22% and ranged from 18% (School G) to 29% (School D) in Year 1; in Year 2, Grade 8 students' enrollment in an advanced mathematics course (including Algebra I) averaged 43% and ranged from 27% (Schools B and D) to 98% (School E). This reflects an overall increase in advanced course enrollment, as well as increases at the school level, although enrollment in Algebra I was slightly less than 30% at

<sup>37</sup> For a list of all Texas GEAR UP SG Project Objectives set by TEA, please see Appendix A.

four schools. At the time of the Year 2 report, data on course completion were not yet available, and, based on enrollment, it seemed unclear whether sufficient percentages of students would be prepared to complete Algebra I successfully in Grade 9. This implementation report will provide an update on course completion in Grade 8, as well as course enrollment in Grade 9, to determine overall and school-level progress toward this goal. In both prior years, schools offered supports such as enrichment programs, summer programs, and tutoring services to help students succeed in Algebra I and other advanced courses. Across all schools, 78% of Grade 8 students were involved in student support services in Year 2, in comparison to 39% in Year 1. However, some schools delivered a higher percentage of student support services than other schools.

### 1.2.3 Prior Years: Parental Engagement with Texas GEAR UP State Grant

One of the Texas GEAR UP SG project objectives is that, each year, at least 50% of parents participate in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events (Project Objective 7.3). No parent at any school attended three or more events in Year 1; in Year 2, there was some progress as 7% of parents from all schools had participated in at least three events. Schools offered more parent events in Year 2 than they did in the limited Year 1 implementation period. Parents reported minimal knowledge of the program during site visits in Year 1; however, Year 2 reflected progress in communication and outreach to encourage parents to get involved in Texas GEAR UP SG events.

Successful parent activities in prior years included a three-part series of parental engagement workshops and parental participation on college visits. In both Year 1 and Year 2, schools used flyers, personal calls or text messages, direct mail, and robocalls to build parental awareness and interest in Texas GEAR UP SG events.<sup>38</sup> Schools provided free childcare to parents and Spanish translation for parents with limited English language skills. In spite of some progress with parental involvement, Texas GEAR UP SG schools continue to struggle with identifying strategies to engage parents and continue to work toward the project objective.

### 1.2.4 Prior Years: Teacher Professional Development and Vertical Teaming

TEA has identified several project objectives related to teacher PD for Texas GEAR UP SG schools, including the following:

- All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL (Project Objective 3.1).
- Teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year (Project Objective 3.2).<sup>39</sup>

In Year 1, most Texas GEAR UP SG schools had scheduled their teacher PD activities for the 2012–13 school year prior to TEA awarding the Texas GEARUP SG in November/December 2012, and thus were not easily able to change plans to provide GEAR UP-specific teacher PD. School G was the primary exception, engaging in a broad range of teacher PD (including PBL and a vertical team meeting). Schools E and F also reported engaging in a single vertical alignment meeting in Year 1; both of these schools met the vertical alignment objective in Year 2. In Year 2, schools offered PD focused on PBL and enhancing academic rigor (such as pre-AP training); these were topics that teachers expressed an interest in during the Year 1 site visits. Other PD offered by two Texas GEAR UP SG schools in Year 2 included financial literacy

<sup>38</sup> Robocalls are automated phone messages that are used as an efficient system to send information out to a large audience.

<sup>39</sup> Vertical teams (also referred to as vertical alignment) refers to teachers from a given subject area participating in collaborative meetings in which they coordinate instruction and learning objectives across grade levels.

modules, but there were various challenges in using the material, including available time and the age-appropriateness of the content, according to site visit data.

### 1.2.5 Prior Years: Student and Parent Key Survey Findings

In Year 1, both primary cohort parents and students were surveyed in spring 2013; in Year 2, primary cohort students were surveyed in fall 2013 and spring 2014, and parents were surveyed in spring 2014. The survey results reflect the perceptions of those students and parents who completed the survey.

#### EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

The gaps between educational aspirations and expectations narrowed from Year 1 to Year 2, but both students and parents continued to have aspirations that exceeded their educational expectations, expecting the student to achieve a level of education lower than what they hoped the student would achieve. In both Year 1 and Year 2, School G, where the implementation mix was the broadest, 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% in Year 1 and 67% in Year 2). Across schools, the percentage of students selecting the same response was 38% in Year 1 and 51% in Year 2. That is, these students suggested that before Texas GEAR UP SG participation, they were not committed to attending college, but after participating in Texas GEAR UP SG they expected to do so.

#### KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COLLEGE

Evaluation survey data indicate that Texas GEAR UP SG is serving schools where the parents and students generally report that they do not perceive themselves to be extremely knowledgeable about postsecondary education. On various college-related terms, parents and students were asked to rate their knowledge by selecting *no knowledge*, *slightly knowledgeable*, *knowledgeable*, and *extremely knowledgeable*. In both prior years, the average level of student-reported knowledge was higher than the average level of parent-reported knowledge in two areas: the general requirements for college acceptance and the importance/benefit of college. Students' and parents' knowledge about the ACT or SAT was *slightly knowledgeable*, on average.

#### FINANCIAL UNDERSTANDING OF COLLEGE

Parents, on average, considered themselves to be only slightly knowledgeable about college-related financial terms. In addition to limited knowledge, parents (69%) and students (93%) expressed at least some concern about being able to afford college.<sup>40</sup> While Texas GEAR UP SG cannot influence the actual cost of college, it can provide parents and students with better information regarding actual costs and the financial supports available to assist in paying for college, including scholarships and loans.

Across schools and in both prior years, the students who do not plan to go to college selected *concerns about cost* as a main reason for not continuing on to postsecondary education, although the percentage of students selecting that reason was lower in Year 2 (48% in Year 1 and 39% in Year 2).<sup>41</sup> In Year 1, 25% of parents and 12% of students indicated that they have *no knowledge* regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of their child pursuing postsecondary education. This was higher in Year 2: 31% of parents and 28% of students reported having *no knowledge* regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of pursuing

<sup>40</sup> These percentages reflect all parents/students responding to the question about 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.

<sup>41</sup> These changes were statistically significant. Additional details are provided in Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015).

postsecondary education. In general, there is low knowledge and high interest regarding strategies for paying for college. Efforts to increase parents' and students' knowledge of the financial aspects of college, such as specific financial aid terms and the actual costs of attending, remains a potential area of focus for Texas GEAR UP SG schools.

### 1.2.6 Prior Years: Key Facilitators and Barriers

Facilitators and barriers to implementation were identified from the full range of data sources. Those associated with key successes or challenges in Year 1 and Year 2 are identified here.

#### TEXAS GEAR UP SG STAFF

In Year 1, the presence of a Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator with a high level of time commitment facilitated implementation in three schools (Schools E, F, and G). At the remaining four schools, all with lower levels of implementation, the coordinator was responsible for a range of other programs or for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation at more than one school. In Year 2, a primary facilitator to Texas GEAR UP SG implementation was the addition of College Preparation Advisors (one assigned to each school).

#### SUPPORT FROM ADMINISTRATORS

In both Year 1 and Year 2, the success of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation hinged on the extent to which school and district administrators supported the program. In Year 2, Texas GEAR UP SG staff at one school reported that services and implementation activities were delayed and, in some cases, eliminated due to the local approval processes that staff needed to navigate prior to implementing the activities. Another school experienced initial resistance from school administrators regarding the TG financial literacy modules, but a new school administrator allowed Texas GEAR UP SG staff to plan an assembly to present the TG curriculum to students.<sup>42</sup>

#### PARENTS' PERCEIVED FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS IN PRIOR YEARS

In both Year 1 and Year 2, the most common practice that encouraged parental participation in Texas GEAR UP SG was encouragement from their child, according to those parents who completed the survey. The most common barrier reported by parents was time/schedule conflicts; this was the case in both prior years.

## 1.3 Evaluation Objectives, Research Questions, and Project Objectives

### 1.3.1 Year 3 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:

- Providing TEA with regular, formative feedback regarding implementation of the program, including memos within 30 days of completion of each data collection.
- Understanding relationships among Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, the timing of implementation, and the implementation dosage on Texas GEAR UP SG outcomes.
- Describing opportunities provided through Texas GEAR UP SG at the statewide level.
- Identifying facilitators and barriers to Texas GEAR UP SG implementation.
- Identifying potential Texas GEAR UP SG promising practices and any possible correction in needed areas of program implementation.
- Evaluating the impact of Texas GEAR UP SG from a cost and sustainability perspective.

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<sup>42</sup> See <http://www.tgslc.org/financial-education/> for additional information about TG's efforts to educate students about financial aspects associated with postsecondary education attendance.

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 alliance outcomes.

As in prior years, the Year 3 implementation report focuses primarily on feedback regarding early implementation and any initial indication of promising practices. In the context of these objectives, this 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 project objectives of Texas GEAR UP SG are being met (see Appendix A). Overarching evaluation questions addressed in this report include the following:

- How was Texas GEAR UP SG implemented overall and at each of the six participating schools? To what extent does implementation change over time?
- What were the perceptions of students, parents, teachers, and school staffs of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation?
- What facilitators and barriers were associated with the implementation of strategies?
- What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by grantees (students, parents, and 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 information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been the most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness? To what extent have these perceptions changed in Year 3? How many collaborations have schools formed with business alliances, government entities, and community groups? What are the perceptions of those collaborations?
- In what ways and how often have collaborating organizations offered opportunities for career exploration to students or information about scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness and readiness?
- What types of information regarding college readiness have been made available through the state? What steps, if any, has the state office taken to communicate to schools and families about the information available?
- For what services and activities do grantees use grant funds each year and over the entire period of the grant?
- To what extent were grantees able to secure matching funds?
- For what services and activities do grantees use matching funds each year and over the entire period of the grant?
- How did schools budget for Texas GEAR UP SG?  
To what extent are grantees able to sustain activities initiated with the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort with follow-on cohorts of students?

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

- How are implementation and outcomes related to one another? Are certain dosages of implementation associated with more successful outcomes? Are there 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 primary cohort students differ from the retrospective and follow-on cohorts?

- How do trends in outcomes at the Texas GEAR UP SG schools differ in comparison to the state average and/or the comparison group schools?<sup>43</sup>
- 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 the 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 Algebra I in Grade 8 or in Grade 9)?
- What is the impact of Texas GEAR UP SG on families, schools, and community alliances? What is the impact on statewide access to information and strategies?
- What is the cost of providing Texas GEAR UP SG at the school and state levels? To what extent are grantees able to sustain implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG with follow-on cohorts of students beyond the primary cohort? What facilitators/barriers do grantees face in sustaining implementation?<sup>44</sup>

### 1.3.2 Year 3 Project Objectives

This report includes findings aligned to the project goals and objectives set by TEA (see Appendix A for a full list). Relevant project objectives emphasized in this report include the following:

- Project Objective 1.1: By the end of the project's second year, 30% of cohort students will have completed Algebra I in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. By the end of the project's third year, 85% of students will have completed Algebra I.
- 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 3.1: All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL.
- Project Objective 3.2: Teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.
- Project Objective 4.1: By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the 8<sup>th</sup> 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 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, the necessary academic preparation for college.
- 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.

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<sup>43</sup> Comparison groups will be selected through propensity score matching for the upcoming comprehensive report.

<sup>44</sup> The 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.

- 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 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.

In addition, there are several near-term objectives relevant to Year 3 Texas GEAR UP SG implementation to some extent. These objectives are referenced as appropriate and will take on a more prominent focus in forthcoming implementation reports. Near-term objectives are as follows:

- Project Objective 1.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Plan plus Endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average.
- Projective 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 Objective 5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT.<sup>[1]</sup> 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.

## 1.4 Evaluation Design and Methods

The Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation utilizes a longitudinal design to evaluate the Texas GEAR UP SG over the seven years of the program and examine change over time in the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort of students.<sup>45</sup> In addition, a quasi-experimental design is being used to compare outcomes for students in Texas GEAR UP SG schools to outcomes for students in comparable schools. Throughout the evaluation, there is a mixed-methods approach; that is, both quantitative and qualitative data were and will be collected and examined. Data collected by TEA will be used whenever possible (e.g., STAAR results). APR data submitted by the schools regarding Texas GEAR UP SG provision of student support services, student and parent workshops/events, teacher PD, and community alliance activities were and will continue to be a primary source of implementation data, supplemented by data collected during fall and spring site visits to each school. In addition, student 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 analyses. Appendix C provides an overview of the data submitted to the APR, and Appendix D contains copies of all surveys and site visit

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<sup>[1]</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG initially indicated a goal aligned with students taking ACT PLAN by the end of project's fourth year. However, ACT has replaced PLAN with ACT Aspire. Similarly, the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) has been replaced by the PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT) and PSAT 10.

<sup>45</sup> The primary 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).

protocols. Appendix E provides detailed summaries of the site visits conducted in fall 2014 and spring 2015.

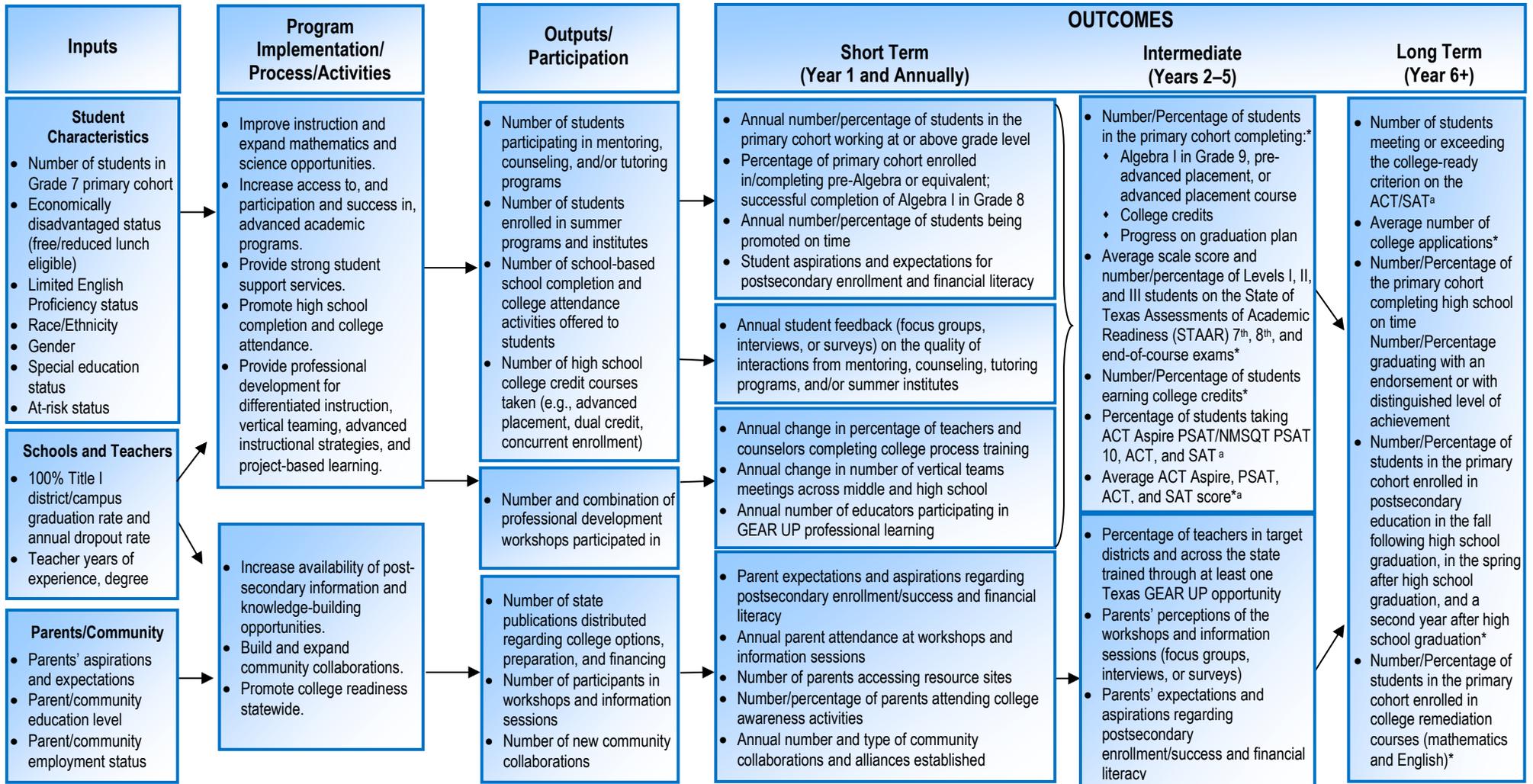
### 1.4.1 Logic Model

The evaluation design depicts how change is conceptualized to occur via the Texas GEAR UP SG (see Figure 1.2). The logic model maps 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 the existing conditions that the students, parents, and schools bring with them as they begin participation in the Texas GEAR UP SG. Many of these inputs 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; also included is the development of materials for statewide distribution. Outputs related to levels of participation are the extent to which individual students, parents, and teachers actually participate in such activities and the patterns of participation. Understanding what activities are implemented and the trends in participation are critical to understanding the potential effect of such participation on outcomes.

Several outcomes of the project will be measured annually to establish changes in trends related to Texas GEAR UP SG activities. For example, students' educational aspirations and expectations will be measured each year to understand changes over the course of the grant period. 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 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 9, are anticipated to affect eventual long-term outcomes (e.g., enrollment in courses earning college credit 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 effects 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 results, grade-level performance, and so forth. 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.

<sup>a</sup> PSAT is the Preliminary SAT. ACT Aspire is the pre-ACT test. SAT and ACT are tests used for college admission.

## 1.5 Overview of Report

This annual implementation report addresses the evaluation objectives with respect to Year 3 implementation activities. Information regarding the third year of implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, including summer 2014 and the 2014–15 school year, is found in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides findings from Year 3 (fall 2014 and spring 2015 with relevant references to prior year data) 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 2 budgets and expenditures as well as Year 3 budgets. A summary of findings, along with actionable recommendations, including potential promising practices for TEA, are provided in Chapter 5. Appendix E provides detailed case studies for each of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools/districts. In reporting findings, school and district names have been masked using the letters and numbers, respectively.

### 1.5.1 Next Steps in the Evaluation

As noted, a key limitation of the annual implementation reports is that they are based on incomplete data for the year. Districts provided APR data only through March 31 of each year for the purposes of the report. Given this limitation, caution is urged in interpreting the findings. Additional information related to implementation and outcomes will be included in a future report, following the receipt and analysis of additional data.

#### OUTCOME DATA

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 results). The forthcoming comprehensive report provides detailed analyses on Grade 8 outcomes and connects Grade 7 and Grade 8 implementation to Grade 8 outcomes. Future comprehensive reports will provide high school outcomes and examine the relationship between implementation and these outcomes. While this report focuses primarily on implementation it includes some early outcomes, such as course completion.

#### NEXT STEPS

TEA will publish annual implementation reports each year. ICF will prepare a comprehensive report that includes an examination of all activities conducted to date, key impact findings to date, interpretations of these findings, and cost and sustainability analyses. The first comprehensive report will also include spotlight analyses about students' transition from middle school to high school. Additional comprehensive reports will be submitted in January 2017 (through the 2015–16 school year) and January 2019 (through the 2017–18 school year).

The chapter that follows examines the implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, overall and across schools, based on data from documents, the APR, and site visits.



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

This chapter focuses on implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, overall and comparatively, across the six participating high schools in four districts. It is based on analysis of program documents, data submitted for the APR (April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015, including summer 2014), and data from site visits (conducted in fall 2014 and again in spring 2015). Implementation findings are presented in the context of the federal GEAR UP recommendations for the types of implementation activities that schools should engage in to support GEAR UP goals. The following evaluation questions related to implementation are addressed in this chapter:

- How was the Texas GEAR UP SG implemented overall and at each of the participating schools?
- What are the perceptions of students, parents, and staff regarding student support services implementation strategies?
- What facilitators and barriers were associated with the implementation of the strategies?
- What practices implemented by districts are perceived by students, parents, and staffs to be effective, and therefore a potential best practice?

Year 3 findings are compared to prior findings (reported in Annual Implementation Report #1, O'Donnell et al., 2013, and Annual Implementation Report #2, Briggs et al., 2015) only descriptively. As noted in Chapter 1, Year 3 implementation is the first year of Texas GEAR UP implementation in high schools. Therefore, in many cases, change between Year 2 and Year 3 implementation may be due in part to this change in context. Tables with additional details on the findings reported here, including the levels of statistical significance, can be found in Appendix F.<sup>46</sup> The forthcoming comprehensive evaluation report includes additional findings on the level of implementation across the first two years, along with analyses of the relationships between implementation and outcomes.

At this point in the evaluation, signs of progress on the following Texas GEAR UP SG goals and project objectives are of particular interest in relation to the implementation to date:<sup>47</sup>

- **Algebra I.** By the end of the project's second year, 30% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary 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.
- **Progress Toward High School Graduation and College Readiness.** By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average. 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. By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10.<sup>48</sup> By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP

<sup>46</sup> In using the term *significant* to discuss differences in this chapter,  $p < .05$  was the minimum cut point for both types of significance testing (chi-square and F-test). This significance level means that, statistically, there is only a 5% chance that the amount of difference occurred due to chance alone.

<sup>47</sup> A list of all project goals and objectives is provided in Appendix A.

<sup>48</sup> ACT Aspire is the preliminary ACT and PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 are preliminary to the SAT. PSAT 8/9 is also a preliminary SAT and will be tracked in the data although it is not explicitly meeting the project objective. PSAT 8/9 is taken by students in Grade 8 or Grade 9 (see <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-8-9> for additional information). PSAT/NMSQT is offered in October and is used to determine if students will qualify for a National Merit Scholarship. The PSAT 10 is the same test as the PSAT/NMSQT but is offered in February/March and is not used to qualify for a

students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college. By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT. By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Program with an endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average.<sup>49</sup>

- **Advanced Course and Pre-Advanced Placement (AP)/AP Course Taking.**<sup>50</sup> By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort, including LEP students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course. 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.
- **Strong Student Support Services.** By the end of the second year, at least 75% of students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on the results of teacher/counselor input and/or 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 primary cohort students and their parents. Each year, at least 50% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort parents, including parents of current and former LEP students, will attend at least three college awareness activities.
- **Summer Programs.** 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.
- **Teacher Professional Development.** In each grant year, all core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training with regard to differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL.
- **Vertical Teaming.** In each grant year, teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation.
- **Community Alliances.** 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 GEAR UP Support Center will make information about college options, preparation, and financing available to students, parents, and educators throughout the state.

## 2.1 Services Planning and Program Leadership at Schools

ASPRs from the four districts outlined processes for planning student services, PD, family outreach, an advisory council, and communication plans at the six Texas GEAR UP SG high schools. Table 2.1 summarizes examples of those processes across all four districts. Planning is of interest because the districts and their participating schools are unlikely to be successful, particularly at reaching long-term goals, if planning does not occur. Planned Year 3 implementation activities included enhanced processes to identify students for services such as more frequent reviews of student data, expanded use of teacher input, and added staff to

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National Merit Scholarship. See <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10> for additional information on the PSAT tests. See <http://www.discoveractaspire.org/> for additional information on the ACT Aspire.

<sup>49</sup> TEA revised this project objective based on changes in the state graduation plan associated with HB 5.

<sup>50</sup> Schools self-determined whether a course was considered to be 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 to be advanced. Algebra I, by definition, is considered to be above grade level when completed in Grade 8.

communicate student needs (intervention specialists and attendance clerks). Expanded planning efforts in Year 3 related to PD included the use of teacher observations to inform training needs and intentional connections to improvement plans. Linking Texas GEAR UP SG practices to improvement plans may be a step toward being able to sustain the practices initiated through Texas GEAR UP SG by embedding PD into existing school/district priorities.

**Table 2.1. Examples of Year 3 Planning Processes by Service Area, 2014–15**

Service Area	Planning Processes
Student Services	<p><i>Frequency and process for identifying students for services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Quarterly review of student progress toward Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and College and Career Readiness Standards to determine individual students' intervention needs based on the district review process</li> <li>▪ Weekly recommendations from teachers</li> <li>▪ Five to eight times per year using student data: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness® (STAAR), STAAR® End-of-Course (EOC), Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) benchmark assessments, grades, attendance, and office referrals, as well as planning with Texas GEAR UP staff, teachers, administrators, intervention specialists, and attendance clerks</li> <li>▪ Every three weeks, the GEAR UP coordinator, campus administrators, counselors, advisors, and teachers plan student services based on various data (e.g., progress reports, formative assessments, parental feedback)</li> </ul>
Professional Development	<p><i>Processes to determine teacher needs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data-driven decisions on district needs using STAAR, STAAR EOC, TELPAS, and curriculum-based assessments</li> <li>▪ Faculty needs assessments</li> <li>▪ Teacher observations by campus/district administrators and instructional facilitators</li> <li>▪ Analysis of counseling/advising records</li> <li>▪ District/campus improvement plans</li> </ul> <p><i>Priority focus</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adoption of a new curriculum (mathematics and science)</li> <li>▪ Implementation of new strategies: Student, Strategies, Success (S3 Strategies) in social studies<sup>a</sup>; sheltered instruction (integration of language and content) to support English Language Learners; and Achieve3000® (cloud-based daily differentiated nonfiction reading and writing instruction)<sup>b</sup></li> <li>▪ Continuation of efforts to increase rigor, align content vertically, utilize project-based learning, and integrate technology</li> </ul>
Family Outreach	<p><i>Strategies to increase parental involvement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaboration with the district parental engagement coordinator and campus parent liaisons</li> <li>▪ Support and resources from the Support Center's Parent and Community Engagement Coordinator</li> <li>▪ Use of various communication tools: flyers/brochures, newsletters, meetings/orientations, district and campus websites, postcards/mailers, social media, personal phone calls, and home visits</li> </ul>
Advisory Council	<p><i>Process for soliciting participation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nominations based on staff</li> <li>▪ Posted dates in central office and campus offices</li> <li>▪ Notification in community bulletin</li> </ul> <p><i>Purpose/Topics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase stakeholder cooperation to ensure sustainability.</li> <li>▪ Review grant requirements/initiatives and implementation progress.</li> <li>▪ Brainstorm parental involvement strategies.</li> <li>▪ Conduct strategic planning for the upcoming school year.</li> </ul>

Service Area	Planning Processes
Communication Plan	<p><i>Continuation of prior strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ District and campus websites</li> <li>▪ Print media (e.g., newsletters, brochures, flyers)</li> <li>▪ Email</li> <li>▪ Phone calls</li> </ul> <p><i>New approaches</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Announcements at school board meetings</li> <li>▪ Updates at principals/directors' meetings</li> <li>▪ Personal interaction through the parent liaison</li> </ul>

<sup>a</sup> S3 Strategies is a professional development provider who offers workshops to districts to improve teaching and learning in social studies classes. Additional details about the program are available at <http://www.s3strategies.net/aboutus.html>.

<sup>b</sup> Achieve3000 provides students with online differentiation based on students' Lexile® reading levels. Additional details about this program are available at <https://www.achieve3000.com>.

One district included plans to use the Support Center's Parent and Community Engagement Coordinator to inform their approach to family outreach, a practice other districts might want to consider if they have not already used that resource. Social media was a new practice added in ASPRs for Year 3. Although most of the planning related to the advisory council was similar to prior years, one added strategy was soliciting participation on the council through a community bulletin. New activities in Year 3 related to communication included making announcements at school board meetings and providing updates at principals/directors' meetings. Staff in this district hoped that both of these communication approaches could help bolster wider awareness of the need for, and the impact of, activities implemented through Texas GEAR UP SG and perhaps spark momentum in continuing those practices in the long term.

A comparison of plans for sustainability showed no change in the ASPRs from one year to the next for three of the districts. A fourth district did not have a sustainability component in their ASPR. However, there were some findings from site visits about sustainability planning. Administrators from High School J reported already having met with local universities to begin identifying ways to sustain programs with them after Texas GEAR UP SG ends. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at this school also explained how improving the college readiness culture is sustainable in that it becomes "embedded in the whole school" and can continue after the cohort graduates. School administrators at High Schools H and I were focused on improving curriculum and teacher training, explaining that "once the teacher is well-trained, once a curriculum is well-developed," then those skills and resources will be retained after the cohort moves on to the next grade. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School M reported working toward sustainability with regard to the mentoring services by looking to juniors and seniors to mentor the younger students. However, it remained important for Texas GEAR UP SG staff and TEA to plan ahead for the ways that program activities can continue once the funding for GEAR UP ends by formalizing these ideas in the ASPRs. More detailed plans in the ASPR sustainability field in forthcoming years will help to address the sustainability evaluation question (To what extent are grantees able to sustain activities initiated with the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort with follow-on cohorts of students?).

Site visit data provided further information about these aspects of Texas GEAR UP SG planning. At District 3, Texas GEAR UP SG staff were able to double their GEAR UP advisory council, to around 15 members. The advisory council was primarily comprised of local business owners, as well as other community stakeholders, such as the city manager and mayor. It functioned as an open dialogue in which members discussed their ideas for increasing parental involvement, community services opportunities, and other projects they are planning. The advisory council created a space for community members to work together and play a role in

achieving program goals. Given the somewhat rural nature of the community this district is located in, opportunities such as this were described as rare for the council members.

### 2.1.1 Introducing the Texas GEAR UP State Grant to the School Community

As reported in Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013) and Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015), the levels of visibility or awareness of the Texas GEAR UP SG among teachers, parents, students, and administrators varied across schools. With Year 3 as the first year of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation at each of the six high schools, new efforts were needed to introduce Texas GEAR UP SG to the school community. Site visits were the primary source of information about strategies that Texas GEAR UP SG implemented to increase awareness of the program.

There were varying degrees of teacher awareness of Texas GEAR UP SG; generally, those who taught the Grade 9 cohort were more familiar with the grant's goals as compared to teachers of other grades. At High School I, for example, one teacher described having regular interaction with Texas GEAR UP SG staff, saying that "I'm with all freshmen ... so we frequently have interactions, if not every week." Teachers from High Schools H, I, and J knew Texas GEAR UP SG primarily from Texas GEAR UP SG PD and tutoring. Parents having a greater understanding of the grant and its goals were appreciative of how the grant had been with their student since Grade 7. In some cases, parents had an awareness of Texas GEAR UP SG through their experiences with college visits (High School J). Another parent from High School M reported that her buy-in to the program increased as she witnessed her student's outlook change as a result, saying that her child "is getting more focused and more goal-oriented than she was before ... [and] that's why I'm making the effort" to be a part of Texas GEAR UP SG. Students from High School M explained that their awareness of Texas GEAR UP SG has increased over the years as they began to receive more one-on-one time with Texas GEAR UP SG staff to discuss grades, career interests, and classes.

Given that there are multiple stakeholders for the Texas GEAR UP SG at the district and school levels, including students and parents, the Texas GEAR UP SG program would benefit from greater visibility within each school. If program leaders in each school continue to incorporate additional communication strategies, it is likely that all stakeholders will become more aware of the Texas GEAR UP SG program and its goals. As one teacher suggested, it will be important to expose teachers from the grade above the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort (Grade 11 teachers in Year 4) to prepare them for working with the program in the coming year.

### 2.1.2 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Staff

As described in Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015), Texas GEAR UP SG staff include coordinators and College Preparation Advisors. Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators' responsibilities in Year 3 were similar to that of prior years and included the following: planning and implementing activities for students and events for parents, coordinating with collaborators, liaising with school and district personnel to deliver programming, collecting data to input into the student tracking data system, and coordinating activities with College Preparation Advisors. Added in Year 2 to support program implementation, College Preparation Advisors were hired to engage directly with students, including individual interactions and class- or cohort-wide informational sessions.

In Year 3, three Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators remained in their roles and one individual was new to the position. During interviews and focus groups, most teachers, administrators, and College Preparation Advisors indicated general satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators and their work. However, some individuals mentioned that coordinators should

take on more responsibility for planning and implementing activities to allow College Preparation Advisors to focus more on their responsibilities for one-on-one interactions with students. TEA should work with the Support Center to offer Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators training or guidance as to what their roles and responsibilities should be and establish mechanisms for accountability to ensure that such guidance is followed.

All seven College Preparation Advisors continued to work with the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort in the high school setting in Year 3. With one district going from three middle schools to two high schools, the district kept all three College Preparation Advisors (one at each school and the third splitting time between the two schools). Site visit data illuminated more specific details about the role that College Preparation Advisors played in implementing Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 3. In facilitating one-on-one meetings with students, communicating issues, or asking questions as they arose, College Preparation Advisors reported that it was helpful to be located within close proximity of other Texas GEAR UP SG staff or school counselors to share ideas and troubleshoot issues. College Preparation Advisors at three schools (High Schools J, K, and M) all reported having provided more one-on-one advising to students during the spring semester in comparison to the fall semester. These advising sessions included discussions about financial aid, graduation plans, college and career plans, volunteer opportunities, and summer programs. According to the College Preparation Advisor from High School J, strong relationships with teachers helped provide the necessary access to meet with students one-on-one or conduct in-class presentations. On the other hand, College Preparation Advisors at High Schools H and I reported minimal opportunity for one-on-one advising with students unless there was a need for specific interventions; this situation required College Preparation Advisors to meet with students before school, during lunch periods, and after school.

College Preparation Advisors from four high schools (High Schools H, I, J, and K) reported a lack of clarity in what their role was supposed to be because at times they were advising students and at other times they were expected to plan and implement grant activities. In other cases, College Preparation Advisors spent a large portion of time entering data about program participation. The College Preparation Advisor at High School M, on the other hand, seemed to have a more defined role of working directly with students on tasks such as students' class schedules to ensure that students were enrolled in appropriate classes that are aligned with their endorsement tracks. Additional feedback from students (based on surveys) about their interactions with College Preparation Advisors is included in Chapter 3.

## 2.2 Student Progress Toward High School Graduation and College Readiness

Given that the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort entered Grade 9 in Year 3, progress toward graduation became a more pressing priority (see Table F.1, Appendix F for student demographic data). This section provides available implementation data related to the following project objectives:

- Project Objective 1.1: By the end of the project's second year, 30% of cohort students will have completed Algebra I in the 8<sup>th</sup> 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 Foundation High School Plan plus Endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average.
- 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 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 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, the necessary academic preparation for college.
- Project Objective 5.1: By the end of the project’s fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT.<sup>[1]</sup> 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.

### 2.2.1 Student Enrollment in and Completion of Advanced Courses

Enrollment in advanced courses is a benchmark toward accomplishing the aforementioned project objectives, assuming that the Grade 9 students stayed enrolled in for the remainder of the school year and successfully completed their advanced course. Just over half of the Texas GEAR UP SG Grade 9 primary cohort students (56%) were enrolled in at least one advanced course during the 2014–15 school year (as shown in the dot plot in Figure 2.1). This was an increase of two percentage points from the enrollment of Grade 8 primary cohort students in advanced courses during the 2013–14 school year (54%).<sup>51</sup>

Most notable however, is that in Year 3, 24% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses, an increase of 14 percentage points from 2013–14 (10%). In the first year of Texas GEAR UP SG, no students were enrolled in four advanced courses. In 2014–15, among all students (n=2,155), the highest percentage of students were enrolled in four advanced courses (24%). Comparatively, in 2013–14, among all students (n=1,924), most students (30%) were only enrolled in one advanced course (Table F.2, Appendix F). Although enrollment in advanced courses was relatively high, fewer students enrolled in AP or pre-AP courses (32%; range of 30% to 87% by school), a percentage expected to increase as students progress through high school and have more AP courses available to them.<sup>52</sup> Site visit participants, especially those from High Schools H and I, said that students were becoming part of the college-going culture by participating in more AP courses.

Efforts from Texas GEAR UP SG staff to encourage enrollment in advanced courses, tutoring, and summer programs to support academic preparation for those courses, and increased course availability in high schools may have all contributed to this increase. These percentages appear to demonstrate progress toward achieving Project Objective 2.1 (By the end of the

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[1] Texas GEAR UP SG initially indicated a goal aligned with students taking ACT PLAN by the end of project’s fourth year. However, ACT has replaced PLAN with ACT Aspire. Similarly, the PSAT has been replaced by the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10.

<sup>51</sup> Sub-recipients were advised 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., Pre-AP Social Studies, Spanish I). Advanced mathematics courses included Algebra I in Grade 8, as well as courses like Pre-AP Algebra. 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 the numbers presented in the figure due to rounding.

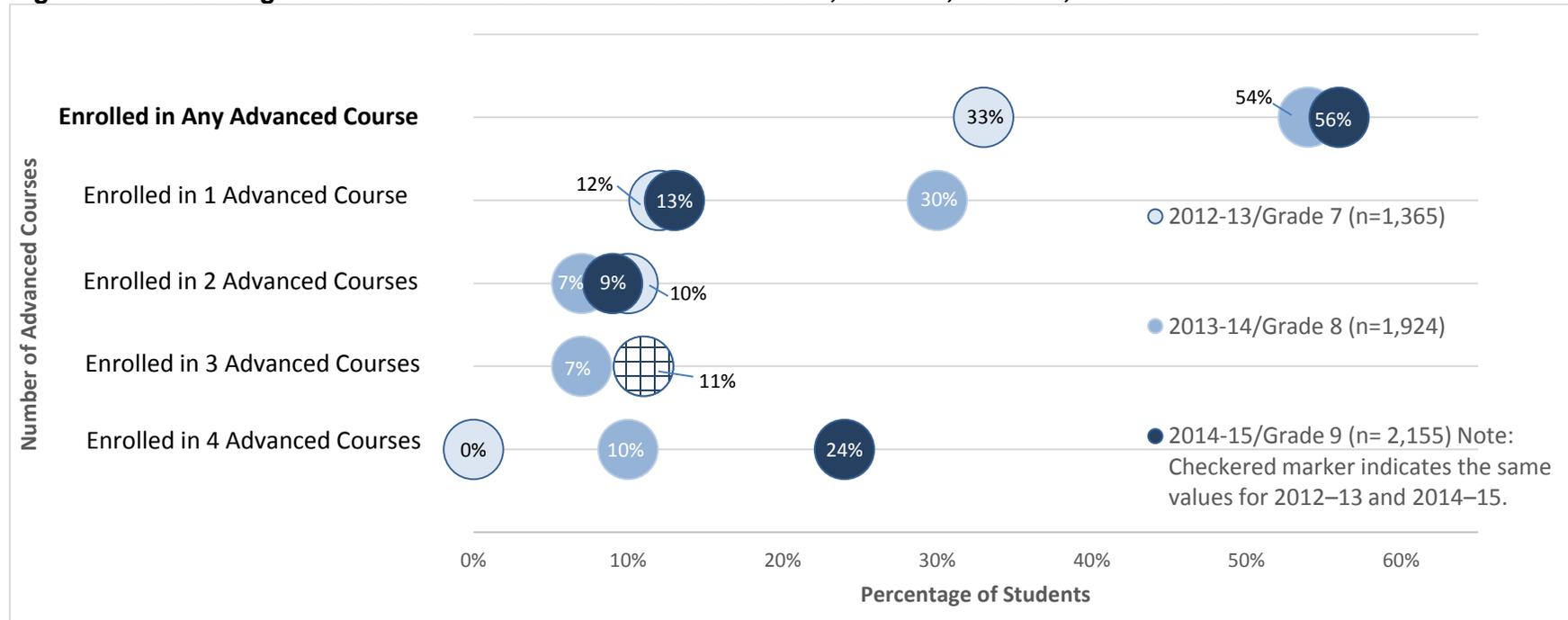
<sup>52</sup> School L indicated 87% of Grade 9 students were enrolled in a pre-AP or AP course and was the only school currently on track to meet Project Objective 2.2 of 60% of students completing an AP course.

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) and Project Objective 2.2 (60% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students successfully completing a pre-AP or AP course [i.e., advanced course] by the end of Year 5 of the grant).<sup>53</sup> However, schools will need to enroll a higher percentage of students in advanced courses in forthcoming years in order to reach that goal by targeting efforts toward the 44% of students who were not enrolled in an advanced course in Grade 9. Collaboration between Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school guidance counselors is a recommended step toward this end.

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<sup>53</sup> Determining progress towards 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) will be based on completion data, which was not available at the time of this report. Taking a pre-AP or AP course is a marker towards this goal, but some students may take AP exams without completing the course. Final determination of Project Objective 2.2 achievement will be based on AP exam scores and dual credit completion.

**Figure 2.1. Percentage of Students Enrolled in Advanced Courses, 2012–13, 2013–14, and 2014–15**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2013, March 31, 2014, and March 31, 2015.  
 Note: Checkered marker indicates the same values for 2012–13 and 2014–15.

### ADVANCED COURSE ENROLLMENT BY CONTENT AREA

Exploring Grade 9 student enrollment in advanced courses by content area was another way to gauge progress toward completing pre-AP/AP (advanced) courses (Project Objective 2.2). In Grade 9, more students enrolled in advanced mathematics than in other content areas.<sup>54</sup> This was consistent with prior years (Tables F.3 and F.4, Appendix F). In Year 3, across all schools, 45% of Grade 9 students were enrolled in an advanced mathematics course, 39% were enrolled in an advanced ELA course, 38% were enrolled in an advanced science course, and 35% were enrolled in an advanced social studies course.

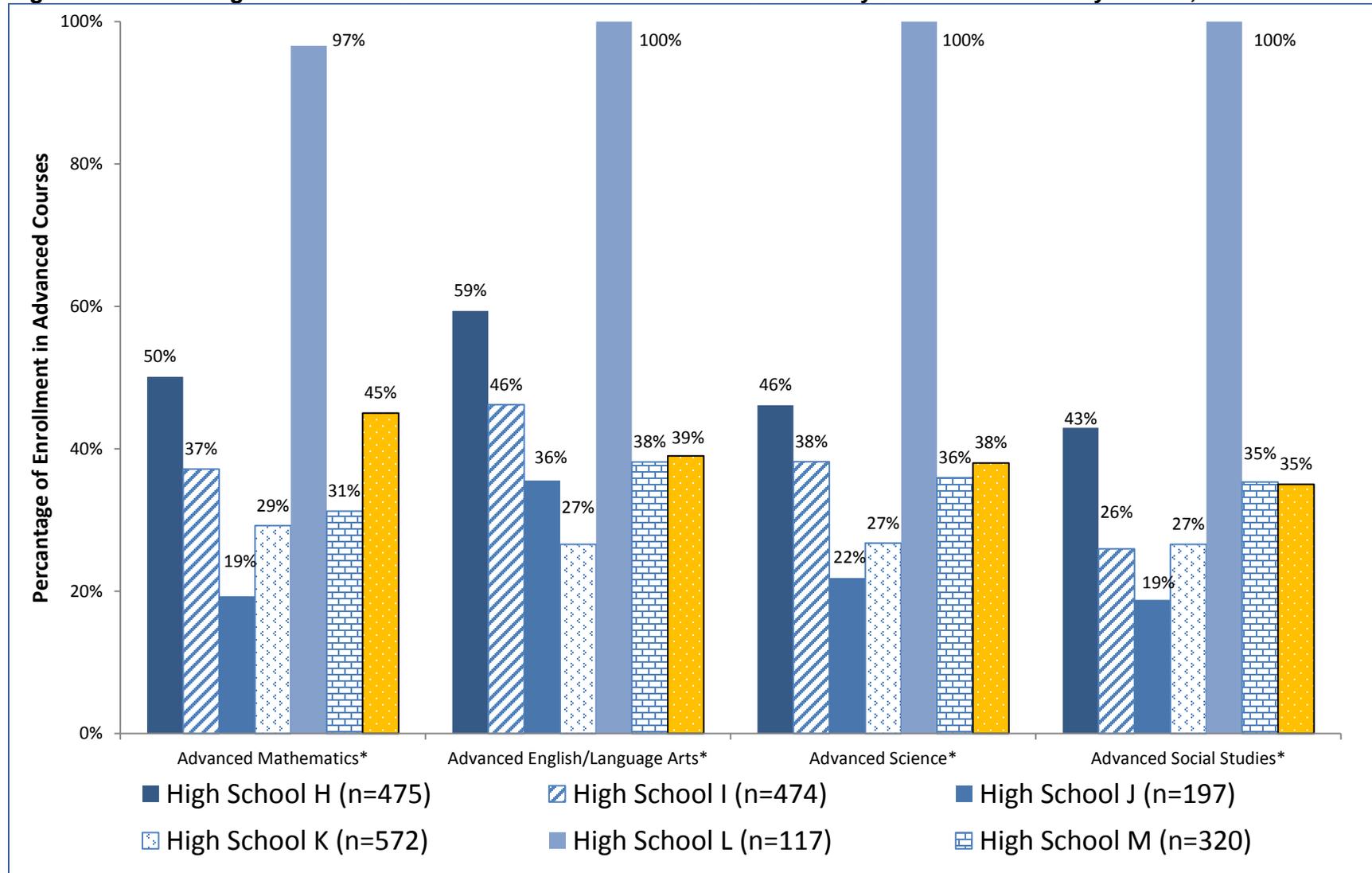
Figure 2.2 provides details about enrollment in advanced coursework by content area and by school. Findings regarding Grade 9 student enrollment in each content area are discussed after Figure 2.2. Enrollment in advanced mathematics, advanced ELA, advanced science, and advanced social studies each varied significantly by school.<sup>55</sup> High School J had the lowest enrollment in advanced courses in all content areas except ELA where High School K had the lowest enrollment. High School L had the highest enrollment in advanced courses with almost all students enrolled in advanced courses across subjects.

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<sup>54</sup> In Grade 9, enrollment in Algebra II or Geometry was considered to be advanced (above grade level). Advanced mathematics also includes students enrolled in a pre-AP or AP course.

<sup>55</sup> Mathematics:  $\chi^2(5) = 252.5$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(5) = 274.9$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(5) = 256.1$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Social Studies  $\chi^2(5) = 289.5$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

**Figure 2.2. Percentages of Grade 9 Students Enrolled in Advanced Courses by Content Area and by School, 2014–15**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2015.

\* Percentage of enrollment was significantly different across schools for each subject area. Mathematics:  $\chi^2(5) = 252.5, p < .001$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(5) = 274.9, p < .001$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(5) = 256.1, p < .001$ ; Social Studies:  $\chi^2(5) = 289.5, p < .001$ .

**Advanced Mathematics.** On average, across all schools, 45% of Grade 9 students were enrolled in advanced mathematics (including Pre-AP Algebra I, Algebra II, or Geometry), an increase from Year 2 when 43% of Grade 8 students were enrolled in what was considered advanced mathematics for Grade 8 students.<sup>56</sup> Student enrollment in advanced mathematics in Grade 9 ranged widely from a low of 19% at High School J to a high of 97% at High School L. Students completing an advanced mathematics course will be included in future reports when discussing meeting achievement on Project Objective 2.2.

In Year 3, 92% of Grade 9 students were either currently enrolled (61%) or had already completed Algebra I (31%). Overall, the Texas GEAR UP SG schools, although not all individual schools, are on track for Project Objective 1.1 to have 85% of students complete Algebra I in Grade 9.<sup>57</sup> Algebra I completion will be discussed based on completion rather than enrollment in future comprehensive reports.

As an indicator of students who are on the path toward obtaining a distinguished level of achievement (Project Objective 1.2), 8% of Grade 9 students were enrolled in Algebra II (details about the distinguished level of achievement are included in Section 1.1.2). Of students enrolled in Algebra I in Year 2 and still in the cohort in Year 3 ( $n = 552$ ), 28% were enrolled in Algebra II in Year 3. That is, Grade 8 Algebra I enrollment in Year 2 led to enrollment in Algebra II in Year 3 for some students.<sup>58</sup> Only High Schools K and L had students enrolled in Algebra II in Grade 9 (19% and 50%, respectively).

As participants described during site visits, District 3 is working to sustain the success of students in advanced mathematics courses started through Texas GEAR UP SG with all students currently in Grade 8 (i.e., one year behind the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort) taking Algebra I. Those interviewed in the remaining Districts were not able to report on sustainability associated with completion of Algebra I in Grade 8.

**Advanced English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies.** Schools differed significantly in the percentages of students enrolled in advanced courses in each of the remaining content areas (Figure 2.2). Direct school comparisons over time are not possible given that Year 3 of Texas GEAR UP SG occurred as students transitioned into high school. However, it is important to note that in Year 2, two middle schools had no or few students enrolled in advanced courses other than advanced mathematics. In Year 3, all high schools had at least 19% of students enrolled in each subject area. High School L had 97% of students in advanced mathematics and 100% of students in each of the other subject areas (ELA, science, and social studies). High School H had nearly half of students enrolled in advanced courses for most subjects (50% for mathematics, 59% for ELA, 46% for science, and 43% for social studies).

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<sup>56</sup> In the forthcoming comprehensive reports, the percentage of Grade 8 students who completed Algebra I will be based on the Grade 8 cohort, while the percentage of Grade 9 students who completed Algebra I will be based on the Grade 9 cohort. To achieve the 85% rate, the percentage of Grade 9 students who completed Algebra I in Grade 8 will be added to those who completed the course Grade 9. As noted in Section 1.1.4, approximately 30% of Grade 9 students did not attend a Texas GEAR UP SG middle school so the Grade 8 and Grade 9 cohorts include different students.

<sup>57</sup> At High School H, only 83% of students were enrolled in or had already completed Algebra I meaning that even if all students passed Algebra I in Grade 9, they would not meet the objective. At High School I, only 86% of students were enrolled in or had already completed Algebra I meaning that nearly all students enrolled in Grade 9 would need to pass the course to meet the objective. All other schools had 94% or more of students enrolled in or having already completed Algebra I.

<sup>58</sup> Although data on Algebra II is most important in the context of distinguished level of achievement, some students were enrolled in Geometry instead. Of all Grade 9 students enrolled in Algebra I in Year 2 ( $n = 552$ ), 72% were enrolled in Algebra II or Geometry in Year 3.

Collectively, Texas GEAR UP SG had more students enrolled in advanced courses in Year 3 in comparison to Year 2. For advanced ELA, 39% of students were enrolled (compared to 21% in Year 2). For advanced science, 38% were enrolled (compared to 21% in Year 2). For advanced social studies, 35% were enrolled (compared to 20% in Year 2).

The variation across subjects was highest at High School I, in which 46% of students were enrolled in advanced ELA but only 26% were enrolled in advanced social studies. High School J had the lowest percentage of enrolled students compared to other schools in all but one subject; the school enrolled 19% of students in advanced mathematics, 22% of students in advanced science, and 19% of students in advanced social studies. Given that the school made progress in prior years toward Project Objective 1.1 to increase enrollment in Algebra I, the positive results of higher enrollment in a broader range of subjects shows promise for being able to begin focusing on achieving other objectives (such as Project Objectives 2.2 and 2.3 regarding pre-AP/AP enrollment).

## 2.2.2 Progress Related to Endorsements and Graduation Plans

Another aspect of student progress toward high school graduation relates to Project Objective 1.2 (By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Plan plus Endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average. ). Site visit data illustrate that Texas GEAR UP SG staff, teachers, and school faculty have informed students and their parents about the various endorsement options and encouraged them to develop four-year plans that will satisfy endorsement requirements. As of March 2015, 90% of Grade 9 students had chosen an endorsement as part of their graduation plans (See Table F.5, Appendix F).<sup>59</sup> Most students (82%) selected a single endorsement with 8% selecting two or more endorsements.<sup>60</sup> Specifically, the following percentages of students selected each endorsement (either alone or in combination with another endorsement): 17% Arts and Humanities (15% alone, 2% in combination); 32% Business and Industry (27% alone, 5% in combination); 31% Public Service (27% alone, 4% in combination); 16% STEM (12% alone, 4% in combination); and 1% Multidisciplinary Studies. Across the high schools, freshmen orientation, summer programs, college visits, and workshops were activities that included endorsement-related components that helped transition students' thinking into graduation-oriented academic planning.

Across high schools, there was inconsistency in the extent to which teachers, parents, students, and school faculty reported awareness of endorsements and their implications related to graduation requirements. However, those who had knowledge of endorsements were generally supportive of the change. For example, one participant at High School J explained how endorsements "gear [students] toward a career," encourage them to opt for more rigorous courses in which they may not otherwise enroll, and simulate college majors to help with planning courses. At some schools, student participation in college visits, job site visits, and summer programs was linked to their selected endorsement. Some districts offered flexibility by allowing for majors and minors, or a primary and backup endorsement, as well as a multidisciplinary major.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff collaborate with school counselors to support students in aspects related to their endorsement. Some concern was expressed during site visits with regard to

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<sup>59</sup> Of all Grade 9 students, 1% had not selected an endorsement and 9% were not on the Foundation High School Program. Some of these students may have been in Grade 9 for a second year and therefore were not required to select an endorsement. See Texas Administrative Code Title 19 Section §74.1021 [https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p\\_dir=&p\\_rloc=&p\\_tloc=&p\\_ploc=&pg=1&p\\_tac=&ti=19&pt=2&ch=74&rl=1021](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=2&ch=74&rl=1021).

<sup>60</sup> All students selecting two endorsements were at School M, with 60% of students at that school selecting more than one endorsement. During site visits, this was described as selecting a major and a minor.

endorsements potentially narrowing students' opportunities; various stakeholders (teachers, administrators, and parents) shared this reaction. For example, a parent discussed wanting her child to receive a "general education" instead of having a concentration of classes within a single subject area (High School I). Teachers from the same school voiced similar concerns, saying that adhering to endorsement requirements "cuts them from certain opportunities" and limits their ability to enroll in other courses they may be interested in. In addition, teachers and counselors reported that some endorsements have a maximum number of students (due to the number of teachers available to teach needed courses or the high costs of courses) which has prohibited some students from enrolling.

The Texas GEAR UP SG staff were able to meet with students to discuss their interests and career options, and to explain the impact that grade point averages (GPAs) and grades have on students' likelihood of being accepted into their first-choice college. A district leader from District 1 explained that the endorsement model was helping students follow through with their graduation requirements. A member of Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School H described one goal over the past year as "making the kids aware that the graduation plans have changed" and ensuring that all students have an endorsement. The Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School M also played a major role in creating graduation requirement plans and used an online template to do so.

Chapter 3 includes additional information about students' perceptions of endorsements and graduation plans.

### 2.2.3 Multiple Skill Sets Necessary for High School Success

In addition to academic preparation, research suggests the importance of a range of skills (e.g., planning, organization) on students' postsecondary success.<sup>61</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG staff and a variety of stakeholder groups reported that the cohort lacked many skills needed for success in high school (and later in college). For example, study skills were consistently mentioned as an area in which many students struggled. A teacher described how homework completion was difficult for students as it is not encouraged by parents (High School I). Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School J further explained that some students had limited time to study because they participated in activities and helped care for their siblings after school. One teacher described how "increasing, [academic] rigor has to be coupled with the ability to receive the information" in order for students to benefit. Tutorials or a study skills program were suggested as ways to address these discrepancies (High School J). Other areas with which students reportedly struggled included motivation, time management, maturity, discipline, leadership, organization, and critical thinking; these themes came up across the Texas GEAR UP SG high schools. Various participants shared how, without these skills, students tended to begin high school unprepared and continue to fall further behind as the academic rigor increases. Alternatively, the improvement of such skills would supplement students' academic success, which would be of even greater benefit to students who struggle academically. Texas GEAR UP SG might be able to influence student progress toward high school graduation and college readiness by helping address these skill gaps. Summer programs may provide one opportunity for Texas GEAR UP SG to work with students on these skills.

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<sup>61</sup> In their review of research on the topic Farrington et al. (2012) mention the following: academic behaviors (attending class, being prepared, participating, and studying), academic perseverance (being focused and engaged despite obstacles or distractions), social skills (being cooperative, assertive, responsible, empathetic), learning strategies (having processes and tactics to aid thinking and remembering information), and academic mindsets (holding beliefs, and attitudes about oneself as a learner).

## 2.2.4 Other College Readiness Indicators

Preliminary indicator data were also available to provide information regarding progress on Project Objective 5.1 (By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT.<sup>[1]</sup> By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT.) and 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). Preliminary indicators demonstrated progress towards these project objectives: 22% of students took the PSAT 8/9 including a low of 0% (High School K) and 6% (High School J) to a high of 78% (High School M) and 97% (High School L).<sup>62</sup> No student had taken ACT Aspire as of March 31, 2015. Taken together, a large portion of students will need to take ACT Aspire, PSAT 10, or PSAT/NMSQT in Year 4 in order for Texas GEAR UP SG to meet the objective. Although High School L will only need to reach out to a small percentage of students, the other Texas GEAR UP SG schools (especially High Schools K and J) will need to engage in intensive effort to ensure all students take ACT Aspire, PSAT 10, or PSAT/NMSQT in Year 4.

Project Objective 4.3 states that by the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average. Texas GEAR UP SG schools reported in the annual performance data that 90% of Grade 8 students were eligible for promotion to Grade 9.<sup>63</sup> The most recent year of available statewide average data for Grade 8 retention is from the 2012–13 school year when retention 1.1% or a promotion rate of 99%.<sup>64</sup> Assuming statewide averages were similar in the 2013–14 school year, Texas GEAR UP SG schools overall were not on track to meet the project objective by the end of the project's third year, but there was some variance across schools. Schools D, F, and G all anticipated that 100% of students would be promoted from Grade 8 to Grade 9, exceeding the state average; School B indicated the lowest percentage of students eligible for promotion at 69%, well below the state average.<sup>65</sup> Final Grade 8 (and Grade 9) promotion data will be provided in upcoming reports.

Some site visit data included more general notions about progress toward graduation and college readiness. Students at some schools (High Schools H and I) kept college preparation folders, including materials from college visits and information on what is needed for them to go to college. A teacher from School H said that talking with students as early as possible has also helped students become more interested in pursuing post-secondary education and in understanding what it will take for them to succeed. Overall, parents expressed appreciation for what Texas GEAR UP SG has done to help their students know what is required in order to be accepted into college and how to navigate the application process. One of the most direct indicators of progress in high school graduation relates to trends in advanced course taking.

Taken together, the various data on student progress toward high school graduation and college readiness indicated that Texas GEAR UP SG is on track towards Project Objective 4.4 (By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college). The various data that will

[1] Texas GEAR UP SG initially indicated a goal aligned with students taking ACT PLAN by the end of project's fourth year. However, ACT has replaced PLAN with ACT Aspire. Similarly, the PSAT has been replaced by the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10.

<sup>62</sup> PSAT 8/9 is the preliminary SAT that students take in Grade 8 and Grade 9.

<sup>63</sup> Schools indicated they were unable to provide promotion indicator data for Grade 9 students who withdrew from the school at any time during the 2014–15 school year. This accounted for 4% of all Grade 9 students. If these students are included in the final cohort based on participation in Texas GEAR UP SG implementation and length of time at the school, future reports will include their promotion data if available.

<sup>64</sup> See <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/acctres/retention/1213/state.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Rates of promotion eligibility for the remaining schools are as follows: School A 75.3%; School C 89.7%, School E 96.9%.

contribute to this project objective will inform more specific progress in forthcoming Year 4 and Year 5 of the evaluation.

## 2.3 Student Participation in Texas GEAR UP State Grant Activities

As part of the Texas GEAR UP SG, various activities were directly targeted to students, including student support services, college visits, job site visits, and workshops/events. The sections that follow summarize the status of implementation in Year 3 related to each of these activities.

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

In reporting implementation of student support services, the following two project objectives are relevant:

- Project Objective 4.1: By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the 8<sup>th</sup> 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 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.

While objectives 4.1 and 4.2 specify second year outcomes, each has been interpreted to mean beginning in the second year and then continuing in each year thereafter. This section includes findings about primary cohort students' participation in each type of student support service during the first seven months of the 2014–15 school year (start of Grade 9 through March 31, 2015), and comparisons are made to their participation during the same time frame in Grade 8 (start of Grade 8 through March 31, 2014) in Year 2.<sup>66</sup>

#### STUDENT ACADEMIC TUTORING

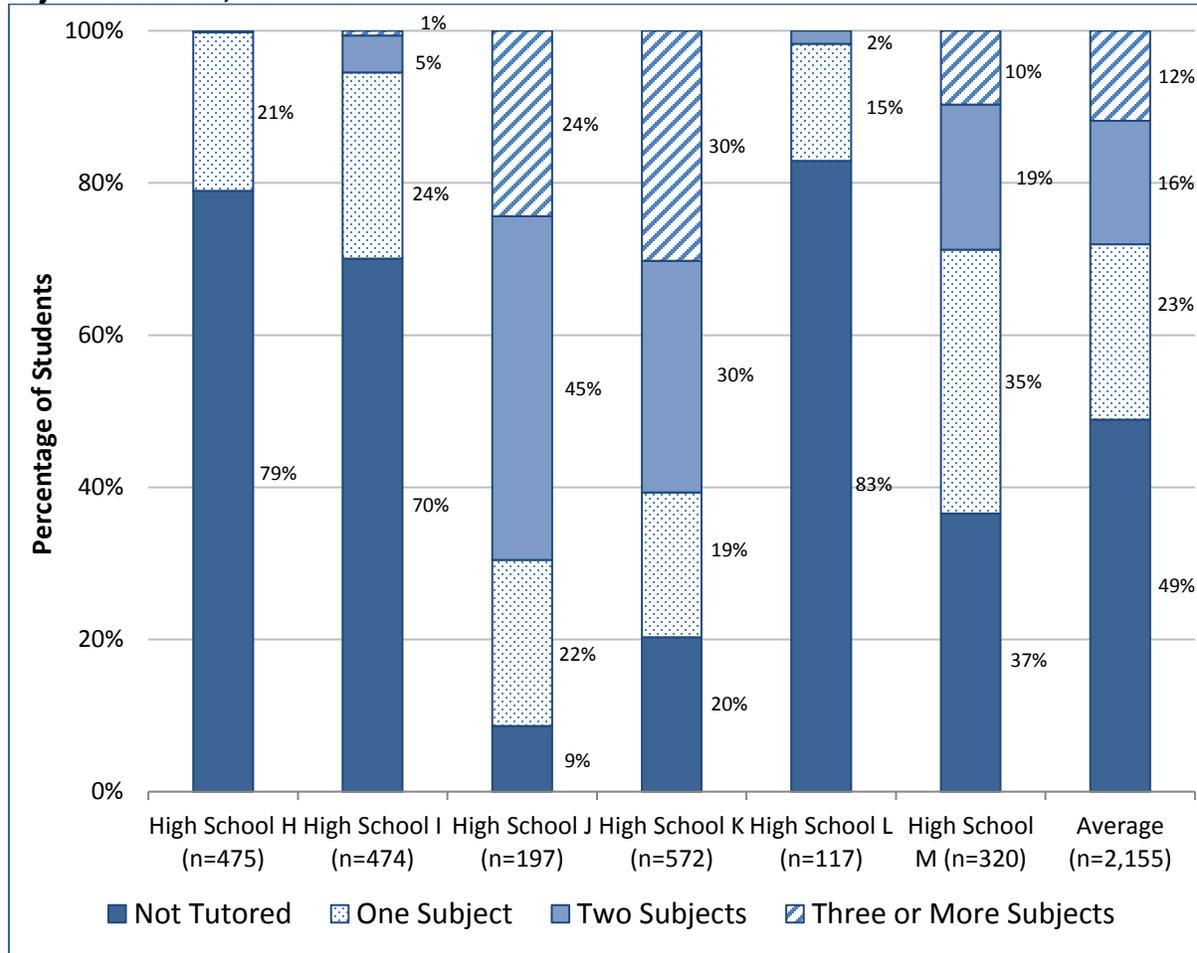
As required by their subgrants, all schools offered academic tutoring to primary cohort students.<sup>67</sup> As of March 2015, schools reported that, on average, 51% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students were receiving tutoring in at least one subject in Grade 9 (compared to 63% in Grade 8). The largest percentage of students received tutoring in one subject (23%), an additional 16% received tutoring in two subjects, and 12% received tutoring in three or more subjects. The number of subjects in which students received tutoring also differed significantly by school (Figure 2.3).<sup>68</sup> Tutoring was most limited at High Schools H, I, and L, in which a large portion of students were not tutored (79%, 70%, and 83%, respectively). Two high schools, in particular, were able to accomplish notable successes regarding tutoring. At High School K, 30% of students received tutoring in three or more subjects. At High School J, 91% of students received tutoring in at least one subject. Although there was a high level of tutoring at High School J, this school had the lowest percentage of Grade 9 students in advanced mathematics, science, and social studies classes compared to the other five Texas GEAR UP SG high schools (see Tables F.6 through F.9 in Appendix F).

<sup>66</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>67</sup> The term *Tutoring* is used in this section, although in the definition, it is referred to as tutoring or homework help.

<sup>68</sup> Difference across schools:  $\chi^2(20) = 1084.2, p < 0.001$ .

**Figure 2.3. Percentages of Grade 9 Students Participating in Tutoring by the Number of Subjects Tutored, 2014–15**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2015.

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Difference across schools:  $\chi^2(20) = 1,084.1, p < .001$ .

The average total hours that Grade 9 students received tutoring, across all subjects, was 12.6 hours; an increase when compared to the average of 9.2 hours in Year 2. The average total hours tutored varied significantly by school.<sup>69</sup> The average hours at three schools (High Schools H, I, and L) was less than three hours (2.3, 2.7, and 1.8 hours, respectively) but was above 12 hours at the other three high schools (High Schools J, K, and M with 17.2, 13.5, and 19.8 hours, respectively). Within schools, the range was also wide; at High School J, for example, some students received as little as one hour of tutoring and others received up to 62 hours.

The extent of student tutoring varied significantly across schools in each course content area.<sup>70</sup> Similar to when primary cohort students were in Grade 8 in Year 2, the largest percentage of students (33%) received tutoring in mathematics in Grade 9. The percentage of students tutored in each subject area declined between Year 2 and Year 3.<sup>71</sup> High School J reported the greatest

<sup>69</sup>  $F(5, 1,095) = 16.2, p < 0.001$

<sup>70</sup> Tutoring in mathematics:  $\chi^2(5) = 699.9, p < .001$ ; tutoring in ELA:  $\chi^2(5) = 161.3, p < .001$ ; tutoring in science:  $\chi^2(5) = 309.9, p < .001$ ; tutoring in social studies:  $\chi^2(5) = 169.5, p < .001$ .

<sup>71</sup> For each subject area, the percentages of student participation declined as follows: Mathematics: 11 percentage points; ELA: 12 percentage points; Science: 13 percentage points; Social Studies: 9 percentage points.

percentage of Grade 9 students participating in tutoring in mathematics, ELA, and social studies (see Tables F.6 through F.9 in Appendix F).

Site visit participants from both High Schools I and K said that they heard from students that having the option for smaller groups or tutoring sessions was more beneficial for their learning needs.

### STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COMPREHENSIVE MENTORING

As required by their subgrants, all Texas GEAR UP SG schools offered comprehensive mentoring to primary cohort students in Year 3. As was the case in prior years, mentoring as a student support service occurred with a much lower percentage of students than the percentage of students participating in tutoring. Similarly, the average amount of time spent on mentoring was 5.8 hours, compared to 12.6 hours on tutoring.

Across Texas GEAR UP SG schools, 10% of Grade 9 students were receiving comprehensive mentoring as of March 31, 2015 (compared to 14% in year 2). The majority of the students participating in mentoring came from High Schools L and M, where 21% and 20% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students, respectively, had a mentor. At High Schools I and K, 5% or less of Grade 9 students had a mentor (4% and 5%, respectively). Overall, the percentage of students mentored differed significantly across schools (see Table F.10, Appendix F).<sup>72</sup>

Similar to prior years, mentoring included a variety of activities at each of the schools, and most mentoring occurred in a one-on-one setting. In some cases, schools coordinated with local universities or non-profit organizations to match students with mentors. Feedback collected during site visits indicated that Texas GEAR UP SG staff capitalized on relationships with local entities—most commonly nearby universities and organizations such as Upward Bound—to provide mentoring services for their students.<sup>73</sup> These programs often focused on peer-level mentoring in which college students work directly with students to promote college awareness and readiness. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America was another commonly noted organization; used to pair students with young adult mentors.<sup>74</sup> Mentoring services at High Schools H and I were generally geared toward students with the most need for this support service; mentors provided them with someone who they “can talk to, get to know, listen to, turn to for advice.” This component of Texas GEAR UP SG was viewed as being very valuable for students by multiple site visit participants at High School I. Although all schools reported providing these services, they also reported mentoring as an area of focus in which they would like to increase the number of students who receive services, as well as the number of programs that provide these services. Texas GEAR UP SG staff in all schools play a role in referring students for mentoring services, which, traditionally, was mainly a responsibility of the school counselor. High Schools H and I were looking toward building their mentoring services through collaboration with nearby universities starting in Year 4 of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation.

### STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COUNSELING

Counseling/advising is another student support service that all Texas GEAR UP primary cohort schools offered to students beginning in Year 2. On average, across schools, 69% of Grade 9 students participated in counseling, and this varied significantly across schools (see Table F.11, Appendix F).<sup>75</sup> This represented a huge increase of 33 percentage points from Year 2 in which

<sup>72</sup>  $\chi^2(5) = 88.6, p < .0001$

<sup>73</sup> Upward Bound is a federal program that provides fundamental support to participants in their preparation for college entrance. More about the program can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/trioupbound/index.html>.

<sup>74</sup> Big Brothers Big Sisters of America is a volunteer-supported mentoring network. More about the program can be found at <http://www.bbbs.org>.

<sup>75</sup>  $\chi^2(5) = 302.8, p < .0001$

only 36% of students received counseling. Nearly all Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students participated in counseling/advising at High Schools J and M (100% and 94%, respectively) and all of the six high schools had at least 50% of students participating in counseling/advising. On average, Grade 9 participating students each experienced about two hours of counseling by the end of March 2015 (this is double the average amount of time reported in Year 2).

Texas GEAR UP SG staff in most schools met regularly to discuss current concerns or issues about students with school counselors and advisors to. Site visit participants from Districts 2 and 4 indicated that ensuring that students are on track with their graduation plans is a shared responsibility between school counselors and Texas GEAR UP SG staff, along with partaking in parent conferences if students were not meeting their graduation plan goals. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School J noted that students' class schedules seem to be more flexible, allowing more time for one-on-one advising in comparison to when they were in middle school.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff at multiple schools met one-on-one with students to discuss career information, job shadowing opportunities, mentoring services, and college-related topics. A supportive and collaborative relationship with school counselors was a key facilitator in executing successful Texas GEAR UP SG counseling activities, as well as other aspects of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation. School counselors often had stronger relationships with school administrators, faculty, parents, and students because they had generally been with the school before the inception of the grant. In fact, teachers and administrators at High School I reported that counseling is an aspect of Texas GEAR UP SG that is more prominent at their school as a result of these collaborative relationships. Texas GEAR UP SG staff across all schools reported working collaboratively with school counselors on a variety of other implementation activities, such as event planning, summer transition programs, and parent events. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at all schools expressed an interest in holding more one-on-one meetings with students to discuss grades, classes, and career interests.

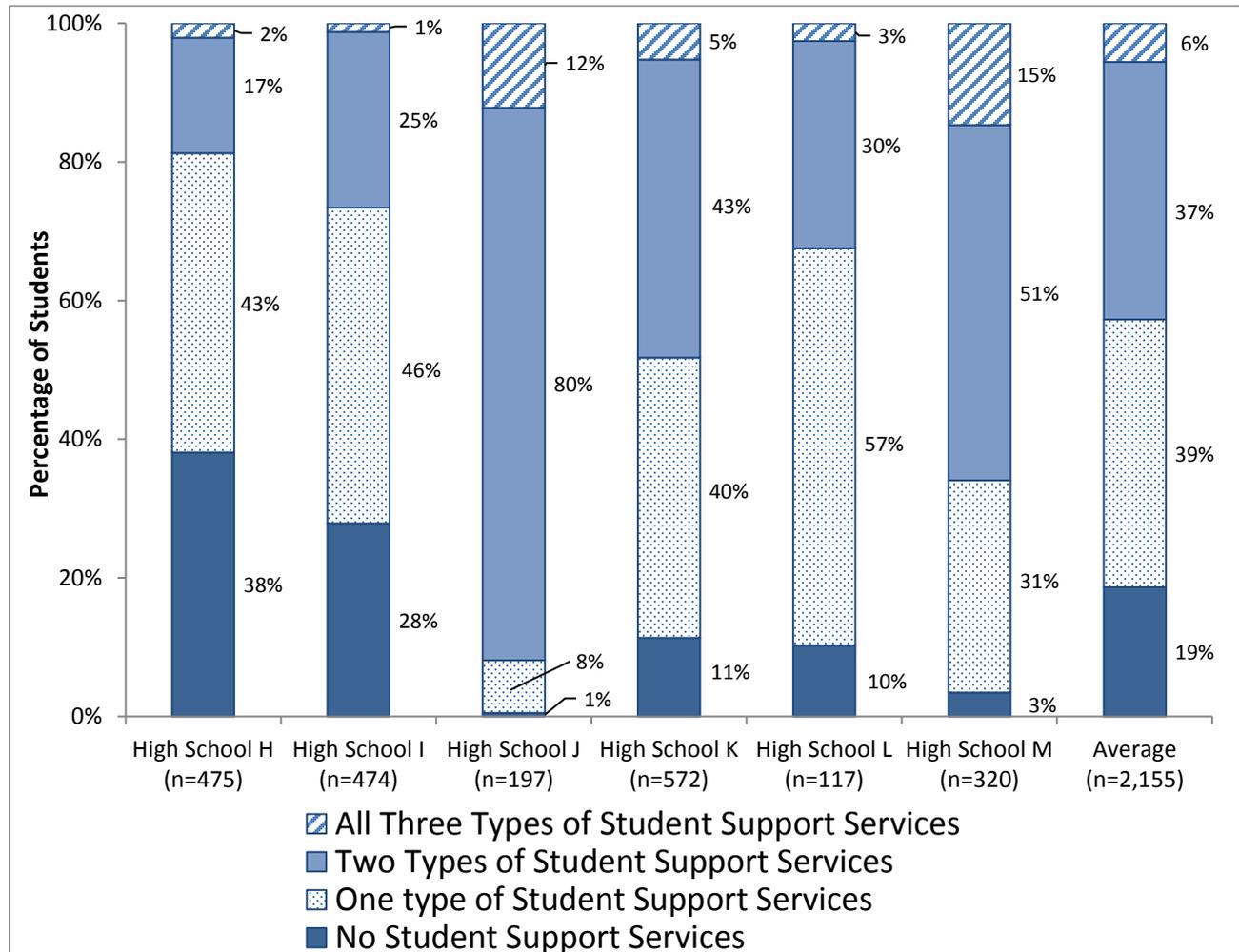
### STUDENT IMPLEMENTATION MIX WITHIN STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

As of March 31, 2015, 81% of all Grade 9 students had participated in at least one of the three types of student support services (i.e., tutoring, mentoring, counseling; Figure 2.4), achieving Project Objective 4.1 that 75% of students receiving student support services. This accomplishment represents an increase of 3 percentage points from Year 2 (78%). Students participated in a mix of student support services to a varying degree. Of the 832 students across all schools who only participated in one student support service (39% of all Texas GEAR UP SG students as shown in Figure 2.4), the largest percentage (68%) participated in counseling/advising; in Year 2, the largest percentage of students participated in tutoring.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, 37% of students participated in two types of student support services and 6% of students participated in all three types of activities. This differed significantly across schools.<sup>77</sup> Four high schools (J, K, L, and M) each individually met Project Objective 4.1 of at least 75% of Grade 9 students participating in student support services. Although comparing this result to schools last year is limited given that implementation occurred in middle schools, it is important to note that only three of the seven middle schools met this goal last year. High School M and High School J had the highest percentages of students that participated in all three types of student support services (15% and 12%, respectively and in at least two of the three types of student support services (51% and 80%, respectively).

<sup>76</sup> In Year 3, 30% of students who only participated in one student support service got tutoring and 2% of students who participated in only one student support service were mentored.

<sup>77</sup> Difference across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 569.7, p < .0001$ .

**Figure 2.4. Percentages of Grade 9 Students Participating in Student Support Services by Number of Support Services and School, 2014–15**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2015.  
 Note: Difference across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 569.7, p < .0001$ .

Additionally, in the APR submitted in April 2015, TEA provided data that were specific to the project objective as actually written, which was also met: Project Objective 4.1 specifies that participation in student support services should be based on the results of teacher/counselor input and/or diagnostic data. The percentage of Grade 9 students who had participated in student support services based on the results of teacher/counselor input and/or diagnostic data was 81%, above the project objective goal of 75%.<sup>78</sup> More specifically, based on specific services, 93% of students were provided with tutoring based on diagnostic data or teacher/counselor input, 66% of students were provided with mentoring, and 78% of students were provided with counseling based on these data. Other reasons for these services included student walk-in/request or parental request. Among the three student support services, 34% of the reasons for mentoring were student-requested mentoring, compared to a student request being the reason for tutoring (7%) and counseling (19%). Parental request only accounted for 3% of the reasons for counseling services and none of the reasons for tutoring or mentoring.

<sup>78</sup> In Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015), this figure was 67% as of March 31, 2015. The APR submitted in April 2015 (including the full year of Grade 8 data) reflects that this percentage was 94% when accounting for data collected for the entire school year.

Table 2.1 also describes a few plans that districts had regarding how they intended to identify students for services. Continuing to refine this process through data-driven decisions and delivery of services to students with the most need of specific supports may further enhance the potential impact of Texas GEAR UP SG and inform more sustainable practices, investing resources where they are most needed.

### SUMMER PROGRAMS

Overall, 55% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students participated in student workshops in summer 2014. Based on these data, Project Objective 4.2 to enroll at least 30% of students in summer programs was met in Year 3. To a much lesser extent, students also participated in other activities over the summer, including the following: family events (3%), other educational trips (5%), parent workshops (3%), and science trips (3%). At least some parents from all schools participated in summer programs. This included 8% who participated in parent workshops, 3% who participated in a family event, and 1% who participated in a student workshop.

At a high level, site visit data pointed to a few important themes about the implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG summer programs. A member of the Texas GEAR UP SG staff described how summer programs allow students to continue learning and maintain involvement with the school (High School H). As the students transitioned into Grade 9, schools offered summer transition programs, often referred to as Fish Camp or Freshmen Camp, to serve as a freshmen orientation. These programs generally lasted between one and two days. Due to Texas GEAR UP SG funds and additional staff capacity, districts reported that summer transition programs offered to the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort experienced more successful outcomes than the orientations offered in prior years. Schools provided students with incentives such as T-shirts and lunch; content included speakers from GEAR UP conferences, parent sessions, leadership activities, information on extracurricular activities, class schedules, tours, and endorsement information sessions. One Texas GEAR UP SG staff member discussed the need to spend more time promoting summer programs next year.

Another summer opportunity for some students was GeoFORCE. Every high school sent a few students to this where students participated in a week of geological excursions throughout the country, with the opportunity to continue to participate over four summers. Students from High School M reported there was “a lot of studying because there was a test every day.” Students attributed their awareness of the opportunity and acceptance into GeoFORCE to Texas GEAR UP SG staff. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School J reported that students “loved it” and “had so much fun.” GeoFORCE benefitted students by not only teaching them about geology, but also simulating a college experience in that they saw what it is like to leave home to study with their peers. Allowing more students to have similar opportunities may help to advance Texas GEAR UP SG objectives.

### 2.3.2 College Visits

College visits are one strategy recommended by the federal GEAR UP program for grantees to implement. College visits may be important because students who visit a campus may begin to perceive college as a place where they will (or will not) fit in. APR data showed that, by March 31, 2015, all schools had involved at least some students in two or more college visits. High School M offered Grade 9 students the most (12) college visits; High School I offered the least (two) and the remaining schools offered the following: High School H: 3, High School J: 4, High School K: 10, and High School L: 3. Overall, 35% of Texas GEAR UP SG students had participated in a college visit by March 31, 2015. Based on site visit data, some college visits were being planned for the end of the school year so this percentage may be higher when accounting for the entire school year; these data were not available for this report, however.

Similar to prior years, college visits included opportunities for students to attend college classes, tour the campus, discover different programs or schools within the university, and learn about campus housing and transportation. Site visit data indicated that students from all six of the Texas GEAR UP SG high schools had the opportunity to participate in college visits, which occurred at eight different universities in Texas, including private and public institutions. Students from all high schools reported enjoying the college visits and even wanting the option of participating in more visits, with some suggesting more college visits beyond their local area, a finding similar to Year 2 (Briggs et al., 2015). At High School M, a school administrator shared how the college visits sparked conversations between students and their teachers as students started asking their teachers where they attended college and can even relate to them by having visited a campus from which their teacher may have graduated. This individual also suggested having students research the college they would be visiting prior to the visit so they would have background information on the campus before the visit. Parents from High School J enjoyed the opportunity to participate in a college visit with their child and one stated, “I probably would consider the [registered nurse] program myself.” Across schools, 33 parents participated in college visits in Year 3 as of March 31, 2015. This was more than in Year 1 when no parents went on college visits but fewer than in Year 2 when 49 parents participated in a college visit. Based on these findings, parental participation in college visits may serve several purposes including creating a college-going culture and initiating important discussions about college plans.

Three high schools (High Schools H, I, and K) focused students’ college visits based on their endorsement; for example, students with a STEM endorsement participated in a visit to a college with a strong STEM program. This allowed students to attend presentations relevant to their high school courses and to what they should look for when they start applying to college. However, with some feedback that this limited who could attend, Year 4 may include opening college visits up at these schools to allow any student to participate in order to allow them to explore potential colleges of interest.

### 2.3.3 Job Site Visits/Job Shadowing

Engaging in job site visits is also a recommended federal GEAR UP strategy and may provide students with relevant information about potential future jobs and careers, as well as the education that is required to attain those jobs/careers. Four schools reported that students had engaged in job site visits or job shadowing by March 31, 2015; High School I reported one activity, High School J reported two activities, and High Schools H and M reported three activities each. This reflected progress in Texas GEAR UP SG implementation as only two middle schools conducted job site visits in Year 2 (Briggs et al., 2015). When looking across schools, the most notable achievement was that High School M had 18% of students participate in a job site visit. Across all schools, participation was only 7%. Site visit data indicated that this strategy requires intensive planning to make arrangements and a willingness of professionals/ organizations to participate. In order to involve a higher percentage of students in job site visits, Texas GEAR UP SG staff will need to find ways to overcome these challenges and increase community collaborations.

Site visit data offered specific insights about job shadowing programs. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School J reported wanting to do more job site visits so that students have an idea of what the “authentic” work environment is like for that job. Students at High School K who participated in the site visit noted that they enjoyed the ability on job site visits to have more independence, explaining teachers trusted them to act responsibly while on their own during job site visits. Participants across schools noted areas for improvement, including the need for advanced planning to provide food, secure transportation, or obtain parental permission. High School K was planning to take algebra students in summer 2015 to a professional league football stadium where they will have an architecture-based lesson.

### 2.3.4 Participation in Texas GEAR UP State Grant Student Workshops/Events

Another GEAR UP implementation strategy is conducting workshops and events for students. The following project objective relates to these efforts:

- 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.

By March 2015, 340 student events/workshops had been held (94% of students participated in at least one event) and all schools had met Project Objective 7.2 of 100% of students having access to events. Table 2.2 provides a general overview of the number and length of the workshops/events held by each school. As of March 2015, 5% of Grade 9 students at any of the schools had not participated in any event/workshop; participation levels ranged from 86% at High School H to 100% at High Schools L and M. High School M held the largest number of events at 149. Although High School I held the fewest events at 23, the school had the largest average number of participants (126) when compared to other schools. Overall, the average number of participants across schools was high (the school with the lowest average number of participants was High School J at 48); this suggests that many of the school events were open to a broad range of students. Across schools, the average length of the events ranged from 1.5 to 4.1 hours.

**Table 2.2. Number of Grade 9 Student Events/Workshops, Average Number of Participants, and Average Event Length by School, 2014–15**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Number of Events	Average Number of Participants (range)	Average Activity Length (in hours)
High School H	25	61 (1–367)	4.1
High School I	23	126 (7–384)	3.0
High School J	53	48 (3–764)	1.6
High School K	61	79 (2–523)	2.8
High School L	29	50 (1–117)	3.2
High School M	149	65 (1–570)	1.5

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2015.

During site visits, participants from all of the six high schools mentioned student workshops. The following is a summary of those experiences:

- A local college resource center provided students in High School H with the opportunity to attend a PSAT/NMSQT and/or PSAT 10 workshop prior to taking the exam.
- Students at High School I also had an opportunity to participate in the PSAT/NMSQT and/or PSAT 10 workshop. Furthermore, a teacher from this school described student workshops as a key instrument for encouraging students to start thinking about college now.
- High School J hosted workshops with a local university and hopes to have university students lead them in the future. Many participants from High School J reported the increased capacity of the school in offering student workshops as a result of the Texas GEAR UP SG.
- Site visit participants from High School K reported hosting student workshops related to college research, such as searching for colleges, majors, and financial aid opportunities.
- Although participants at High School L did not discuss workshops that occurred in Year 3, a teacher discussed plans for a software development and programming workshop.

- High School M hosted workshops with a local university to orient students with a college focus as they began high school; the sessions taught students about their GPAs, course credits, and careers that they could pursue. The school also hosted a workshop in which employees in the community came to speak with students regarding how they began their careers and what steps they took to advance in their career paths. The school would like to work with counselors to coordinate full-day leadership workshops for students.

Teachers from two schools (High Schools H and J) reported an interest in using student workshops as a way to proactively increase academic rigor by helping students improve in their areas of weakness. For example, suggested themes for future student workshops included focus on the following skills: reading, writing, studying, and organizing.

### STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EVENTS

In addition to workshops/events targeting students only, schools were encouraged to offer events for both students and parents to provide an opportunity for schools to support parents in engaging with each other and their children about postsecondary education. As of March 31, 2015, the six schools offered a combined 23 family events (range of one to eight per school) and 159 parent events (a range of 14 to 36 per school). Overall, 14% of students participated in a family event and 12% of students participated in a parent event. All of the six high schools had students participate in either a family event or a parent event. For example, High School J did not have any students participate in a family event, but they had 44% of students participate in a parent event.<sup>79</sup> Parental participation in these events is described in the section on parental engagement (Section 2.4).

### 2.3.5 Mix of Student Texas GEAR UP State Grant Implementation

In addition to the data presented by activity type (e.g., tutoring, mentoring) in prior sections, implementation findings on the mix of implementation illuminated other important trends. One avenue of exploration in future reports is whether any specific implementation activity is key to achieving specific Texas GEAR UP SG outcomes. 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 are presented here. Preliminary steps in this process included looking only at the mix of student support services (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, counseling) presented in Chapter 2 (section 2.3.1). The second strategy for exploring the mix of implementation activities is looking at which students participated in student support services, workshops, parent events, or other academic support. In interpreting the findings of these two approaches, it is important to consider that 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. Additionally, schools may have chosen to engage in a given activity based on their own assessment of students' needs, based on what they could implement most efficiently in the time frame, and/or based on what activities they perceived would have the greatest impact. In this section, the mix of implementation is a marker of each school's success at implementing the range of GEAR UP activities.

### OVERALL STUDENT IMPLEMENTATION MIX

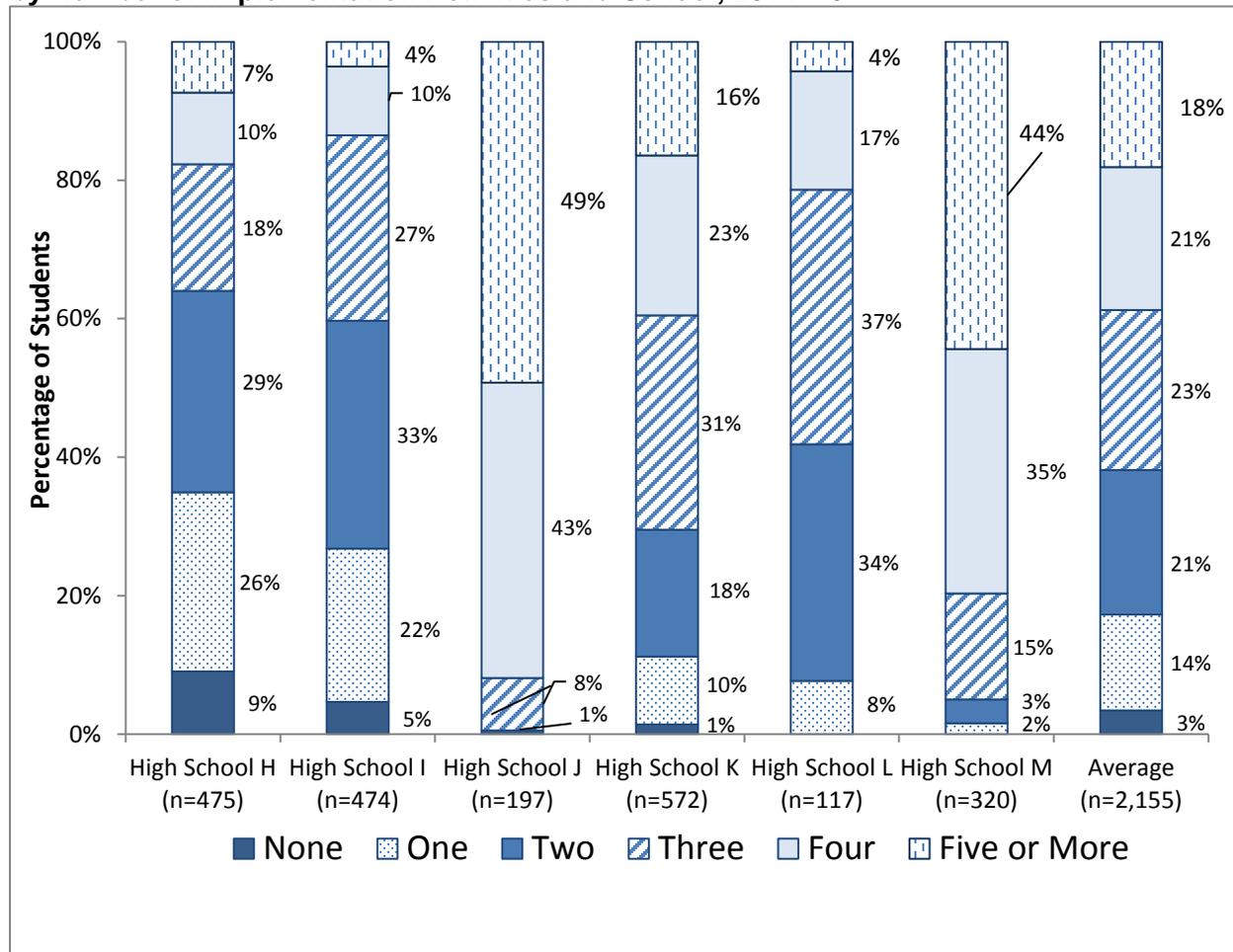
Another approach to exploring the mix of implementation activities is to examine which students participated in any activity (student support services, workshops, parent events, or other

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<sup>79</sup> Data on student participation in family events for the remaining schools is as follows: High School H: 4%; High School I: 9%; High School K: 29%; High School L: 15%; and High School M: 19%. Data on student participation in parent events for the remaining schools is as follows: High School H: 0.2%; High School I: 0%; High School K: 9%; High School L: 17%; and High School M: 28%.

academic support). Specifically, students were considered as having participated or not participated in tutoring, mentoring, counseling, at least one workshop, at least one parent event, a college visit, or other academic support. While 19% of students had not participated in a mix of student support services (see Figure 2.4), only 3% of Grade 9 students had not participated in at least one Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activity overall (see Figure 2.5). An additional 14% of Grade 9 students had participated in only one type of implementation activity while approximately 20% of students participated in each of the remaining groupings of two to five or more types of implementation activities. Just over one third of Grade 9 students (39%) had participated in four or more types of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activities. Similar to Year 2, tutoring, mentoring, counseling, parent events, college visits, and student workshops occurred at all Texas GEAR UP SG schools in Year 3. All schools reported in spring 2014 that they were planning to conduct summer 2014 programs, and all seven middle schools indicated in spring 2015 APR data that students had actually enrolled in a summer 2014 program before beginning high school.

**Figure 2.5. Percentages of Grade 9 Students Participating in Any Implementation Activity by Number of Implementation Activities and School, 2014–15**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2015.

Note: Difference across schools:  $\chi^2(25) = 885.8, p < .0001$ .

Some events did not occur at all schools. In Year 2, job shadowing/job site visits occurred at only two middle schools; however, this strategy was implemented in four high schools in Year 3 (High Schools H, I, J, and M). Educational field trips were held at all schools except for High School L.

In general, the Texas GEAR UP SG schools were more successful at implementing a mix of activities and events in Year 3 than they were in Year 2. As noted, the comprehensive evaluation report will present additional information on the relationship between implementation and outcomes.

## 2.4 Parental Engagement in Texas GEAR UP State Grant Activities

Parental participation in Texas GEAR UP SG activities is also encouraged in the federal GEAR UP model.<sup>80</sup> For Texas GEAR UP SG, the following project objective relates to this effort:

- 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.

As was the case in prior years, no school in Year 3 was successful at achieving this project objective, and, in Year 3, schools were less effective in getting parents to attend three or more events as compared to Year 2 (3% in Year 3 and 7% in Year 2). High School M, where 7% of parents attended three or more events, had the most parents attend but still fell far below the project objective goal. At the remaining schools, the following percentages of parents attended three or more events: High School H, I, J, and L: 3% and High School K: 1%. It is important to note, however, that in Year 3, all six high schools had at least some parents attend three or more events. Overall, 49% of parents attended at least one event, an increase of 11 percentage points since Year 2; High School M again led on this measure (69%).<sup>81</sup> Table F.12 displays additional data on parental participation in events/workshops, including the number of events, the average number of participants, and the average length of events.

Parental involvement is a focus for all Texas GEAR UP SG high schools because it motivates the students and brings additional buy-in to the program. Participants from all high schools reported facing challenges with regard to involving parents. Teachers from High School I reported challenges in not only securing parental involvement in the beginning, but also maintaining it throughout the school year. An administrator from High School J said that they “are still trying to figure out ways to increase parental involvement. It’s been a struggle.” Similar to prior years, feedback received during site visits indicated that communication and outreach to parents were critical to their engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG activities. A community organization from High School M explained that increasing parental involvement was a cultural challenge, not only with regard to addressing language differences, but also with regard to navigating the American education and higher education systems. Parents would like to receive more communication; parents are interested in being involved, but they need to know when activities are occurring (High School J).

Texas GEAR UP SG staff reported using a variety of incentives and communication to increase parental attendance at their events: transportation, food, prizes, follow-up phone calls, automated phone messages, text messages, free admission to athletic events, and child care. High School J incorporated a parent workshop into their summer transition camp and reported that it brought some of the highest rates of parental involvement in the past few years. High School K described a series of Family University Nights, including different financial aid-related rotations (including topics such as scholarship applications and Free Application for Federal Student Aid [FAFSA]). This format was more interactive in comparison to parent events in the past; Texas GEAR UP SG staff received positive feedback from many parents. Texas GEAR UP SG staff from High School H discussed the start of a parent ambassador program in which parents would have more accountability for increasing parental involvement. Four Texas GEAR

<sup>80</sup> While the term parent is used here given the context of the Project Objective, parental attendance is defined as any adult household member attending an event associated with the given student.

<sup>81</sup> Data on parental participation in at least one parent event for the remaining schools is as follows: High School H: 56%; High School I: 49%; High School J: 59%; High School K: 31%; and High School L: 32%.

UP SG high schools (High Schools H, I, L, and M) incorporated parent liaisons or ambassadors into their program as a way to bridge the communication gap between the school and families.

## 2.5 Participation by Teachers in Professional Development Activities

Texas GEAR UP SG includes the following project objectives related to teacher PD:

- Project Objective 3.1: All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training with regard to differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL.
- Project Objective 3.2: Teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.
- Project Objective 9.1: Annually increase the number of educators participating in GEAR UP professional learning, including through Project Share and face-to-face trainings (related to college access and preparation).<sup>82</sup>

Teacher PD opportunities are offered as a way to support the broad goal of improving academic rigor at participating schools. Project Objective 3.1 was met. All Texas GEAR UP SG schools provided some GEAR UP-supported PD in Year 3; there were 114 PD sessions overall (range of eight at High School L to 32 at High School M). PD opportunities included the following topics: the use of technology, needs assessments, differentiated instruction, PBL, AP and pre-AP, financial literacy, and SpringBoard®.<sup>83</sup> Projective Objective 3.2 had not been met as of March 31, 2015. Only High Schools K and M had held at least five vertical team events (12 and 13, respectively), although other schools came close to meeting this objective (4 events at High School H, I, and L; 3 events at High School J). Project Objective 9.1 saw progress in the development of resources for TEA’s Texas Gateway by AMS Pictures, but the resources were not yet made available statewide by the end of the school year. The following subsections include findings about some of the common PD topics that relate to these areas.

Site visit data about teacher participation in PD also offered useful information about Texas GEAR UP SG implementation. Teachers from High School J were not always aware of whether the PD in which they had participated was Texas GEAR UP SG sponsored or not, pointing to a need to advertise and brand Texas GEAR UP SG trainings. A Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator shared general insights about the challenges of implementing PD given that teachers had limited time for PD in addition to the PD required by the district/campus and the lack of available substitutes. Offering Saturday sessions was an option, but one that, as this individual stated, needed to be used sparingly.

### 2.5.1 Ongoing Need for Professional Development Focused on Academic Rigor

High Schools H and I utilized College Board to help with curriculum writing in summer 2014 with the intention of increasing academic rigor; teachers at these schools also collaborated with the Princeton Review with regard to how to teach students about the PSAT exam and learn test-taking tips.<sup>84</sup> PD opportunities at these schools were focused on advanced courses and academic rigor, and a teacher from High School H suggested providing PD about how teachers can effectively work with “at-risk or low-income students.” A teacher from High School K

<sup>82</sup> Beginning in 2016, Project Share is now referred to as TEA’s Texas Gateway. It provides an online, interactive learning environment for Texas teachers. See <http://www.texasgateway.org/> for additional information.

<sup>83</sup> SpringBoard® is the College Board’s print and online program for a customizable pathway integrating rigorous instruction, performance-based assessment, and professional learning. More details about this program are available at <http://springboardprogram.collegeboard.org>.

<sup>84</sup> Princeton Review is a [test preparation](#) and [college admission](#) services company offering test preparation services, tutoring and admissions resources, online courses, and books. More details about the organization are available at <http://www.princetonreview.com/>.

reported wanting to receive PD on incorporating advanced rigor that includes subject-specific strategies with a college readiness focus. Teachers from High School K reported that they wanted to receive PD on making “cross-curriculum connections” with the content to show students how certain concepts can be taught in a variety of subjects through different lenses and expand the way they think about one subject. Teachers from High School J reported that they wanted to see PD to address students’ low reading levels, so that they can read Grade 9 and 10 level texts. Another teacher from this school emphasized the need to have more training about how to help students improve a wide range of skills, like organization, time management, and note taking, so that students do not get lost in the increased academic rigor and can successfully “receive the information” they are being taught.

### 2.5.2 Vertical Teaming

Vertical teaming is a strategy that allows schools to align instruction, increase academic rigor, achieve sustainability, and ease the academic transition from middle school to high school and between grades. In Year 3, all high schools participated in at least some vertical teaming, compared to Year 2 when six of the seven middle schools did so. During site visits, teachers and administrators reflected on their experiences with vertical teaming. The adoption of new textbooks at High School K prompted efforts related to vertical alignment. In these meetings, teachers use maps (crosswalks that outline what students learn when) to identify any missing elements from students’ instruction as a result of the change in materials. Some ELA teachers from this school reported not having vertical alignment opportunities, whereas mathematics teachers reported having them, but independently of Texas GEAR UP SG. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at two schools explained that monthly mandatory vertical alignment meetings took place in a district office; however, not all teachers were aware of it (High Schools K and L).

Although administrators reported that vertical alignment was “crucial to long-term planning,” as one administrator at High School H stated, not all teachers from this school participated in vertical alignment meetings. Various participants shared that vertical alignment meetings became infrequent as the school year went on and teachers became busier. In the meetings that did take place, teachers explained that they used the time to identify materials from one class and how they could be used in other classes. Planning is the key take-away that teachers described wanting from vertical alignment. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High Schools H and I reported one challenge with regard to scheduling vertical alignment trainings was that these trainings had been scheduled to occur over weekends and teacher morale associated with weekend trainings was low. In part, teachers from High School I suggested that, in order to improve the outcomes of vertical alignment training, especially if occurring over the weekend, there would need to be more clearly defined objectives associated with the training such as what skills students should have upon entering a specific grade level. Similar to prior years, school administrators across schools explained that vertical alignment is something that they planned to increase their focus on in upcoming school years.

Schools seemed to struggle with vertical alignment between the high school and the middle school; collaborator interviews indicated that High Schools I and J had not engaged in this effort at all. At High School M, vertical alignment was described as a district-driven initiative, which enabled the opportunity for vertical teaming between middle and high schools. Mathematics teachers from High Schools K and L reported having completed one day of vertical alignment with the middle school toward the beginning of the year; however, some were unsure whether it was sponsored by Texas GEAR UP SG.

### 2.5.3 Project-Based Learning

Five of the six Texas GEAR UP SG high schools provided teacher PD on PBL in Year 3 (High School J did not provide PBL training). Of the 423 teachers who taught Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students in Year 3, 50 teachers from the four districts participated in at least

some PBL PD; however, 45 of these teachers were from three high schools (from two districts). This reflected an increase from Year 2 in which 31 teachers participated in PBL. Site visit data about PBL was also informative. Teachers at High Schools K and L received PBL training every Monday, and, according to the College Preparation Advisor at one of the schools, teachers were “very receptive” to the opportunity to learn about new ways to support their students. At High School M, teachers received a two-day training on PBL in fall 2014 and spoke positively about the information they received; the school also offered PBL training on Saturdays. High School M utilized the PITSCO labs; teachers received PBL training on how to incorporate labs into their lessons and were given resources to assist them in implementation.<sup>85</sup> High Schools H and I engaged curriculum specialists to support teachers’ implementation to sustain the three Saturdays of PBL training they received. In one school (High School H), the extent to which PBL was implemented seemed to be dependent on the subject; English teachers reported minimal follow through with its implementation, whereas mathematics teachers had a stronger focus on PBL. A few teachers from High School I suggested the need for PBL training to include a couple examples of projects that they could implement in their own classes; another described the trainings that had occurred as “a lot of fun.”

#### **2.5.4 Trainings with T-STEM Centers**

Staff from UT-Tyler indicated that their collaboration with the Texas GEAR UP SG allowed for increased access to learning opportunities for students and more PD for teachers (see Chapter 1 for a detailed description of the role UT-Tyler plays as one of the Texas GEAR UP SG collaborators). Staff from UT-Tyler suggested that being able to offer these additional resources to teachers and students is helpful in addressing the disparity between districts and their access to resources. Specifically, UT-Tyler offered mobile laboratory experiences otherwise not available to students. Although teachers across each of the Texas GEAR UP SG high schools may have participated in training from the T-STEM Center, teachers from High School J were the only ones to discuss it during site visits. This training occurred around the same time as the EOC exams, so teachers did not feel that they were able to learn and benefit from this training as much as they could have if it had occurred at another time; although they were able to participate, these teachers shared how they were a bit preoccupied with EOC testing. The training served as PD for teachers while providing biology lab activities for the students. A school administrator at High School J described how teachers were frustrated with the lack of information about what to expect from the training; last minute planning was another frustration teachers expressed.

#### **2.5.5 Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation Financial Literacy**

College Preparation Advisors from High Schools H, I, and K described how they used financial literacy modules developed and distributed by TG and spoke about their positive experiences. The modules were intended to be delivered to students by teachers, but so far they had been mostly delivered by College Preparation Advisors as described in the section on understanding financial aspects of college in Chapter 3. Teachers at High School K indicated that they would be very interested in delivering those modules to their students and thought it could be a useful tool to incorporate into their own curriculum. TG would like to have more opportunities to get teachers more involved in the future as well.

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<sup>85</sup> More details about PITSCO labs (e.g., hands-on, student-focused curriculum modules) are available at <http://www.pitSCO.com>.

## 2.6 Participation by Community Stakeholders in Texas GEAR UP State Grant

Community stakeholders can play critical roles in helping schools with tutoring, mentoring, job site visits/job shadowing, and college visits. TEA established the following two project objectives for the Texas GEAR UP SG with regard to community alliances:

- 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.

Similar to Year 2, all six of the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort schools worked to establish alliances within their community with local/city government entities, businesses, and educational institutions in Year 3. ASPRs included a list of organizations/affiliations supporting the district's Texas GEAR UP SG program. In Year 3, there were 32 organizations/affiliations listed, an increase of three since Year 2.<sup>86</sup> All districts planned to work with institutions of higher education with regard to student support services (e.g., tutoring, summer camps) and, in some cases, teacher PD. In Year 3, Texas GEAR UP SG staff in each district planned to continue collaboration with many of the educational and community-based organizations from prior years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation (e.g., Agile Minds PD and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) support in college readiness curriculum).<sup>87</sup> District 2 and District 4 intended to collaborate with local businesses for tutoring, technology support, and mentoring. District 3 planned to have support from a city council representative who would support Texas GEAR UP SG by advising on city funds available for sustainability and providing opportunities for job shadowing. Of the 32 organizations/affiliations listed in the ASPRs, 20 were also advisory team members.

Site visit data about community alliances specified some of the ways in which high schools collaborated with these community groups. High School J worked with a local university to offer their students free dual-credit courses, as well as a community health science center that allowed students to learn about working at a medical facility and available financial aid programs. High School I worked with a local energy company whose employees provide mentoring services to about 13 students. Participants from High Schools K and L described working with businesses within their communities, including a local branch of a national bank whose staff provided presentations on college financial aid. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School M continued to grow their relationship with the local university and described plans to develop new collaborations, including larger franchise companies located within the community, a local food bank where students can perform community service, and a local energy company. Texas GEAR UP SG staff from High School K described challenges in coordinating activities with community organizations. At other schools, staff from community organizations described communication barriers in working with schools to coordinate activities, suggesting the need for better communication and advanced planning (High Schools I and M).

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<sup>86</sup> For Year 3, District 1 planned on having two fewer organizations/affiliations listed, District 2 planned on having the same organizations/affiliations, District 3 planned on having one new organization/affiliation, and District 4 planned on having four new organizations/affiliations.

<sup>87</sup> More details about Agile Mind (an organization that provides comprehensive mathematics and science programs for middle and high schools) are available at <http://www.agilemind.com/programs/academic-youth-development>. More details about AVID (a global non-profit organization that provides curriculum and strategies to students Kindergarten through higher education) are available at <http://www.avid.org/>.

## 2.7 Statewide Services

In addition to the data already presented in this chapter focused on Texas GEAR UP SG activities that occurred within the primary cohort high schools, additional implementation data are available related to Texas GEAR UP SG in statewide initiatives. That is, the Texas GEAR UP SG seeks to impact students not just at the primary cohort schools, but also 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 project objectives related to statewide services:

- Project Objective 7.1: By the end of the first year, the Support Center will make information regarding college options, preparation, and financing will be made available to students, parents, and educators throughout the state.
- Project Objective 9.1: 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 training.<sup>88</sup>
- Project Objective 9.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 40% of Texas school districts will have used at least one Texas GEAR UP statewide resource, such as materials or PD.

As described in Chapter 1, Texas GEAR UP SG includes collaboration between TEA and various organizations—the Texas GEAR UP technical assistance provider, AMS Pictures, T-STEM Centers, TG, GeoFORCE, CTK, and Raise Achievement. These collaborators are part of the program and play a crucial role in meeting the Texas GEAR UP SG statewide goals. Districts could work directly with the College Board—a former partner on the grant. Under TEA's direction, these organizations (the technical assistance provider and AMS Pictures, in particular) develop and disseminate supplemental statewide materials, support the statewide coalition of GEAR UP grantees, and plan and implement the annual Texas statewide GEAR UP conference. Other collaborators also have statewide missions. For example, the T-STEM Centers work with Texas GEAR UP SG schools and also provide services to others schools in their region (East Texas) and training throughout the state. The following sections include descriptions of the statewide services provided by TEA and its collaborators in Year 3.

### 2.7.1 Supplemental Statewide Materials for Parents and Students

In Year 2, Project Objective 7.1 was met when the redesigned Texas GEAR UP SG website was launched (<http://www.texasgearup.com>). In Year 3, TEA continued to use the Texas GEAR UP SG to expand tools and resources for students and parents statewide regarding the road to college, including a GEAR UP-related website to share supplemental statewide materials with parents and students. Similar to prior years, the Texas GEAR UP SG website acted as a hub for Texas GEAR UP SG and partnership grant programs and staff throughout the state. After the official launch of the revised website in spring 2013, AMS Pictures continued to update and populate content for the website. According to the APR, AMS Pictures conducted an in-depth needs assessment with the GEAR UP community to inform product development and resource sharing.

The website continued to include resources such as interactive lessons, guides, and college planning toolkits (such as grade-level guides). Material continued to cover four major components: Why Go to College, Prepping for College, Finding a College, and Paying for College. In Year 3, this included the addition of more college readiness resources, videos (such as a student-athlete program), and simulation games (e.g., a game that featured going through

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<sup>88</sup>Beginning in 2016, Project Share is now the Texas Gateway. It provides an online, interactive learning environment for Texas teachers. See <http://www.texasgateway.org/> for additional information.

life scenarios and different financial situations). TEA and Texas GEAR UP SG collaborators planned to continue increasing awareness of the website and to increase usage given the number of students and parents who potentially could benefit from these online resources. One challenge, as described during collaborator interviews, is being able to create broad materials that meet everyone's needs.

The website continued to be available statewide, although data on the percentage of districts accessing the website could not be determined from the site usage data. AMS Pictures reported progress in increased use of the website in Year 3; at the time of the interview with this collaborator, they had the 1,000 more impressions (number of times a visitor viewed the website) than in Year 2. AMS Pictures also noted that they are ahead of schedule in the milestones set toward the goal of having 40% of Texas school districts using the website (meeting Project Objective 9.2 well ahead of year 6). Upcoming efforts planned for website enhancement included a version in Spanish (anticipated to be completed in Year 4) and a separate section for parents. A Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator suggested having a section of the website dedicated to GEAR UP parent activities that have occurred nationwide so the staff can get an idea of what has worked well for other school districts then "tweak it to fit" their own.

### **AWARENESS OF TEXAS GEAR UP STATE GRANT WEBSITE**

Site visit data offered additional information about the use of the Texas GEAR UP SG website. Texas GEAR UP SG staff from High Schools H, J, and M reported that they used the website more in Year 3 as compared to prior years. A few Texas GEAR UP SG staff members noted how it had improved dramatically, including resources for advisors and teachers; however, another described how the site was not "user-friendly," explaining that it could be difficult to locate information and that the information is more relevant to juniors and seniors. One Texas GEAR UP SG staff member mentioned having access to other "more efficient" tools elsewhere. When asked whether they used the Texas GEAR UP SG website, many parents and students reported not knowing about the website or having not used it (High Schools H, I, K, and L). Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High Schools H, J, and M, in particular, reported planning to increase promotion of the website to students and introduce them to the different tools that it offers in Year 4. More data about the Texas GEAR UP SG website, based on the student surveys, are found in Chapter 3.

### **2.7.2 Texas Gateway: Providing Statewide Teacher Professional Development Opportunities**

To provide statewide teacher PD, the Texas GEAR UP SG still plans to capitalize on an online communication and teaching platform that is already available to teachers statewide — TEA's Texas Gateway for online resources (formerly Project Share). Although use during Year 3 was minimal (as was the case in prior years), Texas GEAR UP SG did make progress in finalizing the content planned for the Texas Gateway. AMS Pictures played an increased role in this effort during Year 3. For example, they produced videos of highly successful practices in response to feedback about the need for new ideas and grantees feeling like they were doing their work in isolation with limited opportunities to interact with their professional peers. AMS Pictures also continued to collect and disseminate ideas about best practices through the Texas Gateway, as well as through email, social media, and newsletters. During interviews, collaborators were unsure of teacher access or use. TEA staff indicated that TEA still plans to make an investment in the Texas Gateway to provide Texas GEAR UP SG related PD courses statewide. The evaluation team will continue to work with TEA to determine how best to use data from this resource in the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation.

### **2.7.3 Statewide Coalition of GEAR UP Grantees**

As detailed in Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnell, et al., 2013) and Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015), the statewide coalition of GEAR UP grantees is

intended to promote statewide collaboration and study critical GEAR UP topic areas. The Texas GEAR UP Coalition is, according to the Year 3 APR, “a standing membership organization of GEAR UP Partnership Grant leadership, state grant leadership, and key state partners [that] continued work toward its mission and vision of sharing resources statewide and leveraging the Texas GEAR UP voice locally and beyond.” When asking about statewide services during site visits, participants did not offer much detail about the coalition. Information from collaborator interviews indicated that the coalition was less active in Year 3. Other feedback from these interviews was that coalition members were very busy and asking them to share resources or examples of successful practices was often met without a response, but another individual shared that, over time, there was more trust and willingness to share. Additional information included one individual describing how the coalition helped to provide “a unified voice ... a message across [Texas] to be a leader.”

### 2.7.4 Statewide GEAR UP Conference

As in prior years, TEA and the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center delivered an annual statewide GEAR UP conference in Year 3 to promote GEAR UP practices statewide. Approximately 267 GEAR UP professionals attended the 2014 Texas GEAR UP conference (approximately 275 attended in 2013). In Year 3, APR data indicated that more than half of attendees were first-time conference participants and 22 participants were Texas GEAR UP SG parents. The Support Center was responsible for the conference, which includes arranging keynote speakers and reviewing proposals. AMS Pictures was responsible for creating a conference website. Parents were invited to participate in the conference in Year 3 as part of the newly added Parent Leadership Institute; one collaborator also offered scholarship funds to pay for parents’ registration and travel costs.

Based on collaborator interviews, there was positive feedback about the conference (from students, parents, and staff) and many enjoyed the GEAR UP Lounge (which College Preparation Advisors supported). There was also feedback about the caliber of the speakers; an interview participant stated the value of investing in high-quality, nationally known speakers. Collaborators spoke about how the conference was an opportunity to build awareness about their tools and have a “deeper and wider presence.” Site visit participants from all six Texas GEAR UP SG high schools found the state and/or national GEAR UP conferences beneficial and enlightening. In particular, multiple participants from Schools H, J, and K found that the opportunity to network with other schools and GEAR UP staff was especially beneficial; this included hearing about other implementation plans and programs. Parents from five high schools (High Schools H, I, J, K, and L) reported attending either the state or national conference; parents from High School M may have attended but this did not come up during the site visits. Many of the parents from the focus groups spoke about how they enjoyed the conferences. Those from High School I said that they were surprised to see all of the other programs and opportunities that students had available at other Texas GEAR UP SG schools. The College Preparation Advisor from High School J found it encouraging when parents who attended state or national conferences came back to the school and were able to get other parents excited about the Texas GEAR UP SG. Specifically, Texas GEAR UP SG staff from High Schools J and M participating in the site visit interviews were interested in bringing parents to the 2015–16 Texas GEAR UP SG conference; although staff at other schools may also plan to do so, this was not explicitly stated during site visits.

## 2.8 Conclusions and Next Steps

### 2.8.1 Key Implementation Findings

The following findings regarding implementation are considered key to understanding Year 3 Texas GEAR UP SG implementation:

- **Progress in Advanced Course Taking.** In Year 3, 24% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses, an increase of 14 percentage points from Year 2 in which only 10% of students were taking that many advanced courses (and from Year 1 in which no students were taking four or more advanced courses). Based on APR data, 92% of Grade 9 students were either currently enrolled (61%) or had already completed Algebra I (31%) by March 31, 2015, putting them on track to meet Project Objective 1.1 (at least 85% complete Algebra I by Grade 9). This suggests that Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students have continued to make progress in advanced mathematics in Year 3 with the addition of increased enrollment in advanced courses in other subject areas (e.g., ELA, science, social studies). This is a key step toward meeting multiple Texas GEAR UP SG project objectives, including helping students to be academically prepared for college and meeting the necessary entrance criteria.
- **Mixed Progress with Student Support Services.** Various findings show some positive and some potentially negative trends regarding the implementation of student support services in Year 3. Project Objective 4.1 that at least 75% of students participate in in at least one type of student support service was met at a level similar to Year 2 (81% in Year 3 compared to 78% in Year 2). A majority of the students participated in counseling (69%), nearly double the percentage from Year 2 (36%). On the other hand, just over half of the students (51%) received tutoring in Year 3 (compared to 63% in Year 2) and only 10% of Grade 9 students were receiving comprehensive mentoring in Year 3 (compared to 14% in Year 2). However, the average amount of time spent in tutoring was much greater in Year 3 (12.6 hours compared to 9.2 hours in Year 2).
- **Summer Program Success.** In Year 3, Texas GEAR UP SG far exceeded the Project Objective 4.2 goal of having 30% of students participate in summer programs. In fact, 55% of students participated in Texas GEAR UP SG activities in summer 2014. Types of activities included workshops, family events, educational trips, and parent events. These activities, most of which focused on the high school transition, were also very well received by students and parents, based on site visit data.
- **Intensified Challenges with Parental Involvement.** Obtaining parental involvement in the program continued to be a challenge in Year 3 with Project Objective 7.3 (50% of parents attending at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events) remaining unmet. Only 3% of parents were involved in three or more events in Year 3, compared to 7% in Year 2. However, all of the six high schools had at least some parents attend three or more events. Additionally, 49% of parents attended at least one event, an increase of 11 percentage points since Year 2.

Another way to summarize Year 3 implementation, as was done in prior years, is to create a high-level view of each schools' mix of implementation of various activity types. This summary builds on the work of identifying a mix of implementation strategies intended to involve a range of stakeholders (i.e., students, parents, teachers, community, and statewide collaborators). For the purposes of this high-level view, each school was considered as having engaged in, or not engaged in, each type of activity. There were 18 activities tracked in Year 3, and Table 2.3 summarizes Texas GEAR UP SG strategies implemented by each school in Year 3; data from prior years' implementation in middle schools are presented in Table 1.2, Chapter 1.<sup>89</sup> Most notable is that none of the middle schools implemented all of the activities tracked in prior years, but, in Year 3, three high schools (High Schools H, I, and M) implemented all 18 strategies and the other three high schools nearly did so. Given that prior year implementation occurred at middle schools, school-level comparisons are not possible between Year 3 and prior years, but there are a few relevant trends at the district level. For example, the one district that did not

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<sup>89</sup> Some activities reported in prior years were not applicable in Year 3 such as Other Student Support Services, High School Knowledge Activity, and Parent High School Visit. Two new strategies were added to the table in Year 3: AP Course Enrollment and Vertical Teaming Events.

implement summer programs in prior years, did so in Year 3. Two new districts (Districts 1 and 4) implemented job site visits in Year 3, but one district (District 2) that completed job site visits in prior years did not do so in Year 3. The one district that did not implement student workshops or events in prior years (District 1), began to implement the strategy in Year 3. As with the earlier indicators regarding mix of implementation, this summary does not take into account quality, quantity, or the effect of the given implementation activity.

**Table 2.3. Overview of Texas GEAR UP SG Implementation Strategies by School, 2014–15**

	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
<b>Implementation Strategies</b>						
Advanced Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
AP Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Summer Programs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Tutoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Mentoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Counseling/Advising	X	X	X	X	X	X
College Visit	X	X	X	X	X	X
Job Site Visit/Job Shadowing	X	X	X			X
Educational Field Trips	X	X		X		X
Student Workshops/Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Counseling/ Advising	X	X	X			X
Parent Event on College Preparation/Financial Aid	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent College Visit	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Professional Development	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vertical Teaming Events*	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Alliances	X	X	X	X	X	X
Use of Statewide Services	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Total Number of Strategies Implemented (Out of 18)</b>						
	18	18	17	16	15	18

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2015; fall 2014 and spring 2015 site visit data.

Note: An “X” indicates that a school reported implementing the strategy, although it does not capture the level of implementation (such as the number of students served) for each strategy. AP = advanced placement. Asterisk notes new implementation category captured in Year 3.

In addition, Table 2.4 includes indicators regarding whether each school was on target to meet relevant project objectives. Overall, Texas GEAR UP SG is on track to meet each objective, except for parental involvement in which all schools were far from the mark in Year 3. However, Table 2.4 also displays how specific schools are doing regarding each objective. Most schools (all except for High Schools H and I) were on track to meet Project Objective 1.1 regarding Algebra I completion in Grade 9. Although all schools met Project Objective 3.1 regarding teacher training, only two schools (High Schools K and M) met the annual objective for vertical alignment (Project Objective 3.2). All of the Texas GEAR UP SG high schools met the objective related to student support services (Project Objective 4.1) and only two schools (High Schools K and L) did not meet the objective for summer programs (Project Objective 4.2). In order to meet near-term objectives (Project Objectives 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 5.1 and 5.2), each Texas GEAR UP SG high school will need to increase their emphasis on advanced course taking/completion and preparation for college entrance exams (both test-taking and successful scores).

**Table 2.4. School Progress Meeting Project Objectives, 2014–15**

Project Objectives	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
1.1: 85% of students will complete Algebra I by the end of Grade 9. <sup>a</sup>			X	X	X	X
1.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Program with an endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, including four years of credits in each core subject, will meet or exceed the state average.				X	X	
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. <sup>b</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
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.					X	
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.					X	
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.	X	X	X	X	X	X
3.2: In each grant year, teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.				X		X
4.1: 75% of students will receive student support services by the end of Grade 8.	X	X	X	X	X	X
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.	X	X	X			X
4.3: By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average. <sup>c</sup>						
4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college.	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholar Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) or Preliminary SAT 10 (PSAT 10). By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT. <sup>d</sup>					X	X
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.	X	X	X	X	X	X
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.	X	X	X	X	X	X
7.3: 50% of parents will participate in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events each year.						
8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.	X	X	X	X	X	X
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.	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2015; fall 2014 and spring 2015 site visit data.

Note: An "X" indicates that a school is making reasonable progress toward an objective, although it does not capture the completion or attainment of an objective.

<sup>a</sup> Progress towards the earlier objective related to Project Objective 1.1 (30% of students will successfully complete Algebra I by the end of Grade 8) are detailed in Chapter 2.

<sup>b</sup> AP = advanced placement. Near-term objectives also related to Project Objective 2.1 include the following: Projective Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including 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. Schools rated as being in progress toward Project Objective 2.1 are assumed to also be making progress toward these objectives in the later years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation.

<sup>c</sup> Middle Schools D, F, and G are expected to exceed the state averages for Grade 8 to Grade 9 promotion. Eligibility data on anticipated promotion from Grade 9 to Grade 10 were not yet available from Texas GEAR UP SG high schools. State averages for promotion typically lag by at least one year and are not yet available.

<sup>d</sup> ACT Aspire is the preliminary ACT and PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 are preliminary to the SAT. The following near-term objective also relates to Project Objective 5.1: 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. Schools rated as being in progress toward Project Objective 5.1 are assumed to also be making progress toward this objective in the later years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation.

## 2.8.2 Facilitators and Barriers to Texas GEAR UP State Grant Implementation

Data from prior implementation reports (Briggs et al., 2015; O'Donnel et al., 2013) about facilitators and barriers primarily came from site visits and parent survey data. Given the reason for excluding parent survey data described in the beginning of this Chapter, this section primarily relies on site visit data about facilitators and barriers to implementation; specific facilitators/barriers regarding parental involvement are included to some degree and will be revisited in future implementation reports.

### FACILITATORS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Participants across multiple schools described how an established relationship and conversational dialogue with College Preparation Advisors helped motivate students. During the collaborator interviews, a few participants mentioned concepts like trust and rapport as aspects that have been strengthened over time and helped to improve Texas GEAR UP SG implementation. Such rapport building reportedly helped with the implementation of both statewide and district services. Texas GEAR UP SG staff who participated in site visits also spoke positively about how the face-to-face meetings with the Support Center and the Texas GEAR UP conference were helpful opportunities to share ideas and troubleshoot issues. Additionally, High Schools K and L held weekly meetings with their school-level leadership team to share ideas and progress related to Texas GEAR UP SG implementation. These opportunities to share ideas seem important given that a few site visit and collaborator interview participants discussed the challenges in Texas GEAR UP SG staff feeling like they are working in isolation from their professional peers and that sometimes generic materials/ideas are not relevant to every setting.

Some schools shared examples of school-level initiatives that helped promote Texas GEAR UP SG. This includes examples of efforts to increase student attendance (High School I) and college/career fairs (High School K). The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator at High School J met monthly with the district officials and community organizations (such as those leading similar grant programs) to discuss their ideas and determine how to collaborate. An administrator from the same schools suggested a future action that could further enhance GEAR UP SG implementation: aligning Texas GEAR UP SG and campus goals. This individual went on to share ideas about the need for Texas GEAR UP SG staff and teachers to interact more and ensure that communication is occurring at the school level, not just at the cohort level. Similarly, some schools had success building strong relationships with school counselors, who share similar goals of helping students to graduate high school and enroll in college. Another example of collaboration that facilitated success in Year 3 was the way in which some schools maximized their relationships with nearby universities to support a wide range of Texas GEAR UP SG activities, including mentoring, college visits, and workshops; having university representatives on their advisory council may have helped to make these collaborative efforts possible.

There were also strategies that facilitated parental involvement in particular. For example, High School J adjusted the times of parent meetings to a regular set time and have offered lunch meetings. The College Preparation Advisor at this school said that these adjustments, along with the addition of more phone calls, boosted parental engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG events. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator at High School M extensively discussed their level of parental involvement, much of which the individual attributed to the parent liaison and the Parent GEAR UP room at the school. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator and parent liaison have been able to reach parents through social media, phone calls, and postcards. The GEAR UP parent room had laptops for parents to research information about colleges and/or jobs for their students or themselves, and is also able to house the parent meetings held at the school.

The room is available for parents at any time that the school is open and is a separate space specifically for the parents.

### OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS DESCRIBED IN PRIOR YEARS

One of the major challenges in Year 1 and Year 2 (Briggs et al., 2015; O'Donnel et al., 2013) was getting parents involved in Texas GEAR UP SG. In Year 3, high schools continued to struggle with this but also found new ways to address this implementation barrier. Texas GEAR UP SG staff from High School M communicated with the Support Center as a way to improve parental involvement by notifying them of what kind of information or activities parents find worthwhile. A College Preparation Advisor from High School H said that when parents participated, they were always able to leave with new information that they did not previously have; this was important so that parents could find the sessions to be useful and become interested in returning to another session. Participants from High School K said that incentives like free food and babysitting, as well as meeting in small groups, helped increase their parental involvement. High School M held a report card drive-through for parents to come to the school to pick up report cards, which Texas GEAR UP SG staff and parents reported as being a successful activity that helped increase participation given the convenience of being able to participate.

Although there were some new strategies to increase parental engagement in Year 3, it remains a challenge across schools. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School K suggested that “communication [between parents and their children] will lessen as the kids get older.” In conjunction with families that struggle financially, Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School K reported that it was difficult to keep an up-to-date list of parents’ contact numbers if their phone numbers are constantly changing or are out of service. An administrator at High School J spoke about athletic involvement, particularly during the fall football season, as a barrier to family involvement because families are committed to practice and game day schedules that often conflict with Texas GEAR UP SG activities. One site visit participant suggested that Texas GEAR UP SG set up tables/information booths at sporting events to address this issue.

### CONTINUED AND NEW BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION IN YEAR 3

In one district (School District 4), district administrators described challenges in working with the Support Center, saying that there was oftentimes “not enough information upfront” about how the district could implement strategies and that restrictions may hinder their implementation; the district would have liked to have received more guidance in planning.

In general, participants from all schools described poor communication as another barrier to implementation. This affected various aspects of implementation, including parents hoping to have more notice about events and Texas GEAR UP SG staff needing to have more clarity on how to report grant activities. In one case, a Texas GEAR UP SG staff member expressed a lack of clarity between district and school staff on what the individual’s role should be. The lack of advanced planning and strategic coordination were barriers for one school in being able to maximize the potential of their community alliances.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff from High Schools H and I reported barriers to teacher PD with regard to securing substitute teachers during those times. They noted it was difficult to find enough substitutes that can cover all of the teachers that would attend the trainings and taking time away from instruction presents concerns as well.

Across schools, students’ perceived lack of motivation, and related concerns with behavior and poor academic performance, make it difficult to implement Texas GEAR UP SG with fidelity. Specifically, the Texas GEAR UP SG advisor at High School M described the difficulty of reaching students as it can be difficult to get students to seek out help when they are in need of

it, despite making them aware of the resources available. The individual also expressed concern about student participation rates in extracurricular activities, like field trips and those outside of school hours, because students will begin working at jobs as they turn 16 years old.

With regard to the planning and execution of student activities, such as college visits, school districts often present their own set of requirements when coordinating these events. At High School H, in particular, meeting these requirements and obtaining approval for these activities can limit the ability to give students and parents advanced notice in order to get permission to attend. Similarly, the district's long approval processes were what the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator at High School J attributed to having to forego an opportunity with a local university to earn dual credit.

### **2.8.3 Potential Promising Practices**

In addition to engaging facilitators and seeking ways to overcome barriers, there are several emerging promising practices related to Year 3 implementation with regard to several aspects of the Texas GEAR UP SG that are worthy of continued follow-up in the future. This report identifies six potential promising implementation practices based on the information collected to date.

#### **NEAR-PEER MENTORING**

At High School I, two activities were exemplary opportunities for Grade 9 students to be mentored by Grade 12 students at their school. The Senior Panel provided an opportunity for successful Grade 12 students to share with Grade 9 students about what it was like to apply for college and what they wish they would have known when they began high school. A teacher at this school also shared an activity about having her Grade 12 students write letters to Grade 9 students to offer advice about what they did right and wrong throughout their time in high school. Similarly, High School M works with students at a local university to provide mentoring services and plans to work with juniors and seniors to sustain this effort going forward.

#### **PARENT UNIVERSITIES AND SYMPOSIA**

High School K offered Parent Universities: These include providing parents with information on a specific topic (such as financial aid). In some cases, Texas GEAR UP SG staff coordinated the Parent University with the college access organization at the school. The format of these parent events (which included having rotations of discussion items related to the topic) was more interactive compared to parent events in the past; Texas GEAR UP SG staff received positive feedback from many parents. High School M held a parent symposium on a Saturday that included a speaker from the Texas GEAR UP conference and various sessions that parents could attend. Because of parents' complaints about a lack of variety in information presented at previous parent events, this symposium provided new and different information that parents chose.

#### **REPORT CARD DRIVE-THROUGH**

High School H tried out a unique approach to parental involvement by doing a report card drive-through in which they met parents in the parking lot to distribute report cards and have a brief conversation about student progress specifically and Texas GEAR UP SG events/programs more generally. This was well received as a way to reach many parents in a manner that was convenient and accessible for them. A primary advantage of this strategy was that it did not take up a lot of the parents' time or require them to find child care.

### **STRATEGICALLY DESIGNED TUTORING**

High School K strategized a few approaches to effective tutoring. Six tutors provided support across multiple subjects (mathematics, ELA, and science) in the classroom. Teachers reported the usefulness of having “an extra hand” in the classroom for students. They indicated that the tutors were most effective when they worked with students who needed remediation or extra support during class time. Additionally, the school hired a student teacher as the afterschool tutor because the individual was already familiar with the students and the course content, and had a demonstrated ability to work with a larger group of students. Similarly, at High School M, providing content-specific tutors proved to be a useful approach to help bolster students’ areas of need, specifically related to ELA, in preparation for state exams.

### **GEAR UP CONFERENCE ENHANCEMENTS**

In Year 3 of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, there were a few added components of the statewide GEAR UP conference that site visit participants and collaborator interviewees noted as being particularly effective. Involving parents in the conference was an effective approach to helping them to become more invested in the program and aware of how they can support the GEAR UP mission at their school. Additionally, many people liked the GEAR UP Lounge as a central location to network, share ideas, and seek out supports.

### **EXTENDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Instead of a typical one-day PD session that often has minimal staying power with teachers, High Schools H and I have curriculum specialists available to support teachers’ implementation of PBL. Site visit participants spoke about how they were a useful complement to the three Saturdays of PBL training they had received. It is also anticipated to be a way to sustain the practices they learned over time by having the curriculum specialists provide feedback/guidance and resources/ideas.

#### **2.8.4 Recommended Next Steps**

Several important next steps for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation were identified, and the following next steps are recommended:

#### **TEA AND SUPPORT CENTER GUIDANCE ON ROLES**

TEA should work with the Support Center to offer Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators and College Preparation Advisors training or guidance as to what their roles and responsibilities should be. It would be particularly useful to also establish mechanisms of accountability to ensure that such guidance is followed and create frequent opportunities to check in with staff about this.

#### **USE OF EXISTING ASSETS TO ENROLL STUDENTS IN ADVANCED PLACEMENT CLASSES**

Year 3 data point to several successes that Texas GEAR UP SG staff can capitalize on to work toward the project objectives related to AP enrollment. For example, there are already a high percentage of students taking advanced courses, and helping them succeed in those classes may prepare students for more rigorous courses. Successful collaborations with school counselors at some schools in Year 3 can be deepened and expanded to other schools as a way to work together on encouraging schools to offer a wide range of AP options and students to enroll in them. Year 3 showed a slight reduction in the percentage of students receiving tutoring; increasing the emphasis on this support service may be important to helping students succeed academically. This may include exploring flexible options such as lunchtime, in-class, or virtual tutoring given that high school students may continue to have limited availability for afterschool programs.

### **EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE MULTIPLE SKILL SETS THAT STUDENTS NEED FOR SUCCESS**

Many themes emerged related to the need for students to have multiple skill sets in order to succeed. Beyond academic skills, Texas GEAR UP SG staff need to work to help students have study skills, motivation, organizational skills, and so forth. Expanding the percentage of students in mentoring services and focusing mentoring sessions on these skills may help address this gap.

### **EXPANSION OF COLLEGE VISITS AND JOB SITE VISITS**

Students, as well as other stakeholders, continue to see much value in the experiences of college visits and job site visits. Expanding the number of opportunities, the percentage of involvement, and the scope of endorsements covered by these visits will help to make these valuable experiences more widely accessible. Texas GEAR UP SG staff may need to be diligent in advanced planning to make these opportunities purposeful and valuable with intentional coordination and engagement with multiple stakeholders. As one participant suggested, having students research the school before the visit may also make it a more useful experience.

### **DEVOTED EFFORTS TO INVOLVE PARENTS AND TEACHERS**

To continue garnering the support and involvement of parents and teachers, TEA and the Support Center should encourage schools to engage in intensive, ongoing efforts to communicate information about the program, as well as provide information about specific activities. Practices that emerged in Year 3 could be refined and replicated, including the following: posting Texas GEAR UP SG events on school calendars, leveraging parent liaisons, communicating through social media, and linking program activities to sporting events. Similarly, teachers, especially those in the upper grades, need to be involved in Texas GEAR UP SG before the primary cohort matriculates into the grades they teach. Similar efforts regarding making parents aware of Texas GEAR UP SG may help to promote this schoolwide understanding of and involvement with the program.

### **INTENTIONAL PLANS FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

One major factor in being able to sustain programs is advanced planning. TEA and the Support Center need to encourage schools to focus on this aspect of Texas GEAR UP SG by setting clear expectations for what is included in ASPRs and other program documentation. Offering support, guidance, and feedback about approaches to sustainability will be a critical step to continuing GEAR UP activities after Texas GEAR UP SG ends.



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

Surveys are used in the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation as a source to understand students' and parents' perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, evaluate the effectiveness of services and activities, determine educational aspirations/expectations, and assess levels of understanding about college including financial costs and entrance requirements. In large part, survey items provide evidence with regard to the Texas GEAR UP SG goal of increasing primary cohort students' and their parents' knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing (Project Goal 7). These survey 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 are from the analysis of 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. Related insights drawn from site visits are included to a limited extent as appropriate.

As of the end of the 2014–15 school year, parents were asked to participate in surveys three times, once each spring from Grade 7 through Grade 9. Students have been asked to complete surveys in spring 2013 (Grade 7), and in both fall and spring in Grade 8 and Grade 9. This chapter focuses primarily on the findings from the spring 2015 surveys with connections to Year 1 and Year 2 data as relevant (O'Donnel, et al., 2013; Briggs, et al., 2015). Statistically significant differences within students, from spring 2013 to spring 2015, 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>90</sup>

Survey data were collected anonymously at all time points, meaning that individuals' responses over time cannot be linked. Therefore, comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. In the case of students, response rates were relatively high and the sample is likely sufficient to represent the broad range of experiences students may have had. However, as noted in Chapter 1.1.4, the transition from middle school to high school was accompanied by a new group of students joining the cohort for the first time in Grade 9. That is, approximately 30% of the Grade 9 students were participating in Texas GEAR UP SG for the first time. Readers are cautioned to keep this in mind while reviewing the student survey findings making comparisons over time. 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. As is discussed in the following section, parent survey responses in spring 2015 were insufficient to include in this report.

The following questions are addressed in this chapter:

- What were students' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, college readiness, financing college)?
- What were student perceptions of student support services implementation strategies?
- What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by students to be effective, and therefore potential best practices?
- What information or opportunities did students perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness?
- What types of information did grantees making available to students?
- What facilitators and barriers were reported regarding participation in college readiness activities?

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<sup>90</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.

Where possible from site visit data, staff and parent perspectives related to each of these questions will also be provided. In addition, forthcoming will be a spotlight brief on summer 2014 programs. The primary research questions associated with this brief are related to making the transition to high school.

### 3.1 Survey Response Rates

This section summarizes the parent and student response rates for Texas GEAR UP SG surveys administered in May and June 2015. Respondents included the primary cohort of Grade 9 students and their parents served in the 2014–15 school year.<sup>91</sup> See Appendix G for details about survey administration, data cleaning, and the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents. TEA and the evaluation team engaged in a range of strategies to encourage completion of the surveys (see Appendix G), but as indicated in the following the ED goal of 80% of students responding and 50% of parents responding was not achieved. Data presented in the remainder of the chapter reflect those students who did respond to the survey. Students not responding to the survey may differ from those completing the survey although the sample was sufficiently large (73%) to be representative. As noted, given the poor parent response rates, new parent data are not presented although parent data from prior years are presented in graphs for comparative purposes where appropriate.

#### 3.1.1 Challenges in Collecting Parent Survey Data in Year 3

After data cleaning (a standard practice to prepare data for analysis by removing invalid responses), 250 parent surveys (91% of the surveys received) remained for analyses.<sup>92</sup> This represents an overall response rate of 14% for parents. The response rate for each high school is shown in Table 3.1. In Year 3, schools, on average, continued to struggle to achieve the 50% response rate for parent surveys set by ED. TEA must report the findings from parent surveys in the APRs throughout the grant period. For response rates, the number of parents at each school was based on the number of students enrolled at the time of submission of APR enrollment data.<sup>93</sup> Overall, parent survey response rates decreased by 12 percentage points from Year 2 (26%) to Year 3 (14%). High School M (45%) came closest to the 50% response rate requirement. Given the low overall response rates for this round of administration, parent survey results are not reported in this chapter. Appendix E, which includes a case study for each district, reports select findings at the district level.

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<sup>91</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>92</sup> Reasons for exclusion included the following: dissenting to taking the survey, indicating not having a child in Grade 9, and completing less than 50% of the survey items. Excluding surveys based on lack of data is a generally accepted practice within an evaluation, given the perception that the lack of completeness of a high number of items may indicate disinterest or a lack of focus on the part of the respondent.

<sup>93</sup> One parent survey was sent home with each student, although more than one parent of a child may have completed the online survey.

**Table 3.1. Parent Survey Response Rates by School, 2014–15**

School	Number of Parents	Number of Valid Parent Surveys Received	Parent Survey Response Rate
High School H	380	12	3.2%
High School I	360	30	8.3%
High School J	184	29	15.8%
High School K	495	20	4.0%
High School L	111	23	20.7%
High School M	300	136	45.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,830</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>13.7%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2014; Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: The parent survey response rate is calculated based on one parent per student.

### PLANS FOR COLLECTING PARENT SURVEY DATA IN FALL 2015

In an effort to ensure that parents' perspectives are included in the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation, ICF administered additional parent surveys in all schools (except for High School M) in September/October 2015. This survey included items essential to the evaluation (APR-required items, knowledge about college, and perceptions about GEAR UP activities). These data will be reported in Annual Implementation Report #4.

#### 3.1.2 Student Survey Response Rates

There was an overall response rate of 73% for student surveys. The response rates by school for students are included in Table 3.2 (Table G.2, Appendix G provides respondents' demographic information). In Year 3, three schools (High Schools I, L, and M) exceeded the student survey goal set by ED to achieve an 80% response rate, and one school (High School H) nearly met this mark with a 79% response rate. Two schools (High Schools J and K) continued to struggle to achieve an 80% response rate. TEA must report the findings from student surveys in the APRs throughout the grant period. For response rates, the number of students at each school was based on the number of students enrolled at the time of submission of Year 3 APR enrollment data. Overall, student survey response rates increased 1 percentage point from Year 2 (72%) to Year 3 (73%).

**Table 3.2. Student Survey Response Rates by School, 2014–15**

School	Number of Students	Number of Valid Student Surveys Received	Student Survey Response Rate
High School H	380	299	78.7%
High School I	360	291	80.8%
High School J	184	110	59.8%
High School K	495	246	49.7%
High School L	111	103	92.8%
High School M	300	284	94.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,830</b>	<b>1,333</b>	<b>72.8%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2014; Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

## 3.2 Postsecondary Plans

The postsecondary plans of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students and their parents are important because they point to the readiness level of the primary stakeholders. 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. In addition, these data offer an understanding of student perceptions to know where to focus efforts and gauge progress in impacting student perceptions. It will be imperative to track changes over time regarding the extent to which students report that Texas GEAR UP SG participation influences their plans for attending college. The items in this section address the following evaluation questions: What are students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, college readiness, financing college)? How have these changed from spring 2014 to spring 2015?

### 3.2.1 Educational Aspirations and Expectations

Plans for attending college can be understood as both the level that one would like to achieve and the level that one anticipates achieving, with the ideal being that both are in the direction of a four-year college degree. Items on the student survey asked about the highest level of education desired (aspirations), as well as the anticipated actual level achieved (expectations).<sup>94</sup> Figure 3.1 illustrates the percentage of students who selected a four-year degree or higher for each time point and parent data from prior years. Analyses examined the overall distribution of responses and compared them over time. Students' aspirations are continuing to increase on a similar path from prior years, with a four percentage point increase from spring 2014 to spring 2015 (compared to a five percentage point increase between spring 2013 and spring 2014). Students' expectations for a four-year degree or higher increased by one percentage point from spring 2014 to spring 2015; this marks a slightly less dramatic trend than between spring 2013 and spring 2014 in which student expectations increased 13 percentage points. Percentages for each response option and each time point are displayed in Table G.3 in Appendix G.

Both data points are moving in the desired direction; however, in spring 2015, the gap between student aspirations and expectations was wider than in spring 2014 (13 and 10 percentage points, respectively). As was the case in Year 1 and Year 2, students' educational aspirations significantly exceeded their expectations (see Table G.4, Appendix G).<sup>95</sup> For example, within students who aspire to a four-year degree, 64% expect to achieve at that level or higher, while 36% expect to achieve a two-year degree or less. Of the 526 students who said they want to get at least a bachelor's degree, only 338 of them think that they actually will achieve that level of education.

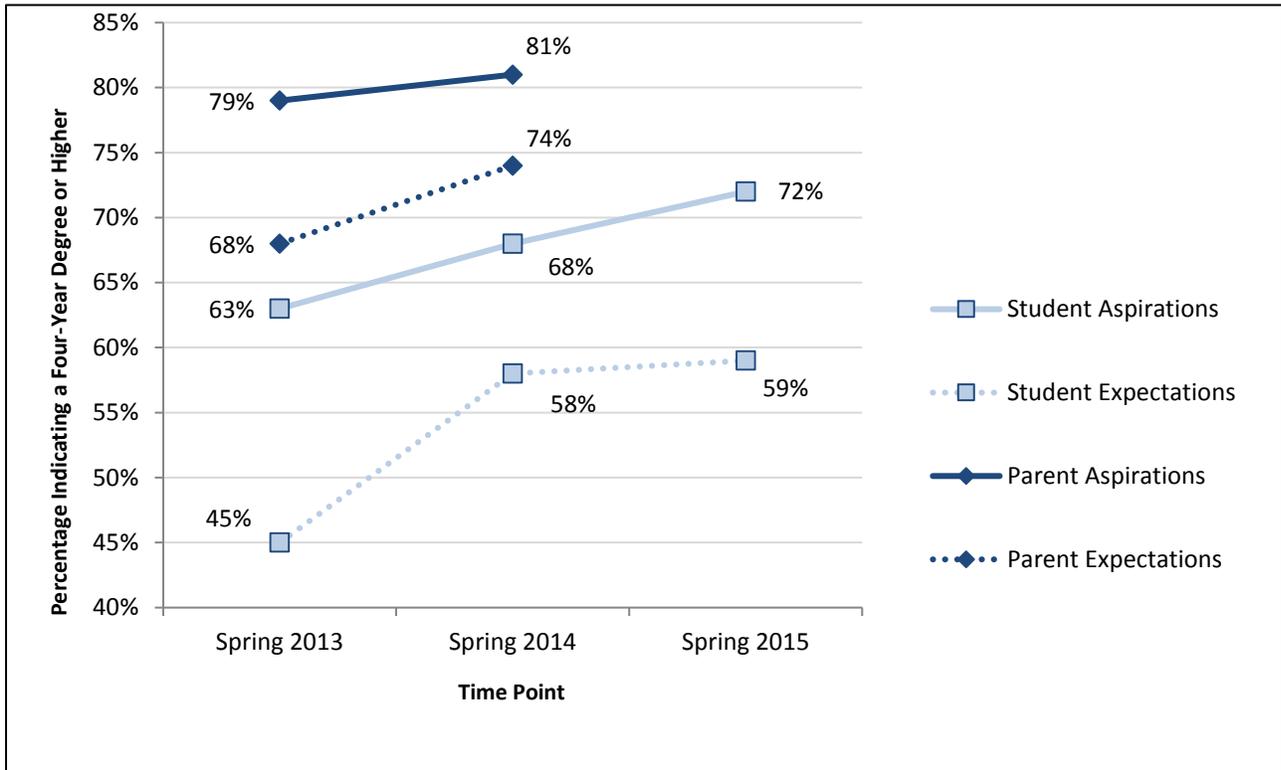
The overall high number of students who aspire to attend college suggests that Texas GEAR UP SG schools continue to encourage students to have a college-going mentality. Although there was progress in Year 2 to narrow the gap between aspirations and expectations, survey results from Year 3 found a wider gap between aspirations and expectations. The gap between aspirations and expectations will need to continue to be examined across the high school years to determine if it is influenced by ongoing Texas GEAR UP SG services and activities/events.

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<sup>94</sup> The question regarding educational expectations is required by USDE for both the student and parent surveys.

<sup>95</sup>  $\chi^2(1) = 56.0, p < .001$ . A small percentage of students (10%) had expectations that exceeded aspirations. This indicates that there may have been some confusion with the items because it is unlikely, for example, that one would achieve a four-year college degree when aspiring for less.

**Figure 3.1. Percentages of Parents and Students Who Aspire and Expect to Obtain a Four-Year College Degree or Higher: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013 and Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015).

Note: Given the low response rate in spring 2015, parent survey results are not reported. Additionally, low parent response rates in spring 2013 and spring 2014 warrant caution in interpreting the trend data included on parent surveys. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. N counts for each item are included in the full data presented in Table G.3, Appendix G. Neither student aspirations nor expectations were significantly different over time.

Survey responses across schools are included in Appendix G (Tables G.5 and G.6). The percentage of students who aspire to some college or less was highest at High School I (21%) and only 5% at High School L. To the extent that educational aspirations influence students' actual choices, this suggests that High School I, in particular, has considerable work to do in order to inspire students with a desire to complete both high school and at least some college. At each school, more than half of the students responding to the survey indicated that they expected to obtain at least a four-year college degree, with High School L representing the highest percentage (74%). Ongoing efforts to help students understand that college is a realistic possibility for them is a suggested effort for all Texas GEAR UP SG schools; this can help to reinforce and maintain that expectation for students who already expect to obtain a college degree and help more students to establish that expectation as well. Data from site visits point to different approaches across schools in how the program is working to influence aspirations and expectations. For example, a teacher from High School H said that talking with students as early as possible has also helped students become more interested in pursuing post-secondary education and what it will take for them to reach that goal.

Site visit data also illuminated important themes about college aspirations and expectations. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High Schools H, I, and M reported that the change in college-going culture is apparent when students frequently ask about their GPA and class rank; this reflects that they are aware of important requirements for college acceptance and are eager to work toward them. An administrator at High School J described a shift in the college-going culture within their community, saying that students are beginning to believe “that it’s possible to go to college. They now have an understanding of what it looks like, what it sounds like.” Teachers at High School H reported that maintaining high expectations of the students is one way to sustain the college-going culture propelled by Texas GEAR UP SG; this includes continuing to increase academic rigor in preparation for what to expect in college as “it gives students confidence and increases their capacity to study.” College visits and job site visits were described as one prominent facilitator in altering the school’s college-going culture by giving students a better understanding of what college and careers are like (see more about these activities in Chapter 2). The continued provision of information on career options and college entrance requirements was mentioned as a way that high school staff can help prepare students for postsecondary education (High School L). One important site visit finding was how multiple Texas GEAR UP SG staff shared that the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students are sharing their knowledge and experiences with other grades and families, resulting in parents and older students coming to the Texas GEAR UP SG staff with questions. In summary, the input from various stakeholders is reflected in the following statement from a parent at High School M: “I think [Texas GEAR UP SG] has turned college into an expectation instead of a dream.”

**Quotes From the Field: Perceptions About College Aspirations and Expectations, Spring 2015**

Many site visit participants spoke about the impact of Texas GEAR UP SG on the college-going culture. For example:

- “[Students believe] that it’s possible to go to college. They now have an understanding of what it looks like, what it sounds like.” (Administrator)
- “[Increased rigor] gives students confidence and increases their capacity to study.... Beforehand, they thought they don’t really need college.” (Teacher)
- “I think [Texas GEAR UP SG] has turned college into an expectation instead of a dream.” (Parent)

**3.2.2 Perceptions of College Plans**

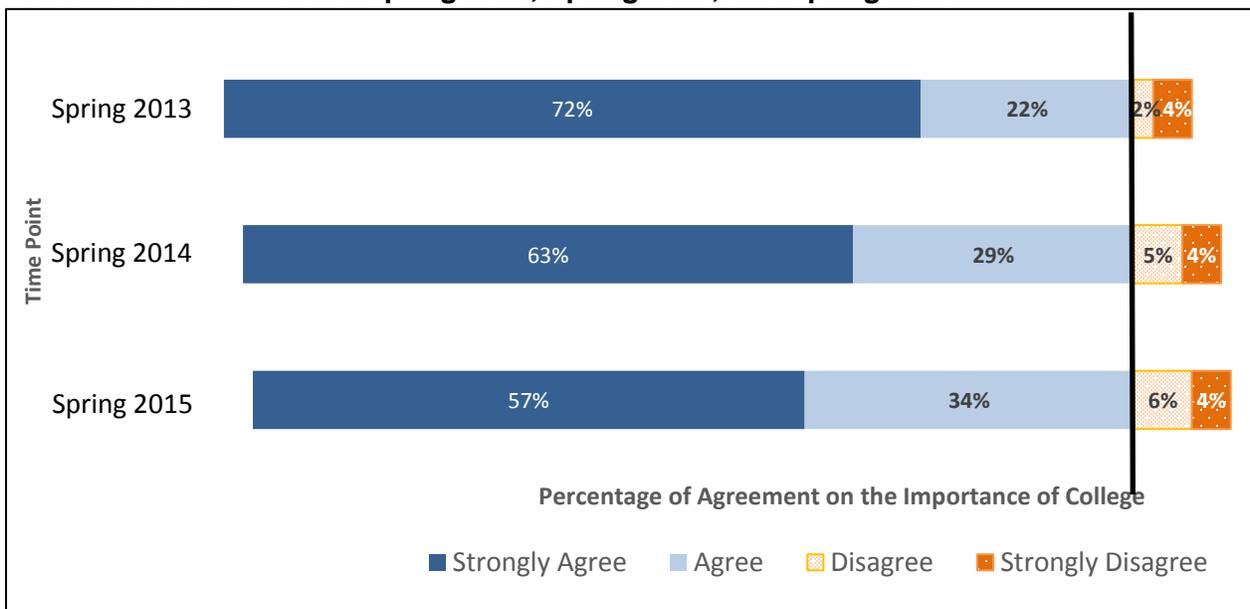
Two items on the survey addressed more specific aspects that may influence postsecondary expectations. One item addresses the respondents’ belief that attending college is important in order to be able to attain their career goals, and the other addresses the perception that it is too early to be talking about college. Each of these items may be related to decisions that students will make about attending college. In the first case, if students believe that they can attain their goals and the future they want without attending college, then college attendance becomes less relevant to them. Similarly, if students believe that it is too early to be thinking about college, then they likely are not having discussions or making plans to that end. Although college may have appeared to be something in the distant future in prior years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, it is anticipated that as students progress through high school, this will continue to become a more pressing priority.

The results for the first item are displayed in the divergent bar graph in Figure 3.2. Nearly all students (91%) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that attending college is important for their career goals and the future in spring 2015. In considering this finding, it is important to note the high baseline: 94% of students *agreed* or *strongly agreed* to this item in spring 2013. The percentage

of students selecting *strongly agree* decreased significantly over time.<sup>96</sup> However, Texas GEAR UP SG staff can continue to intervene with the 10% of students who do not see college as important for them and help students with positive perspectives to maintain them. Similar to data reported in Year 1 and Year 2, a majority of the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students have an overall “readiness level” to receive information and services about college (Briggs et al., 2015; O’Donnel et al., 2013).

Although seemingly high overall, examining the trends at each school suggests that student agreement about the importance of attending college differed significantly across schools. The percentage of students in spring 2015 who *strongly agree* that it is important ranges from a high of 66% at High School M to a low of 51% at High School I and High School K (see Table G.7, Appendix G).<sup>97</sup>

**Figure 3.2. Students’ Levels of Agreement that Attending College Is Important for Their Career Goals and Future: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014; and Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages across those who responded with some level of agreement may not total 100% due to rounding. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

\* Student selection of strongly agreed differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(2) = 56.2, p < .01$ .

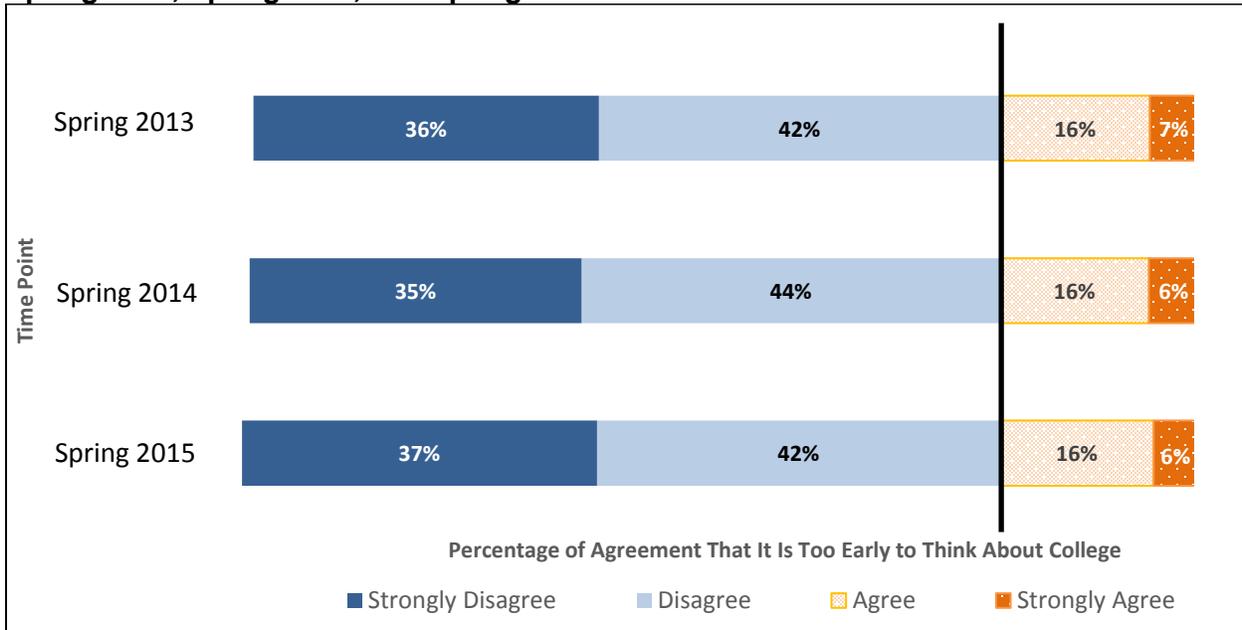
Consistently over the three times surveyed, nearly one quarter of the students (23%, 21% and 22%, respectively) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that it is too early to think about going to college (Figure 3.3). Levels of agreement varied significantly across schools; data for *agreed* and *strongly agreed* are as follows: High School H 23%, High School I-27%, High School J 17%, High School K 24%, High School L 8%, High School M 18%.<sup>98</sup> As students matriculated into high school (Year 3 of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation), it was hoped they might have an increased urgency to begin thinking about college although this has not yet occurred. Texas GEAR UP SG activities and events emphasizing the importance of early planning to prepare for college may not yet be resonating with this subgroup of 22% of students.

<sup>96</sup> Student selection of *strongly agreed* differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(2) = 56.2, p < .01$ .

<sup>97</sup> Student levels of agreement differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 29.4, p < .01$ .

<sup>98</sup> Student levels of agreement differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 30.1, p < .05$ .

**Figure 3.3. Students’ Levels of Agreement That It is Too Early to Think About College: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages across those who responded with some level of agreement may not total 100% due to rounding. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. Change over time was not statistically significant.

In response to these findings about planning for college, Texas GEAR UP SG and school staff might consider additional ways to emphasize to students that thinking about college should begin now in order to help ensure that these percentages drop even lower. This is particularly important as students continue through high school and the window of time to start thinking about college narrows. Students may also need encouragement from Texas GEAR UP SG and school staff to enroll in the appropriate courses that will facilitate college acceptance. TEA should encourage GEAR UP strategies that concomitantly address supporting students who already recognize the importance of college with activities focused on the smaller percentage of students who currently do not understand the importance of college and/or are not thinking about it yet.

### 3.2.3 Perceived Impact of Texas GEAR UP State Grant on Educational Plans

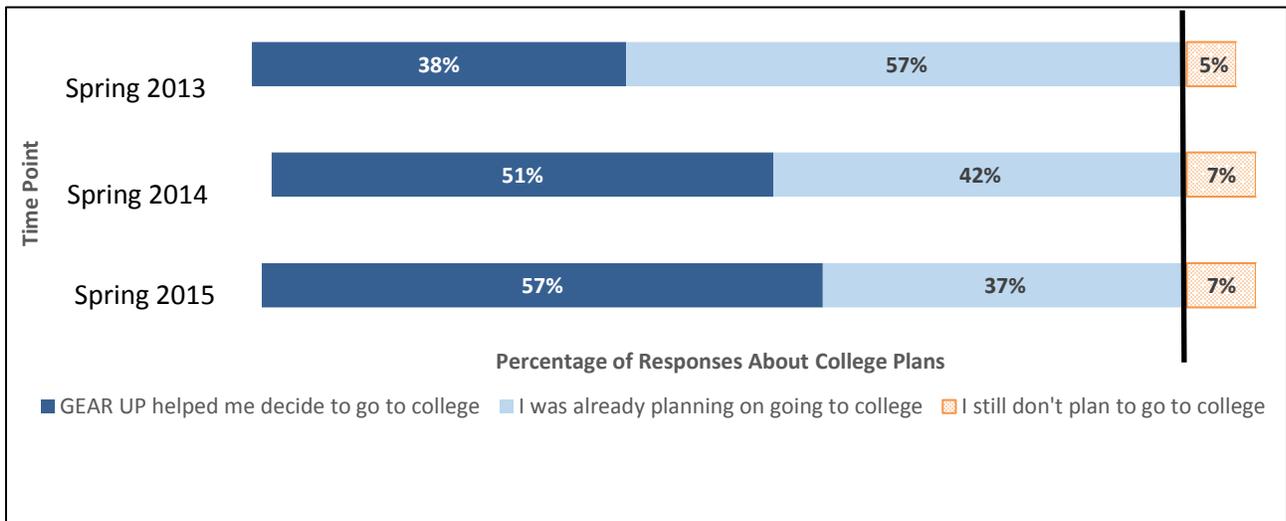
Given the goals of Texas GEAR UP SG, it is important to understand the extent to which Texas GEAR UP SG is related to college-going decisions. Items on the survey asked students to indicate whether participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities/events helped them decide to go to college after high school (see Figure 3.4). Although some of the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students (37%) indicated that they already planned to attend college, more than half (57%) of students responded that participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities in Year 3 helped them make the decision to go to college. The latter reflects an increase of six percentage points since Year 2.<sup>99</sup> However, it is also important to understand that, overall, 94% of the

<sup>99</sup> Student perceptions differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(4) = 4104.9, p < .0001$ .

respondents plan to go to college, similar to the 95% of students who indicated this in Year 1 and the 93% of students who indicated this in Year 2.

Students' perceived impact of Texas GEAR UP SG, as it relates to postsecondary plans, differed significantly across schools (see Table G.8, Appendix G).<sup>100</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG efforts in all schools going forward should seek to address the 7% of students who still do not plan to go to college, an overall percentage that went unchanged from spring 2014 to spring 2015. Additional efforts should focus on High Schools I and M, where the highest percentage of students do not plan to go to college (9% and 8%, respectively).

**Figure 3.4. Percentages of Students Who Plan to Go to College: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015), Has participating in GEAR UP activities at your school helped you to decide to go to college after high school graduation?

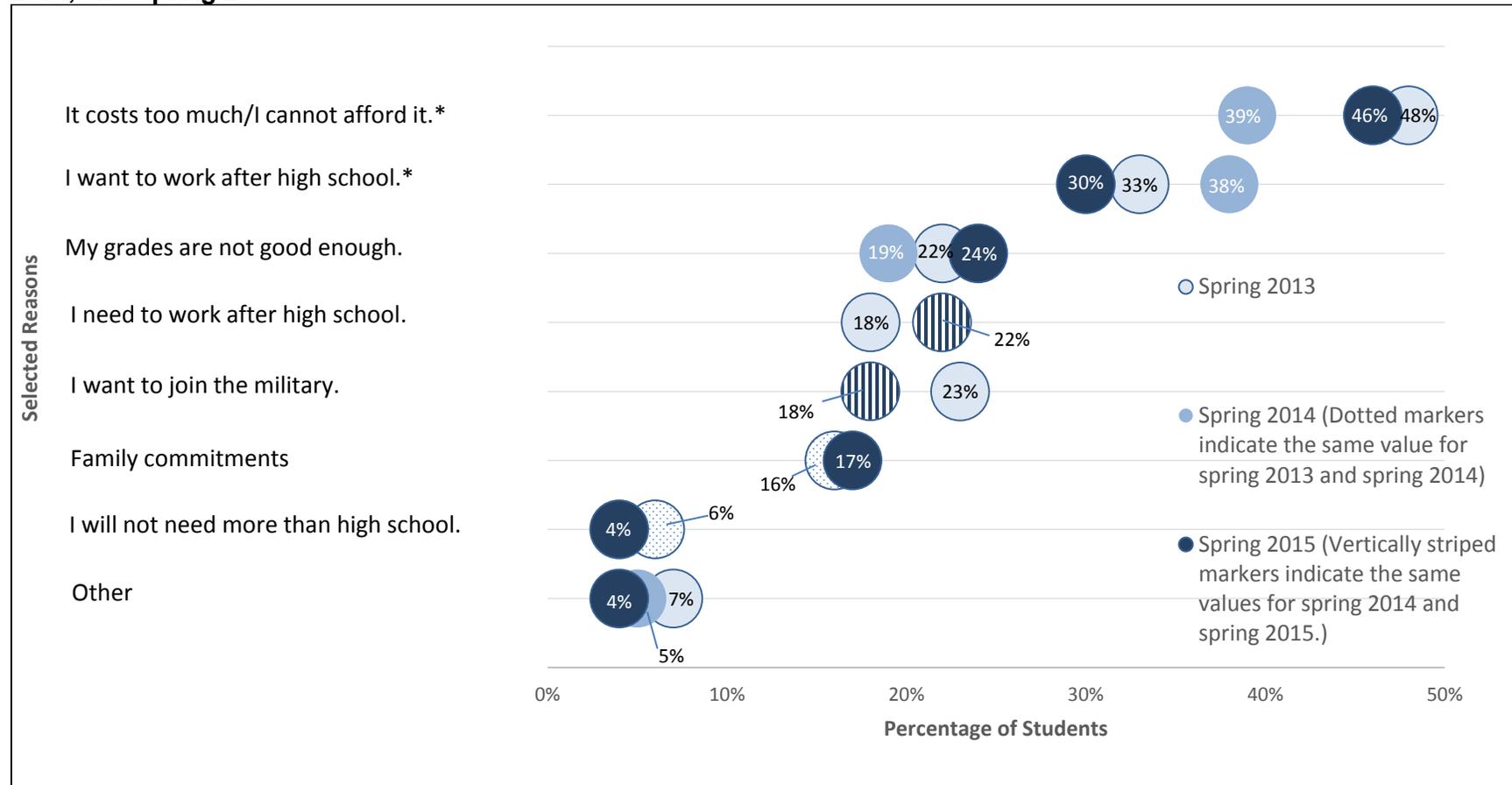
Note: Percentages reflect responses after removing respondents that selected the following response option: “Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP,” which included the following percentages of total responses to this item: Spring 2013: 9.8% (n=1,363), Spring 2014: 6.2% (n=1,287), and Spring 2015: 7.2% (n=95). Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

### 3.2.4 Reasons for Not Continuing Education

In an effort to better inform and influence those who do not plan on attending college, 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, the dot plot in Figure 3.5 displays what students identified as potential reasons for not continuing their education. The results for the spring 2015 survey were generally consistent with the spring 2013 and spring 2014 surveys; concerns about costs (46%), wanting to work (30%), poor grades (24%), and needing to work (22%) were among the most frequently selected reasons.

<sup>100</sup> Student perceptions differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 100.8, p < .0001$ .

**Figure 3.5. Percentages of Texas GEAR UP SG Students by Reason for Not Continuing Education: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015).

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% because respondents were able to select multiple responses. The percentages above reflect the portion of those who selected at least one reason; the following selected “Not applicable, I plan to continue my education after high school.” Spring 2013: 678, Spring 2014: 689, and Spring 2015: 575. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. Dotted markers indicate the same value for spring 2013 and spring 2014. Vertically striped markers indicate the same values for spring 2014 and spring 2015.

\* Significant differences over time: Costs:  $\chi^2(2) = 11.5, p < .01$ , Want to work:  $\chi^2(2) = 10.4, p < .01$ .

Costs remained the most frequently reported reason for not continuing postsecondary education. This response option declined between Year 1 and Year 2, but increased in Year 3; spring 2014 (39%) to spring 2015 (46%) shows a significant increase (7 percentage points) for this item.<sup>101</sup> The percentage of students selecting poor grades significantly rose over time between year 2 and Year 3: 22% in Year 1, 19% in Year 2, and 24% in Year 3.<sup>102</sup> Given that a large percentage of students still see cost as a barrier, TEA should continue efforts around the financial aspects of college to help address this concern and influence students' plans to attend college. Going forward, TEA should apply interventions that address affordability as an issue, along with efforts to address the other reported reasons. Such actions might include helping students understand options regarding being able to work while also going to school and offering students support services to help students perform better in their courses and increase their GPA.

### 3.3 Discussions and Knowledge About College

One way that programs such as Texas GEAR UP SG can support college-going thinking is to provide students and parents with sufficient information to facilitate their discussions about postsecondary education. Site visits offered details about how students are coming to understand college requirements. All school districts will have the entire student primary cohort take the SAT or ACT by the end of the fifth year of program implementation (according to each districts' ASPR). Survey data, summarized in the following section, also inform both current levels of knowledge about college and the practices that help to do so. Analyses of these data address the following evaluation questions: What are students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, college readiness, financing college)? During each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students? What types of information are grantees making available to students' families?

#### 3.3.1 Sources of Information

In an effort to build student knowledge about a range of college topics, it helps to understand the frequently used resources that may be the initial approach for information dissemination; awareness of less-often-used resources can also inform the necessary steps to refine the content/delivery of those materials. Analysis of survey data related to this topic also informs the following evaluation question: During each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students and their families? When asked about what sources of information have helped inform postsecondary education plans, students selected from a list various sources; two items specifically related to Texas GEAR UP SG are shown in Figure 3.6 (the remaining sources are included in Table G.9 in Appendix G).

Student-reported use of Texas GEAR UP SG staff and events as a source of information significantly increased over time from spring 2013 (29%) to spring 2015 (35%) by six percentage points. While AMS pictures continued to work to add resources, 81% of students indicated that the Texas GEAR UP SG website was not a source of information for them regarding postsecondary education.<sup>103</sup> This indicates a potential need for all schools to direct more students to this resource or to directly engage with the website with students and parents,

<sup>101</sup>  $\chi^2(2) = 11.5, p < .01$

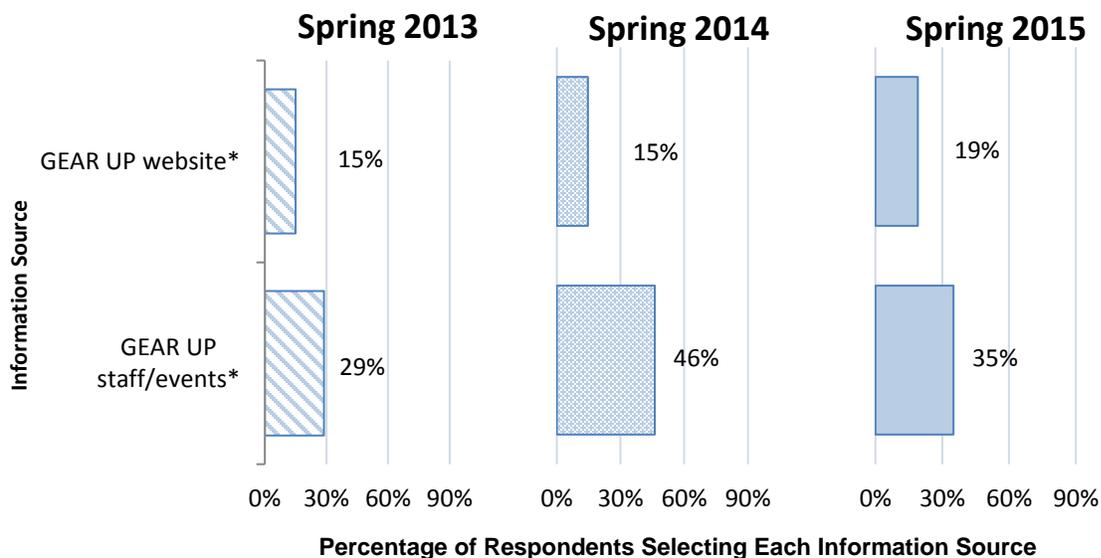
<sup>102</sup>  $\chi^2(2), n = 2179) = 11.45, p < .01$

<sup>103</sup> Students' indication of GEAR UP staff/events as a source of information differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(2) = 81.5, p < .001$ . Students' indication of the GEAR UP website as a source of information differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(2) = 11.6, p < .01$ .

given TEA’s efforts under the statewide aspects of the Texas GEAR UP SG to enhance the website content/design to make it more appealing. TEA should also consider ongoing efforts to understand why the website continues to be under-utilized, at least by the participating Texas GEAR UP SG schools.

Information from discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff or from Texas GEAR UP SG events declined between spring 2014 and spring 2015 (46% and 34%, respectively). In addition to changes associated with the transition to high school, within-school differences might also help to interpret this finding as Year 3 data varied significantly across schools (see Table G.10, Appendix G).<sup>104</sup> For example, 51% of students at High School M reported discussions with GEAR UP staff or information at Texas GEAR UP SG events as a source of information, compared to 23% in High School K. Based on this finding that reflects a relatively wide variation, TEA should encourage and support Texas GEAR UP SG staff at all schools (with targeted support at some schools) to maximize opportunities to share information with a broad range of students, including those new to the cohort. This might include engaging in both formal settings (such as Texas GEAR UP SG events) and informal interactions (such as consulting with students in a GEAR UP office at the school).

**Figure 3.6. Student-Reported College Information Sources: Percentages by Source (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015)**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015).

Note: Response percentages will not add up to 100% because respondents were able to select multiple responses. N counts for each response option are presented for spring 2013, then spring 2014. N counts for each item are included in the full data presented in Table G.9, Appendix G. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

\* Students’ indication of GEAR UP staff/events as a source of information differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(2) = 81.5$ ,  $p < .001$ . Students’ indication of the GEAR UP website as a source of information differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(2) = 11.6$ ,  $p < .01$ .

<sup>104</sup> Students’ indication of GEAR UP staff/events as a source of information differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 61.2$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Students’ indication of GEAR UP website as a source of information differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 23.6$ ,  $p < .0001$ .

Findings for the same survey item indicate that 76% of students selected two or more sources of information in spring 2015 (compared to 78% in spring 2014). It appears that Texas GEAR UP SG continues to encourage a majority of the students to use multiple sources of information. However, Texas GEAR UP SG staff may need to intensify their efforts to encourage the nearly one quarter of students (24%) to use more than one resource for making postsecondary plans. For example, Texas GEAR UP SG events and activities can be used as opportunities for students to engage in information-rich discussions with each other and with Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school staff. It appears that the high school setting offers Texas GEAR UP SG staff more opportunities to access additional resources available to students (e.g., being able to ask advice of students currently applying to college) and capitalize on the potential for peer influence with regard to accessing resources (e.g., juniors and seniors modeling how to take advantage of available supports).

A related survey item asked students to indicate whether anyone at school or from Texas GEAR UP SG had spoken to them about college entrance requirements. The majority of the students (76%) indicated that someone had spoken to them, but this differed significantly by school (Figure G.1, Appendix G).<sup>105</sup> More than 80% of students at two schools indicated that someone from their school/Texas GEAR UP SG had spoken to them about college entrance requirements (High School J: 81% and High School M: 88%); TEA should explore practices at these schools to shed some light on the ways that they have gone about initiating these discussions.

### 3.3.2 Knowledge About College

A detailed understanding about specific terms and concepts related to college is essential for students to be able to make decisions that align with their plans; knowing students' levels of knowledge can help Texas GEAR UP SG focus on particular low-knowledge areas of concern. Monitoring progress in this area will help ensure that Texas GEAR UP SG is on track for the following near-term project objective: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of Texas GEAR UP SG students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college (Project Objective 4.4). Survey data can help to inform the extent to which students report that they know the academic expectations for college (such as the general requirements and, specifically, the minimum SAT or ACT scores) and then can work toward demonstrating academic performance in those directions.

Student surveys asked respondents to indicate how knowledgeable they were about various college-related terms on a four-point knowledge scale, with 1 equaling *no knowledge* and 4 equaling *extremely knowledgeable*. These data, displayed in Figure 3.7, as well as Figure G.2 in Appendix G, are primarily important to guide Texas GEAR UP SG schools in possible directions for future events, activities, and resources. Consistent with prior years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, the highest percentage of students rated themselves as *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about the importance/benefit of college; in spring 2015, 63% of students responding to the survey indicated such (compared to 58% in spring 2013 and 62% in spring 2014).

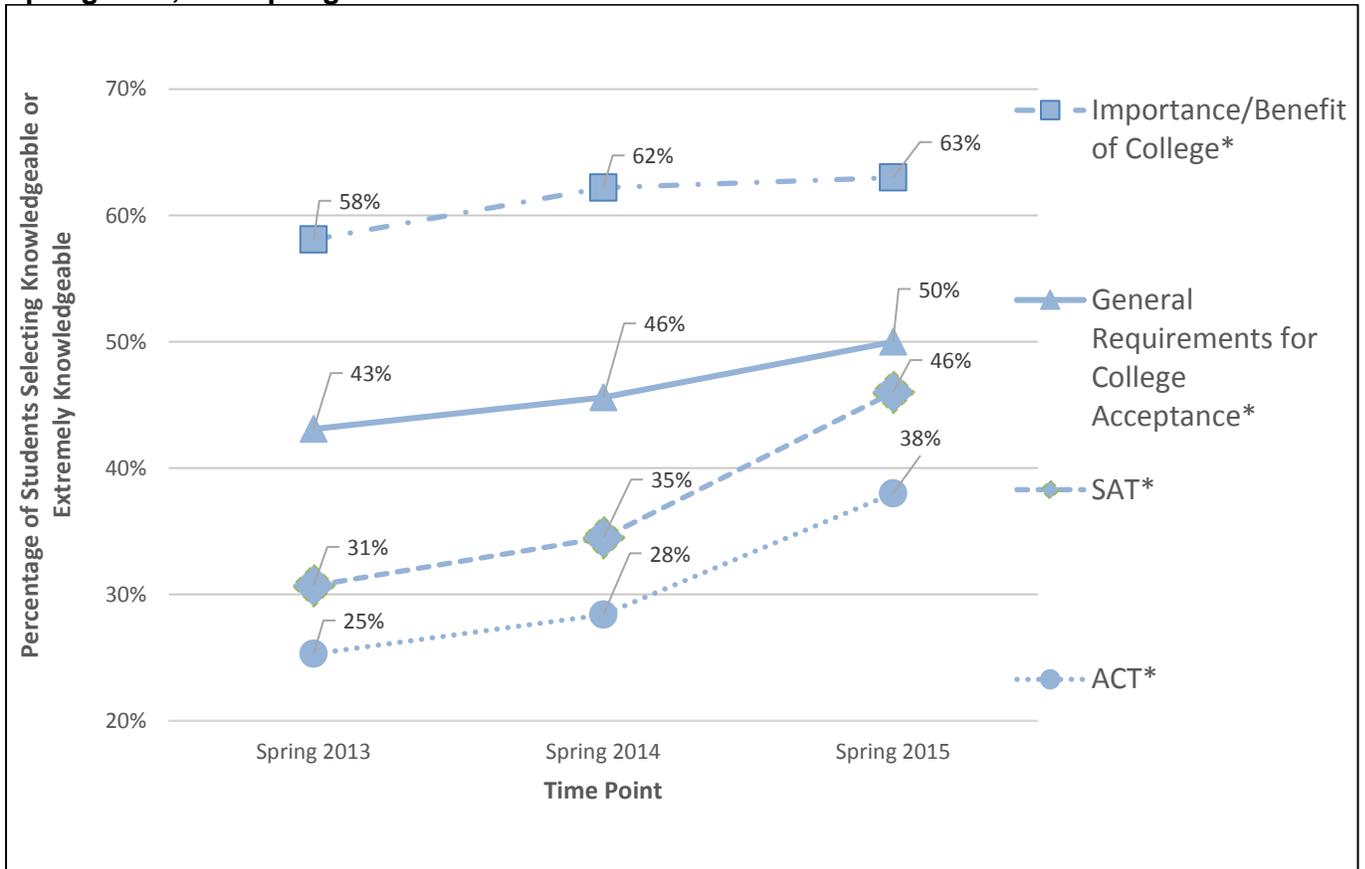
It appears that Texas GEAR UP SG has potentially contributed to an increase in the percentage of students who feel *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about the SAT and the ACT as both items show a significant increase of more than 10 percentage points from spring 2014 to

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<sup>105</sup> Student-reported engagement in discussions about college entrance requirements differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 50.0, p < .0001$ . This question is required by USDE.

spring 2015.<sup>106</sup> It may be that the high school setting also affords students an opportunity to learn more about these college entrance exams through multiple sources of information. In particular, Texas GEAR UP SG staff can continue to provide students with information about the SAT and ACT as more than half of the students still see themselves as having either *no knowledge* or being *slightly knowledgeable*. Students may also continue to gain exposure to these concepts as they enroll in advanced courses, so collaboration between Texas GEAR UP SG and school staff may help to maximize these opportunities.

**Figure 3.7. Students’ Perceived Knowledge of College Terms and Concepts: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015).

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, and 4 – Extremely Knowledgeable. N counts for each item and each response option are included in the full data presented in Figure G.2, Appendix G. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

\* Student-reported knowledge differed significantly over time for each item: Importance/benefit of college:  $\chi^2(2) = 11.0, p < .05$ ; General requirements for college acceptance:  $\chi^2(2) = 37.7, p < .001$ ; SAT:  $\chi^2(2) = 69.8, p < .01$ ; and ACT:  $\chi^2(2) = 57.4, p < .001$ .

Table G.11 in Appendix G also displays these results as averages over time. For each item, averages fell between 2 (*slightly knowledgeable*) and 3 (*knowledgeable*), an overall trend that is

<sup>106</sup> Student-reported knowledge differed significantly over time for each item: Importance/benefit of college:  $\chi^2(2) = 11.0, p < .05$ ; General requirements for college acceptance:  $\chi^2(2) = 37.7, p < .001$ ; SAT:  $\chi^2(2) = 69.8, p < .01$ ; and ACT:  $\chi^2(2) = 57.4, p < .001$ .

consistent with prior years. Data from Year 2 of the Texas GEAR UP implementation reflected that students reported being significantly more knowledgeable, on average, than their parents about the general requirements for college acceptance and the importance/benefit of college (Briggs et al., 2015). Forthcoming survey results will be of interest to see whether these gaps between students and parents remain or whether the self-reported levels of knowledge continue to increase for both groups.

Students' average perceived knowledge of each of the knowledge items differed significantly across schools, as shown in Table G.12 in Appendix G.<sup>107</sup> For example, the importance/benefit of college differed significantly across schools in spring 2015, with average student responses as low as 2.6 at High School I and as high as 3.1 at High Schools L and M.

### 3.3.3 Advanced Course Enrollment Plans

Prior research points to the importance of taking advanced courses for college readiness and college enrollment. For example, Chajewski, Mattern, and Shaw (2011) found that in a national sample of students who took at least one AP course, 83% enrolled in a four-year institution, compared to students who did not take any AP courses, in which only 46% enrolled in a four-year institution. An initial step toward reaching Project Objective 2.2 of advanced course completion, which prepares students for college acceptance and success, is planning to enroll in those courses. Taking AP courses also provides the advantage that students who score well enough on an AP exam may receive college credit for the course supporting achievement of Project Objective 2.3 (at least 50% of students will graduate with college credit).

As shown in Figure 3.8, most students *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they were planning to take advanced courses in mathematics (68%), ELA/writing (73%), and science (70%) in the following school year (2015–16). Each of the response options, across various time points, are in Table G.13 in Appendix G.

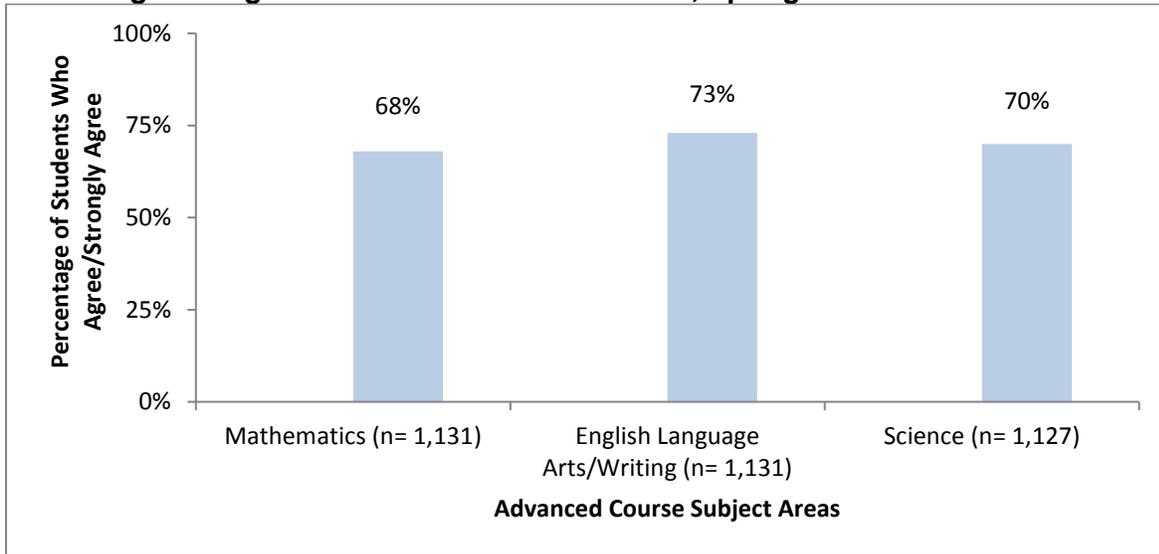
Students' plans for taking advanced courses differed significantly across schools for each subject area (Table G.14, Appendix G).<sup>108</sup> At four schools (High Schools I, J, K, and L), fewer than 25% of students *strongly agreed* that they had plans to take an advanced mathematics course. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider targeting the nearly one third of the students across schools who do not plan on taking advanced courses, potentially through collaboration with school guidance counselors and leveraging the advanced courses that may be available to high school students (and perhaps more so for students in Grade 10 and higher).

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<sup>107</sup> Students' average self-reported knowledge differed significantly across schools each item: Importance/benefit of college-  $F(5, 1,283) = 8.11, p < .001$ ; General requirements for college acceptance-  $F(5, 1,279) = 5.95, p < .001$ ; SAT-  $F(5, 1,291) = 12.31, p < .001$ ; ACT-  $F(5, 1,291) = 11.27, p < .001$ .

<sup>108</sup> Student perceptions differed significantly across schools in each subject area: Mathematics:  $\chi^2(5) = 52.6, p < .001$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(5) = 52.6, p < .001$ ; and Science:  $\chi^2(5) = 52.6, p < .001$ .

**Figure 3.8. Students’ Plans to Take Advanced Courses in the Next School Year: Percentages of Agreement Across Content Areas, Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages across those who responded with some level of agreement may not total exactly 100% due to rounding. Results for each response option are included in the full data presented in Table G.13, Appendix G.

In Year 2, the following percentages of Grade 8 students reported that they planned on taking advanced courses in Grade 9 (selecting *agree* or *strongly agree*): mathematics, 70%; ELA, 71%; and science, 69% (Briggs et al., 2015). Year 3 APR data (see Figure 2.2) indicated that the following percentages of students were reported by schools as actually enrolled in advanced courses in Grade 9: mathematics (including Algebra I and other advanced mathematics courses), 45%; ELA, 39%; science, 38%; and social studies, 35%. This suggests that across all three subjects more students intended on being in an advanced course than actually enrolled in an advanced course. It is difficult to determine whether this is an issue of student eligibility, student interest, school capacity, Texas GEAR UP SG interventions, or other factors. For example, some students may consider any content that is difficult as being advanced, so courses that they find to be difficult may be perceived as being advanced, even though the survey included school-specific course names to minimize this concern. Regardless of the driver, Texas GEAR UP SG can play an important role in capitalizing on students’ reported plans to enroll students in advanced courses and supporting their success in passing advanced courses through services such as tutoring.

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

The goal of Texas GEAR UP SG to increase postsecondary awareness and aspirations also includes financial literacy about college. Site visit data pointed to various efforts to address students’ awareness of college financing. For example, High School J described hosting financial aid tutorials for their students. An employee of the financial aid department from a nearby university came to the high school to speak with parents about the importance of FAFSA and how and when they should complete it; this occurred at High School J as well as High

School M.<sup>109</sup> Parents from other schools (High Schools H and I) attended similar sessions about FAFSA that were presented by the Princeton Review and TG; parents from these schools also had access to financial aid information through a local college resource center.<sup>110</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG staff who participated in site visits reported speaking directly with families to explain the different grant and scholarship opportunities that were available. Parents from High Schools I and J mentioned learning about financial aid at the Texas GEAR UP SG State Conference. High School K also offers TG modules to students during mathematics classes as the budgeting component is highly relevant to the course content; teachers described these sessions as useful and shared that they sometimes incorporate the material into their other lessons.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff should engage in intensive efforts going forward in the hopes of helping to increase the program's emphasis on the financial aspects of college. For example, Project Objective 7.4 includes having teachers and counselors complete college admissions and financial aid training by the program's fifth year, when the primary cohort students are in Grade 11. Plans also include forming alliances with governmental and community organizations to increase students' access to information on scholarships and financial aid. Evaluation efforts in forthcoming years will look at the potential impact of this training and these alliances. Several additional survey items addressed students' thinking about money and college. In general, these findings suggest that there is low knowledge of and high interest in receiving more information about paying for college.

### 3.4.1 Discussions with the School/Texas GEAR UP State Grant Staff About the Availability of Financial Aid

Texas GEAR UP SG can play a valuable role in influencing how students understand the financial aspects of college; thus, it is essential to know the extent to which students reported having conversations about financial aid. Students were asked whether anyone from the school or Texas GEAR UP SG staff had spoken with them about the availability of financial aid to help pay for college.<sup>111</sup> In spring 2015, 67% of students responding to the survey indicated that they had engaged in these conversations; this represents a significant increase of six percentage points from spring 2014 (see Figure 3.9).<sup>112</sup> Although these increases are encouraging, about one third of students (33%) have not reported interactions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff regarding the financial aspects of college. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider mechanisms to track student participation in events, or other opportunities for discussions with students, related to financing to ensure that all students are exposed to information about the financial aspects of school. It would likely also help to continue efforts by providing additional information and continued guidance to those who have already been engaged, including information that is more detailed regarding previously discussed topics or new topics. This is particularly important given that the most common reason for not planning to attend college remains cost/affordability, based on student responses to another survey items as displayed in Figure 3.5.

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<sup>109</sup> FAFSA is the application for federal aid for college. More information can be found at <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>.

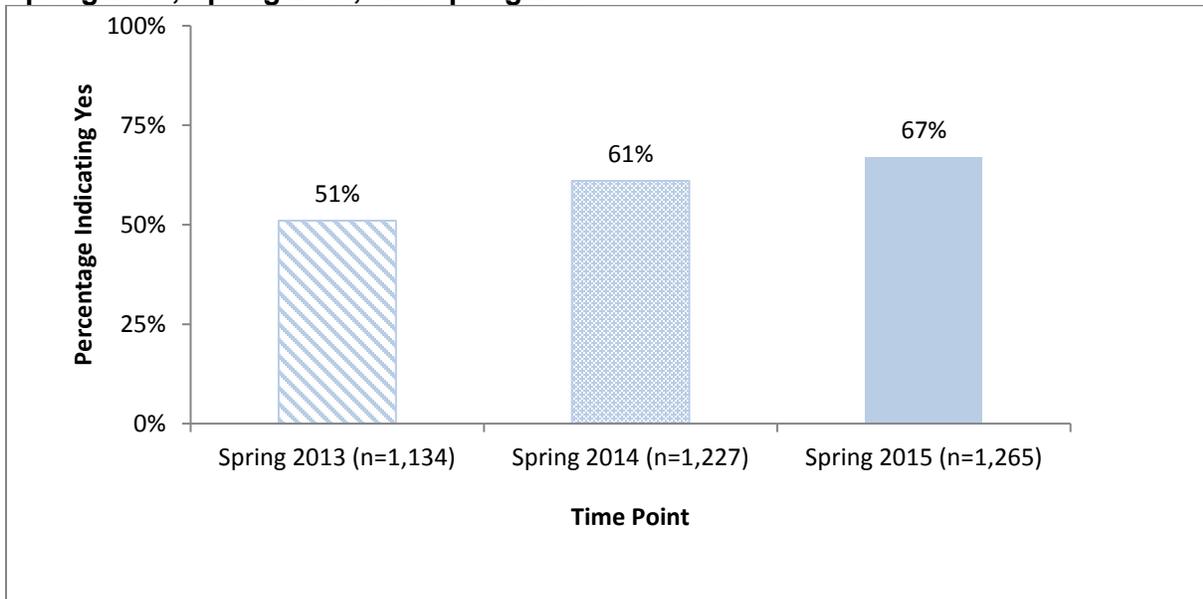
<sup>110</sup> Princeton Review is a [test preparation](#) and [college admission](#) services company offering test preparation services, tutoring and admissions resources, online courses, and books. More details about the organization are available at <http://www.princetonreview.com/>.

<sup>111</sup> The following question is required on the APR by USDE: "Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about the availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?"

<sup>112</sup> Student responses differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(1) = 10.2, p < .01$ .

Student discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff about financial aid differed significantly across schools, with more than 70% of students at High Schools J and M (71% and 76%, respectively), but only about half of students at High Schools K and L (55% and 52%, respectively), indicating that they had such discussions (Table G.15, Appendix G).<sup>113</sup> Thus, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should target efforts to reach out to all students at all schools, which may help to increase their perceptions of affordability. One approach may be having Texas GEAR UP SG staff include financial aid as part of one-on-one discussions with students, which, at some schools is intended to occur twice per year, according to site visit data.<sup>114</sup>

**Figure 3.9. Students’ Discussions with School or GEAR UP Staff About Financial Aid: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015).

Note: Response options to the question “Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about the availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?” include Yes or No. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

### 3.4.2 Knowledge About Financing College

Existing literature points to the importance of students being aware of the financial aid process. Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulos, & Sanbonmatsu (2009) found that helping students’ parents fill out financial aid forms increased the college enrollment rates of high school seniors by 30% suggesting that increased parental involvement in the college application process contributed to the student being more likely to enroll in any type of higher education. Most Texas GEAR UP SG students in spring 2015 (64%) fell somewhere in the middle (selecting *slightly knowledgeable* or *knowledgeable*) regarding feeling knowledgeable about financing college (see Figure G.3, Appendix G).<sup>115</sup> Nearly one quarter of students (23%) reported having *no knowledge*

<sup>113</sup> Student-reported engagement in discussions about the availability of financial aid differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 40.1, p < .001$ .

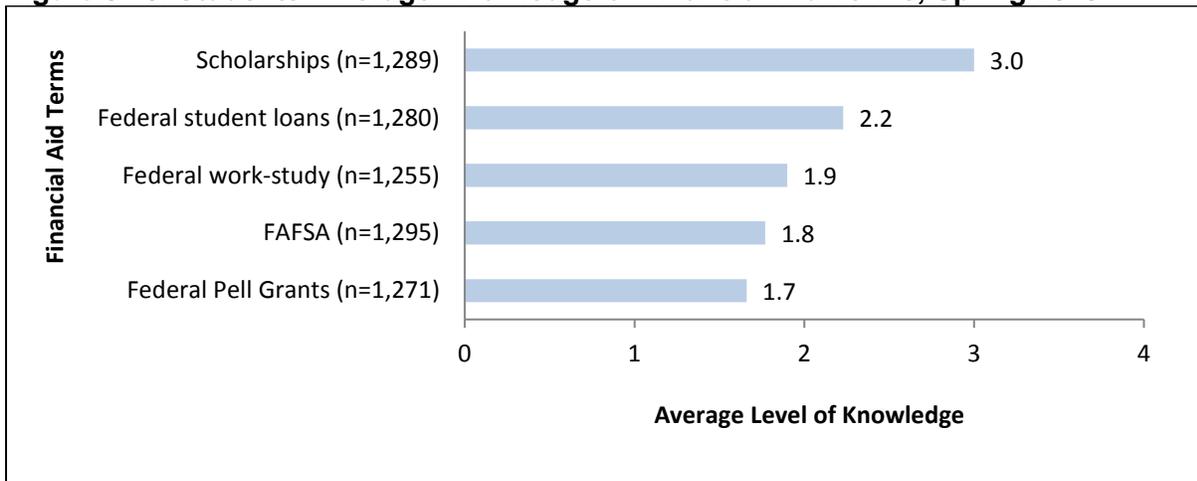
<sup>114</sup> At schools for which this was reported, College Preparation Advisors had not yet met one-on-one with each student but had anticipated being able to do so before the school year ended.

<sup>115</sup> The following question is required on the APR by USDE: “How much do you know about the following: financial aid and the costs and benefits of pursuing postsecondary education?”

regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of pursuing postsecondary education; this reflects a statistically significant decrease of six percentage points from spring 2014.<sup>116</sup> At the other end of the scale, only 13% of students reported feeling *extremely knowledgeable* on this topic. Perhaps Texas GEAR UP SG services are helping students have more realistic perceptions about their knowledge of this topic, but TEA should also continue addressing those who report *little or no knowledge*.

In addition to overall perceptions regarding student knowledge about financing college, the surveys asked about knowledge of specific financial aid-related terms; average knowledge results are shown in Figure 3.10 (Table G.16 in Appendix G shows the percentages for each response option). On average, students reported being *knowledgeable* about scholarships and being *slightly knowledgeable* regarding other financial aid-related terms. These results are similar to those from spring 2014 (Briggs et al., 2015). Texas GEAR UP SG staff need to focus activities on each of these aspects of financial aid in order to increase knowledge about financial aid. Given that these levels have remained relatively the same since spring 2013, exploring new approaches to disseminate information, using a variety of resources, and/or increasing the intensity of the focus may be necessary to effect change in this area.

**Figure 3.10. Students’ Average Knowledge of Financial Aid Terms, Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

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, and 4 – Extremely Knowledgeable. Low parent response rates across both time points warrant caution in interpreting trend data on parent surveys. N counts for each item are included in the full data presented in Table G.16, Appendix G. FAFSA is Free Application for Federal Student Aid; however, the survey items used only the acronym.

### 3.4.3 Perceived Ability to Afford Postsecondary Education

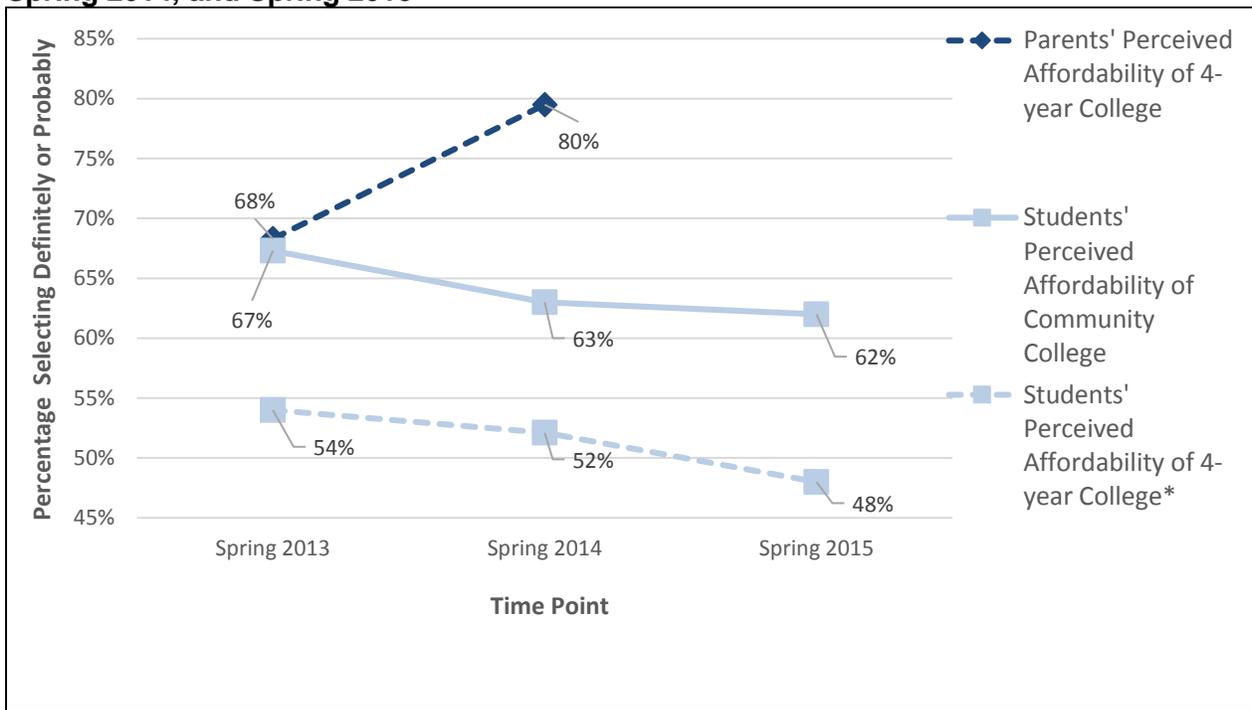
It is important that students have enough knowledge about financing options to perceive college as being affordable through one or more of the many financing options available.<sup>117</sup> In spring 2015, less than half of students (48%) reported perceiving that they would *probably* or *definitely* be able to afford a four-year college, and 62% of students reported that they would *probably* or

<sup>116</sup> Student responses differed significantly across time points:  $\chi^2(1) = 11.1, p < .01$ .

<sup>117</sup> The following question regarding perceived affordability is required on APR by USDE: “Do you think that you/your child could afford to attend a public four-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family’s resources?”

*definitely* be able to afford a community college. Figure 3.11 shows that student perceptions of the affordability of a four-year college decreased between spring 2014 and spring 2015 by four percentage points, and student perceptions of the affordability of community college remained relatively the same.<sup>118</sup> Table G.17 in Appendix G displays the response options for each category; Table G.18 in Appendix G includes results by school. Most students (86%) indicated at least some concern about their ability to afford a four-year college by selecting *probably*, *not sure*, *probably not*, or *definitely not*. Consistent with the recommendations from other survey items related to the financial aspects of college, these findings affirm the need for Texas GEAR UP SG staff to help students perceive college as an affordable option by exposing them to the multiple financial aid options that are available.

**Figure 3.11. Parents' and Students' Perceptions of College Affordability: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013 and Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015).

Note: Response options include *Definitely not*, *Probably not*, *Not sure*, *Probably*, and *Definitely*; however, *Not sure* was not available as a response option for parents on the spring 2014 survey. The spring 2013 parent survey did not ask about the perceived affordability of a local community college. Given the low response rate in spring 2015, parent survey results are not reported. Additionally, low parent response rates in spring 2013 and spring 2014 warrant caution in interpreting the trend data included on parent surveys. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. N counts for each item and each response option for spring 2015 are included in the full data presented in Table G.17, Appendix G.

\* Student perceptions of affordability of a four-year college differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(1) = 4.2, p < .05$ .

### 3.4.4 Perceived Cost of Higher Education

One possible reason for students perceiving postsecondary education as unattainable may be that they overestimate the costs (O'Donnel et al., 2013). Accurate knowledge about the cost of postsecondary education is one step toward perceiving postsecondary attendance as a

<sup>118</sup> Student perceptions of affordability of a four-year college differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(1) = 4.2, p < .05$ .

possibility. This knowledge may also make it seem to be out of reach; thus, 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 as unattainable for reasons related to cost. Ideally, accurate knowledge is accompanied with information about financial aid and scholarships to pay for the cost. The actual average cost for one year at a local two-year community college is \$2,473 (tuition and fees only), and the actual average cost of tuition and fees for one year at a public four-year college or university in Texas (tuition and fees only) is \$5,205 and \$8,319, respectively (College For All Texans, 2015). Student surveys asked about how much they thought college costs (Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3. Students’ Perceived Cost of Higher Education, Percentages by Cost Grouping, Spring 2015**

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 \$8,400	\$8,401 to \$18,000	More than \$18,000
Your local public two-year community college?	1,310	19.1%	24.9%	33.7%	16.7%	5.6%
A four-year public college in your state?	1,318	4.2%	5.9%	28.7%	35.0%	26.1%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Grey boxes indicate actual costs.

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 a four-year public college in the state. Students generally overestimated the costs as compared to the average actual costs. For example, 56% of students thought that one year at a two-year community college would cost more than \$3,000. Similarly, 61% of students estimated the cost of one year at a four-year college to be more than \$8,400, well above the actual average. Although some of the differences between perceived and actual costs may be related to what is known about actual local costs, overestimation of the costs (spring 2013, spring 2014, and spring 2015 surveys) suggests that helping students understand actual college costs continues to be crucial to overcoming cost as a barrier to postsecondary education.

### 3.5 Perceptions About Texas GEAR UP State Grant

One way to understand the potential effect of Texas GEAR UP SG activities is to understand participants’ perceptions of those activities. An analysis of survey items related to these perceptions addresses the following research questions: What are student, parent, and staff perceptions of student support services implementation strategies? What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by grantees (students, parents, and staff) to be effective and therefore potential best practices? Understanding participants’ perceptions can also inform decisions about interim improvements in how activities are designed and implemented, as well as which strategies may be leading to desired outcomes. At the school level, this provides an opportunity to identify pockets of success and allows stories about what is working well to emerge. Given that participation in these many activities in Year 3 reflects a transition of program implementation from the middle school level to the high school level, this section limits comparisons of changes in perspectives over time as the context in which activities were implemented have changed.

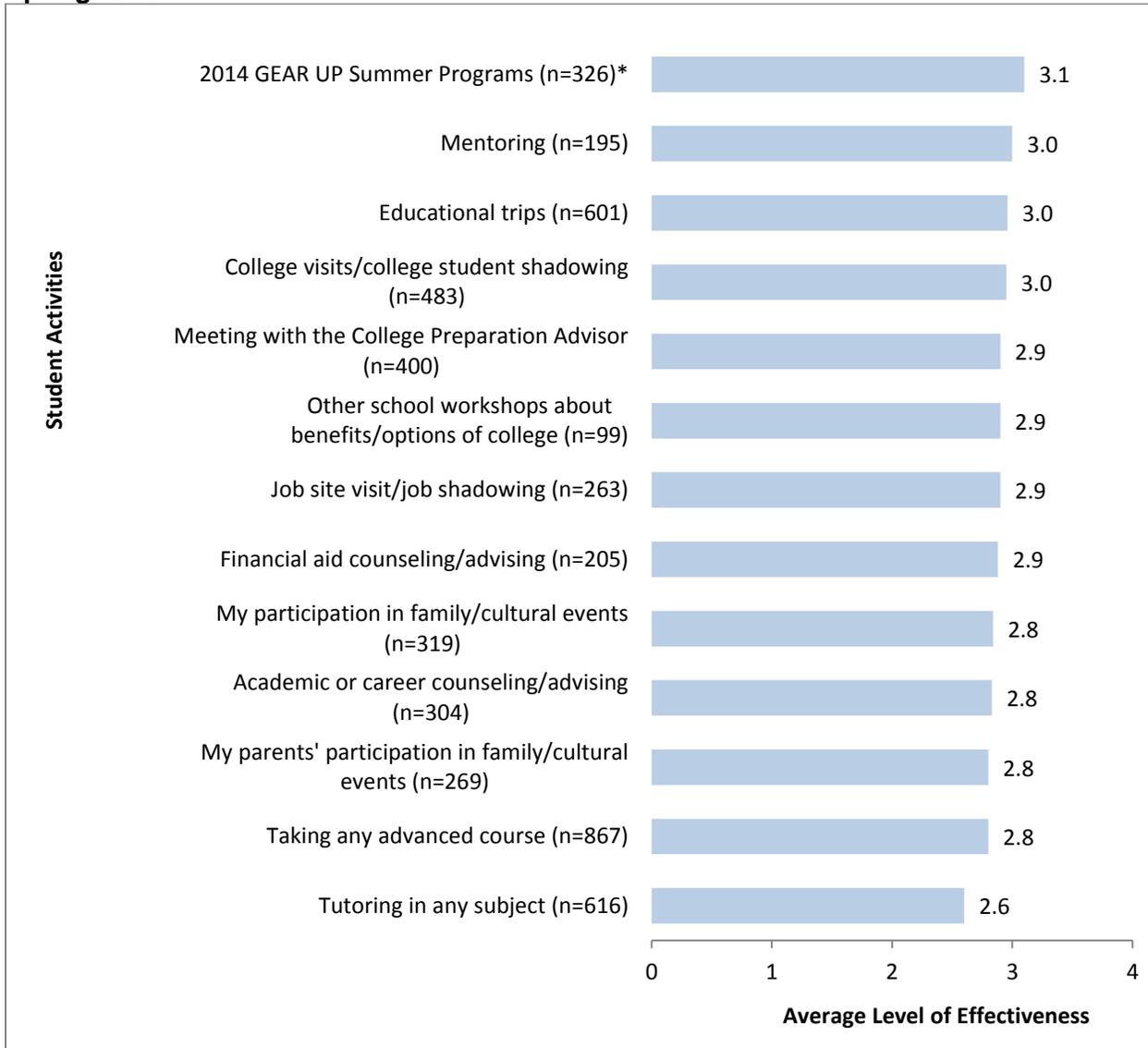
### 3.5.1 Perceived Effectiveness of Texas GEAR UP State Grant-Related Activities Participated in by the Child

#### ACTIVITIES OFFERED DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Students reported if they participated in various activities (e.g., counseling, tutoring, informational events) and how effective they perceived each activity to be in helping them succeed in school/prepare to go to college. However, the data presented in this section are limited in that they do not include the perceptions of those who do not participate and that there is a wide range of n counts for each item (i.e., levels of participation varied). As noted in prior implementation reports (Briggs et al, 2015; O'Donnell et al., 2013), students appear to have generally overestimated their participation in some activities. For example, across schools, 61% of students indicated that they participated in tutoring in any subject, whereas schools indicated that only 51% of students received tutoring. In this case, there may be tutoring offered by other programs that do not count as tutoring delivered as part of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation. In general, the Texas GEAR UP SG staff should think about ways to communicate more effectively to students regarding their participation in the various program components.

The surveys asked about the levels of effectiveness of the activities in which students participated, with lower scores indicating that students perceived the activity as being less effective in preparing them for college and, inversely, higher scores indicating that they perceived the activity as being more effective. On average, students responding to these items found each type of activity in which they participated to be *mostly effective*. Figure 3.12 shows average student perceptions of the effectiveness of activities; the results for each response option are displayed in Table G.19 in Appendix G.

**Figure 3.12. Students' Average Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Student Activities, Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: In response to the survey question “How effective was this course/activity in helping you to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?,” students selected one of the following response options: 1 – Not Effective, 2 – Slightly Effective, 3 – Mostly Effective, or 4 – Very Effective. Table G.19, Appendix G includes each response option. \*Average student responses were significantly different across schools: GEAR UP Summer Program-  $F(5, 556) = 3.6, p < .01$ ; Educational trips-  $F(5, 680) = 4.4, p < .001$ ; College visit-  $F(5, 1,063) = 21.1, p < .001$ ; Meeting with the College Preparation Advisor-  $F(5, 1,049) = 17.9, p < .001$ ; Academic or Career Counseling/Advising-  $F(5, 449) = 3.0, p < .05$ ; Tutoring, Any Subject-  $F(5, 739) = 2.3, p < .05$ . Average responses by school are displayed in Table G.20, Appendix G.

Project Objective 1.1 is to have at least 30% of Grade 8 students complete Algebra I and to have 85% of students complete Algebra I by the end of Grade 9. Of the 70% of students who self-reported that they enrolled in Algebra I, 66% rated taking Algebra I as *very effective* or *mostly effective*. Given that Grade 9 students also reported that they were enrolled in other advanced mathematics courses (52%), it is important to note that 74% found enrollment in an advanced mathematics course *very effective* or *mostly effective*. Taken together, these results indicate that advanced mathematics courses generally continue to be an effective activity for

preparing students for college; schools might consider modeling other academic courses on the approach they took with Algebra I, while also getting more feedback about what might make those and other courses even more effective.

The average levels of perceived effectiveness differed significantly across schools for many activities (Table G.20, Appendix G).<sup>119</sup> In addition, there were meaningful differences in *participation* across schools (Table G.21, Appendix G). For example, 78% of students at High School M reported going on college visits, as compared to only 38% of the students at High School K. High School M also had more than half of students (54%) report participating in GEAR UP summer programs, compared to 21% at High School L (the remaining schools fell in between these two percentages). As noted in Chapter 2, High School M also engaged in the greatest number of college visits (12) and generally made college visits available to all students, while some schools limited participation based on grades or other factors.

### STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES WITH COLLEGE PREPARATION ADVISORS

With Year 3 as the second year that Texas GEAR UP SG had College Preparation Advisors, it is important to continue monitoring their perceived effectiveness. Figure 3.13 illustrates the perceptions of effectiveness of the College Preparation Advisors based on the 41% of students who indicated that they met with a College Preparation Advisor during the 2014–15 school year.<sup>120</sup> Among these, 62% of students found meeting with a College Preparation Advisor to be *mostly effective* or *very effective* (compared to 69% in Year 2). Taken together, it seems that when students have an opportunity to meet with College Preparation Advisors, students see it as a positive experience; thus, offering the remaining 38% of students who have not met with College Preparation Advisors such an opportunity is a suggested next step. However, it may be necessary, given the limited time available for one-on-one sessions with each students, to prioritize meeting only with selected students through a tiered intervention approach and reserving other opportunities (such as Texas GEAR UP SG events) to interact with the remaining students whose needs may not be as intensive. As Texas GEAR SG schools continue to implement this new aspect of the program, it will be important to ensure that students are aware of and access this resource. Further action to ensure that more students perceive interactions with College Preparation Advisors to be effective is another area to consider continuous growth.

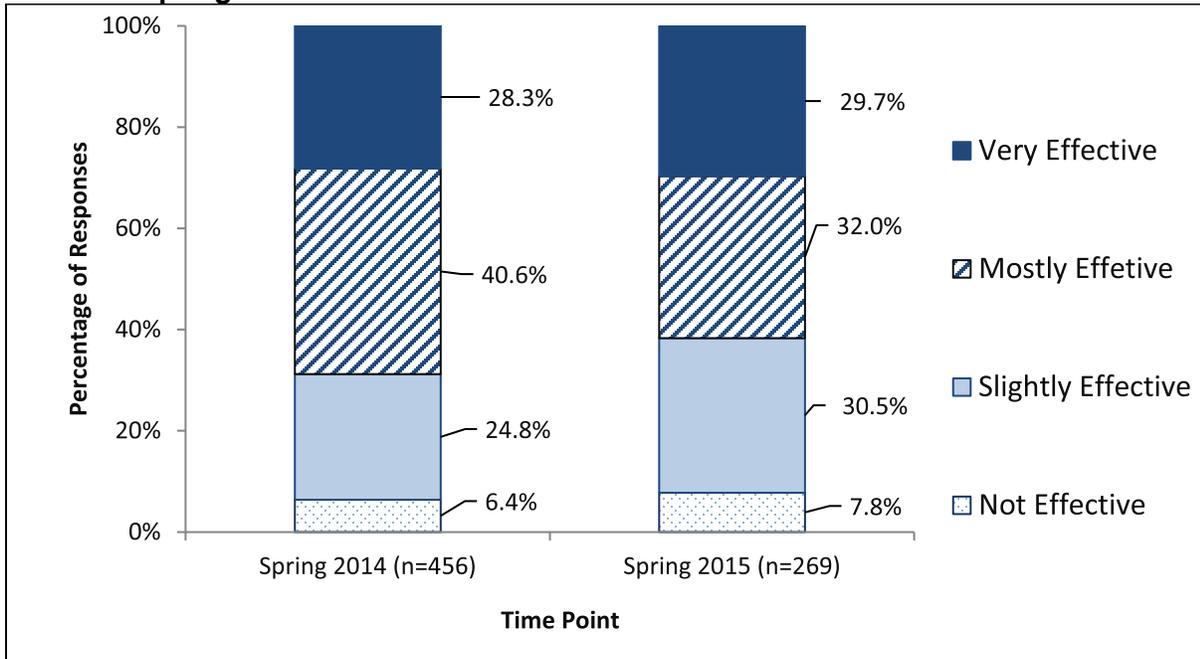
Similar to the qualitative data reported in Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015), College Preparation Advisors performed valuable tasks in ensuring the implementation of activities through a regular, consistent presence in schools. The students and parents at most schools described being appreciative of having the College Preparation Advisor follow the cohort into high school because it helps students feel comfortable with someone who is familiar. Many students described their College Preparation Advisors as being similar to how one student at High School I described: College Preparation Advisors are “trustworthy ... you can tell him/her anything.” Students also shared that these individuals are a useful resource from which to obtain college information.

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<sup>119</sup> Average student responses were significantly different across schools: GEAR UP Summer Program-  $F(5, 556) = 3.6, p < .01$ ; Educational trips-  $F(5, 680) = 4.4, p < .001$ ; College visit-  $F(5, 1,063) = 21.1, p < .001$ ; Meeting with the College Preparation Advisor-  $F(5, 1,049) = 17.9, p < .001$ ; Academic or Career Counseling/Advising-  $F(5, 449) = 3.0, p < .05$ ; Tutoring, Any Subject-  $F(5, 739) = 2.3, p < .05$ .

<sup>120</sup> Spring 2015 survey: Percentage of respondents responding in the affirmative to the following questions: “Have you ever met with the College Preparation Advisor at your school?,” 62%; and “Have you participated in this activity during this school year: Met with a College Preparation Advisor?,” 41%. Internal inconsistency in items on the student survey warrants caution in interpretation.

**Figure 3.13. Students’ Perceived Effectiveness of College Preparation Advisors: Spring 2014 and Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014 and Spring 2015).

Note: Due to anonymity, the responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. Perceptions were not significantly different over time.

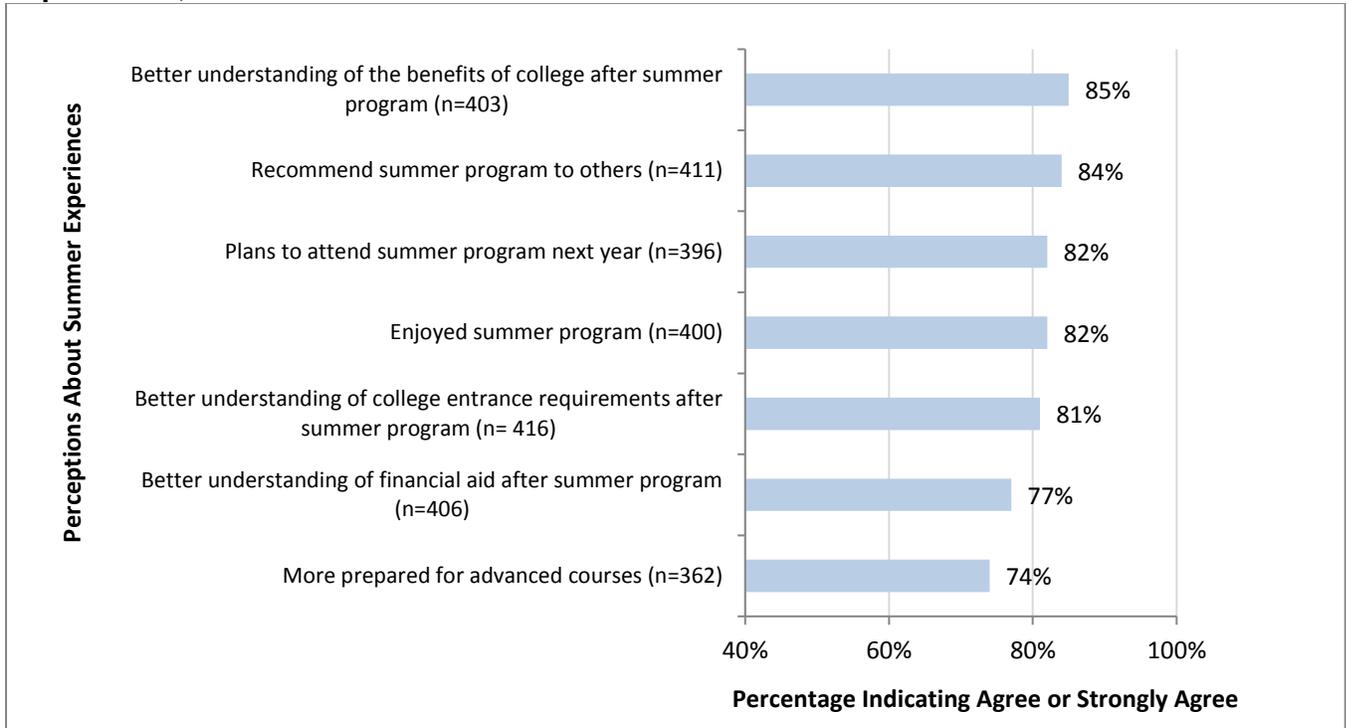
### ACTIVITIES OFFERED IN SUMMER 2014 AND PLANS FOR SUMMER 2015

Since Year 1, each of the schools indicated plans to conduct summer programs focused on activities that would further support student success in advanced courses and general content related to college readiness. In the APR, schools reported that 55% of students enrolled in a summer 2014 program (see Chapter 2.3.1). In the fall 2014 survey, 35% of students stated that they participated in a Texas GEAR UP SG summer program at their school. This may suggest that some students may have been unclear if their summer program was associated with the Texas GEAR UP SG. Alternatively, students who did not respond to the survey may have been more likely to have participated in the summer 2014 program. Figure 3.14 shows student perceptions about the summer program; see Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015) for data from the fall 2013 survey about participation in summer 2013 programs. After participating in the summer program, students perceived having a better understanding of the benefits of college (85%), college entrance requirements (81%), and financial aid (77%); each of these increased from perceptions about the 2013 summer program.<sup>121</sup> A majority of the students plan to attend Texas GEAR UP SG summer 2015 programs (82%) and would recommend summer programs to others (84%), similar to the results from the fall 2013 survey. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should focus more on financial aid in future summer programs given the other survey items that continue to reflect concerns regarding the financial aspects of college. Additionally, Texas GEAR UP SG staff could use the summer programs as an opportunity to prepare students for advanced courses including supporting students development of skills

<sup>121</sup> Data for the spring 2014 survey are as follows: benefits of college (80%), college entrance requirements (77%), and financial aid (68%).

associated with academic success such as organization and planning, especially as students begin enrolling in advanced placement and dual-enrollment courses.

**Figure 3.14. Students’ Perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG Summer Programs by Types of Experiences, Fall 2014**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Fall 2014).

Additional data from spring 2015 surveys asked about a range of Texas GEAR UP SG activities, including summer programs (see Table G.19, Appendix G).<sup>122</sup> Of the students who indicated that they participated, 40% rated the 2014 GEAR UP summer program they participated in as *very effective* and 33% rated it as *mostly effective*. The effectiveness of summer programs for those who do attend is useful to know as Texas GEAR UP SG staff consider ways to encourage a greater percentage of students to attend.

Tables G.22 and G.23 in Appendix G list student-reported reasons for attending and not attending summer programs in 2014. Students commonly reported that participation was driven by anticipated help in Grade 9 classes (53%), wanting to participate in the program (48%), and anticipated help succeeding in high school (48%). In general, these reasons are consistent to prior years with two important caveats: in Year 3, 39% of students responding to this item selected parental encouragement (compared to 52% in Year 2) and 35% of students responding to this item selected school encouragement (compared to 46% in Year 2). Commonly cited reasons for *not* attending included not being in the area during the time (18%) and not being informed about the program (18%). In addition, 33% of students stated that they did not participate because they did not want to. These student responses about reasons for not attending were similar in Year 2. Texas GEAR UP SG and school staff are encouraged to

<sup>122</sup> Percentage of respondents answering in the affirmative to the following questions: Student fall 2014 survey item: “Did you participate in the GEAR UP summer 2014 program at your school?,” 24%; and Student spring 2015 survey item: “Have you participated in this activity during this school year?,” 34%. Internal inconsistency with items on the parent survey warrants caution in interpretation.

consider the facilitators and barriers to recruiting more participants for future Texas GEAR UP SG summer programs. For example, making it clear how programs will help students be successful in their high school courses and having school/Texas GEAR UP SG staff encourage students to attend (and make sure that they are aware of the option) might be a helpful strategy. Given site visit data on the multiple competing summer options for high school students (such as camps for sports and band), coordinating the programs in advance may be a helpful strategy to increase participation.

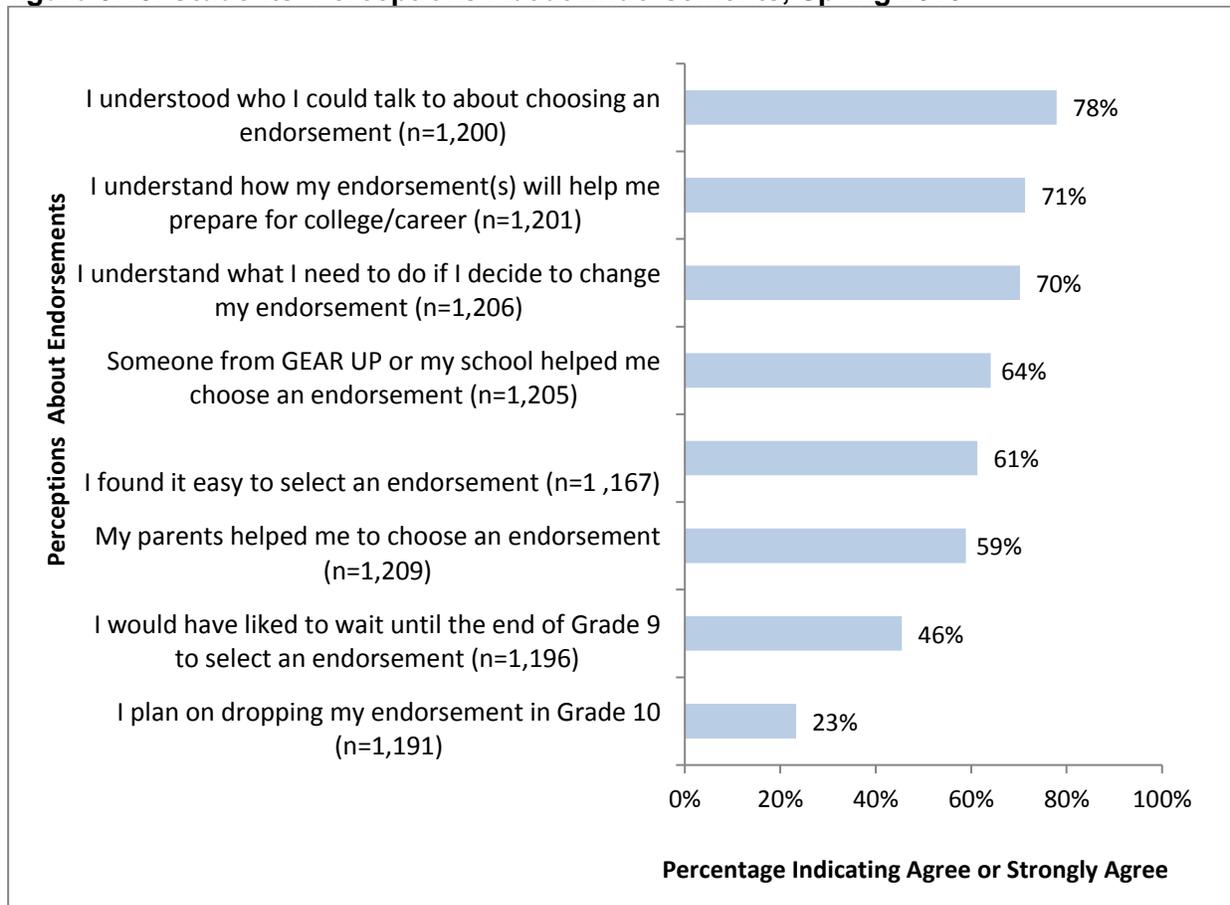
Given that Year 3 marked the transition of the primary cohort into high school, summer programming in 2014 intended to bridge that transition and is detailed further in a spotlight analysis in the forthcoming comprehensive report.

### **3.5.2 Perceived Progress in High School: Endorsements and Graduation Programs**

As previously stated, the forthcoming comprehensive report will include a detailed exploration of the students' transition to high school. Related aspects of that transition include students' experiences with endorsements and graduation programs. The Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort (Grade 9 students in Year 3 of implementation) is the first graduating class to be subject to the new requirements under HB 5 as summarized in Chapter 1. Knowing students' perceptions about their experiences with endorsements and graduation programs will help to gauge progress toward Project Objective 1.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Plan plus Endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average. Survey items related to endorsements and graduation programs also relate to Project Objective 4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college. Thus, efforts through Texas GEAR UP SG implementation offer an opportunity for students to receive supports to help them meet those requirements as a critical step toward college. Students' perceptions about endorsements are included in Figure 3.15.

Results indicate that a majority of the students (78%) knew with whom they can talk about endorsements and nearly three quarters of the students (71%) understood how an endorsement would help them with college/career preparation. Texas GEAR UP SG staff supported students in helping select appropriate endorsements; as a result, only 23% of the students were considering dropping the endorsement they initially selected. In forthcoming years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, efforts might include encouraging students to continue working toward their selected endorsements and offering programs tailored to selected programs (such as college visits to schools that focus on particular endorsement areas).

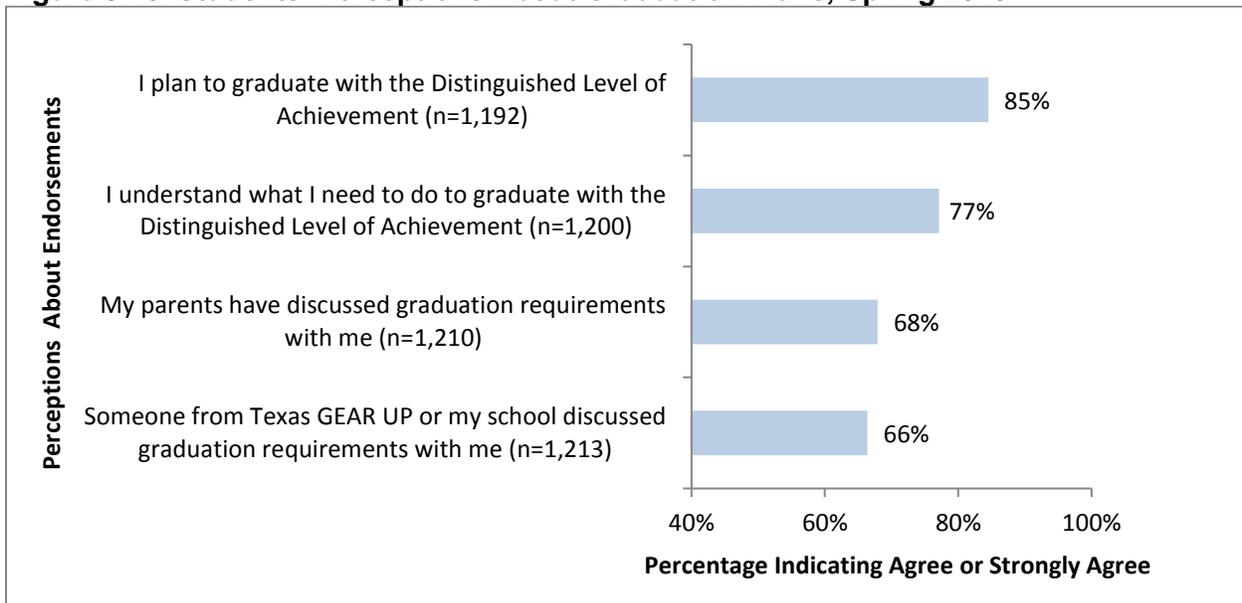
**Figure 3.15. Students’ Perceptions About Endorsements, Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Students’ perceptions about graduation programs are displayed in Figure 3.16. Most encouraging among the results is that a majority of the students (85%) plan to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement (see Chapter 1 for more details about this graduation option). Approximately two-thirds of students reported that someone from GEAR UP spoke with them about graduation requirements. As students progress through high school and graduation nears, it will be important for Texas GEAR UP SG staff to continue to be available for students’ questions about graduation and to proactively reach out to students to ensure that they are on the path to meeting the requirements of their graduation programs.

**Figure 3.16. Students’ Perceptions About Graduation Plans, Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

In addition to their perceptions about endorsements and graduation programs, the fall 2014 survey asked students about how challenging they thought the transition to high school was. Only about one quarter of the students (28%) reported that transitioning to high school was *challenging* or *extremely challenging*. Additional data from site visits included discussions about how the need to select endorsements in Grade 8 prompted a focus on the transition into high school. Additionally, various participants at all six of the high schools commented on “the cognitive jump” that needs to occur for students due to the higher expectations and the slightly less structured school day they experience in high school. During site visits, students shared positive feedback about opportunities they had in touring the high school facilities before they started Grade 9 as a way to get acclimated. Across Texas GEAR UP SG schools, freshmen orientation activities were described as positive transitional experiences for the students and parents who attended. Students and parents appreciated the “familiar faces” as the Texas GEAR UP SG staff transitioned from middle school to high school with the cohort, giving them a sense of familiar support; participants from High Schools H, I, J, and M emphasized this.

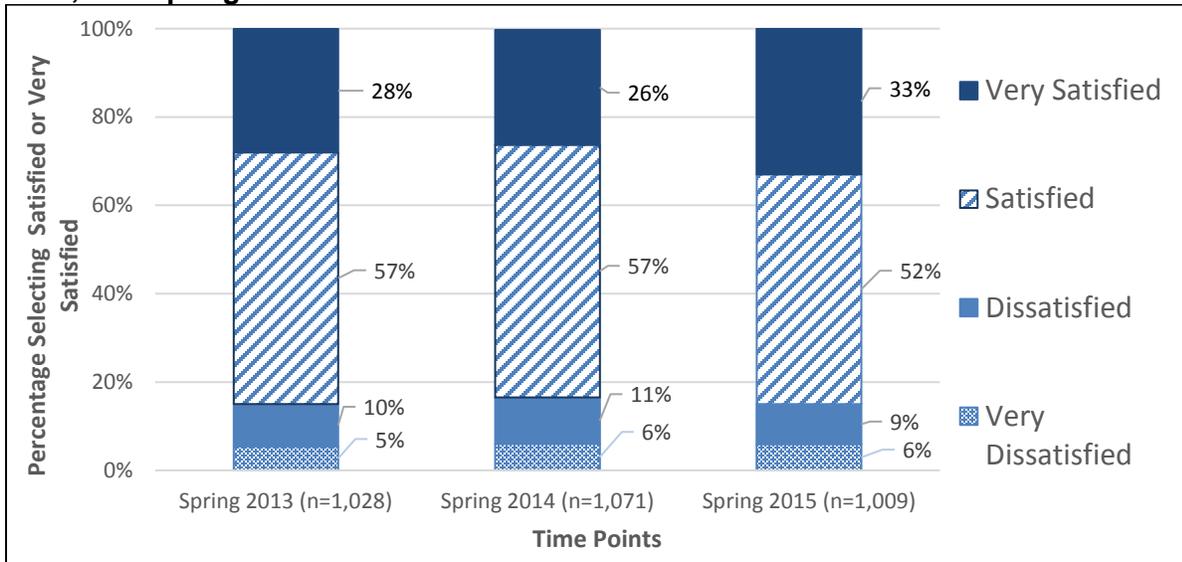
### 3.5.3 Overall Perceptions of Texas GEAR UP State Grant

Beyond feedback about specific activities, students were also asked about their overall perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG. Student surveys asked about overall perceptions of the program. As shown in Figure 3.17, there were significant changes over time in their overall perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG.<sup>123</sup> For example, the percentage of students who were *very satisfied* was 26% in Year 2, but was 33% in Year 3. It will be important going forward for Texas GEAR UP SG to focus on continuing to offer services that students want in order for them to remain satisfied with the program. However, it is important to note that, overall, 85% of students reported being *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with Texas GEAR UP SG.

<sup>123</sup> Student-reported satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(15) = 48.7, p < .001$ .

Student satisfaction differed significantly across schools (Table G.24, Appendix G).<sup>124</sup> The percentages of students who reported being *very satisfied* were below 25% at High School L (23%) and highest at School M (47%). Although all schools engaged in a broader range of Texas GEAR UP SG activities in Year 3, High School M engaged in all of the Texas GEAR UP SG strategies tracked. In addition, this school involved the greatest range of students in a number of strategies in Year 3. These factors may have contributed to the overall higher satisfaction rating at High School M.

**Figure 3.17. Student Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG Overall: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015).

Note: Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

### 3.6 Relationships Between Perceptions

In this section, relationships among survey items are explored. 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 influencing 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 that there is a positive linear relationship between discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff and knowledge (as engagement in discussions rises, so, too, do levels of knowledge) might prompt more focus on discussions in the hopes of also affecting knowledge. The first two sections about knowledge, discussions, and expectations represent consistency with prior years; new sections on summer programs, college visits, and graduation requirements reflect emerging correlational data.

<sup>124</sup> Student-reported satisfaction with GEAR UP differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(20) = 116.5, p < .001$ .

### 3.6.1 College Entrance Requirements

Student discussions about college entrance requirements with someone from their school or Texas GEAR UP SG were significantly positively correlated with students' perceived knowledge of college (an aggregate of items such as SAT, general requirements, and the importance/benefit of college).<sup>125</sup> In other words, having engaged in these conversations was associated with a higher self-reported level of knowledge of college-going concepts, including entrance requirements and anticipated benefits. The results of these correlations mirror the findings in the Year 1 and Year 2 reports (Briggs et al., 2015; O'Donnel et al., 2013).

Given that these discussions about college relate to knowledge, it is also important to examine the ways that knowledge relates to expectations. Correlations between college knowledge and expectations were significantly positive.<sup>126</sup> Higher levels of student knowledge were associated with higher educational expectations, a correlation similar to prior years. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should focus on increasing opportunities to engage students in discussions about college acceptance through events, meetings, advising sessions, and so forth.

### 3.6.2 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>127</sup> That is, students who had participated in such conversations had higher perceived levels of knowledge about financial aid. These results are consistent with the correlations found in Year 1 and Year 2 reports (Briggs et al., 2015; O'Donnel et al., 2013).

Similar to college requirements, it is also important to understand the extent to which knowledge about financing college relates to educational expectations. Student knowledge of financial terms is significantly positively correlated with educational expectations meaning that higher levels of knowledge were associated with higher educational expectations.<sup>128</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG staff should engage in efforts to increase knowledge about college costs and financing options because it may be a key factor in changing perceptions regarding seeing college as a viable option.

### 3.6.3 Summer Programs

Student participation in summer programs was significantly positively correlated with a few key student perceptions: educational expectations,<sup>129</sup> knowledge of college (an aggregated item as previously described),<sup>130</sup> and knowledge of financial aid terms (an aggregated item as previously described).<sup>131</sup> Students who participated in a Texas GEAR UP SG summer program had higher expectations about the level of college they plan to obtain, as well as higher self-reported knowledge about key aspects of being able to do so. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should encourage more students to participate in summer programs to help influence these key aspects of creating a college-going culture.

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<sup>125</sup>  $r(1,301) = .29, p < .001.$

<sup>126</sup>  $r(1,310) = .28, p < .001.$

<sup>127</sup>  $r(1,258) = .30, p < .001.$

<sup>128</sup>  $r(1,316) = .18, p < .001.$

<sup>129</sup>  $r(1,131) = .12, p < .001.$

<sup>130</sup>  $r(1,128) = .19, p < .001.$

<sup>131</sup>  $r(1,134) = .21, p < .001.$

### 3.6.4 College Visits

Student participation in college visits was significantly positively correlated with students' understanding of the importance of attending college.<sup>132</sup> That is, students who participated in this particular Texas GEAR UP SG activity also tended to recognize that college is important. Additionally, college visits also were positively correlated with plans for advanced course taking in each subject area.<sup>133</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG staff should arrange for more college visits (perhaps increasing the number of visits, the percentage of student attendance, and/or the number of universities participating) to help influence these key aspects of creating a college-going culture and academic preparation.

### 3.6.5 Graduation Requirements

Two additional correlations emphasize the importance of Texas GEAR UP SG initiating and continuing conversations with students about key aspects of high school graduation. Students' discussions with someone from Texas GEAR UP SG to help them select an endorsement was positively correlated with students' understanding about how their endorsement would help them prepare for college or a career.<sup>134</sup> Additionally, students' discussions with someone from Texas GEAR UP SG about graduation requirements was positively correlated with their plans to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement.<sup>135</sup> Efforts to continue speaking with students (both one-on-one and in group settings) are anticipated to help students know what they need to do in order to graduate ready for college.

## 3.7 Summary

The survey findings reported in this chapter are considered outcomes. Throughout the chapter and in this summary section, there are suggestions regarding how Texas GEAR UP SG staff are contributing, and should continue to contribute, to increased knowledge and to changing perceptions. However, it is important to acknowledge that definitive cause-and-effect relationships between Texas GEAR UP SG activities and these outcomes cannot be made. For this aspect of the evaluation, there is no comparable group of students who are not participating in Texas GEAR UP SG in order to understand how their perceptions about these issues change over time. Therefore, readers should interpret the findings with caution. In some cases, participants indicate perceiving that Texas GEAR UP SG is having an impact.

### 3.7.1 Key Findings

In Year 3, student survey data suggested several potential directions for continued implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, many of which are related to students' levels of understanding regarding college readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, financing college). There are several key findings reported in this chapter, which are highlighted below. In many cases, the findings differed significantly by school, meaning that an overall finding may not necessarily represent the survey findings from any individual school.

- **Continued Growth in Some Aspects of Students' College-Going Mentality.** For two survey items, findings show continued progress in desired student perceptions. Aspirations to obtain a four-year degree or higher have steadily increased over time. Students' reported knowledge of college-related terms/concepts, especially the SAT and ACT, also increased from spring 2014 to spring 2015, which presumably informs students' plans to attend

<sup>132</sup>  $r(1,065) = .09, p < .01$ .

<sup>133</sup> Mathematics:  $r(1,058) = .12, p < .001$ ; ELA:  $r(1,058) = .11, p < .001$ ; Science:  $r(1,053) = .12, p < .001$ .

<sup>134</sup>  $r(1,192) = .41, p < .001$ .

<sup>135</sup>  $r(1,186) = .38, p < .001$ .

college. Also notable is that the percentage of students who reported that GEAR UP helped them decide to go to college increased in Year 3. Although other areas may not reflect positive changes, overall perceptions remain high, such as students' agreement about the importance of college and plans for taking advanced courses.

- **Initial Promise on the Path Toward Graduation.** Spring 2015 student survey data on endorsements and graduation programs show promise that students are on the path to fulfilling postsecondary college ready requirements. In other words, the majority of the students understand the various aspects of endorsements and plan to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement. Annual Implementation Report #4 will explore trends over time on these items with the hopes of continued progress in students' perceptions about being on track to graduate high school.
- **Positive Experiences with Texas GEAR UP SG Activities.** From college visits to tutoring support, students rated all activities as mostly effective, on average. In particular, students' feedback about summer programs was positive. Correlational data from survey results suggest that participation in summer programs and in college visits was positively associated with education expectations and knowledge of college related terms.
- **Widening Gap of Aspirations and Expectations.** Between Year 2 and Year 3, survey data indicate that students continue to have educational aspirations that exceed their education expectations; in fact, the gap between the two widened over time. It may be that providing students with factual information about college, such as the requirements and costs, needs to be paired with ongoing efforts to support students in seeing those requirements as attainable. This could entail academic supports (such as tutoring to help students increase their GPAs and prepare for the SAT/ACT), as well as mentoring services to help students see examples of others who are able to meet college requirements.
- **Continued Concerns About College Costs.** Similar to findings from prior years, survey data reflect an ongoing challenge with regard to students' understanding of the financial aspects of college and seeing it as an affordable option that is available to them. Multiple survey items point to concerns about college costs, including knowledge of actual costs or financial aid terms, as well as perceptions about being able to afford college. The finding that showed an increase in the percentage of students who reported having discussions with school or GEAR UP staff about financial aid indicates that there seems to have been some effort in Year 3 to begin addressing this concern. In response, Texas GEAR UP SG should consider intensifying both the depth and breadth of services that address the financial aspects of college. For example, events and informational material on financial aid options that explain details about availability, criteria, application processes, and so forth may be helpful to students. Another strategy might be including visiting financial aid offices as part of college visits.
- **Nuances of Areas in Which Perceptions Remain the Same.** In many areas, survey data reflect positive changes in perceptions over time. However, there were a few areas where it seems that Texas GEAR UP SG activities had not yet been able to influence the desired changes in perceptions. The following areas remained relatively similar between Year 2 and Year 3: expectations for obtaining a four-year degree or higher, agreement that it is too early to think about college, plans not to go to college, and overall satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG. It is important to note that, in some cases, a closer examination of school-level data shows a more positive outlook (although trend data is not yet available because this is the first year of implementation at the high school level). For example, in spring 2014 and spring 2015, 7% of students selected that they do not plan to go to college, but at High School L, it was 3%, and at High School H, it was 5%. In other cases, this is cause for less concern as prior year data were already high (such as satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG). For other items, such as expectations about obtaining a four-year degree and it being too early to begin thinking about college, there is more room for growth.

In other areas, survey responses reflected increasing concerns, including the following: the percentage of students who do not think it is important to attend college, the use of GEAR UP staff/events as a resource, the perceived affordability of a four-year college, and the perceived effectiveness of College Preparation Advisors. Given that Year 3 reflects the first year of implementation in a new school setting and students were also undergoing the transition to high school, there may have been short-term setbacks in certain areas. Survey data in forthcoming years will continue to examine those trends with the anticipation that such trends will reverse in the near future.

### 3.7.2 Consistent Implementation and Perception of Successes at High School M

Throughout this chapter, significant differences across schools have been discussed within individual items. It is also important to connect this across items. In particular, High School M stands out as exceeding other schools on multiple survey items. This school had the highest percentage of students for each of the following items:

- Selected *strongly agree* about the importance of attending college.
- Reported an impact of Texas GEAR UP SG on college plans.
- Reported discussions with GEAR UP staff/information at GEAR UP events as a source of information about college.
- Indicated that they had discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG or someone from their school about college entrance requirements.
- Average student knowledge of each of the following items: SAT (equal to the average for High School L), general requirements for college acceptance (equal to the average for High School J), and the importance/benefit of college (equal to the average for High School L).
- Reported *strongly agreeing* about plans on taking advanced mathematics courses.
- Indicated that they had discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG or someone from their school about financial aid.
- Selected *probably* or *definitely* about the perceived affordability of community college.
- Selected *probably* or *definitely* about the perceived affordability of a four-year college.
- Percentage of students reporting that they participated in each of the following activities: mentoring, meeting with a College Preparation Advisor, GEAR UP summer program, academic advising, job site visiting/shadowing, and college visits.
- Reported being *very satisfied* with Texas GEAR UP SG.

Because this was the first year of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation at High School M, it will be important to continue to evaluate the extent to which the school remains a “high performer” and whether the school makes progress over time as reflected in the survey data. Collectively, the findings suggest that High School M may serve as an example for specific aspects of Texas GEAR UP SG, as well as an overall case of success. However, it is important to note that there may be external factors at play, such as an environment that is particularly receptive to Texas GEAR UP SG services, related programming that reinforces Texas GEAR UP SG goals, and so forth.

### 3.7.3 Facilitators and Barriers

A primary source of information on facilitators and barriers is parent survey data for prior implementation reports with site visit data supplementing those findings. Given that this chapter does not include parent survey data, facilitators and barriers derive primarily from site visit data, which reflects a small, likely self-selected sample, so caution is advised in interpreting the findings. Student survey data on a related topic—the information, supports, or activities they report needing—are presented at the end of this section. These analyses address the following

evaluation question: What facilitators and barriers do schools and parents report regarding participation in college readiness activities?

During site visits, participants shared various facilitators to Texas GEAR UP SG implementation. Site visit data about barriers to Texas GEAR UP SG implementation included both challenges that Texas GEAR UP SG staff had implementing program aspects and barriers that parents face in being able to participate in Texas GEAR UP SG activities. These are detailed in Chapter 2 (2.4 and 2.8).

Finally, students were asked for direct input on the kinds of information, support, or activities that would help them to be successful in school and prepared for college as shown in Table 3.4. Similar to Year 2 (Briggs et al., 2015), the most commonly identified need for students was field trips (79%), followed by college tours (62%); this theme also emerged from the site visit data. This likely suggests that students enjoy opportunities for learning that occur outside of the traditional classroom. Information on financing college was selected by more than half of the students (53%). This, once again, affirms the need for Texas GEAR UP SG to focus more on the financial aspect of college. Given that nearly half of the students (44%) reported needing more information on GEAR UP and how to participate, efforts in forthcoming years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation should focus on clear communication with students about what GEAR UP is and how they can become involved.

**Table 3.4. Students’ Input on Needed Information/Support/Activities, Spring 2015**

Information/Support/Activity	n=1,126
Field trips	79%
College tours	62%
More information on financial aid/scholarships	53%
More information on college entrance requirements	53%
More advanced classes	48%
More information on GEAR UP program/how to participate	44%
Sports, activities, and clubs	44%
Tutoring/Individualized care	36%
Bilingual	21%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).



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

The following chapter includes an analysis of how TEA and the schools budgeted and expended funds for Texas GEAR UP SG in fiscal year (FY) 2014 (September 1, 2013 through August 31, 2014), as well as budget data for FY 2015 (September 1, 2014 through August 31, 2015).<sup>136</sup> There are three key areas of analyses for both time points: (1) the overall Texas GEAR UP SG as managed by TEA, (2) the overall budget and spending data from the four Texas GEAR UP SG school districts, and (3) the districts' cost categories (i.e., payroll, professional and contracted services, supplies and materials, other operating costs, capital outlay). At a basic level, the budget and expenditure data provide an accounting of how federal grants are utilized by the Texas GEAR UP SG. In addition to the data throughout these sections providing early information from which to begin to analyze costs over the course of the project, the data will also contribute to eventually understanding the sustainability of project outcomes after funding ends. That is, understanding how funds are utilized at the state and district levels and examining those trends within cost categories will inform projections about how services might be continued after grant funding from this award concludes. The following evaluation questions related to costs are addressed in this chapter:

- For what services and activities do grantees use grant funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
- To what extent were grantees able to secure matching funds?
- For what services and activities do grantees use matching funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
- How did schools budget for Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 3?

### 4.1 Overall Texas GEAR UP Budget and Expenditures

In the second year of the Texas GEAR UP SG (FY 2014), TEA received \$5 million from ED; this is the same amount received in FY 2013. In addition, a requirement of the federal grant is to match all expenditures of the federal funds, dollar for dollar, with local district grantee funds and in-kind contractor contributions in addition to allowable state funds each year of the grant cycle.<sup>137</sup>

Table 4.1 provides an overview of how TEA allocated and expended federal GEAR UP grant funds for state FY 2014. With 69% of funds expended on "other program activities," this table details the various projects that TEA funded under this category.<sup>138</sup> In FY 2013, "other program activities" accounted for 79% of expended funds (Briggs et al., 2015). Projects on which TEA expended the highest percentage of funds included the following: technical assistance (32%), product development (32%), and grants to districts (23%); TEA expended the highest percentage of funds in the same three categories in FY 2013.<sup>139</sup> Product development reflects

<sup>136</sup> The Year 4 Annual Implementation Report will include final data for Year 3, including expenditures.

<sup>137</sup> Section 404C(b) of the Higher Education Act requires that at least 50% of the total cost of a GEAR UP project be paid with state, local, institutional, or private funds (i.e., for each dollar of federal funds received, at least one dollar of state or private funds must be contributed). Matching contributions may be in the form of cash or documented in-kind contributions.

<sup>138</sup> "Other program activities" include the following: product development, technical assistance, Texas Gateway (formerly known as Project Share), and GEAR UP evaluation. Remaining costs include grants to districts and indirect costs (i.e., salaries and wages, employee benefits, travel, materials and supplies, and other indirect costs).

<sup>139</sup> In FY 2013, TEA expended the highest percentage of funds in the following categories: product development (47%), technical assistance (21%), and grants to districts (15%).

the significant investment made by TEA in revising the Texas GEAR UP website (<http://www.texasgearup.com>), which became available statewide by the end of FY 2013; FY 2014 included continued revisions and expanded content. In some cases, expended amounts reflect a slightly lower amount than the allocated funds. For example, the expended amount for “product development” reflects 71% of funding allocated and “technical assistance” reflects 78% of the funding allocated. In other cases, continued challenges implementing statewide PD through TEA’s Texas Gateway for online resources are reflected in the lack of allocated or expended funds in this area. Progress in district implementation in Year 2 is reflected by 87% of allocated funds in the “grants to districts” category being expended, compared to only 65% in Year 1 (Briggs et al., 2015). TEA expended the full amount of allocated funding in Year 2 for “Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation” and “Texas Education Agency direct and indirect administrative costs.”

Table 4.2 provides information about how TEA budgeted to use funds in FY 2015.<sup>140</sup> ED awarded \$5 million to TEA to implement the third year of the Texas GEAR UP SG. This award, in addition to carryover from prior years, was set up in the agency’s FY 2015 budget. Funds were allocated to projects from this budget (combining funds originating in Year 3 with any funds carried over from previous years). The total amount allocated for FY 2015 projects was \$7,716,790. Overall, TEA allocated \$4,005,035 (70%) for “other program activities,” a slightly lower percentage than in prior years.<sup>141</sup> Consistent with trends from prior years, projects to which TEA allocated the highest percentage of funds included the following: product development (40%), technical assistance (25%), and grants to districts (24%). Technical assistance budgeted amounts included the salaries for College Preparation Advisors, which was also the case for FY 2014.

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<sup>140</sup> The Year 4 implementation report will present final expenditure data for Year 3 (FY 2015) because these were not yet available for this report.

<sup>141</sup> “Other program activities” include the following: product development, technical assistance, and Texas GEAR UP evaluation. Other costs include grants to districts and TEA direct and indirect administrative costs (i.e., salaries and wages, employee benefits, travel, materials and supplies, other TEA administrative costs and indirect costs). “Other program activities” accounted for 80% of the allocated funds in Year 1 and 73% of the allocated funds in Year 2.

**Table 4.1. Texas GEAR UP SG Award Funds and Matching Contributions, Fiscal Year 2014**

Categorical Cost Data for Year 2					
Category	Grant Funds Budgeted <sup>a</sup>	Grant Funds Allocated <sup>b</sup>	Grant Funds Expended	Grant Funds Unexpended <sup>c</sup>	Matching Contributions
Grants to Districts	\$1,100,000	\$1,398,850	\$1,222,641	\$176,209	\$1,333,806
Technical Assistance (UT-IPSI) <sup>d</sup>	\$1,578,350	\$2,221,990	\$1,739,982	\$482,008	\$217,153
Product Development (AMS Pictures)	\$1,578,350	\$2,408,385	\$1,720,350	\$688,035	\$215,000 <sup>f</sup>
Professional Development – Texas Gateway	\$63,300	–	–	\$63,300	–
Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	–	–
Texas Education Agency Direct and Indirect Admin Costs <sup>e</sup>	\$430,000	\$430,000	\$430,000	–	<sup>g</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>\$6,709,225</b>	<b>\$5,362,973</b>	<b>\$1,409,552</b>	<b>\$1,765,959</b>

<sup>a</sup> The Grant Funds Budgeted column indicates the budgeted funding breakdown for Year 2 federal funds (\$5,000,000).

<sup>b</sup> The Grant Funds Allocated column includes actual allocations (e.g., awards, contracts, grants) and includes carryover funds from the prior year.

<sup>c</sup> Total FY 2014 Grant Funds Unexpended column accounts for both budgeted funds that were not allocated (Texas Gateway, formerly Project Share, and professional development) and allocated funds that were not expended.

<sup>d</sup> Provided by UT-IPSI: The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives.

<sup>e</sup> Includes salaries and wages, employee benefits, travel, materials and supplies, and other Texas Education Agency direct and indirect administrative costs.

<sup>f</sup> Includes \$200,000 match from the original contract, plus the \$15,000 match provided for TEA's Texas Gateway for online resources in Amendment #2.

<sup>g</sup> Texas Education Agency matches 100% of the remaining expenditures with state-funded program expenditures on the Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate<sup>®</sup> Test Program.

**Table 4.2. Texas GEAR UP SG Award Funds, Fiscal Year 2015**

Categorical Cost Data for Year 3		
Category	Grant Funds Budgeted <sup>a</sup>	Grant Funds Allocated <sup>b</sup>
Grants to Districts	\$1,358,000	\$1,386,755
Technical Assistance (UT-IPSI) <sup>c</sup>	\$1,457,000	\$1,457,000
Product Development (AMS Pictures)	\$1,610,000	\$2,298,035
Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation	\$250,000	\$250,000
Texas Education Agency Direct and Indirect Admin Costs <sup>d</sup>	\$325,000	\$325,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>\$5,716,790</b>

<sup>a</sup> The Grant Funds Budgeted column indicates the budgeted funding breakdown for Year 3 federal funds (\$5,000,000).

<sup>b</sup> The Grant Funds Allocated column includes actual allocations (e.g., awards, contracts, grants) and includes carryover funds from the prior years.

<sup>c</sup> Provided by UT-IPSI: The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives.

<sup>d</sup> Includes salaries and wages, employee benefits, travel, materials and supplies, other Texas Education Agency direct and indirect administrative costs.

## 4.2 School Districts' Expenditures in Fiscal Year 2014

At the time of the Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015), expenditure data for FY 2014 were not yet available. Grantee districts may report expenditures to the TEA Expense Report system at any time during the grant period until final expenditure reporting is due, which occurs in September of the fiscal year following the end date of the award period. Some districts may reconcile expenditures toward the end of the year, and some districts have large end-of-year and summer program expenditures that show up later in the year. Most districts have accounting processes that allow for the gap between reporting to TEA's expenditure system and receiving the drawdown. The update for Year 2 is particularly important because the data at the time of the Year 2 report did not include the funds spent. Overall, the four districts spent 88% of their grant funds, compared to Year 1 in which districts overall spent only 65% of their budgeted funds. Only one district (District #1) spent less than three-quarters (74%) of their budgeted funds. In Year 2, all districts met the requirement of matching 100% of the expended funds; two districts had match contributions that were more than 100% of the expended funds with District 2 matching at 131%. FY 2014 grant funds remaining after the districts reported their final expenditures were carried over by TEA into the next fiscal year and redistributed across FY 2015 GEAR UP project activities.

Each year, the districts are required to reapply for funds and receive a new NOGA that reflects their total budget for the fiscal year. In Year 3 (FY 2015), TEA budgeted for subgrants from the Texas GEAR UP SG totaling just under \$1.4 million to four school districts to serve students in six high schools during the 2014–15 school year (September 1, 2014 through August 31, 2015). The Year 4 implementation report will include data on Year 3 expenditures and data on matching funds.

**Table 4.3. Texas GEAR UP SG School District Percentage of Awarded Amounts Expended and Matched, Fiscal Year 2014**

School District	Fiscal Year 2014 Percentage of Award Amount Expended	Fiscal Year 2014 Percentage Matched
District 1	73.9%	100%
District 2	95.1%	131%
District 3	93.1%	107%
District 4	88.1%	100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>87.6%</b>	<b>109%</b>

*Source:* Texas Education Agency-reported drawdowns through the end of the Year 2 grant cycle for Fiscal Year 2014 as of October 31, 2014. District Notice of Grant Awards for Fiscal Year 2015 (as amended where relevant).

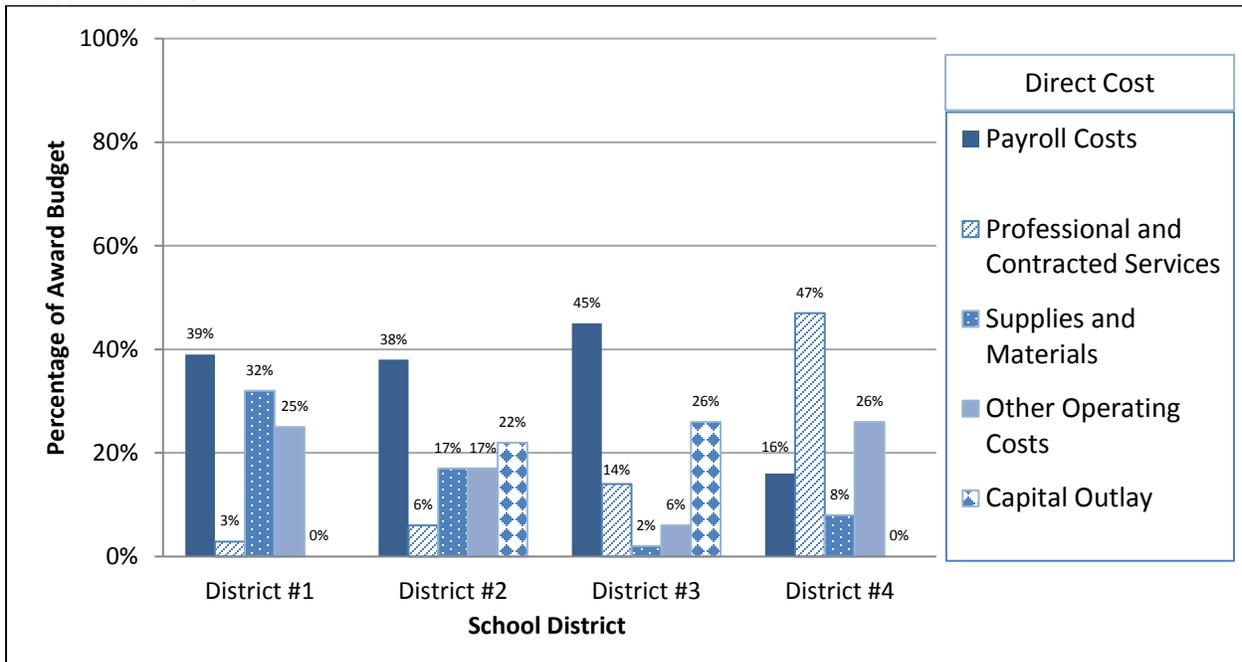
### 4.3 Description of District Budget and Expenditures in Fiscal Year 2014 by Cost Categories

This section presents budgets and expenditures for subgrant awards to the four school districts broken out by five federal APR cost categories: payroll, professional and contracted services, supplies and materials, other operating costs, and capital outlay. Understanding where districts are spending their grant funds will be important in projecting sustainability based on which of those are recurring expenses (such as payroll and contracted services) that may be difficult to continue without additional funds.

#### 4.3.1 Fiscal Year 2014 Final Expenditures

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show updated information for FY 2014 (Year 2), including the budgeted amounts by cost category reported in Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015), as well as new data on the expenditures by cost category. Comparisons between planned and actual expenditures offer some information about whether districts used funds as originally planned. For example, although District 1 budgeted 32% of their funds for supplies and materials, the district ended up only spending 8% of expended funds in this cost category. In Year 2, there were many areas in which districts' expenditures were greater than their budgeted funds. For example, District 1 had expenses for professional and contracted services that exceeded budgeted amounts (3% budgeted, 37% expended). The following districts spent above-budgeted amounts in payroll: District 2 (38% budgeted, 58% expended) and District 3 (45% budgeted, 54% expended).

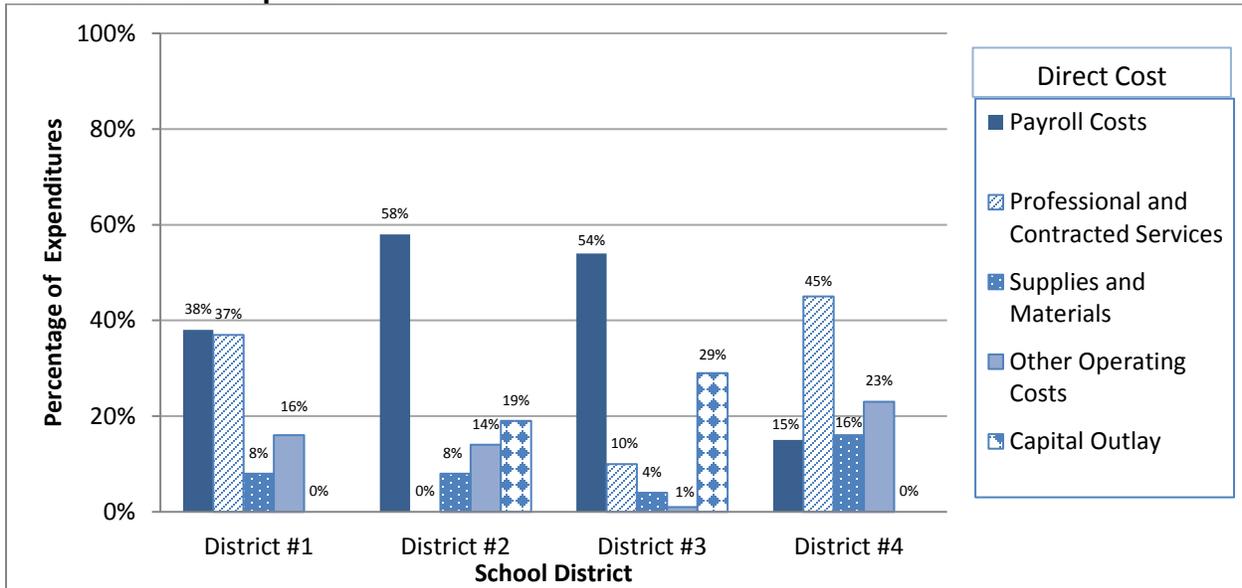
**Figure 4.1. Percentage of Texas GEAR UP SG Award Budget by Direct Cost Category, Fiscal Year 2014**



Source: District Notice of Grant Awards for Fiscal Year 2014 (as amended where relevant): District 1: June 30, 2014; District 2: December 13, 2013; District 3: December 10, 2013; and District 4: May 8, 2014.

Note: Totals do not add up to 100% in Districts 3 and 4 because a 2% indirect cost is included in their program budgets. These data were previously reported in Annual Implementation Report #2, but they are repeated here for ease of comparison to expenditure data.

**Figure 4.2. Percentage of Texas GEAR UP SG Expenditures by Direct Cost Category, Fiscal Year 2014 Update**



Source: TEA-reported final drawdowns through October 31, 2014.

Note: Totals do not add up to 100% in Districts 3 and 4 because indirect costs are included in their program budgets.

Additional expenditure analyses included looking within the cost categories given in which the percentage of grant funds varied widely across districts (Figure 4.2). Three districts (Districts 1, 2, and 3) spent the highest portion of grant funds on payroll services (38%, 58%, and 54%, respectively). As discussed in greater detail in Annual Implementation Report #1 (O’Donnel et al., 2013), payroll services included funds for project management, project coordinators, project directors, tutors, and parent coordinators, for example. In Year 1, District 4 did not expend any of their budgeted funds on payroll (Briggs et al., 2015), but in Year 2, they spent 15% of their expended funds on payroll, reflecting an investment in staff to oversee and implement Texas GEAR UP SG.<sup>142</sup> The schools in the two districts that spent more than half of their grant funds on payroll (Districts 2 and 3) implemented at least 15 of the 19 strategies in Year 2 (Briggs et al., 2015).

Similar to Year 1, District 4 drew down the highest percentage for professional and contracted services (45%) compared to other districts and compared to other expenses for District 4. Examples of professional and contracted services, as described in Annual Implementation Report #1, included staff development, student services, and parent outreach. In looking at expenses for supplies and materials (for items such as tablets and graphing calculators), District 4 drew down the highest percentage at 16% and District 3 only drew down 4%, the lowest percentage among the four districts. One district (District 1) spent much less in this category in Year 2 (8%) compared to Year 1 (51%), perhaps reflecting the investment in non-consumables such as tablet devices. For other operating costs (including expenses for employee conferences and student college visits), District 4 drew down the highest percentage with 23%, compared to 1% in District 3. Although no district drew down funds in the capital outlay cost category in Year 1, two districts (Districts 2 and 3) expended 19% and 29%, respectively, in this cost category in

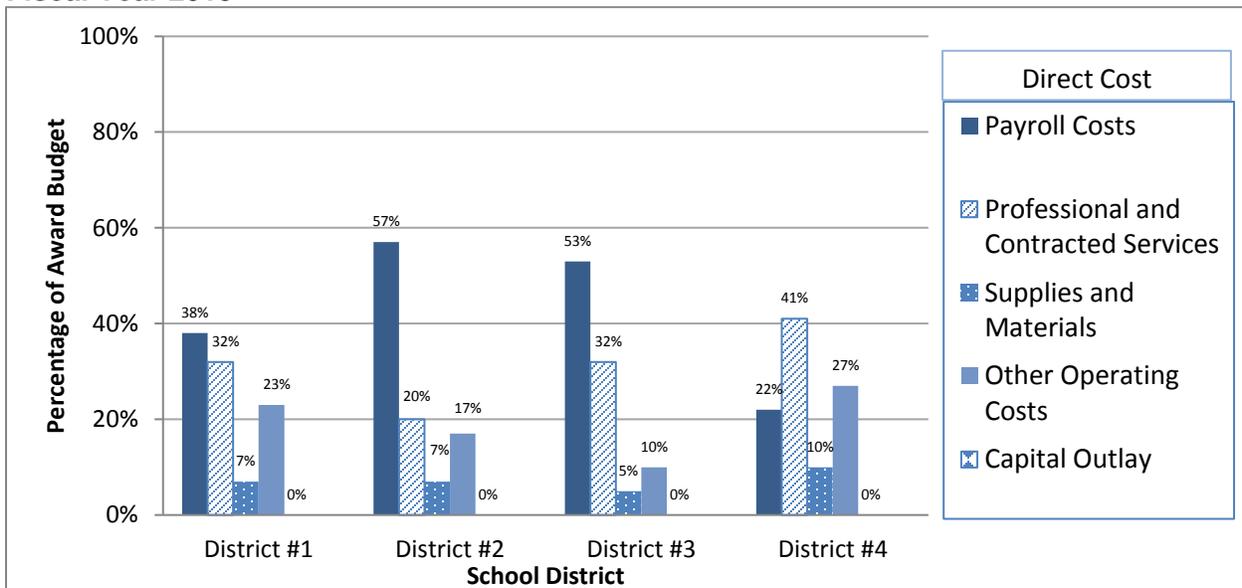
<sup>142</sup> Schools in this district implemented more than double the number of implementation strategies in Year 2 as compared to Year 1 based on data presented in Annual Implementation Report #2 (Briggs et al., 2015).

Year 2. These districts also spent a high proportion of their funds on payroll; thus, it is difficult to determine whether implementation successes are linked to that cost category or the new investment in Year 2 in capital outlay. Future evaluation reports will explore these and other trends with more data over time.

### 4.3.2 Fiscal Year 2015 Budgeted Funds

Figure 4.3 shows information for FY 2015 budgeted amounts. In three districts, payroll costs were the highest percentage of the budget, accounting for more than a third of their planned spending (District 1: 38%, District 2: 57%, and District 3: 53%); District 4 only planned to spend 22% in this category. These trends were similar for FY 2014 budgeted amounts (Figure 4.1); in Year 3, budgeted items in this cost category included funds for data entry clerks and parent liaisons. Qualitative data from the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation point to the value of both of these roles in supporting implementation by building staff capacity. District 4 planned to spend 41% of their funds on professional and contracted services (similar to the budget amount in Year 2). The other three districts budgeted for a greater percentage of their grant funds for professional and contracted services in FY 2015 as compared to FY 2014; for example, District 1 budgeted 3% in Year 2 and 32% in Year 3. Budgets for supplies and materials, as well as other operating costs, also varied slightly across districts from 5% in District 3 to 10% in District 4. Although some districts expended funds for capital outlay in Year 2, none of the four districts budgeted Texas GEAR UP SG funds for this expense for Year 3. The Year 4 annual implementation report will summarize FY 2015 expenditures and compare that to the budgeted amounts as appropriate.

**Figure 4.3. Percentages of Texas GEAR UP SG Award Budget by Direct Cost Category, Fiscal Year 2015**



Source: District Notice of Grant Awards for Fiscal Year 2015 (as amended where relevant): District 1: September 11, 2014; District 2: August 11, 2014; District 3: September 8, 2014; and District 4: October 16, 2014 (amended on May 5, 2015 and June 1, 2015).

### 4.3.3 Summary

ED awarded a total of \$33 million to implement the Texas GEAR UP SG initiative, which was provided to TEA in annual \$5 million awards. TEA budgets those funds in a manner that follows federal and state required accounting processes.

This section included a look at budgeted awards compared to the final data on expenditures in FY 2014, including analyses within cost categories and comparisons between planned and actual expenses. In the comprehensive evaluation report, evaluators explore and report on connections between expenditures and outcomes, both in terms of implementation and the impact of GEAR UP on Texas schools, students, and their parents.

The following chapter ties the prior chapters together by summarizing the findings, offering recommendations, and pointing to next steps.

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

Year 3 of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation reflects opportunities and challenges in offering various program components in high schools. This chapter provides a summary of findings organized by key evaluation research questions. Progress on TEA project objectives for the Texas GEAR UP SG is presented where appropriate. Findings are based on the following sources:

- APR data submitted by Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort schools, reflecting summer 2014 through March 31, 2015
- Site visits conducted by the evaluation team with each Texas GEAR UP SG school in fall 2014 and again in spring 2015
- Student survey data collected in fall 2014 and spring 2015
- Telephone interviews with TEA and its collaborators conducted in May–June 2015

Additional details related to the findings summarized here were presented in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 and in the appendices. As noted in earlier chapters, readers are cautioned against interpreting outcome findings as having been caused by the Texas GEAR UP SG program. Although, in many cases, it is the intent of the program to contribute to outcomes, it is not possible to determine with certainty that the program, in fact, caused a change. In order to make cause-and-effect statements, random assignment of schools and/or students to participate in Texas GEAR UP SG is required; random assignment was not possible for this evaluation. The forthcoming comprehensive report will examine outcomes in more detail, including the relationship between implementation and outcomes. The focus here is on understanding Year 3 implementation and the perceptions of that implementation.

### 5.1 Overall Implementation and Perceptions of Implementation

*How was Texas GEAR UP SG implemented overall and at each of the participating schools? To what extent did implementation change over time?*

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

Year 3 implementation was higher overall than in Year 2 across all schools, although variability in the level of implementation remained. One indicator of the improved implementation between Year 2 and Year 3 was that the number of workshops/events held by March of the respective school year was more than doubled (165 in Year 2 and 340 in Year 3). In looking at individual school progress overall, High School M was the most successful at implementing a broad range of activities and achieving desirable perceptions based on survey data. Although there was some variation across schools on particular aspects of implementation, each school showed some areas of successful implementation.

In examining a mix of implementation, each school was considered as having engaged in, or not engaged in, each of the 18 types of activities. As with the earlier indicators of mix of implementation, this summary does not take into account quality, quantity, or the effect of the given implementation activity. This information serves as an indicator as to whether each school is on target to meet various project objectives. With that in mind, it is promising that advanced course enrollment, tutoring, mentoring, counseling, parent events, college visits, and student workshops occurred at all Texas GEAR UP SG high schools in the 2014–15 school year. An additional success in Year 3 was that three high schools implemented all 18 strategies, and the remaining schools came close to implementing at this level. Overall, 85% of students reported

being *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with Texas GEAR UP SG, although this differed significantly across schools.

Although it is not certain whether any particular activity, as compared to engaging in a range of activities, is linked to desired outcomes, the Texas GEAR UP SG encourages schools to participate in a broad range of activities. Given this approach, some schools could benefit by initiating a broader range of activities moving forward and others may benefit from engaging a higher proportion of students in the activities they already offer. TEA should work with the Support Center to offer those schools the additional supports needed to be able to do so. This is true for the schools that implemented all 18 strategies as well, but to a lesser degree, where it is hoped that the broad range of implementation activities will be sustained in future years.

### 5.1.1 Student Progress in and Perceptions About Endorsements and Graduation Plans

Across the high schools, freshmen orientations, summer programs, college visits, and workshops were activities that included endorsement-related components that helped transition students' thinking into graduation-oriented academic planning. There appeared to be an overall mixed receptivity of endorsements as some site visit participants saw it as an opportunity for students to identify their college/career path and others perceived it as limiting students' opportunities to explore different options. However, Texas GEAR UP SG has helped students to understand what the requirements under their endorsement and graduation plans entail. In fact, survey data indicate that a majority of students (78%) knew who they could talk to about endorsements and nearly three-quarters of the students (71%) understood how an endorsement would help them with college/career preparation.

### 5.1.2 Implementation of and Perceptions About Student Support Services

In Year 3, all six high schools implemented the following core Texas GEAR UP SG activity types: advanced course enrollment, student support services (tutoring, mentoring, and counseling/advising), college visits, parent events, teacher PD, community stakeholder involvement, and use of statewide services. By March 31, 2015, all six high schools had established a strong foundation of robust services, which is reflected in the fact that 81% of Grade 9 students participated in tutoring, mentoring, and/or counseling, and each school met Project Objective 4.1. Overall, students found support services to be *mostly effective*.

### 5.1.3 Algebra I Completion and Advanced Course Taking

TEA set a project objective for the schools to have 30% of Grade 8 and 85% of Grade 9 students successfully complete Algebra I (Project Objective 1.1). Based on APR data through March 31, 2015, 92% of Grade 9 students were either currently enrolled (61%) or had already completed Algebra I (31%). Data on successful completion of Algebra I is also in the forthcoming comprehensive report. Four high schools (High Schools J, K, L and M) appear to be on track to meet Project Objective 1.1 given that enrollment exceeds the project objective. Also notable in Year 3 was that 24% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses, an increase of 14 percentage points from 2013–14 (10 percent). This is an important step toward 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.. However, survey data indicate that about one third of students do not plan on taking an advanced course in Grade 10. On average, students rated taking any advanced course as *mostly effective*.

#### 5.1.4 Parental Participation in and Perceptions About Events

One project objective that schools did not meet was having at least 50% of parents attend at least three parent events each year (Project Objective 7.3). As was the case in prior years, no school in Year 3 was successful at achieving this project objective, and, in Year 3, schools were less effective in getting parents to attend three or more events as compared to Year 2 (3% in Year 3 and 7% in Year 2). However, 49% of parents attended at least one event, an increase of 11 percentage points since Year 2. Texas GEAR UP SG staff reported using a variety of incentives and communication to increase parental attendance at their events.

#### 5.1.5 Knowledge About College Requirements and Financial Aid

Another project objective is that by the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college (Project Objective 4.4). On average, students reported being *knowledgeable* about the importance/benefits of college, as well as scholarships, and being *slightly knowledgeable* regarding other college concepts and financial aid-related terms. Correlational data indicate that engaging in discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff about these topics is associated with high self-reported levels of knowledge.

#### 5.1.6 Teacher Participation in Texas GEAR UP State Grant Professional Development

All six high schools provided opportunities for teachers to participate in Texas GEAR UP SG PD in Year 3, meeting Project Objective 3.1. However, as of March 2015, only two schools had held five days of vertical teaming (Project Objective 3.2). Important to note though is that all schools held at least some vertical teaming events. Teachers participating in focus groups generally had positive perceptions of PD sponsored by Texas GEAR UP SG and with PBL, in particular. Overall, it appears to be challenging to schedule PD amidst the competing training requirements/priorities that teachers have.

#### 5.1.7 Participation by Community Stakeholders in Texas GEAR UP State Grant

All six schools indicated that they had established a range of alliances in their community supporting Project Goal 8. Examples of this collaboration include universities offering dual-credit classes, mentoring students, and hosting college visits. Other organizations offered opportunities for students to participate in job site visits or hear from a panel of professionals sharing career advice. Although examples of engagement with community stakeholders were identified, it continues to be difficult to assess the strength of any given alliance based on the limited information provided through interviews and documents. Site visits serve as the primary source for what is known. Schools are encouraged to engage community organizations in the site visits; however, to date, this has not occurred to the extent initially planned. The perspectives on collaboration with community stakeholders comes from participants in the school site visits, primarily Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators, College Preparation Advisors, and school administrators.

#### 5.1.8 Statewide Services

In addition to the Texas GEAR UP SG program in the schools, TEA is working on statewide Project Objectives 9.1 and 9.2, which are related to college readiness. TEA expanded the breadth and depth of content on the Texas GEAR UP website in Year 3 and continues to work to increase use among school staff, program staff, students, and parents statewide.<sup>143</sup> Texas Gateway for online resources, a TEA strategy to provide statewide teacher PD opportunities, was still primarily in the planning stage through Year 3; AMS Pictures advanced much of this

<sup>143</sup> See [www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)

work by producing videos of promising practices and supporting other enhancements to this resource.

The statewide coalition of GEAR UP grantees and the statewide GEAR UP conference were both considered to be on track in Year 3. Approximately 265 GEAR UP professionals attended the 2014 conference. Notably, Year 3 included parental participation and a useful GEAR UP Lounge for staff to network and share ideas.

### 5.1.9 Facilitators and Barriers

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

In order for implementation to be successful, it is important to understand any potential facilitators and barriers to participation. In general, a key facilitator for implementation in Year 3 was opportunities to meet with other Texas GEAR UP professionals to learn about promising practices and troubleshoot issues. Other facilitators included being able to link Texas GEAR UP SG efforts to the existing efforts of schools or collaborating organizations. Schools continue to explore strategies to engage parents; in Year 3, this included the addition of social media and having a parent room at the school.

Barriers in Year 3 included challenges with communicating program activities (with students, parents, teachers, and community organizations). Other barriers included competing priorities for teacher PD given the many other training obligations, limited availability of substitute teachers, in conjunction with limiting training that occurs on weekends. That is, while weekend trainings may help overcome some barriers, some site visit participants also noted that teacher morale associated with weekend trainings was low, limiting the utility of this solution. Various participants described how students needed to build multiple skill sets in order to be successful in high school; this included skills such as organization, self-motivation, and maturity.

### 5.1.10 Potential Best Practices

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

Based on a range of data, six potentially promising implementation activities were identified. Near-peer mentoring (through activities such as a senior panel, senior letters, and college mentors) was one such success. Parents also appeared to appreciate the opportunity to engage in Parent Universities/symposia in order to learn about a range of topics through interactive dialogue. Another successful parent activity was the report card drive-through as a way to reach a high percentage of parents for a quick one-on-one interaction about their child and Texas GEAR UP activities. Year 3 presented a few successful approaches to tutoring services, including offering in-class supports and strategic use of tutoring. Additions to the Texas GEAR UP conference were also well received; in particular, the parent component and GEAR UP Lounge seemed to be great ways to engage key stakeholders and allow for information exchange. Innovative approaches to PD included the use of curriculum specialists to follow up and reinforce the implementation of PBL in classrooms. These activities are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.8.

### 5.1.11 Grant and School District Budgets and Expenditures

Final expenditures from the FY 2014 budget of \$5 million (\$6.7 million allocated with the inclusion of carryover funds) was just under \$5.4 million, an amount supplemented by 100% matching funds. Of the \$5.4 million, \$1.7 million was expended on product development, reflecting the continued investment made by TEA to update the Texas GEAR UP website (<http://www.texasgearup.com>) through a contract with AMS Pictures.

TEA awarded a total of \$1.2 million to the districts in Year 2. In examining district spending updates for FY 2014, the four districts expended approximately 88% of their grant funds (compared to 65% in FY 2013), and one district expended just under three-quarters of their grant funds (District 1: 74%). All districts met the 100% match requirement. Districts also expended their budgets in FY 2013 in ways that differed somewhat from the planned budgets. For example, the following districts spent above-budgeted amounts on payroll: District 2 (38% budgeted, 58% expended) and District 3 (45% budgeted, 54% expended).

The \$5 million that TEA received from ED to implement the Texas GEAR UP SG in FY 2015 was supplemented with 100% matching funds. Similar to prior years, TEA allocated the highest percentage of funds, including the following: product development (40%), technical assistance (25%), and grants to districts (24%).

In the forthcoming comprehensive evaluation report, the analysis connects expenditures to outcomes.

## 5.2 Recommendations for Implementation

Based on the range of data analyzed to date, several key recommendations or next steps with regard to program implementation in Year 3 are presented here. Some of these reflect continued recommendations from prior years, emphasizing the need to address these continued concerns. Others, such as sustainability, reflect new recommendations to be considered. Collectively, these include the following:

- **Continue Progress on Student Perceptions.** Data from Year 3 indicate somewhat of a plateau in students' educational aspirations and expectations, students' agreement that college is important, students' disagreement that it is too early to think about college, and students' plans to attend college. In order to progress on these important aspects of the program, TEA and its statewide collaborators are encouraged to provide districts with additional strategies related to increasing awareness and knowledge of the college opportunities available to students. Efforts that include targeted outreach to those most at risk might also be a useful strategy. Ongoing attention to helping students set up aspirations and gain confidence that they can expect to achieve them will also help to reinvigorate the momentum in this area.
- **Seek to Better Understand and Potentially Model High School M Implementation.** In Year 3, High School M engaged in the full range of implementation encouraged by the Texas GEAR UP SG program and student survey data reflected the ways that these actions might be positively influencing students' perceptions. Successes included strong implementation of mentoring, counseling, college visits, student events, and parent events. This included high levels of involvement, high percentage of involvement, and high amount of time in these areas (see Chapter 2 for details). Notably, High School M also had high rates of students' self-reported understanding about the importance of college and knowledge about college readiness in many cases (see Chapter 3). High School M also had the highest percentage of students indicate that Texas GEAR UP SG participation was influencing their college plans and that they had engaged in discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG or school staff about college entrance requirements. Although there were some exceptions to these generally favorable findings related to High School M, collectively, the findings suggest that this school may serve as an example for specific aspects of Texas GEAR UP SG, as well as being an overall case of success. However, it is important to note that there may be external factors at play, such as an environment that is particularly receptive to Texas GEAR UP SG services, related programming that reinforces Texas GEAR UP SG goals, and so forth. During future site visits, the evaluation team will seek to

better understand perceptions of why Texas GEAR UP SG appears to be so successful at this school.

- **Identify Strategies to Reach Out to Parents.** Similar to prior years, all schools need to identify strategies to improve parental engagement with Texas GEAR UP SG activities, and TEA needs to encourage the Support Center to provide additional leadership in this area based on what has been learned to date regarding why parents do and do not attend events. Although Abriendo Puertas was presented in Year 2 as a planned approach in Year 3 to support parental engagement, the evaluation did not uncover much detail about any efforts to that end. Additionally, there was minimal attention devoted to the Parent and Community Engagement Coordinator, a Support Center staff member intended to support schools in this effort. The evaluation will continue to collect data on these efforts and gather additional data about parents' perceptions to inform how they might be engaged differently going forward.
- **Increase Statewide Implementation Efforts.** Although statewide efforts have made significant resources available through the Texas GEAR UP website, use continues to be low. Similarly, TEA has identified Texas Gateway for online resources (formerly Project Share) as a strategy for providing GEAR UP-related teacher PD statewide, but has not yet fully implemented this strategy. TEA and its collaborators will want to continue to focus efforts on these statewide project objectives. Consistent with prior years, TEA has experienced some success with implementing the statewide coalition and conference opportunities, and TEA and Texas GEAR UP SG staff should use these conferences as an outlet for communicating and educating about other statewide resources as they become available.
- **Expand and Deepen Sustainability Efforts.** Throughout this report, some early progress toward sustainability emerged, such as how some schools are looking to bolster their collaboration with a university to continue mentoring programs in the long term and changing the college-going culture so that teachers continue to have high expectations and instruction with high academic rigor in mind. Data in the forthcoming comprehensive report that connect spending to outcomes may also be a useful source of information to strategize around sustainability and, in particular, begin making decisions about specific aspects of the program that may be a priority to continue with other means. The early practices of District 3 in their approach to involving city council members on their advisory council may be a particular practice to monitor as a potential example of how to gain local support for continued funding and buy-in for efforts initiated through Texas GEAR UP SG.

### 5.3 Next Steps in the Evaluation

The evaluation will continue in the 2015–16 school year, when the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort is in Grade 10. The Year 4 annual implementation report will continue to focus on implementation (district and statewide); mix of implementation strategies; and the perceptions of students, parents, staff, and administrators regarding the program. Site visits and student surveys in fall 2015 will focus on summer programming; parent surveys in fall 2016 will focus on ED required parent items. Site visits and student surveys in spring 2016 will focus on implementation during the school year.

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## Appendix A: Evaluation Questions and Project Goals

### A.1 Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation Questions

Table A.1 provides an overview of the evaluation questions addressed in this Year 3 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**

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 Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grant (SG) strategies intended for teacher professional development (PD) to improve academic rigor and data-driven instruction</i></b>
1.1.1 What types of PD implementation strategies were identified by grantees in their action plans?
1.1.2 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 Middle School and High School 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 Texas GEAR UP SG strategies</i></b>
1.2.1 What types of student support services 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 student support services implementation activities?
1.2.3 When and to what extent did grantees implement student support services strategies with students?
1.2.4 What are student, parent, and staff perceptions of student support services implementation strategies?
1.2.5 What facilitators and barriers can be identified regarding implementing student support services 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?

<b>Evaluation Questions</b>
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 (percentage) participate in each type of college readiness activity conducted by grantees? How many activities does each student attend?
<b>1.2 To evaluate implementation of student support services 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 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?
<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 alliances</b>
2.2.1 At the end of each grant year, how many collaborations have schools formed with business alliances? In what ways and how often have business collaborations offered opportunities for career exploration to students?
2.2.2 At the end of each grant year, how many collaborations have schools formed with government entities? Community groups? In what ways and how often have collaborations offered opportunities for career exploration to students? Opportunities to provide information regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness and readiness?
2.2.3 What are the perceptions of the school and of the community alliances regarding the collaboration as it relates to meeting GEAR UP goals? What facilitators and barriers to collaboration are reported? If barriers were identified, to what extent were grantees able to

Evaluation Questions
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 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., Texas Gateway, face-to-face)? How many educators, including those not at current GEAR UP campuses, are participating in such opportunities?
<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 State Grant Project Goals and Objectives

Project objectives that were addressed in even a preliminary manner were presented within the report. The following is a list of all project objectives outlined by Texas Education Agency (TEA) in the federal grant proposal.

Project Goal 1 - Improve instruction and expand academic opportunities in mathematics 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 Foundation High School Plan plus Endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average. 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 PD for strong data-driven instruction.

- Project Objective 3.1: 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: 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 Objective 4.1: By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the 8<sup>th</sup> 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 ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT.<sup>[1]</sup> 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: The number of students who graduate college ready in math and English will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.4: The cohort completion rate will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.5: More than 50% of cohort of students will enroll in postsecondary education in the fall after high school graduation.

Project Goal 6 - Support 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 - Provide postsecondary information and 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.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG initially indicated a goal aligned with students taking ACT PLAN by the end of project's fourth year. However, ACT has replaced PLAN with ACT Aspire. Similarly, the PSAT has been replaced by the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10.

- 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: Annually increase the number of educators participating in GEAR UP professional learning, including through Project Share and face-to-face trainings.<sup>144</sup>
- 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 PD.

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<sup>144</sup> Beginning in 2016, Project Share is now the Texas Gateway. It provides an online, interactive learning environment for Texas teachers. See <http://www.texasgateway.org/> for additional information.



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

The current report is focused on implementation of Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grant (SG), and 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 forthcoming comprehensive reports. First, one of the comparison groups is 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 were in Grade 8 in the 2012–13 school year. Examining trends in outcomes in this cohort as compared to the targeted cohort allows Texas Education Agency (TEA) to better understand how the program has potentially created change at the school level. Similarly, the 2012–13 Grade 7 cohort is the primary target for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, but 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 year of implementation includes on 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>145</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>145</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 had 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 determined the criteria for matching Texas GEAR UP SG and non-Texas GEAR UP SG comparison schools with various 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 is 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. Seven middle schools (1 per Texas GEAR UP SG school) were selected for the comparison group based on PSM.

Specific details regarding the PSM are in the forthcoming comprehensive report. The information presented here represents an overview of the PSM. ICF conducted a school-level PSM using an Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and Common Core Data. Each GEAR UP school was matched with one comparison school (nearest-neighbor method).<sup>146</sup> Final determinations were based on the extent to which balance on covariates between intervention and control sample is achieved. Three aspects of the PSM are described here.

- **Ratio.** A fixed 1-to-1 ratio was used; each GEAR UP school was paired with one comparison school.
- **Algorithm.** The nearest-neighbor method is one of the most straightforward and fast algorithms. Exact matching was 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 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). This can limit the utility of the propensity

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<sup>146</sup> The nearest-neighbor method selects the *n* comparison units whose propensity scores are closest to the treated unit.

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, 2013). 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 parent 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

During the 2012–13 school year, the ICF team worked with TEA to develop an appropriate tool for collecting APR data. This strategy was a one-time solution for collecting APR data. Beginning in 2013–14, TEA's collaborator for technical assistance, The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI), contracted with a provider of a system to collect Texas GEAR UP SG APR data. The general strategy was similar to that used in Year 1 and Year 2, but grantees were eventually able to enter APR data in an ongoing manner; 2014–15 APR reporting was similar. In Year 3, TEA added an additional organization, Community TechKnowledge (CTK), to support data collection using GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System (GUIDES), a customized tool for collecting Texas GEAR UP SG data.

In order to broadly understand what is collected for the APR, we have retained prior years' description here. APR data collection are aligned with requirements for the U.S. Department of Education APR, submitted by TEA each year in April. Districts are asked to report on implementation and participation at the student level in Texas GEAR UP SG activities from the time of the prior APR report through the end of March of the current implementation year. For example, districts 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. Districts also indicated if the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) participated in any events targeted for parents. Districts provided a description of each Texas GEAR UP SG student and parent event held at their school. In addition, districts provided information on teacher participation in professional development (PD) opportunities related to the Texas GEAR UP SG and on community alliances formed to date. Appendix C has a description of all data that Texas GEAR UP SG grantees were requested to submit in the APR.

### 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 District Applications.** TEA provided its application to the federal government, district applications provided by each Texas GEAR UP SG school, and all in-place TEA 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 provides updated action plans annually, referred to as Annual Strategic Planning Reports (ASPRs). 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. Each action plan is coded for specific implementation strategies and a comparison of planned versus actual implementation analyses is 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.
- **Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR).** TAPR is an updated version of TEA’s AEIS. TAPR contains campus-level performance information about every public school and district in Texas. TAPR also provides extensive profile information about staff, finances, and programs. The evaluation also 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 Surveys

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) 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>147</sup> In fall 2013 and fall 2014, students were surveyed, primarily with respect to participation in and perceptions of summer 2014 implementation activities. Both students and parents were surveyed in spring 2014 and spring 2015. All surveys are provided in Appendix D. Surveys undergo several layers of review and required approval by both ICF’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) and TEA’s Data Governance Board (DGB).<sup>148</sup> Both student and parent surveys were available online as well as in paper format. Schools collected the data independently following instructions provided by the evaluation team as required by IRB.<sup>149</sup> Students and parents could choose to take the survey in either English or in Spanish. Survey data was collected anonymously.

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<sup>147</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. Surveys will undergo minor revisions as needed to reflect appropriate Texas GEAR UP SG implementation and goals prior to each submission.

<sup>148</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.

<sup>149</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.

The ED 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. Spring 2015 surveys included additional items about endorsements and graduation plans. Understanding what information parents and students have learned and retained that Texas GEAR UP SG districts provided is important in determining whether students/parents have attained a base of knowledge about college that makes the prospect of college attendance less daunting both financially and personally.

#### **B.4.4 Telephone Interview with Texas Education Agency and Collaborators**

To best understand the role of various collaborators and progress at the state level, the ICF team developed interview protocols and conducted interviews with the Texas GEAR UP SG state director at TEA and with appropriate personnel from each of the statewide TEA collaborators in spring 2015 (see Appendix D for interview protocols). The interview with the TEA Texas GEAR UP SG director provided information regarding the process of managing the Texas GEAR UP SG grants to districts, and coordinating with the state technical assistance office to ensure that grant activities are implemented and meeting suggested targets. In addition, questions were asked regarding any changes in the project objectives for the Texas GEAR UP SG, the level of school buy-in from districts, frequency of contact with districts and schools, the status of TEA's work with collaborators and statewide initiatives, and factors that have facilitated or hindered GEAR UP implementation this past year.

Representatives from each of the statewide Texas GEAR UP SG collaborators participated in telephone interviews with the evaluation team. All collaborators had a single interview with one staff member. During the interviews, collaborators 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 individual Texas GEAR UP SG schools, and with other TEA collaborators. Collaborators 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. Seven protocols were developed to gather data from stakeholders. These protocols were for Texas GEAR UP SG school coordinator interviews, Texas GEAR UP SG College Preparation Advisor interviews, school administrator interviews, teacher focus groups, student focus groups, parent focus groups, and community stakeholder interviews/focus groups. The content of the protocols was aligned to Texas GEAR UP SG project objectives, relative to implementation in Year 3. Generally, the protocols explored knowledge and understanding of the Texas GEAR UP SG, participation in 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 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.

## SITE VISITS

Site visits were completed at each of the six Texas GEAR UP SG high schools in fall 2014 and spring 2015. 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 Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator, College Preparation Advisor, and administrator at the school, as well as focus groups with students, parents, and teachers. Sites had the option to schedule a community stakeholder focus group if appropriate. 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. In one district, the site visit occurred solely via telephone due to weather conditions that prohibited evaluation team from being able to travel on site; the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator requested to keep with the scheduled time and conduct sessions over the telephone.

- **School Administrator Interviews.** The ICF team designed interview protocols for administrators (principals, assistant principals, vice principals, and school counselors), school-site Texas GEAR UP SG College Preparation Advisors, and Texas GEAR UP SG Coordinators. In most cases, interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. At each school, an interview was requested with both an administrator as well as school-site GEAR UP SG staff. In a few cases two administrators conducted an interview together. Overall, ICF conducted interviews with 23 school/district administrators and 34 Texas GEAR UP SG staff members (including tutors, data clerks, and parent liaisons).
- **Teacher Focus Groups.** ICF conducted teacher focus groups at all of the high schools in the Texas GEAR UP SG. Due to classroom coverage issues, the size and duration of focus groups varied widely. The typical teacher focus group had five teachers and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Many schools scheduled teachers for focus groups during their planning periods or open times so they did not have to find substitutes for teachers to attend. Teachers participated in interviews rather than focus groups if they were unavailable at the same time as other teachers. 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 Project Objective 1.1 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. Overall for fall 2014 and spring 2015, ICF conducted teacher focus groups with 69 participants.
- **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 averaged eight to 10 participants. Overall, 77 students participated in focus groups.
- **Parent Focus Groups.** ICF conducted focus groups with parents at all sites. 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 sites where the school

requested such support. Overall, 47 parents participated in focus groups. The typical parent focus group averaged five participants.

- **Community Stakeholder Interview/Focus Groups.** In setting up the site visits, all sites were asked about current relationships with community stakeholders on the Texas GEAR UP SG; time was allotted in the schedule to interview community stakeholders if available. Overall, 8 representatives from community organizations participated in an interview or focus group.

## 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 2015, 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.

#### STUDENT GROUP ANALYSES

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

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 the forthcoming comprehensive report, students were grouped in several ways including gender, race/ethnicity, LEP status, and special education status. Students were grouped 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 was also examined relative to the student characteristics (e.g., were 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 more outcomes become available, it will be of interest to continue exploring 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. Findings will be reported in forthcoming comprehensive reports. Annual 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. The evaluation team utilized qualitative analytic software (ATLAS.ti) to code transcribed interview data with program-specific codes.<sup>150</sup> In addition, Appendix E provides case study summaries.

### DATA REVIEW

Evaluators conducted detailed coding of qualitative data using keyword searches and, in some cases, reviewing entire transcripts to look for specific themes (such as facilitators or barriers). The site visit team also 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 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

Diamond, A., & Sekhon, J. S. (2013) Genetic matching for estimating causal effects: A general multivariate matching method for achieving balance in observational studies. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 95(3), 932–945. Retrieved from <http://sekhon.berkeley.edu/papers/GenMatch.pdf>.

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<sup>150</sup> ATLAS.ti is a qualitative analytic software. More information about the product can be found at <http://atlasti.com/>.

## Appendix C: Texas GEAR UP State Grant Annual Performance Reporting Data Requested from Grantees, 2014–15

As described in Appendix B, the ICF team worked with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop an appropriate tool for collecting Annual Performance Report (APR) data for the 2012–13 school year. Beginning in 2013–14, TEA’s collaborator for technical assistance, The University of Texas at Austin’s Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI), contracted with a provider of a system to collect Texas GEAR UP SG APR data. The general strategy was similar to that used in Year 1 and Year 2, but grantees were able to enter APR data in an ongoing manner; 2014–15 APR reporting was similar. Instructions were provided to each Texas GEAR UP SG school to assist them in providing required APR data in GUIDES, the data collection system developed by UT-IPSI.

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
<b>Student Profile</b>	
First Name <sup>1</sup>	Enter student’s full legal first name
Middle Name	Enter student’s full legal middle name
Last Name <sup>1</sup>	Enter student’s full legal last name
Date of Birth <sup>1</sup>	Enter DOB in following format: MM/DD/YYYY
Phone Number(s) <sup>1</sup>	Enter as: XXX-XXX-XXXX
Gender <sup>1</sup>	Male or Female
School Year <sup>1</sup>	Select current school year from 2013–14, 2014–15, etc.
Address <sup>1</sup>	Street address, city, state, zip
Race <sup>1</sup>	Select or type from following list (dropdown in GUIDES): <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>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Ethnicity <sup>1</sup>	Select or type from the following: <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>
Unique ID <sup>1</sup>	10-digit number unique to all students in Texas
Local ID <sup>1</sup>	Variable-length-digit number at district level. May change if student moves across districts.
Limited English Proficiency Status <sup>1</sup>	Select the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Limited English Proficient (LEP) status indicator code from the drop down list as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>0 Not LEP</b></li> <li>• <b>1 Identified As LEP</b></li> <li>• <b>F Student Exited from LEP Status – Monitored 1 (M1)</b> – student has met criteria for bilingual/English Speakers of other Languages 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(I) 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/English Speakers of other Languages program exit, is no longer classified as LEP in PEIMS, and is in his or her second year of monitoring as required by the 19 TAC §89.1220(I) and is not eligible for funding due to the fact that they are not LEP</li> </ul>
Grade <sup>1</sup>	Enter current grade in school (7, 8, 9, 10, etc.)
School <sup>1</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kennedy High School</li> <li>• Memorial High School</li> <li>• Estacado High School</li> <li>• Manor High School</li> <li>• New Manor Tech High School</li> <li>• Somerset High School</li> </ul>
Early College High School <sup>2</sup>	Is the student part of Manor Early College High School (Yes/No)
District <sup>1</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edgewood ISD</li> <li>• Manor ISD</li> <li>• Lubbock ISD</li> <li>• Somerset ISD</li> </ul>
Eligible for Free- or Reduced- Price Lunch <sup>1</sup>	Select Yes or No
Special Education <sup>1</sup>	Select Yes or No to indicate if currently identified as special education

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Education Plan/Program <sup>1</sup> (required only if special education is YES) <sup>2</sup>	Does the student have an Individualized Education Plan? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes or No</li> </ul>
At-risk of dropout status <sup>1</sup>	Yes or No
Status of enrollment <sup>1</sup>	Select Active or Inactive
<b>Academic Milestones</b>	
Degree Plan <sup>2</sup>	Endorsements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)</li> <li>• Business &amp; Industry</li> <li>• Public Services</li> <li>• Arts &amp; Humanities</li> <li>• Multidisciplinary Studies</li> <li>• No Endorsements</li> <li>• Not on Foundation</li> </ul>
Change “promoted to next grade” to “At the end of the school year, student is <b>ELIGIBLE</b> to be promoted to next grade” <sup>1, 2</sup>	Yes/No
Special Note <sup>2</sup>	Open-ended text field to describe why a student is not enrolled in any course, or is missing course outcome, or is missing promotion.
Completed Algebra I in any previous year? <sup>2</sup>	Yes or No
Completed a Pre-Advanced Placement (AP) or AP course in any previous year? <sup>2</sup>	Yes or No
ACT Score <sup>2</sup>	Numeric Score Not taken
SAT Score <sup>2</sup>	Numeric Score Not taken
PSAT Score <sup>2</sup>	Numeric Score Not taken
ACT Aspire Score <sup>2</sup>	Numeric Score Not taken
<b>Course Listing</b>	
District <sup>1</sup>	District the student linked from student profile

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
School Year <sup>1</sup>	School Year linked from student profile
Grade Level <sup>1</sup>	Grade linked from student profile
<i>Following fields are asked for each course</i>	
Course Name <sup>1</sup>	Open-ended text field
Course/Section Number <sup>1</sup>	Open-ended text field Unique identifier for each course. Does not include section identifier.
Is the course an advanced <sup>1</sup> course?	Yes/No  “Advanced Courses” are classes that are identified as above grade level by the student’s school. Most honors, pre-AP, and AP courses are considered Advanced, but that is dependent on the grade level of the student. (ex. Grade 9 student enrolled in Algebra 2 is considered an advanced course)
Course Hours (Aug – Mar) <sup>1</sup>	Numeric; decimal in terms of hours (0.5); Advanced Courses only Calculated by the campus for each student in each advanced course section and entered as: [Maximum seat time in hours for the course for the reporting period] – [total excused and unexcused absences in hours by course section number] – [total time in hours a student was not enrolled during the reporting period] – [number of hours lost for that course due to school closure]
Course Hours (Apr – Aug) <sup>1</sup>	Numeric; decimal in terms of hours (0.5); Advanced Courses only Calculated by the campus for each student in each advanced course section and entered as: [Maximum seat time in hours for the course for the reporting period] – [total excused and unexcused absences in hours by course section number] – [total time in hours a student was not enrolled during the reporting period] – [number of hours lost for that course due to school closure]
Course Completion <sup>1</sup>	Yes/No
If AP course completed and student completed AP exam, what was the exam score? <sup>2</sup>	Numeric (1-5) AP Exam not taken
Semester/Trimester 1 Score <sup>1, 2</sup>	Numeric
Semester/Trimester 2 Score <sup>1, 2</sup>	Numeric
Trimester 3 Score <sup>1, 2</sup>	Numeric

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
<b>Exam/State Assessment Tracking</b>	
Grade Level <sup>1</sup>	Grade linked from student profile
<i>Following fields are asked for State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Math, STAAR Reading, STAAR Writing, and fields will be added as relevant to the year in which the cohort is.</i>	
Date/Month Exam is taken <sup>1</sup>	DD/MM/YYYY or MM/YYYY
Raw Score <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Scale Score <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Level of Performance <sup>1</sup>	Level I: Unsatisfactory Level II: Satisfactory at the Phase-in Standard Level II: Satisfactory at the Recommended Standard Level III: Advanced
Type of Assessment <sup>1</sup>	STAAR STAAR – Modified STAAR – Alternate STAAR – Linguistically Accommodated
<i>For students that take the following exam only</i>	
Month/Year taken - Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)	DD/MM/YYYY or MM/YYYY
Proficiency Level – TELPAS Reading	Beginning Intermediate Advanced Advanced High
TELPAS Reading Raw Score	Numeric
TELPAS Reading Scale Score	Numeric

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Proficiency Level – TELPAS Writing	Beginning Intermediate Advanced Advanced High
Proficiency Level – TELPAS Speaking	Beginning Intermediate Advanced Advanced High
Proficiency Level – TELPAS Listening	Beginning Intermediate Advanced Advanced High
TELPAS Composite Scale Score	Numeric
TELPAS Composite Rating	Beginning Intermediate Advanced Advanced High
<b>Absence Tracking</b>	
School Year <sup>1</sup>	Linked from Student Profile
Total Unexcused Absences – Quarter 1 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Excused Absences – Quarter 1 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Unexcused Absences – Quarter 2 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Excused Absences – Quarter 2 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Unexcused Absences – Quarter 3 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Excused Absences – Quarter 3 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Unexcused Absences – Quarter 4 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Excused Absences – Quarter 4 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Unexcused Absences	Numeric

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Total Excused Absence	Numeric
Total Absences	Numeric
<b>Student Enrollment/Withdrawal Tracking</b>	
Date of Action <sup>1</sup>	MM/DD/YYYY; date when enrollment or withdrawal occurs
Type of Action <sup>1</sup>	Left School Enrolled mid-year Changed District Moved up a grade
If Left School, Reason?	Out of District Out of State Left School System Home Schooling Incarcerated Enrolled in Other TX School Other [SPECIFY]
If changed district, specify	Edgewood ISD Lubbock ISD Manor ISD Somerset ISD Other [SPECIFY]
Notes	Open ended text field
<b>Discipline Referrals</b>	
Date of Incident <sup>2</sup>	Date on which discipline infraction occurs – mm/dd/yyyy
Disciplinary Action Taken	Expulsion (01 – 05) Suspension (06) Partial Suspension (25-26) Placement (07, 13-14) Truancy (16-17) Continuation (08-12)
<b>Event Tracking For Students</b>	
Name of Event	
Date of Event	Date when Event occurs
Attended <sup>1</sup>	Yes/No
Hours Spent at Event <sup>1</sup>	Numeric

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
<b>Educator Profile</b>	
First, Middle, and Last Name <sup>1</sup>	Full legal first, last, and middle name
School	School educator is primarily associated with
District <sup>1</sup>	District educator is associated with
Local ID <sup>1</sup>	District-level numeric identifier for each teacher.
Unique ID <sup>1</sup>	State-level numeric identifier for each teacher.
Grade Level <sup>1</sup>	<p>Indicate the grade level educator is teaching. 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> <li>• Not Applicable (District/ School Administrator)</li> </ul>
Content Area <sup>1</sup>	<p>Select from the following which best describes the content taught by this teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• ELA</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• Social Studies</li> <li>• Not a content area teacher (Middle/ High School)</li> <li>• Not applicable (Elementary)</li> </ul>
If a content area teacher, does the teacher teach any courses that are eligible for college credit? <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
If Not a Content Area teacher, specify role <sup>2</sup>	If Content Area is “Not a Content area teacher” is selected, open-ended text field to specify job title
Program Type	<p>Select all that apply from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular Education</li> <li>• Special Education</li> <li>• Bilingual/English Speakers of other Languages Education</li> <li>• Career and Technical Education</li> </ul>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gifted and Talented Education</li> <li>• Not Applicable (Administration)</li> </ul>
Status	Active/Inactive
<b>Event Tracking for Educators</b>	
Name of Event <sup>1</sup>	
Date of Event <sup>1</sup>	Date when Event occurs
Attended <sup>1</sup>	Yes/No
Hours Spent at Event <sup>1</sup>	Numeric, please round to the nearest half hour, using decimal format (one and a half hours = 1.5)
<b>Parent Profile</b>	
Parent First, Middle, and Last Name <sup>1</sup>	Full legal name of the parent
Parent ID <sup>1</sup>	The Parent ID is a self-constructed value based on their child's Unique ID.
School <sup>1</sup>	School their child is currently enrolled in
District <sup>1</sup>	District their child is currently enrolled in
Student <sup>1</sup>	Student(s) the parent is associated with
Email	Email ID of the parent
<b>Event Tracking for Parents</b>	
Name of Event <sup>1</sup>	
Date of Event <sup>1</sup>	Date when Event occurs
Attended <sup>1</sup>	Yes/No
Hours Spent at Event <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
<b>Grant Events: Student Services</b>	
Students <sup>1</sup>	Link to students
Date for Service <sup>1</sup>	Enter date in the following format: MM/DD/YYYY
Did Parents participate in service? <sup>1, 2</sup>	Yes/No

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Parents	Link to parents
College Prep Advisors <sup>2</sup>	Link only to College Prep Advisors from “Other Contacts” list
Service Type <sup>1</sup>	<b>Select one from the following:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tutoring/Homework Assistance</li> <li>2. Mentoring Counseling/Advising/Academic Planning/Career Counseling</li> </ol>
If tutoring, what subject?	Select: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• English and Language Arts</li> <li>• Social Studies</li> </ul> Required only if Tutoring is selected above.
If counseling/ advising or mentoring, did it cover financial aid?	Select Yes or No  Required only if Counseling or Mentoring is selected as Service Type so it is a sub-set of Counseling or Mentoring services.
Delivery method for activity <sup>1</sup>	For the activity above, please indicate if it was delivered in-person or virtual.
Number of Hours (per day) <sup>1</sup>	Enter number of hours the activity occurred – round to the nearest whole hour (Enter 15 min increments as 0.25, enter ½ hour increments as “0.5”), so four and half hours would be entered as “4.5”and four hours and 45 min will be entered as “4.75”
Explain why number of hours per day for this service exceeds 4 hours <sup>2</sup>	Open-text field
Reason for Service <sup>1</sup>	Planning/justification for services: Indicate how the decision was made to have student be involved in tutoring/homework assistance: <b>Select ONE reason:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher/counselor input</li> <li>• Diagnostic data</li> <li>• Teacher/counselor input AND Diagnostic Data</li> <li>• Student Request/walk-in</li> <li>• Parent request/walk-in</li> </ul>
<b>Events Planning</b>	
Name of the Event <sup>1</sup>	Text field. Unique event identifier
Description of Event	Open text field
Date of the Event <sup>1</sup>	Event Date mm/dd/yyyy

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Date Event Planning Started <sup>1</sup>	Date event record is created for planning purposes
District <sup>1</sup>	Linked to relevant cohort district(s)
School <sup>1</sup>	Linked to relevant cohort school(s)
GEAR UP Partner	Linked to relevant GEAR UP Partner(s)
Type of Event <sup>1</sup>	Select one from following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College Tour</li> <li>• College Student Shadowing</li> <li>• Family Event</li> <li>• Student Workshop</li> <li>• Parent Workshop</li> <li>• Job/Site Visit</li> <li>• Job Shadowing</li> <li>• Math Educational Field Trip</li> <li>• English Language Arts Educational Field Trip</li> <li>• Science Educational Field Trip</li> <li>• Other Educational Field Trip</li> <li>• Educator Professional Development (PD)</li> <li>• Other Educator Event</li> </ul>
Is the event a summer program? <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
If Summer Program, select one: <sup>2</sup>	Choose from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Enrichment (This may include transition across grade levels, college going content – college enrollment, etc.)</li> <li>• Remedial Services (This may include study skills, organization skills, tutoring, etc.)</li> </ul>
If Student or Parent Workshop is selected, please specify	Select one from the following if Student or Parent Workshop selected as Event Type: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisor Introduction</li> <li>• Academic Program</li> <li>• Applications and Admissions College</li> <li>• Applications and Admissions Pre-College</li> <li>• Achievement Appreciation</li> <li>• Application Drive</li> <li>• Assembly</li> <li>• Cafeteria Visit</li> <li>• Career Exploration</li> <li>• College Knowledge</li> <li>• College Fair</li> <li>• Essays and Personal Statements</li> <li>• Financial Literacy</li> <li>• GEAR UP Evaluation</li> <li>• Sporting Events</li> </ul>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test Preparation</li> <li>• Test Registration Drive</li> <li>• Skills focused<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Texas GEAR UP website<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
If Educator PD Content	Mark all that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiated Instruction</li> <li>• Advanced Instructional Strategies</li> <li>• Project Based Learning</li> <li>• Vertical Teaming</li> <li>• Financial Literacy</li> <li>• GEAR UP Specific</li> </ul>
Event Status <sup>1</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Planned</li> <li>• Reviewed</li> <li>• Attendance Pending</li> <li>• Reported</li> <li>• Cancelled</li> <li>• Not Applicable</li> </ul>
Event Length <sup>1</sup>	Total number of cumulative hours over all event dates.
Event Description <sup>1</sup>	Text field; description of the event including agenda attached.
Delivery Method <sup>1</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-person</li> <li>• Virtual</li> </ul>
Is the Event funded by district's GEAR UP funds? <sup>1, 2</sup>	Yes/No
If yes, what is the estimated event cost? <sup>2</sup>	Amount in \$
If no, source of funds? <sup>2</sup>	Text field
List of primary cost items <sup>2</sup>	
Scope <sup>1, 2</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-wide</li> <li>• Cohort-only</li> <li>• Partial Cohort</li> </ul>
Group <sup>1, 2</sup>	Mark all that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Educators</li> <li>• Other Contacts</li> </ul>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Final Agenda upload (PDF) <sup>2</sup>	File upload link
Government Performance and Results Act Goals Fulfilled <sup>1, 2</sup>	Mark all that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government Performance and Results Act Goal 1: Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education of GEAR UP students.</li> <li>• Government Performance and Results Act Goal 2: Increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in postsecondary education.</li> <li>• Government Performance and Results Act Goal 3: Increase the educational expectations and family knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing</li> </ul>
Registered Students <sup>1</sup>	Link to students attending
Registered Educators <sup>1</sup>	Link to educators attending
Registered Parents <sup>1</sup>	Link to parents attending
Registered Other Contacts <sup>1</sup>	Link to GU Partner staff attending
Non-Cohort Attendance	Enter attendance for following grades: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• K-4 -</li> <li>• Grade 5 -</li> <li>• Grade 6 -</li> <li>• Grade 7 -</li> <li>• Grade 8 -</li> <li>• Grade 9 -</li> <li>• Grade 10 -</li> <li>• Grade 11 -</li> <li>• Grade 12 -</li> </ul>
<i>Following fields were developed by the Project Manager during Advisor Training and are required for Advisor monitoring, district planning and audit, and general Event Planning purposes. Most fields are not mandatory. These were also added to in case districts requested specific fields that were useful to them for planning purposes</i>	

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Standards of Service <sup>1,2</sup>	Mark all that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Contact</li> <li>• Family Contact</li> <li>• Parent Contact</li> <li>• Field Trip</li> <li>• Summer Programming</li> <li>• Classroom Observations</li> <li>• Before/After School Programs</li> <li>• College Clubs</li> <li>• Lunch Programs</li> <li>• Community Service</li> <li>• PD</li> </ul>
Food Provided <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
How is the food provided? <sup>2</sup>	Text field
Transportation Type <sup>2</sup>	Select one: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Bus</li> <li>• Coach Bus</li> <li>• School Van</li> <li>• Private Van</li> </ul>
Translator Required <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
Setup/Breakdown procedures <sup>2</sup>	Text field
Visitor protocol distributed <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
Feedback received from parents <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
Reminder calls made	Yes/No
Thank-you letters distributed <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
<b>Internal Meetings</b>	
Name of the Meeting <sup>1,2</sup>	Name of the meeting according to the agenda.
Jurisdiction <sup>1,2</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GEAR UP State Level</li> <li>• District Level</li> <li>• School Level</li> </ul> <p>GEAR UP State Level meeting do not include any districts or schools and are strictly either internal UT-IPSI meetings or meetings with/between GEAR UP Partners.</p>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
	<p>District or School level is defined as per the scope of the meeting and the attendees involved.</p>
<p>Type of Meeting<sup>1, 2</sup></p>	<p>Select from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Review</li> <li>• Grant Assistance</li> <li>• Advisory Council</li> <li>• Public Inquiry</li> <li>• Advisor PD</li> <li>• Districts Educator PD</li> <li>• Statewide Educator PD</li> <li>• UT-IPSI PD</li> <li>• Outreach Activities</li> <li>• State Office Assistance and Coordination</li> <li>• Program Administration</li> </ul> <p><b>Planning and Review</b> - defined as planning for the future or review/ monitoring discussions either within district or with UT-IPSI.</p> <p><b>Grant Assistance</b> – defined as questions from districts and guidance/guidelines provided by UT-IPSI including data assistance.</p> <p><b>Advisory Council</b> - defined as advisory council meetings organized by districts</p> <p><b>Public Inquiry</b> - defined as responses to phone, email, and website inquiries from public or vendors/ partners/etc. (UT-IPSI use only)</p> <p><b>Advisor PD</b> – defined as bi-annual training provided by UT-IPSI to Advisors (UT-IPSI use only).</p> <p><b>District Educator PD</b> - defined as any PD training provided by UT-IPSI staff to cohort districts.</p> <p><b>Statewide Educator PD</b> - defined as any PD training organized/ provided by UT-IPSI staff for statewide programs or non-cohort districts.</p> <p><b>UT-IPSI PD</b> - PD received by UT-IPSI staff (UT-IPSI use only)</p> <p><b>Outreach Activities</b> - Meetings or any communication made to facilitate GEAR UP activities with potential partners.</p> <p><b>State Office Assistance and Coordination</b> - includes meetings and assisting TEA, ICF, and AMS.</p>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
	<b>Program Administration</b> - Contractual oversight and initiation, business services, travel, purchasing, etc.
Districts involved <sup>2</sup>	Link to districts involved in this meeting
Schools involved <sup>2</sup>	Link to schools involved in this meeting
GEAR UP Partner(s) involved? <sup>2</sup>	Link to GEAR UP Partners attending this meeting.
Date of the Meeting <sup>1, 2</sup>	Date – mm/dd/yyyy
Type of Contact <sup>1, 2</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Phone Call</li> <li>• In-Person</li> <li>• Web Conference</li> </ul>
Hours spent <sup>1, 2</sup>	Hours in increments of 15 minutes and entered as 0.25 e.g. 30 minute meeting is 0.5 and 2 hour 45 minutes meeting is 2.75
Notes <sup>1, 2</sup>	Text field for brief content and description of meeting
Attach Agenda or Meeting Minutes <sup>2</sup>	Upload PDF/Word file
Educators participating <sup>2</sup>	Link to Educator profiles that attend this meeting
Other Contacts participating <sup>2</sup>	Link to Other Contact profiles that attend this meeting
Parents participating <sup>2</sup>	Link to Parent profiles that attend this meeting
<b>GEAR UP Partners</b>	
Partner Name <sup>1</sup>	Full Name of the organization or entity
Type <sup>1</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Institution</li> <li>• Non-Profit Organization</li> <li>• Community Organization</li> <li>• Faith-based Organization</li> <li>• Professional Association</li> <li>• Business</li> <li>• Government</li> <li>• School/District</li> <li>• Volunteer Group</li> <li>• GEAR UP Program</li> </ul>
Local Education Agency (LEA)? <sup>1, 2</sup>	Is the organization a local education agency?

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Institution of Higher Education (IHE)? <sup>1</sup>	Is the organization an Institution of Higher Education?
If IHE, what type?	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four-year Public University/College</li> <li>• Four-year Private University/College</li> <li>• Two-year Private Community College</li> <li>• Two-year Public Community College</li> <li>• Historically Black College or University</li> <li>• Hispanic Serving Institution</li> <li>• Tribally Controlled Colleges &amp; Universities</li> <li>• Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions</li> <li>• Alaska Native Serving Institution</li> </ul>
District partnering with? <sup>2</sup>	Linked to District(s) partnering with
School partnering with? <sup>2</sup>	Linked to School(s) partnering with
Address, City, State, and Zip	Full address of the main office of the organization
Email, Phone and Fax	Email, Phone and fax number of the partner
Website	Website of the partner
Summarize the partner's specific support and commitment to the project <sup>2</sup>	Text field
Partner Identification and Cost Share Form Completed? <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
<b>Other Contacts</b>	
Name <sup>1,2</sup>	Full legal name of the person
Title <sup>1,2</sup>	Official job title or role at the GEAR UP Partner organization
GEAR UP Partner associated with <sup>1,2</sup>	Link to the GEAR UP Partner
Email <sup>2</sup>	Email ID
Office Phone Number <sup>2</sup>	Phone number xxx-xxx-xxxx
Status <sup>1,2</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active</li> <li>• Inactive</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>This item is required

<sup>2</sup>This is a new item added to the 2014–15 APR Year 3 collection.



## Appendix D: Evaluation Instruments

This appendix includes copies of the instruments that were used to collect data that are presented in this report. In fall 2014, only students were surveyed, and in spring of 2015 both students and parents were surveyed. In addition to student and parent surveys, site visits were conducted to interview various stakeholders in all districts during both fall 2014 and spring 2015.

### D.1 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Student Survey: Fall 2014

#### GEAR UP Student Survey, Fall 2014

Reminder: You may have completed a similar survey in spring 2014 for GEAR UP. We will be asking just a few questions this fall to learn about summer programs and about becoming a high school student. In spring 2015, we will ask you additional questions to learn about your thinking and understanding about GEAR UP.

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 are enrolled in a GEAR UP school in 2014-15, 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.

#### Study Assent

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)

**Instructions for completing this survey:**

- Read each question carefully. Some will ask that you select only one option, while others will ask you to select ALL that apply.
- With a pencil, make a **HEAVY MARK** that completely fills the circle of your answer choice:
 

Incorrect Marks	Correct Mark
<input type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
- If you change your answer, please be sure to erase your original mark as cleanly as possible.
- Try to avoid making stray marks on the form.

**ABOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**1. Did you attend any of the following schools last year (Grade 8)?**

<input type="radio"/> Brentwood	<input type="radio"/> Decker	<input type="radio"/> Dunbar College Prep Academy	<input type="radio"/> E.T. Wrenn
<input type="radio"/> Gus Garcia	<input type="radio"/> Manor	<input type="radio"/> Somerset	<input type="radio"/> Did not attend any of the schools listed last year when I was in Grade 8

**GEAR UP SUMMER PROGRAM 2014**

**2. Did you participate in the GEAR UP summer 2014 program at your school?**

- a. Yes (*continue to question 3*)
- b. No (*skip items 3-5 and go to question 6 (NOTE to DGB skip logic will take to correct question)*)

**3. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about the 2014 GEAR UP summer program.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I attended the summer program for the majority of days I knew about it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I enjoyed the activities offered during the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I feel more prepared to take Algebra I after attending the summer program. (NOTE we will add a not applicable option for this item)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I feel more prepared to take advanced courses after attending the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. I have a better understanding of financial aid for college after attending the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. I have a better understanding of college entrance requirements after attending the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. I have a better understanding of the benefits of college after attending the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. The summer program prepared me for what it would be like to be a high school student overall.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. The summer program prepared me for what it would be like to taking high school classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. The summer program provided me with skills to help me succeed in my high school classes (for example, time management skills, organization skills).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

k. The summer program prepared me socially for being a high school student (for example, learning about joining school clubs, making new friends).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. During the summer program I was introduced to some of my Grade 9 teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. During the summer program I was introduced to some of my high school counselors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. During the summer program, I learned where I could get help if I needed it at my high school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. I would recommend the summer program to other students at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p. Based on my experiences with the summer 2014 program, I am planning on attending the summer 2015 program if possible.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**4. Select the reasons that you attended the summer 2014 GEAR UP program. (Select ALL that apply)**

- I wanted to participate in the summer program
- My parents wanted me to participate in the program
- The academic content focus of the program was of interest to me
- The summer program provided an opportunity for me to spend time with friends
- I thought it would help me to learn more about succeeding in high school.
- I thought it would help me to do well in my Grade 9 classes
- The summer program was scheduled on days that I could attend
- The summer program was scheduled at a time of day that I could attend
- The school strongly encouraged me to attend the summer program
- Other (please describe other reasons for attending): \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What additional thoughts, if any, do you have about the Summer 2014 GEAR UP program and how it benefited you? If you have any thoughts about the upcoming Summer 2015 GEAR UP program, please also share those.**

**6. (NOTE skip logic to here if did not attend Summer 2014 classes) Select from the following the reasons that you did NOT attend the summer 2014 GEAR UP program. (Select ALL that apply)**

- a. I did not want to participate in the summer program
- b. My parents did not want me to participate in the program
- c. The academic content focus of the program was not of interest to me
- d. None of my friends was attending the summer program

- e. Our family was not in the area during the time that the summer program was scheduled (e.g., on vacation)
- f. The summer program was scheduled at a time of day that did not work for me
- g. I had a job and could not miss work to attend
- h. I had family responsibilities and could not attend (e.g., watching siblings)
- i. The school did not inform me about the summer program
- j. The school did not encourage me to attend the summer program
- k. Other (please describe other reasons for NOT attending): \_\_\_\_\_

**7. So far, how challenging would you say it has been for you to change from being a middle school to a high school student?**

- a. Extremely Challenging
- b. Challenging
- c. A little Challenging
- d. Not at All Challenging

**8. What advice would you give your school to help next year's freshman :**

- Better transition to being a high school student?
- Help them succeed in high school classes?
- Forming positive relationships with other students and teachers.

**BACKGROUND**

**9. When you were in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, did you take Algebra I?**

- a. No
- b. Yes, I successfully completed Algebra I (received a grade A, B, or C)
- c. Yes , but I did not successfully complete Algebra I (received a grade D or below)

**10. 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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**11. What is your gender?**

<input type="radio"/> Female	<input type="radio"/> Male
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**12. 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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**13. What is the language you use most often at home? (Please select only one)**

- a. Both English and Spanish
- b. Only English

- c. Only Spanish
- d. Another language (please specify:\_\_\_\_\_)

**14. What is the language you use most often with friends? (Please select only one)**

- a. Both English and Spanish
- b. Only English
- c. Only Spanish
- d. Another language (please specify:\_\_\_\_\_)

**15. Are you Hispanic/Latino? (Please select only one)**

- a. No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- b. Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- c. Yes, Puerto Rican
- d. Yes, Cuban
- e. Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

**16. What is your race? (Select ALL that apply)**

- a. American Indian or Alaska Native (*A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This area may include, for example, native Indians from the United States, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.*)
- b. 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.*)
- c. Black or African American (*A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.*)
- d. 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.*)
- e. White (*A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe (including Spain), North Africa, or the Middle East.*)

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

## D.2 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Student Survey: Spring 2015

### GEAR UP Student Survey: Spring 2015

Reminder: You may have completed a survey in fall 2014 for the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). We will be asking questions each Fall and Spring through your senior year to learn how your thinking and understanding about GEAR UP changes over time.

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the impact of the Texas GEAR UP program at your school. Because you were enrolled in a GEAR UP school in 2014-2015, 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 20-30 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. Some questions ask you about your current thinking about your plans for the future. 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 education after high school graduation. Where appropriate, GEAR UP grantees can use the information learned to adjust GEAR UP programming.

When completing this survey, please use a pencil and completely fill in the circles that correspond to your answers.

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) 934-3000.

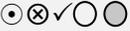
#### Study Assent

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)

**Instructions for completing this survey:**

- Read each question carefully. Some will ask that you select only one option, while others will ask you to select ALL that apply.
- With a pencil, make a **HEAVY MARK** that completely fills the circle of your answer choice:
 

Incorrect Marks	Correct Mark
	
- If you change your answer, please be sure to erase your original mark as cleanly as possible.
- Try to avoid making stray marks on the form.

**ABOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**1. Did you attend any of the following schools last year (Grade 8)? Check all schools that you attended in Grade 8 for any time.**

Brentwood	<input type="checkbox"/> Decker	Dunbar College Prep Academy	E.T. Wrenn
Gus Garcia	Manor	Somerset	Did not attend any of the schools listed last year when I was in Grade 8

**ABOUT COLLEGE**

**2. What is the highest level of education that you want to complete? (Please select only one)**

- Less than high school
- High School
- Some college
- 2-year college degree (Associates Degree)
- 4-year college degree (Bachelor’s degree)
- More than a 4-year college degree

**3. What is the highest level of education that you expect to complete? (Please select only one)**

- Less than high school
- High School
- Some college
- 2-year college degree (Associates Degree)
- 4-year college degree (Bachelor’s degree)
- More than a 4-year college degree

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

- Yes
- No, I was already planning on going to college
- No, I still don’t plan to go to college
- Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP at my school

**5. If you do not continue your education after high school, what would be the reason(s)? (Select ALL that apply. If you plan to continue your education after high school, select only “Not Applicable”)**

- Not applicable, I plan to continue my education after high school
- Family commitments
- I need to work after high school
- I want to work after high school
- I will not need more than high school to succeed
- I want to join the military service after high school
- It costs too much/I cannot afford it
- My grades are not good enough
- Other (please write in other reason):

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

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

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

- Information from a class activity or assignment
- Doing research specifically at one of the Texas GEAR UP websites: [www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)
- Research that I have done on my own (other than on the Texas GEAR UP website)
- Information from or discussions with friends or other people my age
- Information from a college visit
- Information from a GEAR UP summer program
- Information from or discussions with GEAR UP staff or GEAR UP events (other than college visits or summer programs)
- Information from programs other than GEAR UP (e.g. AVID, Breakthrough, Communities in Schools)
- Information from or discussions with parents/family members
- Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors
- Information from a college fair
- Information from television
- Information from watching sports
- None, I have not yet begun to seek outside sources of information for my future college education
- Other (please describe other sources):

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

	\$1 to \$1,000	\$1,001 to \$1,900	\$1,901 to \$3,000	\$3,001 to \$6,500	\$6,501 to \$9,400	\$9,401 to \$13,000	\$13,001 to \$18,000	More than \$18,000
a. Your local public two-year community college? <i>(Please select only one)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
b. A four-year public college in Texas? <i>(Please select only one)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					

**9. 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>
a. Your local <u>public community college</u> using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b. A <u>public 4-year college</u> using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	<input type="checkbox"/>				

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

	<i>Not Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Slightly Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Extremely Knowledgeable</i>
a. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. SAT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. ACT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Federal Pell Grants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Federal student loans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Federal work-study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Scholarships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Financial aid and the cost and benefits to you in pursuing postsecondary education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. General requirements for college acceptance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Importance/benefit of college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES**

**11. For the following set of questions, we would first like to know if you have participated in the academic course or activity during this school year (2014-2015). If you participated in the course or activity during this school year, please answer “yes” and then choose the answer that best matches how effective the course or activity was in helping you to succeed in school/prepare to go to college. If you did not participate in the course or activity, please answer “no” and skip to the next item.**

Have you participated in this activity during this school year (2014-2015)?			If yes you participated in the course/activity, how effective was this course/activity in helping you to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?			
	Yes	No	Not Effective	Slightly Effective	Mostly Effective	Very Effective
a. Taking Algebra I	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Taking an advanced mathematics course other than Algebra I (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Taking an advanced English/language arts course (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Taking any of the following advanced science courses (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Taking any of the following advanced courses (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Tutoring/homework assistance in math	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Tutoring/homework assistance in English/language arts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Tutoring/homework assistance in science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Tutoring/homework assistance in social science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

k. The 2014 GEAR UP Summer Program	<input type="checkbox"/>					
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**12 Overall, how challenging would you say it has been for you to change from being a middle school Grade 8 student to a high school student?**

- Extremely Challenging
- Challenging
- A little Challenging
- Not at All Challenging

**13. Please indicate if you have selected any of the following endorsements (major/minor). Check all that apply.**

- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)
- Business & Industry
- Public Services
- Arts & Humanities
- Multidisciplinary Studies

**14. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your endorsement (major/minor).**

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
a. Someone from Texas GEAR UP or my school helped prepare me to choose an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. My parents helped prepare me to choose an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I understood who I could talk to about choosing an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I understand what I need to do if I decide to change my endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I found it easy to select an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I would have liked to wait until the end of Grade 9 to select an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. I understand how my endorsement(s) will help me to prepare for college and a career.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. I plan on dropping my endorsement(s) as soon as I am able to after my sophomore (Grade 10) year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**15. Please answer each of the following.**

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
a. I have already officially changed my endorsement at least one time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I plan to officially change my endorsement in the near future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**16. What advice would you give your school to help prepare next year's freshman (Grade 9 students) about selecting an endorsement (major/minor)? Please also share any advice about changing your endorsement if you have experienced that.**

**17. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your high school graduation plans.**

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
a. Someone from Texas GEAR UP or my school has discussed graduation requirements with me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. My parents have discussed graduation requirements with me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I understand what I need to do to graduate with the Distinguished Level of Achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I plan to graduate with a Distinguished Level of Achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**18. Did you know that your school has a College Preparation Advisor who is available to meet with students?**

- Yes
- No (*skip to question 21*)

**19. Have you ever met with the College Preparation Advisor at your school?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**20. If yes, you met with the College Preparation Advisor at your school, please briefly describe what you met with them about. For example, talked about courses to take in high school, talked about applying to college, or talked about financial aid for college.**

**21. For these questions, we would first like to know about specific activities you may have participated in during this school year (2014-2015). If you participated in the activity, please answer “yes” and then choose the answer that best matches how effective the activity was in helping you to succeed in school/prepare to go to college. If you did not participate in the activity, please answer “no” and skip to the next activity.**

	Have you participated in this activity during this school year (2014-2015)?		If yes you participated in the activity, how effective was this activity in helping you to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>Slightly Effective</i>	<i>Mostly Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>
a. Academic or career counseling/advising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Financial aid counseling/advising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Met with the College Preparation Advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. College visits/college student shadowing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Job site visit/job shadowing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

f. Educational field trips	<input type="checkbox"/>					
g. Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	<input type="checkbox"/>					
h. My participation in family/cultural events	<input type="checkbox"/>					
i. My parent(s) participation in family/cultural events	<input type="checkbox"/>					

**22. 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>
a. Attending college is important for my future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. It is too early for me to think about college.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I am planning to take an advanced course in mathematics next year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I am planning to take an advanced course in English/language arts next year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I am planning to take an advanced course in science next year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

- Does not apply; I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP
- Very Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

**24. What kind of information, support, or activities do you need from your school/GEAR UP to help you be more successful in school and be more prepared for college? (Select ALL that apply).**

**I would like:**

- More advanced classes
- Information about participating in GEAR UP events
- Tutoring
- Opportunities to participate in College Visits
- Information about college entrance requirements
- Information about college financial aid/scholarships
- Field trips
- Information about college student clubs and sports
- Information and events presented in other languages like Spanish
- Information about taking the PSAT
- Information about taking the SAT
- Information about taking the ACT
- Information about selectng Advanced Placement courses
- Information about dual credit courses where I can earn both high school and college credit
- Other information, support or activities you would be interested in participating in or learning more about? (please specify)

**BACKGROUND**

**25. When you were in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, did you take Algebra I?**

- No
- Yes, I successfully completed Algebra I (received a grade A, B, or C)
- Yes, but I did not successfully complete Algebra I (received a grade D or below or switched to different Mathematics class)

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

- Grade 6
- Grade 7
- Grade 8
- Grade 9
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12
- Other (please specify)

**27. What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

**28. Do you participate in the free or reduced-cost lunch program at school?**

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

**29. What is the language you use *most often* at home? (Please select only one)**

- English
- Spanish
- Both English and Spanish
- Another language (please specify)

**30. What is the language you use *most often* with friends? (Please select only one)**

- English
- Spanish
- Both English and Spanish
- Another language (please specify)

**31. Are you Hispanic/Latino? (Please select only one)**

- No, not of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

**32. What is your race? (Select ALL that apply)**

- American Indian or Alaska Native (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This area may include, for example, native Indians from the United States, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.)*
- 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.)*
- Black or African American (A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.)*
- 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.)*
- White (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe (including Spain), North Africa, or the Middle East.)*

**Thank You for Completing the Survey!**

## D.3 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Parent Survey: Spring 2015

### Survey of Parent/Guardian of GEAR UP Students: Spring 2015

Reminder: You may have completed a similar survey in spring 2014 for GEAR UP. We will be asking questions annually to understand how your thinking and understanding about GEAR UP changes over time.

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 2014-2015, 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 9, participating in GEAR UP. If you do not have a Grade 9 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) 934-3000.

#### Study Assent

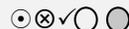
For parents/legal guardians taking the paper-based version: By signing the attached consent form, you acknowledge that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate by completing the survey. Separate the form from the survey and place each in the appropriately marked container once 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).

#### Instructions for completing this survey on paper:

- Read each question carefully. Some will ask that you select only one option, while others will ask you to select ALL that apply.
- You may use any writing instrument to complete the survey, but a pencil may be preferred, as it will allow you to more easily change your answers if needed.
- Make a HEAVY MARK that completely fills the circle of your answer choice:

Incorrect Marks



Correct Mark



- If you change your answer, please be sure to erase your original mark as cleanly as possible.
- Try to avoid making stray marks on the form.

**1. Please confirm that this is the only time you completed the GEAR UP Parent/Guardian Survey in Spring 2015.**

- Yes, this is my only time completing this survey in Spring 2015.
- 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.\***
- No, I completed the survey online in Spring 2015. **\*Please STOP and DO NOT complete this survey. Thank you for completing it online!\***

**2. Do you currently have a child in Grade 9? Please complete the survey thinking about this child.**

- Yes (Please complete the survey thinking about this child. Continue to item 3)
- No (Continue to item 2b)

**b. If no, in what grade do you have a child participating in GEAR UP for whom you would like to complete a survey?**

- Grade 6
- Grade 7
- Grade 8
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12
- Other (please specify):

**ABOUT COLLEGE**

**3. What is the highest level of education that you want your child to complete? (Please select only one)**

- Less than high school
- High school
- Some college
- 2-year college degree (Associate's degree)
- 4-year college degree (Bachelor's degree)
- More than a 4-year college degree

**4. What is the highest level of education that you expect your child to complete? (Please select only one)**

- Less than high school
- High school
- Some college
- 2-year college degree (Associate's degree)
- 4-year college degree (Bachelor's degree)
- More than a 4-year college degree

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

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

**6. Select the sources of information that have helped you to think about your child's future college education. (Select ALL that apply)**

- Information based on my own enrollment in or experience in college
- Information based on another of my children's enrollment (current or previous) in college
- Information from another family member currently enrolled in college
- Information from another family member who graduated from college
- Information from or discussion with friends or other parents
- Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors
- Doing research specifically on the Texas GEAR UP website [www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)
- Research that I have done on my own (other than on the Texas GEAR UP website)
- Information from a GEAR UP college visit
- Information from a GEAR UP summer program
- Information from or discussions with GEAR UP staff or GEAR UP events (other than college visits or summer programs)
- Information from college materials or college fairs.
- None, I have not yet begun to seek outside sources of information for my child's future college education
- Other (please describe other sources):

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

	<i>\$1 to \$1,000</i>	<i>\$1,001 to \$1,900</i>	<i>\$1,901 to \$3,000</i>	<i>\$3,001 to \$6,500</i>	<i>\$6,501 to \$10,400</i>	<i>\$10,401 to \$14,000</i>	<i>\$14,001 to \$18,000</i>	<i>More than \$18,000</i>
a. Your local public two year community college? ( <i>Please select only one</i> )	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. A four-year public college in your state? ( <i>Please select only one</i> )	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**8. Do you think that your child could afford to attend...**

	<i>Definitely not</i>	<i>Probably not</i>	<i>Probably</i>	<i>Definitely</i>
a. A local <u>public community college</u> using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. A <u>public 4-year college</u> using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

	<i>Not Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Slightly Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Extremely Knowledgeable</i>
a. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. SAT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. ACT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Federal Pell Grants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Federal student loans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Federal work-study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Scholarships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. General requirements for college acceptance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<i>Not Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Slightly Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Extremely Knowledgeable</i>
j. Importance/benefit of college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**GEAR UP SUMMER PROGRAM 2014**

**10. Thinking back to last summer (Summer 2014), did your child participate in a GEAR UP summer program or in a summer 2014 transition to high school program?**

- Yes (continue to question 11)
- No (skip to question 14)
- I don't know (skip to question 15)

**11. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about the 2014 summer program.**

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
a. My child attended the summer program for the majority of days I knew about it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. My child enjoyed the activities offered during the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. My child felt more prepared to take Algebra I after attending the summer program. (NOTE we will add a not applicable option for this item)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. My child had a better understanding of financial aid for college after attending the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. My child had a better understanding of college entrance requirements after attending the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. My child had a better understanding of the benefits of college after attending the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. The summer program prepared my child for what it would be like to be a high school student overall.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. The summer program prepared my child for what it would be like to take high school classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
i. The summer program provided my child with skills to help her/him succeed in high school classes (for example, time management skills, organization skills).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. The summer program prepared my child socially for being a high school student (for example, learning about joining school clubs, making new friends).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. During the summer program my child was introduced to some of the Grade 9 teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. During the summer program my child was introduced to some of my high school counselors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. During the summer program, my child learned where she/he could get help if needed it at the high school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. I would recommend the summer program to other parents at my child's school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. Based on my experiences with the summer 2014 program, I am planning on having my child attend the summer 2015 program if available.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**12. Select the reasons that your child attended the summer 2014 GEAR UP program. (Select ALL that apply)**

- My child wanted to participate in the summer program
- It was important to me that my child participate in the program
- The academic content focus of the program was of interest to me and my child
- The summer program provided an opportunity for my child to spend time with friends
- I thought it would help my child to learn more about succeeding in high school
- I thought it would help my child to do well in Grade 9 classes
- The summer program was schedule on days that my child could attend
- The summer program was scheduled at a time of day that my child could attend
- The school strongly encouraged the participation of my child in the summer program
- Other (please describe other reasons for attending):

**13. What additional thoughts, if any, do you have about the Summer 2014 GEAR UP program and how it benefited (or not) your child?**

**14. If your child did NOT attend the summer 2014 GEAR UP program, select the reasons that your child was NOT able to attend. (Select ALL that apply)**

- My child refused to participate in the summer program
- It was not important to me that my child participate in the program
- The academic content focus of the program was not of interest to me and my child
- None of my child’s friends was attending the summer program
- Our family was not in the area during the time that the summer program was scheduled (e.g., on vacation)
- The summer program was scheduled at a time of day that did not work for my child
- My child had a job and could not miss work to attend
- My child had family responsibilities and could not attend (e.g., watching siblings)
- The school did not inform me about the summer program
- The school did not encourage me to have my child attend the summer program
- Other (please describe other reasons for NOT attending):

**15. Overall, how challenging would you say it has been for your child to change from being a middle school (Grade 8) student to a high school student?**

- Extremely Challenging
- Challenging
- A little Challenging
- Not at All Challenging

**16. What advice would you give your school to help prepare next year’s freshman (Grade 9 students) to succeed in high school?**

**17. Please indicate if your child has selected any of the following endorsements (major/minor).**

**Check all that apply.**

- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)
- Business & Industry
- Public Services
- Arts & Humanities
- Multidisciplinary Studies)

**18. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your child’s endorsement (major/minor).**

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
a. Someone from Texas GEAR UP or my child’s school helped my child prepare to choose an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I helped prepare my child to choose an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

c. My child understood who he/she could talk to about choosing an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. My child understands what he/she needs to do if he/she decides to change endorsements (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. My child found it easy to select an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. My child would have liked to wait until the end of Grade 9 to select an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. I understand how my endorsement(s) will help my child to prepare for college and a career.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. My child plans on dropping her/his endorsement(s) as soon as she/he is able to after sophomore (Grade 10) year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**19. Please answer each of the following.**

	Yes	No
c. My child has already officially changed his/her endorsement at least one time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. My child plans to officially change his/her endorsement in the near future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**20. What advice would you give your school to help prepare next year’s freshman (Grade 9 students) about selecting an endorsement (major/minor)? Please also share any advice about changing your endorsement if you have experienced that.**

**21. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about high school graduation plans at your child’s school.**

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
a. Someone from Texas GEAR UP or my child’s school has discussed graduation requirements with my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I have discussed graduation requirements with my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I understands what my child needs to do to graduate with the Distinguished Level of Achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I plan for my child to graduate with a Distinguished Level of Achievement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. My child understands what he/she needs to do to graduate with the Distinguished Level of Achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. My child plans to graduate with a Distinguished Level of Achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**ABOUT YOUR CHILD’S AND YOUR EXPERIENCES**

**22. For the following set of questions, we would first like to know if your child participated in the *academic course* or activity during this school year (2014-2015). If your child participated in the course or activity, please answer “yes” and then choose the answer that best matches how effective the course or activity was in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college. If your child did not participate in the course or activity, please answer “no” and skip to the next activity.**

<b>Has your child participated in this activity during this school year (2014-2015)?</b> If you do not know if you child participated in any of the activities listed below, please feel free to skip that item.			<b>If Yes, how effective was this activity in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?</b>			
	Yes	No	<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>Slightly Effective</i>	<i>Mostly Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>
a. Taking Algebra I	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Taking an advanced mathematics course other than Algebra I (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Taking an advanced English/language arts course (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Taking an advanced science course (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Taking any other advanced courses(*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Tutoring/homework assistance in math	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Tutoring/homework assistance in English/language arts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Tutoring/homework assistance in science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Tutoring/homework assistance in social science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. The 2014 GEAR UP Summer Program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**23. For these questions, we would first like to know about the other activities your child participated in during this school year (2014-2015). If your child participated in the activity, please answer “yes” and then choose the answer that best matches how effective the activity was in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college. If your child did not participate in the activity, please answer “no” and skip to the next activity.**

Has your child participated in this activity during this school year (2014-2015)? If you do not know if your child participated in any of the activities listed below, please skip that item.			If yes, how effective was this activity in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?			
	Yes	No	<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>Slightly Effective</i>	<i>Mostly Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>
a. Academic or career counseling/advising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Financial aid counseling/advising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Met with the College Preparation Advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. College visits/college student shadowing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Job site visit/job shadowing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Educational field trips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Family/cultural events held by the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**24. Think about the GEAR UP events/activities you participated in this school year (2014-2015). How effective was each in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college? If you did not participate in the given type of activity, indicate that and skip to the next type of activity.**

	<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>
a. Parent/family counseling/advising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Parent workshops on the importance/benefits of college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Parent/family workshops about college options/requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

d. Parent/family workshops about financing college	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e. Parent/family high school or college visits	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f. Family/cultural events held by the school	<input type="checkbox"/>				
g. Meeting(s) with GEAR UP staff	<input type="checkbox"/>				

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

- Encouragement from your child
- Incentives (food, raffle, etc.)
- Interest/relevance of topics
- Outreach from school/GEAR UP staff
- Translated services/material available
- Other (please specify):

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

- Child care
- Work Schedule
- Interest/relevance of topics
- Language barriers
- Time/schedule
- Transportation
- Other (please specify):

**27. 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"/>				
b. It's too early to think about my child going to college.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c. GEAR UP has helped my child be more successful in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d. GEAR UP has helped my child better prepare for college.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e. I will encourage my child to take advanced courses next year.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f. I will encourage my child to participate in summer GEAR UP 2014 activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

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

- Does not apply, I have not participated in GEAR UP
- Very Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied

- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

**29. 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? (Select ALL that apply)**

**I'd like information about:**

- GEAR UP participation
- Tutoring
- College visits
- College entrance requirements
- College financial aid/scholarships
- Information and events presented in other languages like Spanish
- Other activities you would be interested in participating in or learning more about? (please specify):

**BACKGROUND**

**30. Please select the school your child attended in Grade 8:**

- Brentwood
- Decker
- Dunbar College Prep Academy
- E.T. Wrenn
- Gus Garcia
- Manor
- Somerset
- Other school not listed here

**31. When your child was in Grade 8, did she/he take Algebra I?**

- No
- Yes, I successfully completed Algebra I (received a grade A, B, or C)
- Yes, but I did not successfully complete Algebra I (received a grade D or below)
- Unsure/Don't know

**32. Does your child participate in the free or reduced-cost lunch program at school?**

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

**33. What is your child's gender?**

- Female
- Male

**34. What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

**35. What is the language you use most often at home?**

- English
- Spanish
- Both English and Spanish
- Another language (please specify)

**36. Other than the child you focused on in completing this survey, in what other grades do you have children? (Select all that apply.)**

- I do not have any children other than the one for whom I completed this survey
- Younger than kindergarten
- Kindergarten through Grade 5
- Grade 6
- Grade 7
- Grade 8
- Grade 9
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12
- College student or college graduate
- Other (please specify):

**37. Are you Hispanic/Latino? (Select One)**

- No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

**38. What is your race? (Select one or ALL that apply)**

- American Indian or Alaska Native *(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This area may include, for example, native Indians from the United States, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.)*
- 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.)*
- Black or African American *(A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.)*
- 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.)*
- White *(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe (including Spain), North Africa, or the Middle East.)*

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

- Less than high school
- High school
- Some college
- 2-year college degree (Associate's degree)
- 4-year college degree (Bachelor's degree)
- More than a 4-year college degree

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

## D.4 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2014: 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 have been your roles and responsibilities in GEAR UP with regard to moving from the middle school to high school?... over the summer? This semester?
  - a. *How has your role changed over the past two years? Stayed the same?*
  - b. *What are some activities you have engage in over the past two years to work with the high school to be prepared for success at GEAR UP?*
  - c. *What GEAR UP activities are you involved with? (e.g., summer program, vertical team, before/after school services, teacher PD, partners, college visits, statewide GEAR UP activities). What GEAR UP activities/programs do you deliver yourself? What activities do you oversee or delegate to others? (Probe for perceptions of this oversight/management structure).*
  - d. *How do you interact with the college prep advisor(s) at your school(s)? How has this changed from last year?*
- 2) What are the main GEAR UP goals/objectives at your site? (NOTE: Review grantee action plan for specific probes.)
  - a. *What are this site's primary goals for this year? (Probe for: Promoting student success in Algebra I and II and/or advanced courses including AP courses and dual credit; teacher PD on differentiated instruction or rigor, teacher PD on college admissions, vertical alignment, etc.)*
  - b. *Who has been 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 this year's planning? (Probe for graduating college ready (distinguished plan/endorsements), college entrance requirements knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation, on-time promotion and graduation, EXPLORE/PLAN/ACT and SAT). Probe in general for how the introduction of endorsements and change in graduation requirements has influenced GEAR UP planning.*
- 3) What is the structure of GEAR UP at the high schools? Who are the key players? How are decisions made? How does this differ from the middle school experience?
  - a. *What are your perceptions of the management structure of GEAR UP in your district?*
  - b. *What impact does the state implementation office have on GEAR UP operations in your district? How often do you interact with the implementation office?*
  - c. *What are your perceptions of the state implementation office's role in GEAR UP?*
- 4) What activities did your site offer this past summer for students/parents/teachers? (Probe for details on each event. Probe for focus on academic rigor and for transition to high school)

- a. *Who was responsible for planning and conducting the summer program? To what extent did the middle school and high school work together on the summer program?*
  - b. *For each event, what percentage of students attended the summer program and were participation/attendance levels consistent with program targets? (30% of students will be involved in summer programs) If not, why not?*
  - c. *What activities in summer school or since then has the GEAR UP program helped to put into place to help students make the transition to high school?*
  - d. *What are your perceptions about the success of these events? What factors may have contributed to the success of these events?*
  - e. *What challenges did you face? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
- 5) What student and parent events/activities have been conducted so far this school year? (NOTE: If no events held to date, probe grantee on why events not held and what is planned.)
- a. *How has planning and conducting activities changed from middle school to high school?*
  - b. *Were participation / attendance levels consistent with program targets? (If not, why not? Probe for the goal of 50% of parents attending 3 events and role in helping to meet this goal)*
  - 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 have you faced? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
  - e. *What role do the college preparation advisor(s) playing in these services?*
- 6) What student support services (tutoring / mentoring / academic support) is GEAR UP is offering this year. (NOTE: Use if tutoring/mentoring/academic support was listed in answer to Q4. If none to date, probe when services will begin). Are any of the services carried over from middle school to high school?
- a. *What challenges has the school faced in providing these types of services?*
  - b. *How did you identify/recruit students for services? Are data systems in place and being used to help identify students in needs of services?*
  - 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, college enrollment)? 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 9 students? What factors do you think contribute to your ability to sustain support services over time?*
- 7) What advanced/honors courses have been made available to Grade 9 students Does your school(s) have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered in high school grades and/or to increase enrollment?
- a. *If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved and when the work began. If no, why not?*
  - b. *Are you aware of any additional advanced courses offered at your school this year as compared to last based on the high school preparing to meet the goal if increasing offerings? Strategies for increasing enrollment??*
  - c. *How is GEAR UP supporting Grade 9 students enrolled in Algebra I and Algebra II this year? Other math and science courses?*
  - d. *How have your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/districts are to take these courses been changing based on the two years so far? (Probe for perceptions about student success so far in Algebra I and Algebra II and in AP courses more generally).*
  - e. *Does your school have a specific role to increase the number of advanced courses available to students or to increase enrollment in available advanced courses? (Probe for 18 college credits by graduation and role in helping to ensure that this can be met)*
  - f. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing number of and student enrollment in advanced courses.*
- 8) How has the role of GEAR UP in supporting teacher/administrator professional development (PD) changed over time? Changed as began working with high school?
- a. *What specific GEAR UP PD has been provided so far this year?*

- b. *If none provided so far, what has prevented site(s) from conducting these types of PD? What is the plan to begin conducting PD? How might any barriers to conducting be overcome?*
  - c. *How pleased are you with the number and type of PD related to GEAR UP you have been able to provide so far? )*
  - d. *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)?*
  - e. *To what extent did any given PD align with GEAR UP goals (e.g., improved academic rigor, student success, college admissions training)? What gaps in PD have you identified with regard to alignment to GEAR UP goals?*
  - f. *To what extent were HS teachers already familiar with GEAR UP because of prior participation in PD that was vertically aligned? How has this year's PD training focused on vertical alignment with regard to meeting GEAR UP goals? Probe for continued work with Middle school as well as cross grade or content PD in high school.*
  - g. *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., 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?*
  - h. *What barriers do you face in implementing GEAR UP PD programs this year? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*
  - i. *How can these PD services be sustained for future teachers? How might the skills taught be enhanced in teachers who have already participated?*
  - j. *What non-GEAR UP PD are Grade 9 teachers receiving this year? How might this PD support GEAR UP goals?*
- 9) Outside of PD, how are teachers / school staff involved with GEAR UP? (e.g., field trips, college visits, afterschool, etc.)
- a. *How are teachers/staff involved in college visits and awareness activities? Do teachers integrate GEAR UP/college themes into their lessons? If so, how? If not, why not?*
  - b. *Have teachers delivered any financial literacy curricula to students this year? If so, what are your perceptions of this activity? If not, why not?*
- 10) Have business, government, education and community partners supported GEAR UP at the school(s) this year (e.g., through providing services, holding/participating in events)? How has this changed/stayed the same from middle school partners?
- a. *If no, what challenges have you faced in engaging partners to participate in GEAR UP?*
  - b. *If yes, how have community partners supported GEAR UP at the school this year? What services / support has the partner provided?*
  - c. *Tell us about the partners' role in providing matched funding to the GEAR UP program. If any partner provided matching funds, please describe.*
  - d. *What factors help facilitate partner involvement? How might you build on this in the future?*
  - e. *What barriers did you encounter in working with partners? How did you address them/how might you address them in the future?*
  - f. *Do you anticipate that you will be able to sustain the partnership in future years? Why/why not?*
  - g. *Do you plan on recruiting new partners? If so, how many and/or what types of additional partners would you like to recruit?*
  - h. *Have you recruited and convened a GEAR UP Advisory Board for the district? If so, what does it do and how often does it meet? If not, why not?*
- 11) One goal of Texas GEAR UP was to have schools put in place programs that might help students successfully transition from middle school to high school. Probe for attendance by at least 30% of students.)
- a. *If known, what has this school done in the past to help students/teachers with the transition from middle school to high school? How did that differ from what occurred with this year's grade 9 students. Probe for summer program and for transition events since the start of school.*
  - b. *What types of content have transition programs focused on? Probe for setting expectations for high school environment, study skills, encouraging social engagement, introducing teachers, etc. as well as for college going/college ready focus. Probe for discussing Distinguished plan and selecting endorsements that will help be college ready.*
  - c. *What are your perceptions about the success of these transition events? What factors may have contributed to the success of these events?*
  - d. *What challenges did the school face in helping students to transition, including the summer program? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future? What*

*might you do differently in the future to help these types of transition programs to be more successful*

12) How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events? (Probe for, GEAR UP Website (which one?), GEAR UP conferences)

- a. *Did you/your school/students/parents participate in any statewide activities/events? What was the purpose of the event? Who/how many attended?*
- b. *Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this year? If yes, which resources how did you use them? If not, why not? Probe for use of TEA Graduation Tool Kit or district tools(while not a GEAR UP specific tool may be of use to support GEAR UP).*
- c. *Discuss facilitators and barriers to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*

***Thank you for your time.***

## D.5 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: 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 have been your roles and responsibilities in GEAR UP this semester?
  - a. *How has your role changed over this school year? Over the past three years? Stayed the same?*
  - b. *What are some activities you have engaged in over the past three years to work with the high school to be prepared for success at GEAR UP?*
  - c. *What GEAR UP activities are you involved with this semester? (e.g., summer program, vertical team, before/after school services, teacher PD, partners, college visits, statewide GEAR UP activities). What GEAR UP activities/programs do you deliver yourself? What activities do you oversee or delegate to others? (Probe for perceptions of this oversight/management structure).*
  - d. *How do you interact with the college prep advisor(s) at your school(s)? How has this changed from last semester?*
  
- 2) Any changes in how GEAR UP is structured at this school over the course of this year? Since last year?
  - a. *If known: Have any of the key players changed?*
  - b. *If not known: What is the structure of GEAR UP at this school? Who are the key players? Who are the key players on a day-to-day basis? How has this changed over the course of the year? Going forward: From prior years?*
  - c. *Have your perceptions of the management structure of GEAR UP in your district changed this semester? If how, please explain.*
  - d. *What impact has the state implementation office had on GEAR UP operations in your district this semester? How often have you interacted with the implementation office this semester?*
  - e. *What are your perceptions of the state implementation office's role in GEAR UP?*
  - f. *Who has been involved in the GEAR UP planning process (advisory councils, parents, school leaders, teachers, principal)? Who is involved now? Are these groups helping to inform GEAR UP programming decisions/activities/programs? If so, how? What are barriers/facilitators to involving these groups?*
  - g. *How does preparing for long-term success of GEAR UP fit into this year's planning? (Probe for graduating college ready (distinguished plan/endorsements), college entrance requirements knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation, on-time promotion and graduation, EXPLORE/ASPIRE/ACT and SAT). Probe in general for how the introduction of endorsements and change in graduation requirements has influenced GEAR UP planning.*
  
- 3) The primary goal of GEAR UP is to promote college readiness and college going. In what ways has GEAR UP contributed to the college going culture in the GEAR UP school(s) in this district? Has it changed over the course of this year? Going forward: Changed from prior years? Is the change across a broad range of

students? What features of GEAR UP do you think have contributed to this change? If any factors identified, do you think those factors will continue in the future?

- a. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Relative to being college ready and college going -- What are the characteristics of in the GEAR UP school(s) in this district 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 GEAR UP school(s) in this district this year? (Probe on English Language Learners in particular, subgroups in general throughout.) Going forward: Has this changed over prior years?*
  - b. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What are the characteristics of households from which students come? (Family structure, employment status, education, attitudes toward postsecondary education.) Going forward: Has this changed over prior years?*
  - c. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: How involved are parents in their children's education? Has parent involvement changed over the course of the year? Going forward: From prior years?*
  - d. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What challenges/successes has/have the GEAR UP school(s) in this district had with students being promoted on time? What plans does/do the GEAR UP school(s) in this district have to improve on-time promotion? How have students been doing on the ACT/SAT? What steps do you see taking to improve in this area going forward? (Probe for using ASPIRE) How many youth from the district have been going to college after graduating? In general, how would you say your district has been doing on these issues relative to other districts in the state? Going forward: Any changes from prior years?*
  - e. *What programs and student support services (other than GEAR UP) are available to students this semester [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)]? How has this changed over the course of the year? Going forward: Over prior years? How helpful are these programs at preparing students to be college going? What programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful? Any plans for new/additional programs/support services for next year?*
  - f. *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)]? How has this changed over the course of the year? Going forward: Over prior years? What programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful? Any plans for new/additional programs/support services for next year?*
- 4) Improving the number of advanced/honors and college credit courses as well as the number of students involved in these is also a GEAR UP goal. **Does your school(s) have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered in high school grades and/or to increase enrollment in these courses?**
- a. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Tell us about how your offerings of advanced courses has changed over time. Any new advanced courses or any advanced courses no longer offered? Planned for Grade 10? (Cite list of advanced/honors math, English, science courses from Grade 9 based on APR and/or prior site visit knowledge.). Does your school have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered and/or to increase enrollment in advanced courses/AP courses? If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not?*
  - b. *To what extent, if any, have you seen any change in the interest of GEAR UP students in advanced courses in comparison to prior years' students? To what extent was the school prepared to enroll a greater number of students in advanced courses?*
  - c. *A goal of GEAR UP is to provide students with opportunities to receive 18 hours of college credit by graduation. Since we last talked, what steps has the school taken to ensure that this goal can be met?*
  - d. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/district are to take these (advanced and college credit) courses? At this point, have this year's GEAR UP students seemed better prepared than students in the past or about the same?*
  - e. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing the number of, and student enrollment in, advanced courses and college credit courses.*
- 5) How has the role of GEAR UP in supporting teacher/administrator PD changed over the course of the year? How has it changed, if at all, throughout this semester as you been working in the high school(s)?
- a. *What specific GEAR UP PD has been provided so far this semester?*
  - b. *If none provided, what has prevented site(s) from conducting teacher/administrator PD? What is the plan to begin conducting PD for Grade 10 teachers? How might any barriers to conducting be overcome?*
  - c. *How pleased are you with the number and type of PD activities related to GEAR UP you have been able to provide this semester?*

- d. *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)?*
  - e. *To what extent did any given PD align with GEAR UP goals (e.g., improved academic rigor, student success, college admissions training)? What gaps in PD have you identified with regard to alignment to GEAR UP goals?*
  - f. *To what extent were HS teachers already familiar with GEAR UP because of prior participation in PD that was vertically aligned? How has this semester's PD training focused on vertical alignment with regard to meeting GEAR UP goals? Probe for continued work with middle school as well as cross grade or content PD in high school.*
  - g. *What are your perceptions on the success of GEAR UP's teacher PD strategies deployed to improve academic rigor and promote student achievement this semester (e.g., 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?*
  - h. *What barriers do you face in implementing GEAR UP PD programs this semester? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*
  - i. *How can these PD services be sustained for future teachers? How might the skills taught be enhanced in teachers who have already participated?*
  - j. *What non-GEAR UP PD are Grade 9 teachers receiving this semester? How might this PD support GEAR UP goals?*
- 6) Outside of PD, how are teachers / school staff involved with GEAR UP? (e.g., field trips, college visits, afterschool, etc.) Did this change over the course of the school year?
- a. *How are teachers/staff involved in college visits and awareness activities? Do teachers integrate GEAR UP/college themes into their lessons? If so, how? If not, why not?*
  - b. *Have teachers delivered any financial literacy curricula to students this semester? If so, what are your perceptions of this activity? If not, why not?*
- 7) One goal of Texas GEAR UP was to have schools put in place programs that might help students successfully transition from middle school to high school.
- a. *If not already known: What has this school done in the past to help students/teachers with the transition from middle school to high school? How did that differ from what occurred with this year's Grade 9 students? Probe for summer program and for transition events since the start of school. What challenges have you seen in the past in making this transition at this school?*
  - b. *Have any additional transition events occurred since we last spoke? How successful were these activities?*
  - c. *How well would you say that this year's students have transitioned to high school? What aspects of transitioning have gone well/not so well: developing high school level study habits (time management skills, organization skills); social transition (e.g., joining clubs, making friends in high school); students knowing teachers and counselors (knowing who/where they can go to for help when needed)*
  - d. *What factors may have contributed to the success of student transitions? To what extent do you think the district will be able to sustain these facilitators?*
  - e. *What challenges did the school face in helping students to transition since fall? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future? What might you do differently in the future to help these types of transition programs to be more successful?*
- 8) How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events? (Probe for, GEAR UP Website ([www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)) GEAR UP conferences)
- a. *Did you/your school/students/parents participate in any statewide activities/events this semester? What was the purpose of the event? Who/how many attended?*
  - b. *Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this semester? If yes, which resources how did you use them? If not, why not? Probe for use of TEA Graduation Tool Kit or district tools(while not a GEAR UP specific tool may be of use to support GEAR UP).*
  - c. *Discuss facilitators and barriers to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*
- 9) Anything else we should know about GEAR UP at your school/district?

***Thank you for your time.***

## D.6 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2014: College Preparation Advisor 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 state grant initiative to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your role as the College Preparation Advisor (Advisor) 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. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

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 have been your roles and responsibilities in GEAR UP...over the summer? this semester?
  - a. *What GEAR UP activities are you involved with? (e.g., summer programs, college visits, before/after school services, tutoring/mentoring)*
  - b. *How do you interact with students? (Probe for one-to-one, group contact, workshop. Probe for frequency/duration of interaction.)*
  - c. *What factors at the school help facilitate your interaction with students? What barriers do you face in interacting with students? If barriers, how have you / will you address them? To what extent are data systems in place to identify students in need of services?*
  - d. *What if any changes have you seen in your responsibilities and how you carry them out in the high school as compared to the middle school? Any new successes or challenges?*
- 2) How has your interaction with the GEAR UP coordinator for this school changed since last year? With guidance counselors / teachers / parents/administrators?
  - a. *Who do you report to and has that changed since last year? (Probe for level/frequency of interaction with coordinator and supervisor as well as teachers/parents.)*
  - b. *What new training have you received? How useful has this training been so far? From who? (Probe for IPSI role)*

- 3) Tell me about your main GEAR UP goals/objectives for this year?
  - a. *What are your primary goals? (Probe for: Promoting student success in Algebra I and Algebra II (advanced math and science courses generally); preparing students for effective transition to high school; familiarizing students/families with college entrance requirements, financial literacy, terminology. Check against project goals in general.)*
  - b. *To what extent have you been involved in the GEAR UP planning process this year? If involved, how? If not, why not? [Probe for who else is involved in the GEAR UP planning process (parents, school leaders, teachers, principal)? How has role changed from prior year?]*
  - c. *How does preparing for long-term success of GEAR UP students fit into this year's planning? (Probe for graduating college ready (distinguished plan/endorsements), college entrance requirement knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation, ACT/SAT, on-time promotion, increasing number of and enrollment in advanced courses)*
  
- 4) What activities/events has your school offered to students / parents so far this year? (Probe for details on each event.)
  - a. *How did you encourage student/parent attendance at events? For each event, were participation/attendance levels consistent with program targets? If not, why not?*
  - b. *What are your perceptions about the success of these events? What factors may have contributed to the success of these events?*
  - c. *The goal is to have at least 50% of parents attend 3 events; this was a challenge for the middle schools. Tell me about your role to help meet this goal in this high school.*
  - d. *What challenges did you face (with students and/or parents)? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
  - e. *What was your role in these events? What role, if any, did other GEAR UP/school staff or partners play? Was this a change in roles as compared to last year?*
  - f. *Are there activities/events that support student academic achievement (such as tutoring)? If so, what is your perception of these activities?*
  
- 5) What services have you provided directly to students so far this year? (Probe for selecting/changing endorsements; developing educational plans; mentoring; developing career plans; assessing education interests, college entrance requirements and financial literacy.)
  - a. *For each service, how was it provided (one-to-one, group, etc.)? If one-to-one, what is a typical session like? (Probe for timing and duration.) If no one-to-one meetings, how do you provide these services to students? What if anything would you like to see change in how services are delivered?*
  - b. *What are the data available to you or other supports to help you identify or provide these services to students?*
  - c. *What are your perceptions of these services so far? (Probe for perceptions of understandings of the new graduation plans and endorsements and how this links to college readiness)*
  
- 6) What business, government, education and community partnerships are involved with GEAR UP? How does this differ from middle school partners? [If none identified, probe for any involvement in identifying/recruiting partnerships]
  - a. *Have partners supported college preparation and awareness activities this year (e.g., through providing services, hosting college visits)?*
  - b. *If no, what challenges have you faced in engaging partners?*
  - c. *If yes, how have community partners supported GEAR UP this year? What services / support has the partner provided?*
  
- 7) Effective transition to high school is another important element in promoting student preparation for college. What activities in this area occurred over the summer? are underway / planned for this year? (Probe for use of EXPLORE, high school visits, academic early warning systems)
  - a. *What was the purpose of your summer program? If there was not a summer program, why? If yes, probe for high school transition, AP course taking in general, general GEAR Up goals (college entrance requirements or financial aid), selecting endorsements. About how many students were involved in the summer program? (Probe for a general percentage)*
  - b. *Relative to successfully transitioning to being a high school student, probe for content (e.g., making high school culture clear, training on specific skills like organization or study skills, encouraging to get involved, introducing to teachers, etc.)*
  - c. *Did any college visits occur during the summer program?*
  - d. *What are your perceptions about the success of these transition events? What factors may have contributed to the success of these events?*

- e. *What challenges did the school face in helping students to transition, including the summer program? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
- 8) How has your involvement with and knowledge about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events changed since last year? [Probe for Graduation Tool kit (statewide activity outside of GEAR UP), GEAR UP website GEAR UP conferences]
- a. *Did you/your school/students/parents participate in any statewide activities/events? What was the purpose of the event? Who/how many attended?*
- b. *Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this year? If yes, which resources 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?*

***Thank you for your time.***

## D.7 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: College Preparation Advisor 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 state grant initiative to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your role as the College Preparation Advisor (Advisor) 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. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

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 have been your roles and responsibilities in GEAR UP this semester?
  - a. *How have your responsibilities changed since last semester? Has your role increased or diminished at all this semester? If so, what factors have contributed to that?*
  - b. *What GEAR UP activities are you involved with? (e.g., summer programs, college visits, before/after school services, tutoring/mentoring)*
  - c. *How do you interact with students? (Probe for one-to-one, group contact, workshop. Probe for frequency/duration of interaction)*
  - d. *What factors at the school help facilitate your interaction with students? What barriers do you face in interacting with students? If barriers, how have you/will you address them? To what extent are data systems in place to identify students in need of services? Tell me about any one-on-one interactions you have had with students.*
  - e. *What if any changes have you seen in your responsibilities and how you carry them out in the high school as compared to the middle school? Any new successes or challenges?*
- 2) How has your interaction with the GEAR UP coordinator for this school changed since last semester? With guidance counselors/teachers/parents/administrators?
  - a. *Who do you report to and has that changed since last semester? (Probe for level/frequency of interaction with coordinator and supervisor as well as teachers/parents.)*
  - b. *What new training have you received this semester? How useful has this training been so far? From who? (Probe for IPSI role)*
- 3) Tell me about any progress made toward accomplishing the main GEAR UP goals/objectives for this year?
  - a. *What are the primary goals for this year? (Probe for: Promoting student success in Algebra I and Algebra II (advanced math and science courses generally); ensuring students had an effective transition to high school; familiarizing students/families with college entrance requirements, financial literacy, terminology. Check against project goals in general.)*
  - b. *To what extent have you been involved in executing this year's plan and/or the GEAR UP planning process for next school year? If involved, how? If not, why not? [Probe for who else is involved in the GEAR UP planning process (parents, school leaders, teachers, principal)? How has your role changed from prior year?]*

- c. *How does preparing for **long-term success** of GEAR UP students fit into executing this year's plan? (Probe for graduating college ready (distinguished plan/endorsements), college entrance requirement knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation, ACT/SAT, on-time promotion, increasing number of and enrollment in advanced courses)*
- 4) What activities/events has your school offered to students/parents this semester? (Probe for details on each event.)
- How did you encourage student/parent attendance at events? For each event, were participation/attendance levels consistent with program targets? If not, why not?*
  - What are your perceptions about the success of these events? What factors may have contributed to the success of these events?*
  - The goal is to have at least 50% of parents attend 3 events; this was a challenge for the middle schools and an even bigger challenge for high schools. Tell me about your role to help meet this goal in this high school.*
  - What challenges did you face (with students and/or parents)? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
  - What was your role in these events? What role, if any, did other GEAR UP/school staff or partners play? Was this a change in roles as compared to last year?*
  - Are there activities/events that support student academic achievement (such as tutoring)? If so, what is your perception of these activities?*
  - Any changes over the course of the year (i.e., from fall to spring semester)?*
- 5) What services have you provided directly to students this semester? (Probe for selecting/changing endorsements; developing educational plans; mentoring; developing career plans; assessing education interests, college entrance requirements and financial literacy.)
- For each service, how was it provided (one-to-one, group, etc.)? If one-to-one, what is a typical session like? (Probe for timing and duration.) If no one-to-one meetings, how do you provide these services to students? What if anything would you like to see change in how services are delivered?*
  - What are the data available to you or other supports to help you identify or provide these services to students?*
  - What are your perceptions of these services this semester? (Probe for perceptions of understandings of the new graduation plans and endorsements and how this links to college readiness and how that's changed since fall)*
  - Any changes over the course of the year (i.e., from fall to spring semester)?*
- 6) What business, government, education and community partnerships are involved with GEAR UP? Any changes since fall semester? [If no partners are identified, probe for any involvement in identifying/recruiting partnerships]
- Have partners supported college preparation and awareness activities this semester (e.g., through providing services, hosting college visits)?*
  - If no, what challenges have you faced in engaging partners?*
  - If yes, how have community partners supported GEAR UP this semester? What services/support has the partner provided?*
- 7) Effective transition to high school is another important element in promoting student preparation for college. What activities in this area occurred over the school year? What activities are underway/planned for this summer and upcoming school year?  
(Probe for use of or planned use of EXPLORE, high school visits, academic early warning systems)
- What are your perceptions about the success of these transition events so far? What factors may have contributed to the success of these events?*
  - What challenges did the school face in helping students to transition, including the summer program? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
  - Relative to successfully transitioning to being a high school student, probe for content (e.g., making high school culture clear, training on specific skills like organization or study skills, encouraging to get involved, introducing to teachers, etc.)*
  - If planned Summer 2015 activities have not yet come up, probe for here. What is the purpose of the Summer 2015 programs (transition, college readiness, academics)?*
  - If summer 2015 program is planned: What is the purpose of your summer program? If there is not a summer program planned for 2015, why? If yes, probe for high school transition, AP course taking in general, general GEAR UP goals (college entrance requirements or selecting endorsements). About how many students were involved in the summer program? (Probe about financial aid, for a general percentage)*
  - Are any college visits planned for the summer 2015 program?*

- 8) How has your involvement with and knowledge about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events changed since last semester? [Probe for Graduation Tool kit (statewide activity outside of GEAR UP), GEAR UP website, GEAR UP conferences]
- a. *Did you/your school/students/parents participate in any statewide activities/events? What was the purpose of the event? Who/how many attended?*
  - b. *Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this semester? If yes, which resources 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?*

***Thank you for your time.***

## D.8 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2014: 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 state grant initiative 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. Tell me a little about yourself. (Probe for how long at school, how long in role).
2. What is the structure of GEAR UP at this school? Who leads GEAR UP planning and activities/events with students? With staff? With families? Who are the key players on a day-to-day basis?
  - a. *How and to what extent are you involved in GEAR UP? (Probe for when first learned about it/when began focusing on GEAR UP.)*
  - b. *What are your perceptions about GEAR UP's management structure at this school?*
  - c. *Have you interacted with the state GEAR UP implementation office? If so, how would you describe the relationship between the office and your GEAR UP site?*
  - d. *What business, government, education and community partners are involved in GEAR UP at your site? If partners are active in the program, what are your perceptions about their roles? If no partners are involved, are there plans to involve community agencies? What are the plans to get partners involved?*
  - e. *How does GEAR UP leverage or coordinate with other programs/services within the school building? With other programs/services in the community? (Probe for links with specific programs.)*
3. 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? (Probe on English Language Learners in particular, subgroups in general throughout.)
  - a. *What are the characteristics of households from which students come? (Family structure, employment status, education, attitudes toward postsecondary education)*
  - b. *How involved are parents in their children's education?*
  - c. *What challenges/successes has the school had with students being promoted on time? What plans does school have to improve on-time promotion? How have students been doing on the ACT/SAT? What steps do you see taking to improve in this area going forward? (Probe for using PLAN) How many youth from the district have been going to college after graduating? (NOTE: Ask if district administrator being interviewed.) In general, how would you say your school/district has been doing on these issues relative to other schools/districts in the state?*
  - d. *How has your school handled the change in graduation plans that this year's freshman will fall under? Probe for endorsements that are available and decisions about selecting endorsements. Remind that this is related to HB 5 changes in graduation requirements if needed.*

- e. *Who at your school has a key role in helping students navigate their selected endorsement path? What has the school done to help teachers /students with endorsement paths? Probe for any use of the TEA Graduation Toolkit or other district resources.*
  - f. *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))*
  - g. *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))*
4. Is GEAR UP helping to promote the goals of student success this year? If so, how? If not, why not? (NOTE: Focus on support services and activities/events related to GEAR UP goal of college readiness.)
- 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? What are your perceptions about the success of these efforts? The goal is to have at least 50% of parents attend 3 events; this has been challenging for the middle schools. How do you see the high school successfully meeting this goal? What factors facilitated the success of any given event/activity or service?*
  - c. *Is GEAR UP supporting any early warning system for students at your school? (Probe for details of the warning system). If not, why not? How are students identified? Are there data systems in place?*
  - 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? (e.g., on-time promotion; EXPLORE/ACT/SAT, college credit, etc. but also college entrance requirements and financial literacy.)*
  - f. *Were you involved in any conversations about services/activities/events that occurred in the middle school and how you might build on their success/learn from their failures? Has your school been able to sustain any successful services/activities/events to current Grade 9 students that began with the GEAR UP cohort last year? (for example, mentors, TG financial literacy courses for parents)*
5. Improving the number of advanced and college credit courses as well s the number of students involved in these is a GEAR UP goal. Tell us about how your offerings of advanced courses has changed over time. (Probe: What advanced courses were available to Grade 9 students in 2013-14? How about now, any new advanced courses or any advanced courses no longer offered? (Cite list of advanced/honors math, English, science courses from Grade 9 based on APR and/or prior site visit knowledge.). Does your school have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered and/or to increase enrollment in advanced courses?
- a. *How is GEAR UP supporting the goal of more students taking Algebra I? How would you characterize the success of students in Algebra I so far?*
  - b. *If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not?*
  - c. *A goal of GEAR UP is to provide students with opportunities to receive 18 hours of college credit by graduation. What is in place to ensure that this goal can be met?*
  - d. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/district are to take these (advanced and college credit) courses? So far, have this year's GEAR UP students seem better prepared than students in the past or about the same?*
  - e. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing number of, and student enrollment in, advanced courses and college credit courses.*
6. Have you/the teachers at your school engaged in any GEAR UP related PD in the past two years (since GEAR UP began in the district)? Past summer? If so, what were your impressions of it? If not, what barriers prevented conducting GEAR UP related PD?  
(Probe for any additional PD activities that we should be aware of that were not reported in APR, which may have occurred after the latest APR submission. Probe for impressions of pre-AP/AP and/or Algebra I or II-related PD; improving academic rigor, differentiated instruction, project based learning etc..)
7. What are the school's/district's major goals for teacher and administrator PD for the current school year? What role will GEAR UP play in this effort?
- a. *Has any PD occurred this school year? (Probe whether PD was provided by GEAR UP). If none so far, 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 for any critical PD still needed at the school in order for GEAR UP to be successful? Also probe for any PD in project-based learning or financial literacy.*
  - c. *What factors contribute to current successes related to PD?*

- d. What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*
8. Were you or the teachers at this school engaging in vertical alignment activities over the past two years? Has this school provided any vertical alignment activities for teachers so far this year? 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?
- If alignment is underway or planned, what is the scope of the effort? (Probe for: Grades and major subjects covered by vertical alignment. Probe whether vertical alignment is provided through GEAR UP or through other funding). What are your perceptions about the success of this work? What factors contribute to successes?*
  - What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them?*
  - What are your perceptions about the value of vertical alignment? How will it impact student achievement? How will it impact teachers and instruction at the school?*
10. One goal of Texas GEAR UP was to have schools put in place programs that might help students make the transition from middle school to high school. What challenges have you seen in the past in making this transition at this school?
- What has this school done in the past to help students/teachers with the transition from middle school to high school? How did that differ from what occurred with this year's grade 9 students. Probe for summer program and for transition events since the start of school.*
  - What are your perceptions about the success of these transition events? What factors may have contributed to the success of these events?*
  - What challenges did the school face in helping students to transition, including the summer program? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future? What might you do differently in the future to help these types of transition programs to be more successful?*
11. How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/ resources/events? (Probe for Gear UP website (either texasgearup.com or ownyourownfuture.com), GEAR UP activities/events?)
- What statewide activities/events do/did you/your school/district participate in?*
  - Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this year? If yes, how did you use them? If not, why not?*
  - What facilitators and barriers are there to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*
12. Looking ahead, what roles would you like GEAR UP to play at your school?
- How might successful GEAR UP activities be sustained for next year's Grade 9 students and their families? For Grade 9 students in the future?*
  - How might GEAR UP activities be sustained with any new teachers at the school?*
  - What strategies do you anticipate will be difficult to sustain?*
  - What factors do you think contribute to your ability to sustain or not activities over time?*

***Thank you for your time.***

## D.9 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: 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 state grant initiative 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.

### FIRST TIME INTERVIEW ADMINSTRATOR QUESTIONS

**Interviewer notes:** If you already met the person and had a chance to engage with them previously, review prior notes and identify any key issues that were not addressed. If basic items were all addressed and unlikely to change, skip the item. Questions to focus on change within current year and over year have been identified.

1. Tell me a little about yourself. *(Probe for how long at school, how long in role if not already known).*  
If already met, reintroduce self and begin interview.
2. Any changes in how GEAR UP is structured at your school over the course of this year? Since last year?
  - a. *If not known: What is the structure of GEAR UP at this school? Who leads GEAR UP planning and activities/events with students? With staff? With families? Who are the key players on a day-to-day basis? How has this changed over the course of the year? Going forward: From prior years?*
  - b. *How and to what extent are you involved in GEAR UP since we last spoke? (Probe for when first learned about it/when began focusing on GEAR UP if not already known.) How has/Has the extent of your involvement changed in current year? From prior years? How satisfied are you with your role in the program? To the extent satisfied, what do you like about your role (what factors contribute to satisfaction); if unsatisfied, how would you like your role to differ (what factors contribute to dissatisfaction)? How has your satisfaction changed over the current year? Going Forward: From prior years?*
  - c. *At this point, in general how satisfied are you with the structure of the program? To the extent satisfied, what do you like about structure (what factors contribute to satisfaction); if unsatisfied, how would you like structure to differ (what factors contribute to dissatisfaction)? How has your satisfaction changed over the course of the current year? Going Forward: From prior years?*
  - d. *Since we last spoke, have you interacted with the state GEAR UP implementation office? If so, how would you describe the relationship between the office and you/your GEAR UP site? How satisfied have you been? What would you like to see stay the same? Change? How have interactions changed over the course of the current year? Going forward: From prior years?*
  - e. *What new business, government, education and community partners are involved in GEAR UP at your site since we last spoke? If partners are active in the program, what are your perceptions about their roles? Has there been any change in partners or in partners' involvement over the course of the year? If no partners are involved, are there plans to involve partners next year? What are the plans to get partners involved?*

- f. *How does GEAR UP leverage or coordinate with other programs/services within the school building? With other programs/services in the community? (Probe for links with specific programs.) How has this changed over the course of the year? Going forward: Over prior years?*
3. The primary goal of GEAR UP is to promote college readiness and college going. In what ways has GEAR UP contributed to the college going culture at this school? *Has it changed over the course of this year? Going forward: Changed from prior years? Is the change across a broad range of students? What features of GEAR UP do you think have contributed to this change? If any factors identified, do you think those factors will continue in the future? What more do you think the GEAR UP program could be doing to improve college-going culture at this school?*
- a. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: 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? (Probe on English Language Learners in particular, subgroups in general throughout.) Going forward: Has this changed over prior years?*
  - b. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What are the characteristics of households from which students come? (Family structure, employment status, education, attitudes toward postsecondary education). Going forward: Has this changed over prior years?*
  - c. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: How involved are parents in their children's education? Has parent involvement changed over the course of the year? Going forward: From prior years?*
  - d. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What challenges/successes has the school had with students being promoted on time? What plans does school have to improve on-time promotion? How have students been doing on the ACT/SAT? What steps do you see taking to improve in this area going forward? (Probe for using ASPIRE) How many youth from the district have been going to college after graduating? In general, how would you say your school/district has been doing on these issues relative to other schools/districts in the state? Going forward: Any changes from prior years?*
  - e. *What programs and student support services (other than GEAR UP) are available to students this semester? (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)). How has this changed over the course of the year? Going forward: Over prior years? How helpful are these programs at preparing students to be college going? What programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful? Any plans for new/additional programs/support services for next year?*
  - f. *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)) How has this changed over the course of the year? Going forward: Over prior years? What programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful? Any plans for new/additional programs/support services for next year?*
4. Let's discuss endorsements and graduation plans. This was the first year of implementing the new HB 5 changes including endorsements and revised graduation requirements. How has that been going at this school? *What features of GEAR UP, if any, have been helpful in facilitating implementing the changes? Any challenges/barriers to implementing changes? How has this changed over this course of this year? Any planned changes going forward? Going forward: Changes over prior years?*
- a. *How has your school handled the change in graduation plans that this year's freshman fall under? Probe for endorsements that are available and decisions about selecting endorsements. Remind that this is related to HB 5 changes in graduation requirements if needed. Any change over the course of the year/planned for next year in endorsement offerings? Change from prior years?*
  - b. *What have you learned so far about students selecting endorsements? What factors contribute to selection of endorsements? Does going to college/being college ready appear to play a role in how students select endorsements? Any changes you would like to see so that students select endorsements to facilitate being college going/college ready? How about changing endorsements? Any change over the course of the year? Going forward: From prior years?*
  - c. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Who at your school has a key role in helping students navigate their selected endorsement path? What has the school done to help teachers /students with endorsement paths? Probe for any use of the TEA Graduation Toolkit or other district resources. Any change over the course of the year? Changes planned for next year? Going forward: Change from prior years?*

5. Are services/events encouraged or sponsored by GEAR UP helping to promote the goals of student success and college readiness in your school? *If so, how? If not, why not? (NOTE: Focus on support services and activities/events related to GEAR UP goal of college readiness.)*
  - a. *For tutoring / mentoring/ academic support services, how were decisions made to involve students in these activities? Has this changed over the course of the year? Going forward: Over prior years?*
  - b. *As each GEAR UP event was planned, how were decisions made about which students and parents to invite to participate in college readiness/awareness events, if any held so far this year? Were some events open to all parents/student while others were not? What are your perceptions about the success of college readiness/awareness efforts? What factors facilitate success of events? What barriers impede success?*
  - c. *The goal is to have at least 50% of parents attend 3 events; this has been challenging. To what extent do you see your school succeeding at meeting this goal? What might the school need to do to be more successful? How do you see the high school successfully meeting this goal? What factors facilitated the success of any given event/activity or service? What barriers impeded success of events? Any plans for the upcoming year? Going forward: Changes from prior years?*
  - d. *If not known: Is GEAR UP supporting any early warning system for students at your school? (Probe for details of the warning system). If not, why not? How are students identified? Are there data systems in place? Any plans to put a system in place? If already known have a system: How has the early warning system been used at your school? How helpful has it been at identifying students with needs and providing services to those students? Any challenges with using the system? Any plans for changes to the system? Changes over the course of the year? Going forward: From prior years?*
  - e. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Were you involved in any conversations about services/activities/events that occurred in the past and how you might build on their success/learn from their failures? Has your school been able to sustain any successful services/activities/events over time (from one semester to the next or one year to the next)? (for example, mentors, TG financial literacy courses for parents)*
  
6. Improving the number of advanced and college credit courses as well as the number of students involved in these is also a GEAR UP goal.
  - a. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Tell us about how your offerings of advanced courses has changed over time. Any new advanced courses or any advanced courses no longer offered? Planned for Grade 10? (Cite list of advanced/honors math, English, science courses from Grade 9 based on APR and/or prior site visit knowledge.). Does your school have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered and/or to increase enrollment in advanced courses/AP courses? If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not?*
  - b. *To what extent, if any, have you seen any change in the interest of GEAR UP students in advanced courses in comparison to prior years' students? To what extent was the school prepared to enroll a greater number of students in advanced courses?*
  - c. *A goal of GEAR UP is to provide students with opportunities to receive 18 hours of college credit by graduation. Since we last talked, what steps has the school taken to ensure that this goal can be met?*
  - d. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/district are to take these (advanced and college credit) courses? At this point, have this year's GEAR UP students seemed better prepared than students in the past or about the same?*
  - e. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing the number of, and student enrollment in, advanced courses and college credit courses.*
  
7. Since we last talked: Have you/the teachers at your school engaged in any GEAR UP related PD? *(If new, ask since GEAR UP began in the district in 2012-13)? This includes any GEAR UP related PD that occurred in the summer. If so, what were your impressions of it? If not, what barriers prevented conducting GEAR UP related PD?*  
*Also probe for any additional PD activities that we should be aware of that were not reported in APR, which may have occurred after the latest APR submission. Probe for impressions of pre-AP/AP and/or Algebra I or II-related PD; improving academic rigor, differentiated instruction, project based learning etc.*
  - a. *If not already known: What were the school's/district's major goals for teacher and administrator PD for the current school year?*
  - b. *Has any PD occurred since we last spoke? (Probe whether PD was provided by GEAR UP). If none, why not?*
  - c. *How successfully were major goals for teacher and administrator PD related to GEAR UP met? Has the number of PD events held this year met your expectations for the year? Why/why not? What about participation in these events, did it meet expectations?*

- Probe for any critical PD still needed at the school in the next year in order for GEAR UP to be successful? Also probe for any PD in project-based learning or financial literacy. What factors contribute to current successes related to PD? What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*
- d. *Has the school begun to make Plans/goals for next year for teacher/administrator PD related to GEAR UP? If yes, what role did GEAR UP play in this effort?*
7. Since we last talked, have you or any of the teachers at this school been engaged in any vertical alignment activities? *NOTE if none identified in prior conversations or in response to main prompt, 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?*
    - a. *If not already known: Were you or the teachers at this school engaging in vertical alignment activities since the GEAR UP program began in 2012-2013 school year?*
    - b. *If new vertical alignment events have occurred, underway or planned, what is the scope of the effort? (Probe for: Grades and major subjects covered by vertical alignment.*
    - c. *Probe whether new vertical alignment activities were provided through GEAR UP or through other funding). What are your perceptions about the success of this vertical alignment work? What factors contribute to successes?*
    - d. *What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them?*
    - e. *What are your perceptions about the value of vertical alignment? How will it impact student achievement? How will it impact teachers and instruction at the school? If not satisfied with current status of vertical alignment, what might need to occur to improve satisfaction?*
  8. One goal of Texas GEAR UP was to have schools put in place programs that might help students make the transition from middle school to high school.
    - a. *If not already known: What has this school done in the past versus this year to help students/teachers with the transition from middle school to high school? How did that differ from what occurred with this year's Grade 9 students? Probe for summer program and for transition events since the start of school. What challenges have you seen in the past in making this transition at this school?*
    - b. *Have any additional transition events occurred since we last spoke? How successful were these activities?*
    - c. *How well would you say that this year's students have transitioned to high school? What aspects of transitioning have gone well/not so well: developing high school level study habits (time management skills, organization skills); social transition (e.g., joining clubs, making friends in high school); students knowing teachers and counselors (knowing who/where they can go to for help when needed)*
    - d. *What factors may have contributed to the success of student transitions? To what extent do you think the district will be able to sustain these facilitators?*
    - e. *What challenges did the school face in helping students to transition since fall? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future? What might you do differently in the future to help these types of transition programs to be more successful?*
  9. How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/ resources/events? *(Probe for GEAR UP website (www.texasgearup.com), GEAR UP activities/events?)*
    - a. *What statewide activities/events do/did you/your school/district participate in this semester?*
    - b. *Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this semester? If yes, how did you use them? If not, why not?*
    - c. *What facilitators and barriers are there to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*
  10. Thinking overall about the GEAR UP Program
    - a. *Generally, what are the key successes that you feel can be contributed to the GEAR UP program this semester? This year? Going forward: across years? What factors do you think contributed to the success of the program?*
    - b. *Generally, what barriers did you encounter in promoting goals of GEAR UP this semester? This year? Were you able to overcome any barriers? Overcome over the course of the year? Over prior years? Plans to overcome going forward?*
    - c. *How/to what extent was the school keeping in mind long-term GEAR UP goals in conducting events/activities and providing services this semester? (e.g., on-time promotion; ASPIRE/ACT/SAT, college credit, etc. but also college entrance requirements and financial literacy.) Any changes over the course of the year? Change from prior years? Plans to change going forward?*
  11. Looking ahead, what roles would you like GEAR UP to play at your school?

- a. *How might successful GEAR UP activities be sustained for next year's Grade 9 students and their families? For Grade 9 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?*

***Thank you for your time***

## D.10 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2014: 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: *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, summer programs, and field trips. This is not an evaluation of your school or your GEAR UP leaders. The purpose of this focus group is to get 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 permission forms will be collected prior to the focus group.
- Each focus group should have six to eight participants. The focus group is open to any 9<sup>th</sup> grade GEAR UP student in the 2014–15 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
2min	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> Please introduce yourself, your name.		
3 min	<b>WHAT IS GEAR UP?</b> 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>	○ Basic knowledge if available	List student ideas on chart paper. <i>Provide background if students lack basic knowledge.</i>
5 min	<b>EXPERIENCE WITH GEAR UP</b> We would like to know the range of any activities/events you attended or participated in to help you succeed in	○ When ○ Nature of activity ○ Content covered/goal of activity	List student responses on chart paper. Then ask to see if other students participated in named activities. Prompt for recent

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	<p>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 activities from APR to provide examples of activities if needed to get started. Prompt for summer 2014 activities and any activities/events from early fall 2014.)</i></p>		<p>activities in the past month. Prompt specifically for helping to select courses/endorsements and for helping to make the transition to high school (learning how to navigate schools, select/change classes, meet teachers/counselors). (NOTE we will have a list of endorsements to share so that agree we are communicating about the same things)</p>
<p><b>5-8 min</b></p>	<p><b>LEARNING / ATTITUDE CHANGE</b>            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 on chart paper. Discuss how different ideas may be related.</p> <p>Separate ideas based on attendance vs. not at activities.</p>
<p><b>5-8 min</b></p>	<p><b>MORE GENERAL: ACADEMIC RIGOR AND ADVANCED COURSES</b>            One goal of GEAR UP is to encourage student participation in advanced courses and to improve how challenging courses are at your school. Are you currently in any advanced courses? Have you participated in other course activities/courses that you find particularly challenging? Why/why not? If so, what do you like/not like about challenging/advanced courses? <i>Probe: Are students in Algebra I in 8<sup>th</sup> grade? If so, what is their impression of the course and its difficulty level so far? 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> <li>o Transition from middle school to high school</li> <li>o Graduation Toolkit (endorsements/distinguished honors)</li> <li>o Advanced courses (18 hours of college credit before graduation)</li> </ul>	<p>List what students are participating in            Focus in on subject area            Why/why not taking list</p>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
7-10 min	<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>○ Understanding college admissions and financial literacy</li> <li>○ Learning about/Taking EXPLORE/PLAN/ACT and SAT</li> <li>○ Implementation issues (facilitators and barriers)</li> <li>○ Student learning</li> <li>○ Outcome (change in attitude, views, and 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>
5-8 min	<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 options? 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? If state websites do not come up, ask if they have heard of them and/or visited state GEAR UP websites. 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>Use the chart paper to list and group student responses.</p>
3-5 min	<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 to college after high school? Possible follow up questions to their ideas: “Why is that important?” “How will it change the way you learn about college?”</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>
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.11 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: 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: *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, summer programs, and field trips. This is not an evaluation of your school or your GEAR UP leaders. The purpose of this focus group is to get 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 permission forms will be collected prior to the focus group.
- Each focus group should have six to eight participants. The focus group is open to any 9<sup>th</sup> grade GEAR UP student in the 2014-2015 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 or index cards (to write down their thoughts)

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
2 min	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> Please introduce yourself, your name, and how long you've been involved in GEAR UP (i.e., has anyone been involved since Grade 7?).		
3min	<b>WHAT IS GEAR UP?</b> When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What activities, events, or programs do you think of? For those of you who have been involved since Grade 7 or Grade 8, how has your thinking about the GEAR UP program changed over time? <i>Probe for where they have heard about GEAR UP at school, if anywhere. Provide</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Basic knowledge if available</li> </ul>	List student ideas on chart paper. <i>Provide background if students lack basic knowledge.</i>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	<p><i>examples of activities from APR to help get students started if needed.</i></p>		
<p><b>5 min</b></p>	<p><b>EXPERIENCE WITH GEAR UP</b>            We would like to know the range of any activities/events you attended or participated in this year 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 activities from APR to provide examples of activities if needed to get started. Prompt for prior summer activities and any activities/events from current school year.) Probe specifically for participation in GeoForce and if so ask the students: Has there been any follow through on GeoForce?</i></p> <p>Any plans to participate in activities in the upcoming summer? Why/why not?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When</li> <li>○ Nature of activity</li> <li>○ 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. Prompt specifically for helping to select courses/endorsements and for helping to make the transition to high school (learning how to navigate schools, select/change classes, meet teachers/counselors). (NOTE we will have a list of endorsements to share so that agree we are communicating about the same things)</p>
<p><b>5-8 min</b></p>	<p><b>LEARNING / ATTITUDE CHANGE</b>            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. <i>(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.)</i></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. <i>Ask if others in the group agree.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Change in attitude</li> <li>○ Change in knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>Have students present what they have written. Discuss how different ideas may be related.</p> <p>Separate ideas based on attendance vs. not at activities.</p>
<p><b>5-8 min</b></p>	<p><b>MORE GENERAL: ACADEMIC RIGOR AND ADVANCED COURSES</b></p> <p>How challenging has high school been for you so far? How were you prepared for the move from middle school to high school? What helped? What would you have liked? <i>(probe for summer transition activity participation as well as school year events to help transition)</i></p> <p>Please tell me about the endorsement you selected. How have your teachers/administrators/GEAR UP staff helped you with meeting the endorsement goals?</p> <p>One goal of GEAR UP is to encourage student participation in advanced courses and courses that will give them college credit and to improve how challenging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Perceptions and participation</li> <li>○ Barriers and challenges</li> <li>○ Transition from middle school to high school</li> <li>○ Graduation Toolkit (endorsements/distinguished honors)</li> <li>○ Advanced courses (18 hours of college credit before graduation)</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>courses are at your school. Are you currently in any advanced courses (note that Algebra II or AP courses are advanced for Grade 9 students – have school specific list to share if needed)? Do you plan to participate in advanced courses in the future? What roles do teachers/administrators/parents/</p> <p>GEAR UP staff play in helping you select advanced courses? Have you participated in other course activities/courses that you find particularly challenging? Why/why not? If so, what do you like/not like about challenging/advanced courses? <i>Probe: Are students in Algebra I or beyond in 9<sup>th</sup> grade? If so, what is your/their impression of the course and its difficulty level so far? Perceptions of any AP courses taking? 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>		
<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>○ Understanding college admissions and financial literacy</li> <li>○ Learning about/Taking EXPLORE/ ACT and SAT</li> <li>○ Implementation issues (facilitators and barriers)</li> <li>○ Student learning</li> <li>○ Outcome (change in attitude, views, and 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 options? 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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formal (school, GEAR UP)</li> <li>○ Informal (friends, family, media)</li> </ul>	<p>Use the chart paper to list and group student responses.</p>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	<p><i>If state websites or TXGU social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) do not come up, ask if they have heard of them and/or visited state GEAR UP website (<a href="http://www.texasgearup.com">www.texasgearup.com</a>) or the TXGU social media sites.</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>		
<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 to 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>
<p><b>2 min</b></p>	<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.12 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2014: 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 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 2014-2015 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. When available, 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. Additionally, there will be outreach to GEAR UP partners to determine activities that they have conducted with the districts.*

### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Conduct introductions. In addition to Grade 9 students, do you have students in any other grades? What school did your Grade 9 student attend last year (in grade 8) or is this your first year in the district? Probe to find out if any parents participated in prior GEAR UP focus groups.
2. When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What do you know about it? If long-term cohort parent, How has your understanding of the program changed over time. (If needed, facilitator provides a short overview of the program including specific examples where appropriate. Note to ask about participation in events more specifically in a separate question.)
  - a. *What and how/how often has the school communicated with parents so far this year about the GEAR UP program (e.g., mail/email, robo-calls, at school events)?*
  - b. *What is your understanding of the goals of GEAR UP at your high school? For students? Parents? Teachers? The school/district? Statewide?*
  - c. *What activities, events, or programs do you think of? (e.g., College workshops/visits for students, financial literacy, Tutoring/mentoring/academic support services, workshops for parents, summer programs)*
3. Let's talk about the summer 2014 GEAR UP program. Did your child attend the program?
  - a. *If your child did attend, what did you/your child think about the program? Were there activities or events that occurred during the summer program that you think were particularly helpful or not particularly helpful? Since the school year started, do you think the summer program has helped your child to be more successful in high school this year?*

- b. *What do you think was the purpose of the summer program (e.g., specific content like math, being a successful high school student, college going thinking). How did the summer program help your student make the change from being in middle school to being in high school?*
    - c. *If your child did not attend the summer program, why not? What factors kept your child from participating in the summer program?*
    - d. *How successful would you describe your child's move to being a high school student has been?*
    - e. *If your child did attend, to what extent were parents involved in the summer program? Were you able to be involved? Why/why not?*
    - f. *For all parents, how and when did the school inform you about the summer program? Were there features of the summer program that made it easier for your child to attend or for you/your child to want to attend? Any challenges to participating in the summer program?*
    - g. *Would you encourage the school to continue this type of summer program in the future? Why/why not? Any recommendations for changing the program to improve it or things you would not change?*
4. Now let's talk about the school year so far. Have your children shared any information with you about their experiences in the GEAR UP program so far during the current school year? If so, what information have they shared?
  - a. *Experience with college awareness (including workshops, tours); Experience with tutoring / mentoring; experience with course selection/endorsement selection; Experience with information resources / educational planning (e.g., encourage/prepared to take advanced courses)?*
  - b. *Have you had conversations with your child about selecting an endorsement and how their selection might impact being accepted by a college?*
  - c. *What, if anything, do you think about the events/activities your student has participated in (college visits, job shadowing)? 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?*
  - d. *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?*
5. Knowing what GEAR UP can provide to your children, do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services in the summer and the current school year 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; successfully taking Algebra I, support students to take higher-level classes; promoting early college awareness; usefulness in planning for college academically/financially; encouraging to take advanced classes.*
6. Have you or another adult in your household attended a GEAR UP activity or event this during the current school year? (Probe again about summer if it has not already been discussed).
  - a. *If yes, what activities or events did you attend? Did you participate in any events around financial literacy? (Probe to understand if the parents knew about courses and did/did not attend as compared to not knowing about courses.)*
  - b. *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?*
  - c. *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?*
  - d. *Probe whether few/some/all parents were aware of activities and events. Probe for how schools might be able to successfully meet the goal of at least 50% of parents attending at least three events.*
7. 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. *Has the school or someone from GEAR UP communicated with you about advanced course or college credit opportunities at your school and encouraged you to have child enroll in these types of courses?*
  - c. *Probe for: supporting you in helping your child to succeed in school, learning to advocate for your child, usefulness in academic and financial planning for college*

8. The program at this school is part of a statewide Texas GEAR UP program. Have you received any information about statewide GEAR UP? [Describe materials and web sites in more detail].
  - 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. Would you like to learn more about these resources? What would be the best way to inform you about statewide initiatives? What ways are not helpful in informing you about new resources?*
  
9. 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. *How is GEAR UP helping you and your student navigate his/her selected endorsement path?*
  - c. *Ideas for future workshops/activities/resources*
  
10. 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.13 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: 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 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 2014-2015 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. When available, 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. Additionally, there will be outreach to GEAR UP partners to determine activities that they have conducted with the districts.*

### **FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

1. Conduct introductions. In addition to (current grade) students, do you have students in any other grades? What school did your (current grade) student attend last year (prior school grade) or is this your first year in the district? *Probe to find out if any parents participated in prior GEAR UP focus groups.*
2. When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What do you know about it? If long-term cohort parent, how has your understanding of the program changed over time. (If needed, facilitator provides a short overview of the program including specific examples where appropriate. Note to ask about participation in events more specifically in a separate question.)
  - a. *What and how/how often has the school communicated with parents so far this year about the GEAR UP program (e.g., mail/email, robo-calls, at school events)? In what ways, if any, have you interacted with the parent outreach liaison?*

- b. *What is your understanding of the goals of GEAR UP at your high school? For students? Parents? Teachers? The school/district? Statewide?*
    - c. *What activities, events, or programs do you think of? (e.g., College workshops/visits for students, financial literacy, Tutoring/mentoring/academic support services, workshops for parents, summer programs)*
  3. Let's talk about the summer GEAR UP programs. Did your child attend the (prior summer) program?
    - a. *If your child did attend, what did you/your child think about the program? Were there activities or events that occurred during the summer program that you think were particularly helpful or not particularly helpful? Since the school year started, do you think the summer program has helped your child to be more successful in high school this year?*
    - b. *What do you think was the purpose of the summer program (e.g., specific content like math, being a successful high school student, college going thinking). How did the summer program help your student make the change from being in middle school to being in high school?*
    - c. *If your child did not attend the summer program, why not? What factors kept your child from participating in the summer program?*
    - d. *How successful would you describe your child's move to being a high school student has been?*
    - e. *If your child did attend, to what extent were parents involved in the summer program? Were you able to be involved? Why/why not?*
    - f. *For all parents, how and when did the school inform you about the summer program? Were there features of the summer program that made it easier for your child to attend or for you/your child to want to attend? Any challenges to participating in the summer program?*
    - g. *Would you encourage the school to continue this type of summer program in the future? Why/why not? Any recommendations for changing the program to improve it or things you would not change?*
    - h. *What about the upcoming summer? Are you aware of any planned summer activities? Why will/won't your child participate?*
  4. Now let's talk about the school year so far. Have your children shared any information with you about their experiences in the GEAR UP program so far during the current school year? If so, what information have they shared?
    - a. *Experience with college awareness (including workshops, tours); Experience with tutoring/mentoring; experience with course selection/endorsement selection; Experience with information resources/educational planning (e.g., encourage/prepared to take advanced courses)?*
    - b. *Have you had conversations with your child about selecting an endorsement and how their selection might impact being accepted by a college?*
    - c. *What, if anything, do you think about the events/activities your student has participated in (college visits, job shadowing)? 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?*
    - d. *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?*
  5. (If not already discussed) GEAR UP is also interested in helping students to successfully navigate the transition from middle school to high school. What if anything would you say about how the transition to high school has been like for your child this year?
    - a. *What do you think you/your school has done well to help your child transition to high school?*
    - b. *What more do you think you/your school could do to support your child in successfully transitioning to high school? Probe for any involvement in summer transition programs.*
    - c. *In general, what indicators of successful transition have you seen? What about challenges?*
  6. Knowing what GEAR UP can provide to your children, do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services in the summer and the current school year 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; successfully taking Algebra I, support students to take higher-level classes; promoting early college awareness; usefulness in planning for college academically/financially; encouraging to take advanced classes*
  7. Have you or another adult in your household attended a GEAR UP activity or event this during the current school year? (Probe again about summer if it has not already been discussed).

- a. *If yes, what activities or events did you attend? Did you participate in any events around financial literacy? (Probe to understand if the parents knew about courses and did/did not attend as compared to not knowing about courses.)*
  - b. *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?*
  - c. *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?*
  - d. *Probe whether few/some/all parents were aware of activities and events. Probe for how schools might be able to successfully meet the goal of at least 50% of parents attending at least three events.*
8. Do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services are/would be helpful for you as a parent to help your child succeed in college? 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. *Has the school or someone from GEAR UP communicated with you about advanced course or college credit opportunities at your school and encouraged you to have child enroll in these types of courses?*
  - c. *Probe for: supporting you in helping your child to succeed in school, learning to advocate for your child, usefulness in academic and financial planning for college*
9. The program at this school is part of a statewide Texas GEAR UP program. Have you received any information about statewide GEAR UP? [Describe materials and [www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com) in more detail].
- 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. Would you like to learn more about these resources? What would be the best way to inform you about statewide initiatives? What ways are not helpful in informing you about new resources?*
  - d. *Have you participated in the state GEAR UP conference (November)? If yes, what did you get out of that experience? How were you notified of the opportunity to attend?*
10. 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. *How is GEAR UP helping you and your student navigate his/her selected endorsement path?*
  - c. *Ideas for future workshops/activities/resources*
11. 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.14 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2014: 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 in high-need middle and high schools across the country. In support of that goal, GEAR UP also supports school-wide improvements and PD 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 will have access to the recording, and the Texas Education Agency will only have access to a de-identified written transcript. 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 or the transcript.
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. Please review and complete the consent form. Do you have any questions before we begin?
- 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 no more than 10 participants. The focus group is open to any teacher of a GEAR UP student in the 2012-2013 school year. We anticipate 2-3 teacher focus groups per school to accommodate teacher schedules and minimize classroom disruptions. 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 – math, science, English, social studies, AP courses)*
- 2) Have you heard of GEAR UP before today? What do you know about it? (5-8 min.) (have the GEAR UP goal sheet to share)
  - a. *How ready do you feel that students and families are for reaching the goals of GEAR UP (to succeed in schools and be college ready)? What do you perceive to be the major challenges with regard to the students and families you serve in reaching goals of the program? Probe for student support services, and student/family activities/events*
  - b. *Many of the Grade 9 students have been participating in GEAR UP for the past two years. Given what you know about the goals, have you noticed any differences in this year's Grade 9 students compared to previous years*
  - c. *What do you know about GEAR UP goals of teacher 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 PD over the past two years? during... summer 2014? So far during this school year? (10 min.)
  - a. *If Yes, what programs/workshops/events do you recall. Probe for participation in pre-AP/AP training, increasing academic rigor in general, differentiation strategies, vertical alignment, middle to high school transition, college admission requirements, project-based learning, professional learning communities, and data-driven instruction offered by GEAR UP and financial literacy curriculum PD provided by TG. Ask them to recall details on the sessions including length of training.*
  - b. *If No, were you invited to participate IF yes, why did you not participate? Probe for scheduling conflicts, inability for others to cover classes, status as non-core content teacher, other factors. Also probe for recent non-GEAR UP funded PD to better understand PD goals for the school.*
  
- 4) For teachers who participated in GEAR UP-sponsored PD, 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? Probe again for differentiated instruction, project based learning, improving academic rigor if appropriate.*
  - c. *For those receiving PD through TG, have you utilized any of these financial literacy curriculum materials? If so, what is your perception of these materials and their usefulness in the classroom?*
  - d. *How familiar are you with college entrance and application processes? Financial aid for students? Is this something you have had training in? Are these issues you discuss with students (discuss can include classroom activities). How do you see that changing?*
  - e. *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 PD 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.) Probe for college admissions and financial aid training.*
  - 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?*
  - c. *What has been your interaction with the GEAR UP coordinator? College prep advisor?*
  
- 6) GEAR UP seeks to improve the readiness of students to succeed in rigorous high school courses (e.g, advanced courses and college credit 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, college credit courses and future plans for such classes. One specific goal is to increase the number of advanced courses offered and to increase enrollment in advanced courses. Have you met with colleagues, the GEAR UP coordinator or the College Prep Advisor around these issues? Probe for understanding the role of these staff as compared to teachers and for being introduced to resources (website and Graduation Toolkit). What steps might you suggest to help the school to succeed at these goals?*
  - c. *What has been your role with helping students navigate their selected endorsement path and graduation plans more generally? How prepared do you feel to help students on these?*
  - d. *Discuss any facilitators or barriers to improving academic rigor at your school (e.g., teacher enthusiasm/resistance, student skill levels).*

- e. *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?*
  - f. *For math teachers, how would you assess the school's effort to prepare more Grade 9 students to enroll and succeed in Algebra I and Algebra II? What successes or challenges have you found with Grade 9 Algebra I and Algebra II students so far this school year?*
- 7) This GEAR UP grant has a performance measure that schools will participate in vertical alignment trainings and meetings. In vertical alignment, teachers across different grades work together to promote student transition and curriculum alignment. This includes alignment with middle school teachers/curriculum as well as across high school levels. 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 what activities occurred at your school focused on facilitating vertical alignment in the past two years? Going on now? 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 activities and future plans for group. Probe for whether activities are GEAR UP-funded.*  
*If No, probe for reasons for not participating (time, scheduling, teaching non-core content area)*
  - c. *What are your perceptions of the value of vertical alignment? How will it contribute to student academic achievement and college readiness? Probe for the role of vertical alignment in helping prepare teachers and students to handle the transition of students from middle to school?*
  - d. *What else has been done to help you prepare students for transition from middle school to high school? Probe for any involvement in summer transition programs.*
  - e. *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? (Probe for future oriented planning around graduating college ready (distinguished/endorsements), college entrance requirement knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation). Discuss any facilitators and barriers to vertical alignment with regard to each issue.*
- 8) What other GEAR UP activities/events have you attended (outside of PD and vertical alignment)? What are your perceptions of these activities/events? *Probe for attendance at summer programs, college visits and parent/family events.*
- 9) What is your perception about the college-going culture at this school? What might GEAR UP do improve college-going culture? *Probe for any changes in attitudes/perceptions since the inception of GEAR UP at the school.*

***That concludes the focus group. Thanks so much for your ideas and your time.***

## D.15 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: 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 in high-need middle and high schools across the country. In support of that goal, GEAR UP also supports school-wide improvements and PD 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 will have access to the recording, and the Texas Education Agency will only have access to a de-identified written transcript. 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 or the transcript.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *Please review and complete the consent form. Do you have any questions before we begin?*
- 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 no more than 10 participants. *The focus group is open to any teacher of a GEAR UP student in the 2014-2015 school year. We anticipate 2-3 teacher focus groups per school to accommodate teacher schedules and minimize classroom disruptions. 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. 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 – math, science, English, social studies, # teach AP courses)
2. Have you heard of GEAR UP before today? What do you know about it, about GEAR UP goals? (5-8 min.) (have the GEAR UP goal sheet to share)
  - a. How ready do you feel that students and families are for reaching the goals of GEAR UP (to succeed in schools and be college ready)? What do you perceive to be the major challenges with regard to the students and families you serve in reaching goals of the program? Probe for student support services, and student/family activities/events.
  - b. Many of the Grade 9 students have been participating in GEAR UP for the past two years. Given what you know about the goals, have you noticed any differences in this year's Grade 9 students compared to previous years?

- c. *To what extent, if any, have you interacted with the GEAR UP coordinator in your school/district? What kind of information does this person provide? What expectations do you have of this person in helping the school/district meet these GU goals?*
  - d. *What do you know about GEAR UP goals of teacher 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 PD over the past two years? What about during summer 2014? So far during this school year? (10 min.)*
    - a. *If Yes, what programs/workshops/events do you recall. Probe for participation in pre-AP/AP training, increasing academic rigor in general, differentiation strategies, vertical alignment, middle to high school transition, college admission requirements, project-based learning, professional learning communities, and data-driven instruction offered by GEAR UP and financial literacy curriculum PD provided by TG. Ask them to recall details on the sessions including length of training.*
    - b. *If No, were you invited to participate IF yes, why did you not participate? Probe for scheduling conflicts, inability for others to cover classes, status as non-core content teacher, other factors. Also probe for recent non-GEAR UP funded PD to better understand PD goals for the school.*
  4. *For teachers who participated in GEAR UP-sponsored PD, 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? Probe again for differentiated instruction, project based learning, improving academic rigor if appropriate.*
    - c. *For those receiving PD through TG, have you utilized any of these financial literacy curriculum materials? If so, what is your perception of these materials and their usefulness in the classroom?*
    - d. *How familiar are you with college entrance and application processes? Financial aid for students? Is this something you have had training in? Are these issues you discuss with students (discuss can include classroom activities). How do you see that changing?*
    - e. *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 PD 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.) Probe for college admissions and financial aid training.*
    - 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?*
    - c. *What has been your interaction with the GEAR UP coordinator? College prep advisor?*
  6. *GEAR UP seeks to improve the readiness of students to succeed in rigorous high school courses (e.g, advanced courses and college credit 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, college credit courses and future plans for such classes. One specific goal is to increase the number of advanced courses offered and to increase enrollment in advanced courses. Have you met with colleagues, the GEAR UP coordinator or the College Prep Advisor around these issues? Probe for understanding the role of these staff as compared to teachers and for being introduced to resources (website and Graduation Toolkit). What steps might you suggest to help the school to succeed at these goals?*

- c. *What has been your role with helping students navigate their selected endorsement path and graduation plans more generally? How prepared do you feel to help students on these?*
  - d. *Discuss any facilitators or barriers to improving academic rigor at your school (e.g., teacher enthusiasm/resistance, student skill levels).*
  - e. *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?*
  - f. *For math teachers, how would you assess the school's effort to prepare more Grade 9 students to enroll and succeed in Algebra I and beyond? What successes or challenges have you found with Grade 9 Algebra I and Algebra II students so far this school year?*
7. This GEAR UP grant has a performance measure that schools will participate in vertical alignment trainings and meetings. In vertical alignment, teachers across different grades work together to promote student transition and curriculum alignment. This includes alignment with middle school teachers/curriculum as well as across high school levels. 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 what activities occurred at your school focused on facilitating vertical alignment in the past two years? Going on now? 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 activities and future plans for group. Probe for whether activities are GEAR UP-funded.*
  - c. *If No, probe for reasons for not participating (time, scheduling, teaching non-core content area)*
  - d. *What are your perceptions of the value of vertical alignment? How will it contribute to student academic achievement and college readiness? Probe for the role of vertical alignment in helping prepare teachers and students to handle the transition of students from middle to high school?*
  - e. *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? (Probe for future oriented planning around graduating college ready (distinguished/endorsements), college entrance requirement knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation). Discuss any facilitators and barriers to vertical alignment with regard to each issue.*
8. What other GEAR UP activities/events have you attended (outside of PD and vertical alignment)? *What are your perceptions of these activities/events? Probe for attendance at summer programs, college visits and parent/family events.*
9. (If not already discussed) GEAR UP is also interested in helping students to successfully navigate the transition from middle school to high school. What if anything would you say about how the transition to high school has been like for Grade 9 students this year?
- a. *In what ways, if any, have you collaborated with middle school teachers about student transition to high school? Are there any opportunities to collaborate more, and if so, what suggestions do you have?*
  - b. *What do you think you/your school does well to help students transition to high school?*
  - c. *What more do you think you/your school could do to support students in successfully transitioning to high school? Probe for any involvement in summer transition programs.*
  - d. *In general, what indicators of successful transition have you seen? Challenges?*
10. What is your perception about the college-going culture at this school? What might GEAR UP do improve college-going culture? *Probe for any changes in attitudes/perceptions since the inception of GEAR UP at the school.*
11. *Anything else you would like to share related to GEAR UP and GEAR UP goals at this school?*

***That concludes the focus group. Thanks so much for your ideas and your time.***

## D.16 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2014: 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.***

## D.17 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: 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.***

## D.18 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: Texas Education Agency 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. 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 in implementing GEAR UP. As an independent, external evaluator, ICF is seeking input that will help in describing the program and the vision for GEAR UP held by TEA. We expect this interview will last 45-60 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. *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.*

### Interview Questions

- 1) Please briefly describe your role at TEA more broadly and then specifically with Texas GEAR UP.
  - a. *Is your workload solely on GEAR UP or is your time also allocated to other projects?*
- 2) First, I'd like to talk about your role in working with GEAR UP schools/districts. What is the extent of your GEAR UP role in working with district grantees?
  - a. *What types of supports/services do you provide? How is the support you provide similar or different across sites?*
  - b. *What portion of your work is devoted to districts? Schools?*
  - c. *How would you describe the level of buy-in from district leadership? Teachers? Administrators? Students? Parents?*
  - d. *How frequently do you interact with district grantees? schools? IPSI? Who initiates that contact?*
  - e. *How do you interact with College Preparation Advisers? What is the necessary skill set for staff in these positions? To what extent are those skills evident in the current staff?*
  - f. *In what ways, if any, are there differences in those interactions with high school?*
  - g. *What factors facilitate your relationship with GEAR UP grantees? Have you faced any barriers? If so, have you been able to overcome those barriers or do you have plans to try to overcome?*
- 3) How would you describe implementation of the program this year?
  - a. *To what extent are district grantees and partners adhering to their action plans as they begin to implement GEAR UP? What is the process for modification if it is necessary?*
  - b. *How is TEA assessing progress by grantees on goals? Is APR the only format or are you assessing/tracking progress in other ways? If so, how satisfied is TEA with grantee progress toward long term goals to date? Anything specific to progress towards Algebra I completion and on-time promotion in particular (as the "nearest" long-term goal)?*
  - c. *How are you kept up to date regarding GEAR UP implementation within schools? What role, if any, does TEA have in the design of PD, student and parent workshops or services? If any, how satisfied are you? To what extent does the GUIDES system continue to be a useful tool for progress monitoring?*
  - d. *To what extent does GEAR UP address service gaps at the district level? School level?*
  - e. *Based on APR data and what you know through other sources, how satisfied are you with events to involve students? Parents? Teachers? Are there any specific GEAR UP-funded activities that have impressed/disappointed staff at TEA?*

- f. *How would you describe the impacts of GEAR UP efforts related to high school transition? What factors have facilitated this transition work? Have you faced any barriers? If so, have you been able to overcome those barriers or do you have plans to try to overcome them?*
  - g. *What factors have facilitated GEAR UP implementation this year? What factors have hindered GEAR UP implementation this year? How have you addressed these challenges? What challenges are ongoing? What unexpected issues have you encountered?*
- 4) With regard to Texas GEAR UP, who are the key players that you work with regularly and in what ways do you engage with them? (NOTE: This may include non-formal partners.)
    - a. *Who are the major (non-school) Texas GEAR UP collaborators? [probe for TG, AMS, Abriendo Puertas and GeoForce] What roles do / will they play in program implementation? Are they formal partners or more informal collaborators? Any that you are trying to partner with more formally? Are there particular partners you work closely with? Who? How?*
    - b. *In what ways do you involve collaborators in GEAR UP activities? This may include involvement with grantees and/or with the statewide initiatives? Any collaborators you would like to see more/less involved?*
    - c. *What factors facilitate your relationship with GEAR UP partners? Have you faced any barriers? If so, have you been able to overcome those barriers or do you have plans to try to overcome?*
    - d. *To what extent have districts continued to work with the College Board by procuring services directly?*
  - 5) How would you describe the current status of the statewide initiative?
    - a. *What is the primary focus of the statewide initiative? How much progress has been made? How satisfied are you with the progress? Are there any topics that have been made available relevant to college readiness? Are there any topics relevant to college readiness not yet available that you would really like to see be part of the statewide initiative? What are plans/next steps to make progress? (NOTE: Be sure to document any progress in particular anything that parents or students might be aware of.)*
    - b. *What components of the statewide initiative have been rolled out? How? To who? What steps if any has been taken to communicate to schools and families about information/resources available through the statewide initiative? If not, what are plans/next steps to make progress towards statewide initiative roll out?*
    - c. *Have any GEAR UP professional learning opportunities been made available to educators (e.g., Project Share, face-to-face)? If so, how many educators, including those not at current GEAR UP campuses, are participating in such opportunities and what are some of the opportunities? If not, what are plans/next steps to make progress on making these available?*
    - d. *What factors facilitate working on the GEAR UP statewide initiative? Have you faced any barriers? If so, have you been able to overcome those barriers or do you have plans to try to overcome?*
  - 6) Anything else you would like us to know? Anything that would be important in our describing Texas GEAR UP?
    - a. *Any final questions/suggestions with regard to site visits scheduled for spring 2013, including issues that we may want to address during the site visits?*

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

## D.19 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: IPSI 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. 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 in implementing GEAR UP. As an independent, external evaluator, ICF is seeking input that will help in describing the program and the vision for GEAR UP held by TEA. We expect this interview will last 45-60 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. *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.*

### Interview Questions

- 1) Please briefly describe your role at IPSI more broadly and then specifically with Texas GEAR UP.
  - a. *What other staff members at IPSI work on GEAR UP?*
  - b. *What portion of their time is devoted to GEAR UP?*
  - c. *Please describe the changes in IPSI staff who focus on GEAR UP.*
- 2) First, I'd like to talk about IPSI's role in working with GEAR UP schools/districts. What is the extent of you and your staff's GEAR UP role in working with district grantees?
  - a. *What types of supports/services does IPSI provide? How is the support that you and your staff provide similar or different across sites?*
  - b. *What portion of IPSI's work is devoted to districts? Schools?*
  - c. *How would you describe the level of buy-in from district leaders? Teachers? Administrators? Students? Parents? How, if at all, has the level of buy-in from leaders changed at the high school level?*
  - d. *How frequently do you and your staff interact with district grantees? Schools? Who initiates that contact?*
  - e. *In what ways, if any, are there differences in those interactions in the high school setting?*
  - f. *How do you interact with College Preparation Advisors?*
  - g. *In what ways, if at all, is the necessary skill set for staff in these positions different at the high school level? To what extent are those skills evident in the current staff?*
  - h. *What types of compliance/monitoring, if any, does IPSI engage in? APR?*
  - i. *What factors facilitate IPSI's relationship with GEAR UP grantees in the high school setting? Have you or your staff faced any new barriers? If so, have you and your staff been able to overcome those barriers or have plans to try to overcome?*
- 3) How would you describe implementation of the program this year?
  - a. *To what extent are district grantees adhering to their action plans as they continue to implement GEAR UP? How, if at all, has the process for modification changed?*
  - b. *In what ways, if at all, are there changes in the way you and your staff assess grantees' progress on goals? Is APR the only format or is IPSI assessing/tracking progress in other ways? How satisfied are you with grantee progress toward long term goals to date? Anything specific to progress towards Algebra I course completion/on-time promotion in particular (as the "nearest" long-term goals)?*
  - c. *How are you and your staff kept up to date regarding GEAR UP implementation within schools? What role, if any, does IPSI have in the design of PD, student and parent workshops or services? If any, how satisfied are you with those services? Please describe any changes IPSI has made to the GUIDES*

- system to increase its utility for progress monitoring. Are there further improvements you would like to see with the GUIDES system?
- d. To what extent does GEAR UP address service gaps at the district level? School level?
  - e. Based on APR data and what you and your staff know through other sources, how satisfied are you with events to involve students? Parents? Teachers? Are there any specific GEAR UP-funded activities that have impressed/disappointed staff at IPSI? In what ways are activities more or less successful in the high school setting?
  - f. How would you describe the impact of GEAR UP efforts related to high school transition? What factors have facilitated this transition work? Have you and your staff faced any barriers? If so, have you and your staff been able to overcome those barriers or have plans to try to overcome them?
  - g. What factors have facilitated GEAR UP implementation this year? What factors have hindered GEAR UP implementation this year? How has IPSI addressed these challenges? What challenges are ongoing? What unexpected issues have you and your staff encountered?
- 4) With regard to Texas GEAR UP, who are the key players that IPSI works with regularly and in what ways do you and your staff engage with them? (NOTE: This may include non-formal partners.)
- a. Describe IPSI's communication with TEA. Who do you and your staff communicate with and in what ways? How regular do you and your staff communicate? How would you describe the quality of those interactions?
  - b. Please tell me about the various organizations IPSI collaborates with for GEAR UP [probe for TG, AMS, UT T-STEM Centers, GeoForce, Raise Achievement, and CTK Inc.]. Who are the new collaborators IPSI has sought out for the 2014-15 school year? Why have you and your staff selected to work with these organizations? What roles do / will they play in program implementation? Are there particular organizations IPSI works closely with? Who? How? Are there any collaborators you would like to see more/less involved?
  - c. In what ways does IPSI involve collaborators in GEAR UP activities? [This may include involvement with grantees and/or with the statewide initiatives.]
  - d. What factors facilitate IPSI's relationship with GEAR UP collaborators? Have you and your staff faced any barriers? If so, have you or your staff been able to overcome those barriers or are there plans to try to overcome them? To what extent are collaborators adhering to action plans or other agreements?
  - e. To what extent have districts continued to work with the College Board by procuring services directly?
  - f. Are there any new collaborators IPSI would like to work with in the 2015-16 school year?
- 5) How would you describe the current status of the statewide initiative?
- a. What is the primary focus of the statewide initiative? How much progress has been made? How satisfied is IPSI with the progress? Are there any topics that have been made available relevant to college readiness? Are there any topics relevant to college readiness not yet available that you would really like to see be part of the statewide initiative? What are plans/next steps to make progress? (NOTE: Be sure to document any progress and, in particular, anything that parents or students might be aware of.)
  - b. What components of the statewide initiative have been rolled out? How? To whom? What steps, if any, have been taken to communicate to schools and families about information/resources available through the statewide initiative? If not, what are plans/next steps to make progress towards statewide initiative roll out?
  - c. Have any GEAR UP professional learning opportunities been made available to educators (e.g., Project Share, face-to-face)? If so, how many educators, including those not at current GEAR UP campuses, are participating in such opportunities and what are some of the opportunities? If not, what are plans/next steps to make progress on these services?
  - d. What factors facilitate working on the GEAR UP statewide initiative? Have you or your staff faced any new barriers? If so, have you and your staff been able to overcome those barriers or are there plans to try to overcome?
- 6) Anything else you would like us to know? Is there anything else that would be important in our describing Texas GEAR UP?
- a. Any final questions/suggestions with regard to site visits scheduled for spring 2015, including issues that we may want to address during the site visits?

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

## D.20 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: State Collaborator 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 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 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 collaboration with Texas GEAR UP?*
  - b. *What, if any, work has your organization been involved in with Texas Education Agency other than GEAR UP?*
  - c. *How, if at all, has this relationship changed over time? [For GeoForce, Raise Achievement and CTK: What changes do you hope to see in this relationship going forward?]*
  - d. *How would you describe the level of communication with IPSI? [For AMS, communication with TEA]*
  - e. *In what ways, if at all, do you interact with GEAR UP coordinators and College Preparation Advisors? [For TG, T-STEM and AMS ask how it has changed over time]*
  - f. *What types of supports/services does your organization provide to TX GEAR UP? How have these supports/services changed from year to year? [For TG, T-STEM and AMS ask how it has changed over time]*
  - g. *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?*
  - h. *Does your organization serve similar roles in other state or local GEAR UP initiatives?*
- 3) What, if any, is the extent of your organization's involvement related to statewide GEAR UP initiatives and at each GEAR UP school (in the 4 districts, 6 high schools)?

### Statewide Initiative

- a. *What portion of your organization's work is devoted to supporting the state? Districts? Schools? Students? Parents?*

- b. *Are you involved in GEAR UP statewide efforts? If so, how? [For TG, T-STEM and AMS ask how it has changed over time]*
- c. *How frequently are services related to the statewide effort 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? [For TG, T-STEM and AMS ask how it has changed over time]*
  - e. *How frequently are district/school services provided? Who initiates/requests these services?*
  - f. *[For TG, T-STEM and AMS] Has your organization's role changed now that GEAR UP students are in high school? If so, how?*
  - g. *What progress have you made this year in the goals you shared during the last telephone interview:*
    - i. *TG: 2 financial literacy modules per year*
    - ii. *AMS: 40% of GEAR UP students using the website*
- 4) What, if any, are benefits you see in your organization's role as a GEAR UP collaborator?
- a. *New organizations (CTK, GeoForce, Raise Achievement): What prompted your organization's interest in becoming a GEAR UP collaborator? What are the perceived benefits to TEA? Districts? Schools? Students? Parents? State?*
- Continued organizations (TG, T-STEM and AMS): What has sustained your interest in being a GEAR UP collaborator? Are there any new benefits to TEA, districts, schools, students, parents, or the state?*
- b. *What factors (facilitators) have helped the collaboration to succeed [or continue to succeed]? Have you faced any [new for TG, T-STEM and AMS] barriers to a successful collaboration? 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 organizations?
- a. *What, if any, formal/informal opportunities are there to interact with other organizations?*
  - b. *Are there particular organizations you work closely with? Who? How?*
  - c. *What supports or resources does the Texas Education Agency provide to GEAR UP collaborators with regard to collaborating with one another? Clarify any facilitators or barriers to collaboration.*
- 6) Do you have a collaboration agreement in place (MOU)? To what extent is your organization's current role aligned with the 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 other collaborators?

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

## Appendix E: Case Studies

The following are case studies on the programs operating in each of the four districts as part of the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grant (SG) during the 2014–15 year. Findings are based on site visits to all six high schools within four districts during fall 2014 and spring 2015. The purpose of presenting these case studies is to provide an overview of the implementation of grant activities during the 2014–15 school year, through the date of the spring 2015 site visits. The majority of site visit data was obtained during in-person site visits. A small number of interviews at some sites were conducted via telephone when the person was unavailable during the in-person visit. In addition, at one site in Spring 2015 the entire site visit occurred via telephone when poor weather led to cancellation of the in-person visit.

Viewpoints from important stakeholders, namely the students served through the grant and their parents, teachers of these students, administrators, and Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators in each district, have been incorporated. These case studies provide important information for longitudinal analyses of implementation. Throughout these case studies when there are comments from individuals, staff responsible for the Texas GEAR UP SG in the district will be referred to as the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator; school staff including principals, assistant principals, or other similar positions will be referred to as school administrators.

These case studies examine activities within each district that helped Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students transition from middle school to high school. The case studies include both a description of what actually occurred during summer 2014 and a discussion of planned summer 2015 activities. It should be noted that final site visits for the year occurred in May 2015 and therefore these case studies do not include the finalization or actual implementation of the summer 2015 programs. Before discussing the individual district information, a brief overview of factors that affected all districts is provided.

### E.1. Overview of Findings from All Districts

#### E.1.1 Student Support Services and Activities

Increasing academic rigor and offering students advanced courses continues to be a focus across districts. In Year 3, this also included providing students with dual-credit opportunities (or efforts to work towards enrolling in dual-credit courses). Various supports helped students including enhancements to tutoring services (such as in-class tutoring support) and more opportunities for Texas GEAR UP SG staff to individually meet with students. Texas GEAR UP SG used their collaboration with local colleges/universities both to offer dual credit options but also to allow for Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students to receive mentoring and tutoring services. Educational trips, both college- and career- focused, were successful activities in Year 3.

#### E.1.2 High School Transition and Endorsements

Across districts, summer programs and relationships with Texas GEAR UP SG staff helped students transition to high school. However, a common theme was that students still need multiple skills sets (independent skills, organization, motivation, etc.) to be successful in high school and college. Texas GEAR UP SG staff collaborated with school counselors to help students navigate endorsements. Stakeholders expressed mixed levels of student familiarity with and enthusiasm for their endorsements.

### E.1.3 Parental Engagement

Although parent engagement remained a challenge across districts, there were many useful strategies applied in Year 3. Flexibility in location and time seemed to facilitate parental engagement in some districts. In other cases, changing the format to allow for more interactive involvement and parent choice in sessions was well-received. The use of a parent liaison in one district also helped to increase parental involvement.

## E.2. Case Study: District 1

### E.2.1 Summary of Site Visit Findings

#### OVERVIEW

As part of the Year 3 Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation, ICF evaluators visited District 1 in both fall 2014 and spring 2015. During Year 3 of the grant, the cohort students were in high school, so site visits occurred in this setting. This case study intends to provide a detailed description of the Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in this district during the third year of the grant. During both the fall and the spring site visits, the evaluation team conducted interviews and focus groups with the Texas GEAR UP SG Coordinator, College Preparation Advisors, teachers, parents, students, and school administrators (see Figure E.1 for detailed participant list). The sections that follow summarize themes heard in this district during the site visits. Specifically, this section of the report provides information about the Texas GEAR UP SG activities occurring in this district during summer 2014 and during the 2014–15 school year, challenges encountered, and plans for the Texas GEAR UP SG in the district.

#### Figure E.1: District 1 Focus Group and Interview Participants

- Fall 2014 focus groups included:
  - 4 students
  - 4 parents
  - 5 teachers
- Fall 2014 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator(s)
  - College Preparation Advisor(s)
  - 2 school administrators
- Spring 2015 focus groups included:
  - 4 students
  - 3 parents
  - 3 teachers
- Spring 2015 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator(s)
  - College Preparation Advisor(s)
  - 2 school administrators
  - 4 school counselors

#### CHANGES SINCE YEAR 2

General responsibilities of the Texas GEAR UP SG staff have remained similar to Year 2. However, the College Preparation Advisor conducted more one-on-one advising sessions with students during the fall semester and became more involved in activity planning (in collaboration with the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator) in the spring semester. Texas GEAR UP SG staff described students' schedules as "more flexible" in comparison to their schedules as middle school students, which allowed the College Preparation Advisor to conduct more one-on-one advising with students rather than group-based like it was done in the middle school. Overall, staff differentiated between their roles in that the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator worked with the adults of the program – such as parents or community collaborations – and the College Preparation Advisor focused on students and student activities.

## DESCRIPTION OF YEAR 3 IMPLEMENTATION (2014–15)

**Increased Academic Rigor.** A few of the advanced courses offered at the high school include Pre-Advanced Placement (AP) Biology, Pre-AP English, Pre-AP History, and Pre-AP Geometry. Most students reported taking advanced courses, such as geometry, and school counselors added that Texas GEAR UP SG staff “do a great job of trying to get kids in those higher classes.” A staff member explained that the endorsement plans helped to encourage students to enroll in the advanced course offerings. One teacher noted the larger issue of improving academic rigor within the school saying that, “we don’t have the rigor we need here” in order to successfully prepare students for postsecondary education. To address this, teachers reported having more focus on real-life application of what students learn in the classroom as one way they are trying to expose students to more rigorous content. Increasing academic rigor is a campus-wide goal as reported by a school counselor.

The Texas GEAR UP SG staff reported working on the development of a dual credit program through a local university. Initially, there was a dual credit program in the developing stages with one university, but it was reported that district administrative process in approving this was slow and “another district...just came out of nowhere and got it done a little quicker.” The staff are currently working with a different local university to secure this opportunity for their students with a goal of becoming an early college high school.<sup>151</sup> Dual credit was generally only offered to upperclassmen; the additional collaboration with the local university will provide more class offerings to the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort once they get to Grade 11. Of the four dual credit courses available over the past school year, none were available to the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort.

**Transition to High School.** During summer 2014, a member of the Texas GEAR UP SG staff led the coordination of the Fish Camp, or summer freshmen orientation program, for the students. The College Preparation Advisor described this program as successful in helping students to be prepared for high school. Participants also noted that it had the highest turnout of all freshmen orientations offered over the past five years and “more attendance [than] in the last three years combined.” Another facilitator of students’ transition into high school was their involvement in extracurricular activities at the high school prior to their first day of class. Students involved in these activities were more acclimated to the high school than other students because activities occurred on campus at the high school. Furthermore, extracurricular involvement also provided students with a sense of inclusion because they had the opportunity to contribute to their new school.

Students struggled academically with the transition to high school, according to various site visit participants. A Texas GEAR UP SG staff member explained how students “are so far behind” and “their level is so low” compounded by the fact that there are many new teachers in the school district (a lot of whom received their teaching certification through alternative routes). Another recommendation from a Texas GEAR UP SG staff member was to address students’ low academic levels is to offer a program that aims to improve students’ academic skills (namely reading and writing) as well as soft skills (such as leadership or critical thinking) so they can perform at grade level and benefit fully from increased academic rigor.

**Events and Programs.** In Year 3, the College Preparation Advisor developed and continued to enhance a mentoring program. The College Preparation Advisor also coordinated/assisted with other activities including the following: volunteer projects, an afterschool college club, parent

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<sup>151</sup> In other districts offering early college high schools, students have been offered opportunities for dual-credit courses and attainment of an associate’s degree.

workshops, college visits, and summer programs. The College Preparation Advisor also assisted students in applying to various other summer programs offered through other organizations.

The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator arranged for one of the speakers from the national GEAR UP conference to also come to the school. This visit included a presentation to students and parents as well as a professional development (PD) session for teachers. Both sessions included positive messages about college opportunities from someone who came from an environment similar to that of the high school's community.

Programs that were planned for summer 2015 included a variety of camps at the local university, which centered on themes such as chess, engineering, fashion, leadership, and theater. Non-local summer programs included camps at locations such as the University of Texas in Austin (UT-Austin), the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and GeoFORCE. Texas GEAR UP SG staff and parents noted that some of these programs during the previous summer (summer 2014) allowed students to travel with their parents, which they described as a useful aspect. Students were anxious to know if they had been accepted into these programs for the upcoming summer (summer 2015).

Tutoring occurred within the classrooms, primarily in English and mathematics, and after school. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator stated that the tutors played an important role in easing students' academic transition into high school. Within the classrooms, tutors worked with students in need of additional support. A teacher, reflecting the input from other teachers participating in the focus group, reported that students are "making progress with the tutoring." This student support service allows the students who struggle to grasp the more rigorous content and learn at a similar pace to other students. One student said, "I love tutors. Tutors are helping me a lot in class." School counselors would like more tutoring opportunities offered to the students, particularly within the core classes, saying that it was a "really beneficial" component of academic support.

**Endorsements and Graduation Plans.** Both school staff and Texas GEAR UP SG staff described endorsements as the school counselors' responsibilities through one-on-one advising sessions with students (including initial selection and follow-up discussions). Students described the counselors as helping them choose their endorsement whereas Texas GEAR UP SG staff helped them think about "what [the students] want to go into when [they] get to college." The College Preparation Advisor expressed interest in participating in endorsement-related meetings with the counselors in order to better coordinate communication with students. Texas GEAR UP SG staff have played a role in educating students and parents on the career aspects of endorsements. They talked with parents and students to let them know what options were available to students. In doing this, staff worked with students to identify what their interests were and what career paths align to them. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator expressed support towards endorsements and graduation plans because they "gear [students] towards a career that they would like to go to" encouraging them to enroll in more rigorous courses and is similar to college majors.

**Community Alliances.** A Texas GEAR UP SG staff member described the local community center as a community alliance in a couple different ways – it served as the primary location for regularly scheduled parent workshops and it offers a venue for Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students to volunteer with younger youth. The intention of having parent workshops in the community center was to develop a sense of community involvement around Texas GEAR UP SG instead of having it presented solely within the school building. In addition, high school students volunteered at the community center by mentoring and tutoring younger youth. This created a reciprocal relationship in which both organizations benefitted.

**Parental Engagement.** Parent workshops served as meetings for parents to receive information on a variety of topics related to postsecondary education and were offered every first Tuesday of the month, as opposed to being inconsistently offered as they had been in previous years. At these workshops, speakers from the local university, the school district's central office, and other resource programs came to discuss scholarships, financial aid, grade point averages (GPAs), SAT scores, and test preparation programs. At one meetings, a speaker gave her personal testimony about how she was raised in a similar setting to this community and found ways to afford and succeed in college. The goal of inviting the speakers to the parent workshops was to show families the various aspects in preparing, applying, and attending postsecondary education.

Making phone calls and providing incentives (including gift cards from the local mall and college-themed t-shirts and pens) to parents helped to improve parental involvement. Parent engagement during the workshops has reportedly improved in that parents asked more questions and stayed after the workshop to speak with the Texas GEAR UP SG staff. The parent workshops also provided an opportunity for staff to survey parents in order to identify topics that parents would like to learn more about.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff reported having received positive feedback regarding the parent component of the state conference and suggested more opportunities like these where parents can interact with each other. Afterwards, parents felt “motivated and encouraged and educated,” according to the College Preparation Advisor. They shared the information they had learned at the conference with other parents and told them about their positive experiences with some even posting about it on social media. One parent described the experience at the conference by sharing the following:

I loved it. I thought I was getting ready to go to college. They had so many motivational speakers and what I really liked about it was they look like our kids. There were Mexican-Americans and African-Americans and they were young. They were really inspiring and I loved it.

For future parent events, a staff member suggested that, to improve attendance at parent events, it is important to provide parents with advanced notice so they are able to request time off of work. Distributing a magnet at the beginning of the school year that listed all of the dates for Texas GEAR UP SG activities and events for the school year was one suggestion as to how the high school could notify parents well in advance.

**Teacher Professional Development.** A member of the Texas GEAR UP SG staff reported that PD occurs on a monthly basis. One PD opportunity was technology focused in which every student received a touch screen smart tablet and teachers learned about a variety of applications that students could utilize to facilitate interactive learning. Teachers also had the opportunity to participate in project-based learning (PBL). Teachers were unaware of PD opportunities sponsored by Texas GEAR UP SG.

**Statewide Initiatives.** Texas GEAR UP SG staff, students, and parents enjoyed the conferences and reported that they had “really good resources” with presenters who “always give helpful information.” They reported that conferences provide networking opportunities, but would also like to see more opportunities for students to interact with and meet one another, and likewise for the parents. Giving students the chance for peer interaction would allow them to experience Texas GEAR UP SG in a way that “is so much bigger than their school and their city or town.”

The College Preparation Advisor utilized the website the most in meeting with students so they could complete the online questionnaire and determine what career paths would be good fits for them. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator would like to see a section of the website dedicated to GEAR UP parent activities that have occurred nationwide so the staff can get an idea of what has worked well for other school districts then “tweak it to fit” their own.

### CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

The Texas GEAR UP SG staff described data entry as challenging because it takes a significant amount of time out of the day and away from directly working with the students. One individual described wanting more clarification on data definitions, deadlines, and responsibilities to allow for more timely and accurate reporting.

The College Preparation Advisor described how previously, there was a school district faculty member who played a role in assisting with the administration of the Texas GEAR UP SG but that individual has since retired. Texas GEAR UP SG staff suggested that re-instituting this role to a school administrator who is able to provide support by overseeing necessary grant requirements could help to ensure they meet Texas GEAR UP SG deadlines.

In general, the home environments from which many of these students come are single parent homes that struggle financially and most students would be first generation college students. As such, there are many barriers creating a college-going culture. However, the Texas GEAR UP coordinator noted progress in that students now “realize that college really is an option. It is not just a dream but it can be real and it is real for them.” The Texas GEAR UP SG staff serve as role models in getting to college because they have attended and are available to work with students and their families with that experience.

### FUTURE PLANS

The Texas GEAR UP SG staff listed three programs planned for summer 2015 that they would be hosting: Destination Imagination, a leadership camp, and a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) camp. Destination Imagination will give students the opportunity to work on STEM projects with one another allowing them to collaborate and be innovative. Students attending the leadership camp will have the chance to improve various skills such time management and social skills, which will be useful for high school and postsecondary success. The STEM camp is intended to show students a variety of STEM-related careers so they can understand what kind of jobs will be offered in that field once they enter the workforce.

A Texas GEAR UP SG staff member recommended conducting more job site visits as a way to help students better understand the objectives of their endorsements and make their career goals more tangible. Instead of helping students select their endorsements based on what they wish to study in postsecondary education, job site visits could provide students with firsthand insight into the work environment and use this experience to inform whether or not a certain endorsement would still be of interest to them.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff also described a focus on the continued development of mentoring programs. To do this, they are working with local universities to have college students paired with high school students.

The Texas GEAR UP SG staff as well as school staff shared their hope for having the high school become an early college high school. At the time of the spring 2015 site visit, they were establishing a dual credit program with a local university, which would hopefully lead to an early college high school.

## E.2.2 Summary of Parent Survey Results

The response rate for the Spring 2015 parent survey in this district was 16%, compared to 25% for the Spring 2014 survey.

**Educational Expectations.** Table E.1 provides an overview of parent educational expectations. At the end of Grade 9, 79% of parents who responded to the spring 2015 survey indicated that they expected their child to obtain a four-year college degree or higher and 17% did not expect their child to obtain any college degree.

**Table E.1. District 1 Parents' Educational Aspirations and Expectations for Their Children: Spring 2015**

	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree	More than a Four-Year College Degree
What is the highest level of education that you <u>want</u> your child to complete?	29	3.4%	6.9%	6.9%	41.4%	41.4%
What is the highest level of education that you <u>expect</u> your child will obtain?	29	6.9%	10.3%	3.4%	55.2%	24.1%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Discussions about College Entrance Requirements and Financial Aid.** Table E.2 includes survey data on the discussions parents had with Texas GEAR UP SG staff, school staff, and students about college entrance requirements. At the end of Grade 9, just over 50% of the parents (55%) who completed the spring 2015 survey reported that they had spoken to someone from their child's school or Texas GEAR UP SG about college entrance requirements. However, the majority of the parents responding to the survey indicated they had spoken with their child about attending college (97%). More than half of parents (66%) had spoken to someone from their child's school or Texas GEAR UP SG about the availability of financial aid.

**Table E.2. District 1 Parents' Reported Discussions with School Staff/GEAR UP staff and Their Child, Spring 2015**

	n	Percentage Selecting Yes	Percentage Selecting No
Has anyone from your child's school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?	29	55.2%	44.8%
Have you talked with your child about attending college?	29	96.6%	3.4%
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?	29	65.5%	34.5%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Knowledge of Financial Aid.** Almost a quarter of parents (24%) reported not being knowledgeable regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of their child pursuing postsecondary education (Table E.3); 24% of parents considered themselves extremely knowledgeable.

**Table E.3. District 1 Parents’ Knowledge Regarding Financial Aid and the Costs/Benefits of Pursuing Postsecondary Education: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Spring 2015**

	n	Not Knowledgeable	Slightly Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
How much do you know about financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education?	29	24.1%	17.2%	34.5%	24.1%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Perceived Ability to Afford Postsecondary Education.** Although parents’ self-reported knowledge of financial aid and the cost and benefits of postsecondary education was low (Table E.3), parents’ perception of their child/family being able to afford to attend a public four-year college was relatively high. As shown in Table E.4, 79% of parents who responded to the survey reported they could probably or definitely afford it (41% and 38%, respectively). However, 21% of parents reported that they either definitely or probably could not afford for their child to attend a four-year college.

**Table E.4. District 1 Parents’ Perceptions of Affordability, Spring 2015**

	n	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Probably	Definitely
Do you think that your child could afford to attend a public four-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family’s resources?	29	10.3%	10.3%	41.4%	37.9%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Overall Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG.** Overall, parents were satisfied with Texas GEAR UP SG as 100% of parents responding to the survey indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied (Table E.5).

**Table E.5. District 1 Parents’ Satisfaction with GEAR UP Overall, Spring 2015**

	n	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your child’s school?	29	0.0%	0.0%	34.6%	65.4%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

## E.3. Case Study: District 2

### E.3.1 Summary of Site Visit Findings

#### OVERVIEW

As part of the Year 3 Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation, ICF evaluators visited District 2 in both fall 2014 and spring 2015. During Year 3 of the grant, the cohort students were in high school, so site visits occurred in this setting. This case study intends to provide a detailed description of the Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in this district during the third year of the grant. During both the fall and the spring site visits, the evaluation team conducted interviews and focus groups with the Texas GEAR UP SG Coordinator, College Preparation Advisors, teachers, parents, students, tutors, and a school administrator (see Figure E.2 for detailed participant list). The sections that follow summarize themes heard in this district during the site visits. Specifically, this section of the report provides information about the Texas GEAR UP SG activities occurring in this district during summer 2014 and during the 2014–15 school year, challenges encountered, and plans for the Texas GEAR UP SG in the district.

#### Figure E.2: District 2 Focus Group and Interview Participants

- Fall 2014 focus groups included:
  - 10 students
  - 1 parent
  - 6 teachers
  - 3 GEAR UP Tutors
- Fall 2014 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor(s)
  - 1 school administrator
- Spring 2015 focus groups included:
  - 9 students
  - 10 teachers
- Spring 2015 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor(s)

#### CHANGES SINCE YEAR 2

One of the biggest changes since Year 2 of Texas GEAR UP SG in District 2 has been a strong focus on individualized attention to cohort students. Specifically, the College Preparation Advisors were able to focus on individual meetings with students that included elements of financial aid advising, college advising, career counseling, and personal graduation plan reviews. This occurred while continuing with the College Preparation Advisors' responsibilities in event planning and parent contact in previous years. Additionally, more tutors were brought on to support students in the classroom.

#### DESCRIPTION OF YEAR 3 IMPLEMENTATION (2014–15)

Throughout the course of Year 3, multiple activities and events were implemented in District 2 to support the Texas GEAR UP SG goals in the district. Among these goals included College Preparation Advisors meeting with every student in the cohort (including a focus on students not connected to other resources, programs, or adult support); continuing discussions of college access; and bringing more parents into parent events and programming to provide information to a broader group of people.

**Advanced Course Taking.** Another goal of District 2 is to offer students advanced courses, not only through AP classes, but also through dual enrollment classes with a local community college that are offered to Texas GEAR UP SG students specifically through the Early College High School that has been instituted in the district. A school administrator discussed the importance and value of offering dual credit classes to students in the district. "If we keep AP

enrollment the same, or if it grows, what's the point? Because the scores of the AP tests are not passing and not getting them college credit. It's exposing them to rigor, but we can expose them to rigor through dual credit, and it also meets the needs of low socioeconomic kids getting potential college credit," the individual explained. To take the dual credit courses, students need to pass the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) test.<sup>152</sup> During the 2014–15 school year, students in the Early College High School began taking this test.

Teachers noted that there are struggles in terms of advanced courses for students in the district. A teacher described that in schools with a lower socioeconomic status, it can be common for teachers to give students excuses and feel sorry for them. Further, wanting students to have fun and remain interested in the courses can deter teachers from providing higher levels of rigor in the classroom. However, based on student input, it appears that the Texas GEAR UP SG is helping to overcome barriers and succeed in advanced courses. Some students saw the value that advanced courses could offer to them. For example, a student discussed how being part of the Texas GEAR UP SG helped him to succeed in high school courses. He explained, "GEAR UP allowed me to go into the higher up classes like pre-AP and Algebra I. And Algebra I sort of gives me that boost, like, 'Okay, the game just got harder, let's work harder, let's get all this more efficiently done, let's put everything we can into it.'" Another student said, "One thing that I think they're doing good is actually giving us those advanced courses that we took last year."

To support student achievement in advanced courses, District 2 employed eight tutors across subject areas. The tutors worked in the classroom with teachers, sometimes leading smaller groups of students and other times working one-on-one with struggling students. Through these individualized interactions, tutors felt that they were able to "have a good relationship with the kids...and [serve] as a role model" and to work with students in "seeing where they were struggling and try to reinforce that or reteach that with the teacher." Some of these tutors also worked with students during the summer academy and were able to begin developing relationships. Having tutors in the classroom was seen as very effective by teachers. "I want them to stay with me forever," said one teacher. "I love them because they help a lot with the attention that the kids need.... What I've noticed is the days the [the tutors] are here, [the students] are more comfortable in doing the work," said another. A successful strategy with regard to tutors was hiring a current student teacher as a tutor after school as that individual was familiar with the work that the students were doing and had the pedagogical and content knowledge necessary to tutor students effectively.

**Transition to High School.** When asked about how the Texas GEAR UP SG helped them transition to high school, students indicated that the most important thing was exposure to the school building so that they were comfortable moving between classes and knowing the school. This was accomplished by holding the summer academy that occurred after Grade 8 in the high school. Although this summer program was not specifically a transition camp, but rather an educational program for students, the choice of location at the high school helped students to feel more comfortable with the transition. "We had summer camp here at the high school so we could get to know the place and not be confused on our first day. It helped us a lot because I was really scared.... I just wanted to stay in middle school.... Summer camp made it easier because my friends also went and I got used to the environment," explained a student. A College Preparation Advisor collaborated this idea saying the following: "During the summer program, we made sure that they understood what the high school atmosphere was." Additionally, the summer academy included a focus on mathematics, either Algebra I or Algebra

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<sup>152</sup> The TSI is used to determine readiness for college coursework and identifies needs for any developmental coursework. For more information see <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=C92F1DAA-D49E-03F0-0750060AA756E807>

It based on the student's Grade 9 schedule, to help students prepare for high school mathematics and give them an "extra boost." Students were also able to attend a transition day or night (not associated with the summer academy), at which they were able to meet Grade 9 teachers and administrators as well as learn about high school expectations.

Regarding the transition to high school for the cohort students, at the site visits there was a great deal of discussion about the change in personal responsibility for students. Various participants identified this as a key struggle for students in making the transition to high school. According to a teacher, "That 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade is a tough transition in general. A lot of them came from high structure in the middle school and it is just, they get to high school and it is a lot more freedom from the structure and is a lot different." Similarly, a College Preparation Advisor described the increased freedom for students and the associated challenges, "The freedom is a good thing and a bad thing. It comes with the need to be responsible and disciplined. Getting them to be responsible and disciplined and make the right choices has been an issue for some kids."

**Events and Programs.** According to a College Preparation Advisor, the Texas GEAR UP SG team in District 2 had a focus of expanding horizons for their students; the College Preparation Advisor said "our students know that we have a focus on giving them new experiences and taking them to different places and we've continued to do that." This strategy of providing new experiences to students while supporting them academically and providing college access information guided events and programs in Year 3. Additionally, events and programs were tailored to the needs of the students. For example, a College Preparation Advisor explained, "if we talk to a certain number of students and we realize that a lot of these kids don't know about SAT, we'll do a workshop on SAT. So, it's kind of talking to the students, looking at the data from what they're saying, and then, from there, providing the services that we feel like they need."

During the summer before Grade 9, District 2 offered a summer academy to all graduating Grade 8 students in the district. This summer academy was designed and implemented by the Texas GEAR UP SG staff in the district (with a great deal of the development and execution completed by the College Preparation Advisors). Approximately 150 students attended this camp, which was organized into two, two-week periods of classes; most students attended both sessions. During the summer academy, students went on educational trips, such as to a theme park, and took a variety of courses each day, such as mathematics and college awareness. This program was designed to be fun for the students while also providing educational options for them. Activities in the summer academy were interactive to engage the students in learning and make them enjoy the experience. For example, in a science class, they were able to dissect sharks and, in an art class, they completed hands-on projects.

Another summer program attended by some students in the district was the GeoFORCE summer program offered through the University of Texas (UT). These students traveled to Florida for a "program that is making us mini geologists for a summer and opening our minds about that", explained a student. Students enjoyed this program and the education that they received through participating. Additionally, they described how the program pushed them to be successful by requiring that they receive As and Bs on tests to continue participating. A parent of a student who participated in GeoFORCE was impressed by the knowledge gained by the student. "She loved the program. This past summer we went [on a family vacation] and she was just telling us all about these rocks and threw all the names and terminologies out."

Once school began for the 2014–15 school year, the College Preparation Advisors began having one-on-one sessions with students. During these interactions, the students completed a specific form provided by the Support Center that asked questions based on their interests and

current activities to help the College Preparation Advisors understand students better. It also helped to identify students who were not involved in other activities and may benefit from additional support through the Texas GEAR UP SG. During these sessions, the College Preparation Advisors looked at student's grades to see if they needed additional afterschool tutoring or support and discussed with students how to be successful. The College Preparation Advisors also organized a college/career fair in the gymnasium that included over 180 different institutions representing colleges, careers, and the military. To make the fair more interesting to students, there was a Disc Jockey present who played music and created a fun atmosphere.

During the school year, the Texas GEAR UP SG provided the opportunity for teachers to offer afterschool programs to students to build on experiences in the classroom and provide additional support to students. One popular afterschool club focused on computer programming because of the large number of students interested in this activity and potential career path. Through the club, students developed an interactive comic online, with some students completing drawings and others working on the programming. This club also included Grade 11 and Grade 12 students at the school, so these students were able to serve as mentors to the Grade 9 students participating. Another afterschool program focused on art and exposing students to different elements of art history and art projects. To start of these afterschool programs, teachers completed a proposal of what they wanted to include in the afterschool program, materials required, and how the program would benefit students.

Additionally, educational trips that aligned with the school's endorsements or students' interests were offered to students. For example, a group of students attended a poetry festival in which they heard poets recite their poems and were able to meet these individuals. Students were excited about this trip, with one saying "We went to a poetry festival and it was amazing.... When I got there, I saw that people had a story to tell and... it's just like expressing yourself through words. I thought it was really great. I actually started doing poetry too." Another group of students interested in computer coding, simulation, and video game development were able to attend a gaming exposition event, a conference where they could see people who were able to succeed in these careers. A teacher indicated that this was an excellent experience for students as they were able to "talk to people who have a job [the students] like." These field trips were in addition to the numerous college visits that students were able to attend. For field trips, students were selected to attend schools based on their House Bill (HB) 5 endorsement tracks. For example, students in the arts and humanities endorsement attended a smaller liberal arts college, while students with technical interests visited a local technical college.

**Endorsements and Graduation Plans.** In District 2, the Texas GEAR UP SG staff worked to provide information about the endorsements to students and parents in the cohort. In Grade 8, College Preparation Advisors worked with students to select endorsements using a survey of their interests and then choose appropriate classes for high school. This involved explaining to students the progression of courses (e.g., some courses are prerequisites for others) and helping them to understand the courses required for each endorsement. Texas GEAR UP SG staff also taught parents about the endorsements at a parent event; the goal of this was that the parents would know about HB 5 and the requirements for their children. A teacher indicated that this event was successful in providing those parents that participated with the relevant information about the various endorsements.

However, focus group participants revealed that students may not have a strong understanding of the endorsements and the relationships between their selected endorsement, classes taken, and graduation plans. Students understood the idea of selecting a major and minor, saying that these were selected to be "your main focus." Most students participating in the focus groups indicated that they had selected an endorsement during the previous school year, but, when asked about their endorsement in the current school year, students made comments such as "I

doubt we're even doing that this year, because last year we had worked hard to fill the paper out but this year... I haven't heard anything about it" and "we picked it last year, but they didn't give it to us." Similarly, a College Preparation Advisor indicated that it is necessary to continue explaining endorsements and graduation plans to students because it is "tough for them to grasp [the idea] right now in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, because they don't necessarily have very much control over their classes."

**Community Alliances.** In terms of community support, District 2 engaged several local businesses and other college access programs to promote success in the Texas GEAR UP SG. One organization was Wells Fargo; a representative from this banking institution came in to do financial aid presentations for students and also talked to parents about financial planning, banking options, and ways to help their children attend college. Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TG) also provided financial information to students and parents through various modules selected for this year. During the school year, the College Preparation Advisors went into classrooms to present this information to students during class time. A College Preparation Advisor felt that these modules were a great opportunity to share financial information with students in a way that they could understand. "It comes with a PowerPoint, and then [the students] get materials, and there's a game at the end of it. That's the fun part. That's what the kids learn from the most, because they are actually putting it into action."

Local businesses also support the Texas GEAR UP SG in the district by providing discounted food for events. Further, many local businesses participated in the college/career fair. For this event, which is planned and implemented by the College Preparation Advisors and the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator, people from local businesses talk with students about their work and opportunities. One challenge noted by the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator with regard to coordinating with outside organizations is the difficulty in logistics and scheduling. For example, although the district coordinator would like to provide more job shadowing opportunities, it can be a challenge to find timing that works for both the school and the business. Something that facilitates Texas GEAR UP SG implementation is that all of the college access programs in the district (Texas GEAR UP SG, Advancement Via Individual Determination [AVID], and others) cooperate and coordinate with one another to help promote the goals of each program.<sup>153</sup>

**Parental Engagement.** Throughout the school year, parents were invited to participate in parent events, referred to as Family University Nights. At one of these events, a TG module was presented. Other parent event content was developed by the College Preparation Advisors and targeted toward questions that parents had, with a goal of providing them new information. A school administrator indicated being very satisfied with the parent involvement of the Grade 9 students and saw this participation as much greater than the other grades in the district. The individual attributed this increased participation to the Texas GEAR UP SG, saying "[the parents] are used to participating because GEAR UP does entice them with dinner, a program, and other things. However, they were able to do that because the kids participated in afterschool programs in middle school." One College Preparation Advisor indicated that the Texas GEAR UP SG parent events were gaining momentum, but another College Preparation Advisor thought that it was typically the same parents attending events as who had attended in the past.

As one way to try and better engage parents, the College Preparation Advisors changed the format of parent events. In previous years of the grant, parent events included a presentation of information to the whole group of parents. Texas GEAR UP SG staff noticed that parents looked bored or uninterested during these presentations. As such, they developed a format in

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<sup>153</sup> More details about AVID (a global non-profit organization that provides curriculum and strategies to students Kindergarten through higher education) are available at <http://www.avid.org/>.

which there are various stations around the room and parents were able to visit these in small groups and learn varied information during the same session. Being in smaller groups helped the parents to feel comfortable asking questions, which in turn provided information they need and began to increase attendance. In addition to changing the format of the events, the Texas GEAR UP SG staff has been exploring other strategies, such as changing the location of events to somewhere outside of the school, to better engage parents.

One way to engage non-English speaking parents has been to include a translator at all parent events. The typical translator is a teacher in the school who works with Grade 9 students, so she has an understanding of Texas GEAR UP SG. She felt that this translation service has been beneficial stating the following: “I’ve noticed that with working with the smaller group, they’re a bit more comfortable...I was able to one-on-one talk to the parents, and that was nice because I was able to get a lot of questions.”

Additionally, some parents were invited to attend the Texas GEAR UP Conference in Austin. A parent who attended noted that it was very informational. She found it especially beneficial for parents who do not have older children who have been through the college application process or who did not attend college themselves.

**Teacher Professional Development.** The main teacher PD that occurred in District 2 during Year 3 of the Texas GEAR UP SG was SpringBoard curriculum training provided to English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics teachers of the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students.<sup>154</sup> Although many teachers who participated in site visit focus groups were not familiar with PD opportunities offered through GEAR UP funds, those who had attended the SpringBoard training found it to be useful. When asked about this training, one teacher said, “I didn’t realize that [GEAR UP] had provided that. I really, actually liked it. I was pretty hesitant at first because our board had decided to buy a bunch of what I perceived as workbooks. And then I went to the training and my perception changed, so I did find a lot of value in it and we are actually going to be implementing some next week.” Another teacher shared the following: “I benefitted a lot from that training. I have not been using SpringBoard on like a regular basis, but I definitely used it in my Geometry classes last year. I mean, it’s mostly made for pre-AP students. That was one of my favorite trainings I’ve ever done.”

Teachers also discussed information sessions that they attended about the Texas GEAR UP SG and its function in the district. These meetings were seen by the teachers in the high school who were new to the grant as helping them understand the type of support the grant was designed to give and provided them with information about the ways in which they could use grant funds to support their students’ education. A teacher who attended the GEAR UP National Conference in a previous year described that it could be helpful to teachers if they were able to meet with other grant recipients locally to learn about programs that have been implemented and ways in which districts have been successful with their GEAR UP grants.

### CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

A school administrator indicated that one challenge faced by the Texas GEAR UP SG in this district was school staff’s lack of interest. Although the individual believed that the Texas GEAR UP SG staff are proactive, open, and inviting when trying to implement activities, this administrator said that they are handicapped by staff who do not want to be involved or work after the school day. Without staff to support Texas GEAR UP SG programs and activities, it is hard to make those programs successful. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator and College

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<sup>154</sup> SpringBoard® is the College Board’s print and online program for a customizable pathway integrating rigorous instruction, performance-based assessment, and professional learning. More details about this program are available at <http://springboardprogram.collegeboard.org>.

Preparation Advisors indicated that teacher buy-in was a big problem at the beginning of the 2014–15 school year. Contributing to the difficulty gaining buy-in within District 2 was a high level of teacher and administrator turnover. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator indicated that a high school lost 50 to 70% of their teachers to turnover; with new teachers who had never heard of the grant or its benefits, it was more difficult to get their participation. However they felt that as teachers started to understand the program more and knew the types of support that they could receive from Texas GEAR UP SG, that buy-in increased. For example, an ELA teacher realized the value of Texas GEAR UP SG, which the individual shared with other teachers in the department who were then more willing to participate with the Texas GEAR UP SG activities. In the late spring, a College Preparation Advisor indicated that the relationship with teachers had “progressed significantly since the beginning of the year. Teachers have been more involved and more interested in new programs, afterschool programs, and working with [the Texas GEAR UP SG staff] on field trips and other things.”

Another challenge in implementation was communication with various stakeholders. Although students in the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort have touch screen smart tablets, if they do not have Wi-Fi at home, that communication tool is not beneficial when they are outside of school. Further, communicating with parents can be difficult. A school administrator noted that about 50% of the phone numbers that the school has for parents change during the year; this leads to numbers that are no longer in service or cannot be used to reach parents.

### FUTURE PLANS

District 2 has plans in the works for additional offerings through the Texas GEAR UP SG. The first event planned is a summer academy for Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students. This program was planned to be offered in Summer 2015, similar to the program that was offered in previous summers (a summer academy of two, two-week sessions). It will be structured similar to a school day with five different classes for students to attend during the day, including a college readiness class taught by the College Preparation Advisors. There will also be multiple mathematics classes (Geometry and Algebra II) to help prepare students for academic success in the upcoming school year and increase their confidence. In addition to these classes, the summer academy will include educational trips for the students. According to a College Preparation Advisor, the summer programming will be “a chance to try new things and expose the students to things that they might not have otherwise been a part of before. Whether that is taking them to a place that they haven’t been before, either through a college trip or a museum trip.... We want to expose them to a new experience. We want to expose them to new ideas in their classes and give them a chance to be in a class where they are not just being taught to a test.” The summer academy is designed to be an interactive learning experience for the students.

In terms of teacher PD, the district (through Texas GEAR UP SG funds) will be offering AP training to teachers of Grade 10 students during the summer months (planned for Summer 2015). Additionally, the grant funds will continue to be used to support SpringBoard curriculum training for teachers of cohort students. Finally, Texas GEAR UP SG had planned to support summer academy teachers in traveling to the 2015 GEAR UP national conference in San Francisco to present about the summer academy and its successes.

### 5.3.2 Summary of Parent Survey Results

The response rate for the Spring 2015 parent survey in this district was 5%, the same response rate for the Spring 2014 survey.

**Educational Expectations.** Table E.6 provides an overview of parent educational expectations. At the end of Grade 9, 84% of parents who responded to the spring 2015 survey indicated that

they expected their child to obtain a four-year college degree or higher and 7% did not expect their child to obtain any college degree.

**Table E.6. District 2 Parents' Educational Expectations for Their Children: Spring 2015**

	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree	More than a Four-Year College Degree
What is the highest level of education that you <u>want</u> your child to complete?	32	0.0%	6.7%	3.3%	26.7%	63.3%
What is the highest level of education that you expect your child will obtain?	32	6.5%	0.0%	9.7%	38.7%	45.2%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Discussions about College Entrance Requirements and Financial Aid.** Table E.7 includes survey data on the discussions parents had with Texas GEAR UP SG staff, school staff, and students about college entrance requirements. At the end of Grade 9, just over 50% of the parents (53%) who completed the spring 2015 survey reported that they had spoken to someone from their child's school or Texas GEAR UP SG about college entrance requirements. However, all parents responding to the survey indicated they had spoken with their child about attending college (100%). More than half of parents (56%) had spoken to someone from their child's school or Texas GEAR UP SG about the availability of financial aid.

**Table E.7. District 2 Parents' Reported Discussions with School Staff/GEAR UP staff and Their Child, Spring 2015**

	n	Percentage Selecting Yes	Percentage Selecting No
Has anyone from your child's school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?	32	53.1%	46.9%
Have you talked with your child about attending college?	32	100.0%	0.0%
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?	32	56.3%	43.8%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Knowledge of Financial Aid.** Just under a quarter of parents (23%) reported not being knowledgeable regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of their child pursuing postsecondary education (Table E.8); 3% of parents considered themselves extremely knowledgeable.

**Table E.8. District 2 Parents’ Knowledge Regarding Financial Aid and the Costs/Benefits of Pursuing Postsecondary Education: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Spring 2015**

	n	Not Knowledgeable	Slightly Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
How much do you know about financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education?	31	22.6%	35.5%	38.7%	3.2%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Perceived Ability to Afford Postsecondary Education.** Although parents’ self-reported knowledge of financial aid and the cost and benefits of postsecondary education was low (Table E.9), parents’ perception of their child/family being able to afford to attend a public four-year college was relatively high. As shown in Table E.9, 84% of parents who responded to the survey reported they could probably or definitely afford it (48% and 36%, respectively). However, 16% of parents reported that they either definitely or probably could not afford for their child to attend a four-year college.

**Table E.9. District 2 Parents’ Perceptions of Affordability, Spring 2015**

	n	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Probably	Definitely
Do you think that your child could afford to attend a public four-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family’s resources?	31	3.2%	12.9%	48.4%	35.5%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Overall Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG.** Overall, parents were satisfied with Texas GEAR UP SG as 100% of parents responding to the survey indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied (Table E.10).

**Table E.10. District 2 Parents’ Satisfaction with GEAR UP Overall, Spring 2015**

	n	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your child’s school?	32	0.0%	0.0%	30.8%	69.2%

## E.4. Case Study: District 3

### E.4.1 Summary of Site Visit Findings

#### OVERVIEW

ICF evaluators visited District 3 in the fall 2014 and spring 2015 as part of the Year 3 Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation. These visits occurred in the high school setting, as cohort students are currently in high school. The goal of this case study is to provide details regarding implementation of summer 2014 GEAR UP SG activities, implementation of the grant and associated challenges encountered during the 2014–15 school year, and upcoming plans for the Texas GEAR UP SG in the district. During both the fall and the spring site visits, the evaluation team conducted interviews and focus groups with the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator, College Preparation Advisors, teachers, parents, students, GEAR UP staff members (e.g., tutors, data clerk, parent liaison), and school administrators; see Figure E.3 for detailed participant list. The sections that follow summarize themes from this district during the site visits.

#### CHANGES SINCE YEAR 2

As the Texas GEAR UP SG moved from the middle school to the high school with the cohort students, multiple changes occurred. One of the biggest changes in District 3 was the addition of staff to support Texas GEAR UP SG. Specifically, this district has worked to create a GEAR UP team that includes tutors, a data clerk, and a parent liaison. Although the district had tutors in the past, Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school administrators recognized that student were struggling in ELA courses so they arranged for an additional tutor to provide support in this subject. One data clerk position was added in Year 3 due to previous difficulties and inconsistency in data reporting for the grant. Finally, the parent liaison was added as a part-time position to help with the parent engagement aspect of Texas GEAR UP SG due to the struggles in meeting the target for parent participation. Each of these new positions provided needed support in areas that were previously identified as challenges or problems.

Another change is that during Year 3, there were more opportunities for one-on-one interactions between the College Preparation Advisor and students. Specifically, the College Preparation Advisor indicated that in Year 3, the role was more of an advisor to the students than in previous years. Previously, the College Preparation Advisor was responsible for more of the program planning, communication, and implementation and was unable to devote time to students individually. Each student in the cohort received individualized attention during a meeting, which typically focused on graduation plans, course selection, and student grades. Students were also able to receive additional personalized support through multiple mentoring opportunities added to the events and programs offered through the Texas GEAR UP SG in this district.

**Figure E.3: District 3 Focus Group and Interview Participants**

- Fall 2014 focus groups included:
  - 7 students
  - 6 parents
  - 7 teachers
  - 4 GEAR UP staff members
  - 3 community organizations
- Fall 2014 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor
  - School administrator
- Spring 2015 focus groups included:
  - 5 students
  - 4 parents
  - 2 teachers
  - 5 GEAR UP staff members
  - 2 community organizations
- Spring 2015 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor
  - School administrator

Finally, parents and students both indicated that they were more aware of the Texas GEAR UP SG and its benefits during Year 3. Additionally, they described more positive attitudes about the program; these improved perspectives were developed through experiencing various Texas GEAR UP SG activities. For example, one parent described this change in attitude: “When it first started in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I was like ‘oh, man, I don’t have time for all this’. It was like we are busy enough as it is. Now, I have plenty of time for GEAR UP...I am a lot more aware of the benefits for my kid and for the whole group. My attitude has changed.”

### DESCRIPTION OF YEAR 3 IMPLEMENTATION (2014–15)

During the 2014–15 school year, many programs were implemented in District 3 to support students and meet the Texas GEAR UP SG goals of student success, college awareness, and parent involvement. Texas GEAR UP SG staff in the district indicated that they felt there was more support from high school teachers and administrators than they felt in the middle school. This was exemplified in how school staff allowed Texas GEAR UP SG staff to work with students. Activities and events implemented during Year 3 are described in the following sections.

**Advanced Course Taking.** Parents and students are both aware of the Advanced Placement (AP) and dual credit courses that are available to students. Not only do they know that these are available, but they also understand the difference and see the importance of these classes to the students’ futures. Teachers indicated that Texas GEAR UP SG students are more aware of the importance of GPA and monitor their children’s grades more than previous cohorts of students. For example, a teacher said, “There seems to be kind of a better maturity level in the sense that they understand the consequences of some things going on.... they seem more conscientious of their grades.” The district is working to increase enrollment in the AP and dual-credit courses on campus because they want students to gain as many hours as they are able before entering college; dual-credit courses are offered by a community collaborator that is a nearby community college.

According to a school administrator, approximately 60% of the students in the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort in this district completed Algebra I in Grade 8; she indicated that this was done with a very high success rate. These students are now in Geometry or Advanced Geometry. The district is working to sustain the success of students in advanced math courses started through this grant, with all students currently in Grade 8 (i.e., one year behind the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort) taking Algebra I. To encourage student participation in advanced courses, the College Preparation Advisor and school counselor worked with students on their graduation plans; if students were not currently in an advanced course, the goal was to have them enrolled in at least one advanced course in Grade 10. Additionally, during one-on-one planning sessions with students, the College Preparation Advisor focused on the student’s strengths to identify appropriate advanced classes for their skills.

The main form of academic support provided to students in this district was tutoring. Tutors are available to students in all of the core classes, providing support in the classroom. One tutor in the district assists students with ELA courses, which was a barrier to student success in the past; students must pass State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness® (STAAR) in this area. Another tutor focuses on Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. This tutor has been working with these students since the start of Texas GEAR UP SG and has successfully been able to build relationships with students; she has also seen student success in academics as well as students moving out of the LEP program. There are also upperclassmen from the district who serve as tutors in the classroom and also provide tutoring before and after school. Beyond these dedicated tutors, teachers also provide tutoring to students as needed. Although

teachers see the value of these various tutors, they did not think that all students took advantage of this beneficial opportunity.

**Transition to High School.** The transition to high school was also supported by Texas GEAR UP SG efforts during Grade 8 to prepare students for high school. Communication to students about the high school started early so that the cohort could begin to feel comfortable with the transition. Additionally, all Grade 8 students were able to go to the high school in groups to spend a day there, go through course planning, and talk about future plans and what they would need to accomplish in high school.

To further help students make the transition from Grade 8 to high school, District 3 facilitated a four-day transition camp for students to attend in summer 2014. During this camp, students were able to meet with high school teachers, get to know the campus, and attend a culminating event (college visits and a luncheon meeting for students and parents). A high school administrator was very pleased with the success of this event and shared the following: “That really has made a big impact on how comfortable the kids felt coming in. I think it eased a lot of the nervousness about high school.” Despite these preparatory activities, some students discussed challenges associated with the transition to high school. They noted that high school requires more responsibility and more work. However, they did acknowledge the support of Texas GEAR UP SG as being key to their success. “It’s hard [going to high school], but with the help of the teachers and GEAR UP, they help you and it is not that hard anymore,” described one student.

Another aspect that facilitated the transition to high school was the relationships that students had built with the College Preparation Advisor and other GEAR UP staff (e.g., tutors, school college counselor who works with the GEAR UP team). Students know that these individuals are available to support them and there was a familiar face for them at the high school to make them feel more comfortable.

**Events and Programs.** Texas GEAR UP SG students in District 3 were given the opportunity to participate in various summer programs. For example, multiple subject-specific camps at the school provided additional academic support to students; there were geography, Algebra, and forensic science camps as well as one for students who did not pass state testing and needed to prepare for a retest. Like in other districts, a group of students were also able to attend the GeoFORCE summer program which included a trip to Florida in summer 2014. Students talked about learning a lot at this camp and reported having to study every day for a daily test. However, they indicated it was a fun and positive experience. A separate group of students participated in an engineering program for students before entering high school that involves math and engineering courses for participating students.

Another major event for students in this district was educational trips: both college visits and job shadowing trips. In terms of college visits, students were able to take trips to a variety of colleges and universities including a total of nine institutions. Students enjoyed these trips because they were able to explore college campuses and learn about what college will be like. Parents also saw the value in college visits; one parent shared, “I like the fact that they’re going to college campuses, getting an introduction and seeing what it’s about. A lot of kids don’t get that.” A school administrator indicated that not only are these trips beneficial for students, who are able to see a variety of college campuses and gain exposure, but that they have also been beneficial for teachers who serve as chaperones. Teachers learned valuable information about college admissions, financial aid, and the impact of the college visit on their students, which better prepared them to support students in terms of college awareness.

For the job shadowing trips, students were able to visit different local organizations to learn about job descriptions, daily job responsibilities, employee opportunities provided through STEM

education. Sometimes mentoring sessions were also a component of the job shadowing trips. Students were also able to participate in community service opportunities with some organizations; for example, students mentioned that they helped at a local food drive as well as at a local marathon. A community organization that supports these opportunities indicated that the community service opportunities give students, not only a chance to build their resume, but also an understanding of why being a good citizen is important.

Mentoring was another activity that was provided to students in District 3 during Year 3. The College Preparation Advisor and a community collaborator, Communities in Schools (CIS), provided students these mentoring services and the district also implemented a peer mentoring program. The district program matched Grade 11 students with Grade 9 students who are in the same school, and plan to continue the mentoring relationships in the 2015–16 and 2016–17 school years (i.e., the mentors will be in Grade 12 and the mentees will be the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort in Grade 10). The freshmen meet with their mentors approximately every two weeks, with approximately 30 students participating. This program was implemented because of difficulty in getting outside mentors for the students. Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school administrators shared how they believed that this mentoring is valuable to Texas GEAR UP SG students for multiple reasons. First, it has been difficult to get mentors for the Texas GEAR UP SG students into the district, so this opportunity provides students with one-on-one mentoring with an older, successful student. Additionally, a school administrator described that students who were successful in Grades 7 and 8 were struggling with the transition to high school, but the mentoring they received was a power tool to help ease their transition and promote success in high school.

Across all of the events and programs offered, the College Preparation Advisor indicated that success comes from promoting and marketing for the events to emphasize their importance, not only to students, but also to parents. Sharing why the various events are important for college or how they can support students helps to increase effectiveness of the activities as well as student engagement.

**Endorsements and Graduation Plans.** District 3 focused on endorsement and graduation plans by working directly with students on their graduation plans. The College Preparation Advisor indicated that, because this cohort of Grade 9 students need to graduate with an endorsement, getting them familiarized with the associated terms and graduations plans has been an important first step to ensure that there are no unpleasant surprises for them as upperclassmen. In this district, students were each required to select a major and a minor; the reasoning behind this was that until the end of Grade 10, students would be able to switch endorsements and not be behind. A school administrator explained that they built this plan of selecting two endorsements as a way to combat the indecisiveness of students of this age and allowing a “back-up plan” for students.

The administrator in this district felt that rolling out the endorsements and related student plans was going successfully, much due to planning that Texas GEAR UP SG and the district did; they worked to get feedback from students on desired endorsements and then presented information about the endorsements to not only students, but also their parents. Teachers felt this plan had been successful, and that it gave students direction toward graduation and college.

Some students indicated that they felt a bit limited on the endorsements from which they could choose, but others indicated that the endorsements met their interests. Although students understood that they were required to select a major and a minor, some expressed confusion on exactly what major and minor mean. Students also described being happy with courses that were directly related to their chosen field. For example, one student said, “I put criminal justice

as my major because of what I want to be when I get older.... In my criminal justice class, we have learned handcuffing, how to do drug searches, and how to do felony traffic stops. I'm just glad they're able to provide us that kind of stuff.... GEAR UP helped pick my classes, and I didn't even know they had these classes.”

**Community Alliances.** As with previous years of the grant, District 3 has involved community organizations as part of their implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG. This district has developed multiple alliances with community organizations to support and advise activities that are being implemented. One collaborator is CIS, who helps to meet the goal of mentoring students and providing job shadowing opportunities. CIS is responsible for the implementation of the peer mentoring program in this district. Through CIS, some students are also provided with counseling services. Through Texas GEAR UP SG, CIS provides career awareness and community service projects to students. The job shadowing trips fulfill this career awareness component. A school administrator indicated that one of the most successful pieces of the collaboration with CIS is that there is constant coordination to ensure that the Texas GEAR UP SG students are receiving benefits and the program is running smoothly. The CIS representative also corroborated this thought, indicating the communication is the key to a successful collaboration – communicating the mission and goals of the collaboration and what each party needs from the other. Although communication at the beginning of this collaboration was difficult because of limited understanding about the purpose, improved communication helped to enhance it.

District 3 has also worked to develop relationships with local community colleges that can provide resources and support to Texas GEAR UP SG students. For example, one higher education agency provides some PREP scholarships (in addition to the funding provided with Texas GEAR UP SG funds for students to attend), and connects students to resources and college awareness activities. Additionally, they host field trips for the cohort students. This investment in the successful implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG also indicated that the collaboration with the district is successful because the district is so invested in Texas GEAR UP SG; the district is punctual and follows through on commitments, which further promotes a positive and strong relationships.

**Parental Engagement.** One way that District 3 has focused on increasing parent engagement was by hiring a part-time parent liaison to facilitate communication with parents. Through this parent liaison, as well as through the College Preparation Advisor, this district encourages parents to be involved by providing individualized attention to parents. For example, the parent liaison described the following strategies to get parents involved: explaining to parents what GEAR UP is about, stating that it is a federally-funded grant, and sharing information about various activities. The College Preparation Advisor also described meeting one-on-one with parents so that they can ask questions or learn from people associated with Texas GEAR UP SG. A key element that makes this individualized attention successful is the personal relationships Texas GEAR UP SG staff developed with parents; the College Preparation Advisor shows interest and involvement by attending parent meetings and school sporting events. This helps to ensure that parents know who the College Preparation Advisor is and that they can reach out for support related to their students' education. Parents enjoyed that they were involved in the activities for their children; for example, parents were invited to attend the last day of the transition camp where they were introduced to their children's high school experiences.

Multiple events have been held for parents in District 3. Some parents attended the Texas GEAR UP conference, which parents reported having enjoyed. District 3 was able to increase parent attendance at parent meetings by offering multiple times for the same session. For example, parents could attend the meeting at 9:00 AM or 6:00 PM. This allowed parents with

varying work schedules or other responsibilities to be able to attend a meeting. Additionally, the College Preparation Advisor and Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator worked to improve parent involvement by communicating with parents in multiple ways. Parents preferred receiving information by text message or email to ensure that it is received. As such, the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator successfully used an automated text messaging application that was used to communicate with the parents about events. Additionally, the College Preparation Advisor was able to successfully connect with parents through a social media page. Although parents talked about the increase in number of communications they received about Texas GEAR UP SG, they felt more warmth and personalization in communications than in previous years of the Texas GEAR UP SG. They also indicated that communication was better received in Year 3 because they were timely. Parents who participated in the focus groups felt that the frequency of communication increased in Year 3 of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation.

Although parents who attended the various parent meetings thought that these meetings were helpful, they also indicated that these events became a bit repetitive when the same information was presented multiple times across years of the grant. To combat this, the district held a parent symposium on a Saturday that included a speaker from the Texas GEAR UP conference and various sessions that parents could attend. Because of parents' complaints about a lack of variety in information presented, this symposium provided new and different information. For example, there were speakers from health services to financial institutions; there were also various vendors who shared relevant information with parents. The school administrator said this symposium had a "profound impact" on the parents.

**Teacher Professional Development.** For Year 3, much of the teacher PD focused on PBL. This training was offered to teachers through various sessions offered at multiple points in time. When PBL training was provided more globally (i.e., across content areas), there was a lack of implementation in the classroom as teachers were not sure how to use the lessons learned in their own classes. For this reason, later PBL training was offered to specific content areas so teachers could see the applicability to their own classes and lessons.

Some PD also focused on differentiation as school administrators felt that teachers were struggling with addressing individual student needs. A school administrator indicated that they have "done six weeks of work on really getting to know your students, their academic needs, breaking apart where their strengths, their needs, their focus, what programs are they in."

Vertical alignment occurs consistently through the district, with teachers being aware of the vertical alignment work. Because this alignment occurs at the district level, there is coordination not only among different grades in the high school, but also between the middle school and the high school. Teachers indicated they knew vertical alignment activities were a conscious effort and these conversations help them to sufficiently understand what their students are coming into a class with and what they should be expected to know upon completion of the class.

### CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Most of the focus group participants during the site visits indicated that there had not been significant challenges in implementing the Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 3. However, one minor challenge was related to funding for Texas GEAR UP SG activities and internal barriers. There were often roadblocks to spending from the district, which led to frustration and difficulty getting funds at the right time. School administrators described how they were unable to spend funds for certain activities, even when the activities were put into the grant application and approved as part of the grant proposal or that to get approval for funding from the district, they were expected to provide information that was not available (e.g., names of all students attending a future event).

There were a few other challenges mentioned related to previously discussed topics. For example, the Texas GEAR UP SG staff described challenges in getting parents to meetings, such as a lack of reliable transportation and parents' busy schedules. Further, they thought that parents did not always understand the value of focusing on college when students are in Grade 9 and therefore would benefit from additional information about the Texas GEAR UP SG and its value to their children.

### **FUTURE PLANS**

This district has been planning for future grant activities, and specially summer actives that will occur during Summer 2015. At the time of the site visit, the College Preparation Advisor described planning four different endorsement-based summer camps for students. The College Preparation Advisor and Texas GEAR UP SG district coordinator were also identifying opportunities for students to attend external camps, such as an engineering camp, a writing camp at Boston University, a college access program at the University of Wisconsin, and a football camp at the UT. Students were encouraged to apply for these various programs to provide opportunities for them during the summer.

The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator in the district indicated that community service is one of the areas that they want to focus attention in the upcoming school year, with a goal of seeing more students civically engaged. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator indicated that a couple of big projects were planned, with approval processes in the works. Additionally, the coordinator discussed adding more local collaborators to be part of the Texas GEAR UP SG advisory council, to support the grant. A specific target for adding to this committee was a local credit union that could provide additional support to Texas GEAR UP SG students and their parents around financial literacy and saving for college. A school administrator also indicated that there were plans for teacher PD over the summer, to include vertical teams. Finally, the parent liaison discussed the possibility of conducting home visits with parents in an attempt to reach those who are unable to attend events at the school.

#### **E.4.2 Summary of Parent Survey Results**

The response rate for the Spring 2015 parent survey in this district was 45%, compared to 37% for the Spring 2014 survey and 48% for the Spring 2013 survey.

**Educational Expectations.** Table E.11 provides an overview of parent educational expectations. At the end of Grade 9, 84% of parents who responded to the spring 2015 survey indicated that they expected their child to obtain a four-year college degree or higher (an increase of five percentage points from spring 2014) and 8% did not expect their child to obtain any college degree.

**Table E.11. District 3 Parents' Educational Aspirations and Expectations for Their Children: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**

	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree	More than a Four-Year College Degree
<b>What is the highest level of education that you want your child to complete?</b>						
Spring 2013	134	2.2%	9.7%	11.9%	76.1%	
Spring 2014	109	0.9%	0.9%	6.4%	36.7%	55.0%
Spring 2015	136	4.4%	4.4%	4.4%	27.4%	59.3%
<b>What is the highest level of education that you expect your child will obtain?</b>						
Spring 2013	128	1.6%	10.2%	20.3%	68%	
Spring 2014	108	2.8%	2.8%	15.7%	34.3%	44.4%
Spring 2015	133	2.3%	6.0%	8.3%	33.1%	50.4%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014; Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Spring 2013 surveys only asked about four-year degree or higher whereas spring 2014 and spring 2015 surveys asked about four-year degree and more than a four-year degree separately.

**Discussions about College Entrance Requirements and Financial Aid.** Table E.12 includes survey data on the discussions parents had with Texas GEAR UP SG staff, school staff, and students about college entrance requirements. At the end of Grade 9, almost three-quarters of the parents (73%) who completed the spring 2015 survey reported that they had spoken to someone from their child's school or Texas GEAR UP SG about college entrance requirements. However, the majority of the parents responding to the survey indicated they had spoken with their child about attending college (95%). More than half of parents (63%) had spoken to someone from their child's school or Texas GEAR UP SG about the availability of financial aid; this reflects an increase of 21 percentage points from spring 2014.

**Table E.12. District 3 Parents' Reported Discussions with School Staff/GEAR UP staff and Their Child: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**

	n	Has anyone from your child's school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?	Have you talked with your child about attending college?	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?
Spring 2013	141-145	36.2%	92.2%	31.0%
Spring 2014	106-109	59.4%	97.2%	41.5%
Spring 2015	134-136	72.5%	94.9%	62.7%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014; Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages reflect respondents who selected Yes. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Knowledge of Financial Aid.** Just over a quarter of parents (26%) reported not being knowledgeable regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of their child pursuing postsecondary education (Table E.13); 17% of parents considered themselves extremely knowledgeable. The percentage of parents rating themselves as knowledgeable or extremely knowledgeable in spring 2015 (44%) was five percentage points higher than parents' self-ratings in spring 2014 (39%).

**Table E.13. District 3 Parents' Knowledge Regarding Financial Aid and the Costs/Benefits of Pursuing Postsecondary Education: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**

How much do you know about financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education?	n	Not Knowledgeable	Slightly Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
Spring 2013	141	22.7%	22.7%	31.2%	23.4%
Spring 2014	104	32.7%	27.9%	29.8%	9.6%
Spring 2015	133	25.6%	30.1%	27.8%	16.5%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014; Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages reflect respondents who selected Yes. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Perceived Ability to Afford Postsecondary Education.** Although parents' self-reported knowledge of financial aid and the cost and benefits of postsecondary education was low (Table E.13), parents' perception of their child/family being able to afford to attend a public four-year college was relatively high. As shown in Table E.14, 88% of parents who responded to the survey reported they could probably or definitely afford it (42% and 46%, respectively); this was relatively similar in spring 2014 (87%) but those selecting definitely was 11 percentage points higher in spring 2015. However, 12% of parents reported that they either definitely or probably could not afford for their child to attend a four-year college, a similar trend to spring 2014 in which 13% of parents selected either of these responses.

**Table E.14. District 3 Parents' Perceptions of Affordability, Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**

Do you think that your child could afford to attend a public four-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	n	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Not Sure	Probably	Definitely
Spring 2013	143	3.5%	5.6%	23.8%	42.7%	24.5%
Spring 2014	106	6.6%	6.6%	N/A	51.9%	34.9%
Spring 2015	125	4.0%	8.0%	N/A	42.4%	45.6%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. "Not Sure" was only a response option in Spring 2013.

**Overall Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG.** Overall, parents were satisfied with Texas GEAR UP SG as 96% of parents responding to the survey indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied (Table E.15).

**Table E.15. Parents' Satisfaction with GEAR UP Overall, Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**

Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your child's school?	n	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Spring 2013	112	2.7%	1.8%	54.5%	41.1%
Spring 2014	94	1.1%	11.7%	41.5%	45.7%
Spring 2015	136	3.8%	0.0%	42.5%	53.8%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

## E.5. Case Study: District 4

### E.5.1 Summary of Site Visit Findings

#### OVERVIEW

As part of the Year 3 Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation, ICF evaluators visited District 4 in the high school setting in both fall 2014 and spring 2015. This case study intends to extend the detailed story of implementation captured in the Year 1 and Year 2 implementation reports that focused on Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in the middle school setting. During each of these visits, the evaluation team conducted interviews with the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator, College Preparation Advisors, teachers, community organizations, parents, students, and school administrators (see Figure E.4 for detailed participant list). The sections that follow summarize themes throughout these groups as well as distinctions within them. This section of the report provides information about the Texas GEAR UP SG activities occurring in this district during summer 2014 and during the 2014–15 school year, challenges encountered, and plans for the Texas GEAR UP SG in the district.

#### CHANGES SINCE YEAR 2

Both students and parents explained that they increasingly see value in the Texas GEAR UP SG program as the timeline for college application processes and high school graduation nears. For example, many shared how they are developing a deeper understanding about the importance and benefits of college for career success. As parents are becoming more familiar with Texas GEAR UP SG, they are beginning to express interest in learning how to support their children in the completion of scholarship and college entrance applications. Parents would like to learn more about the scholarship application process in general such as where to find the application and what is required. Parents feel that the information Texas GEAR UP SG provides becomes more useful as students' deepen their commitment to attend college. However, some teachers did not see any difference in the college-going culture among this cohort of Grade 9 students as compared to prior years and noted that increased parent involvement is needed to affect that change.

Furthermore, students not only reported a stronger understanding of the importance of college, but also acknowledged the need to prepare themselves by setting goals and establishing intermediate steps towards college. They expressed a strong consensus in needing a college education in order to be successful after high school. Teachers and administrators shared how Texas GEAR UP SG students are receiving more college-related information in Grade 9, as opposed to the typical timeline of waiting until Grade 11. The information and activities related to college has been opening students' as well as parents' minds to educational opportunities.

**Figure E.4: District 4 Focus Group and Interview Participants**

- Fall 2014 focus groups included:
  - 20 students
  - 13 parents
  - 21 teachers
- Fall 2014 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor(s)
  - 5 school administrators
  - 6 district leaders
  - 2 community organizations
- Spring 2015 focus groups included:
  - 18 students
  - 16 parents
  - 15 teachers
- Spring 2015 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor(s)
  - 5 school administrators
  - 1 community organization

### DESCRIPTION OF YEAR 3 IMPLEMENTATION (2014–15)

The technical assistance provider contract (and the funding for College Preparation Advisors by extension) was delayed in Year 3 which one school administrator suggested prevented the coordination and execution of Texas GEAR UP SG activities in the beginning of the school year. The school administrator stated the following: “It was maybe until late December, right before we went on break, that we were able to utilize those funds.” A Texas GEAR UP SG staff person expressed a limited understanding about the unavailability of grant funds during the fall semester saying, “We had been told [GEAR UP SG money] hadn’t come. I don’t even know what that means, but we were told it hadn’t come so we weren’t able to do a lot of activities.” However, there was still some implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG as it related to academic support, high school transition, events/activities, endorsements, community alliances, parent engagement, and teacher PD.

**Advanced Course Taking.** In District 4, test preparation courses include practice for college entrance exams (i.e., ACT, SAT) and the TSI test.<sup>155</sup> Students who were part of the Honor Scholar program participated in this course to learn about testing formats, procedures, and tips for exams such as the SAT, ACT, and TSI. Students described the content of the course as “more flexible than [an] actual class.” Some teachers did not perceive the preparation course as useful for the students because students in Grade 9 might not yet realize the impact that these exams have on their postsecondary education. Instead, teachers suggested that students take more content-specific courses.

Students who participated in focus groups shared their experiences taking advanced classes, including the opportunity to demonstrate their willingness to work hard and succeed. They enjoyed learning through interactive teaching strategies that teachers in the advanced classes used. Although students expressed that they would like their courses to be more challenging, teachers showed concern for students’ readiness for such rigor. Teachers participating in focus groups spoke about concerns with students writing skills with statements such as the following: “[Students] complain about writing issues. I see it in Social Studies. I incorporate writing all the time into my lessons and it’s just a terrible skill that they have. They don’t like doing it.” During focus groups, teachers expressed interest in being a part of curriculum writing as a way to increase course rigor.

Tutoring was a primary source of academic support for students in advanced courses, offered by teachers as part of existing district requirements. Students were identified for tutoring based on factors such as grades, attendance, and parent recommendation. College Preparation Advisors had minimal role in selecting students to receive tutoring services. One school administrator noted that these services appeared to be effective in providing supplemental academic support to students.

Parents noted that their children are aware of and interested in enrolling in dual credit courses once they are permitted to (beginning in students’ junior year). Students expressed similar awareness and interest about dual credit courses. A school counselor recommended having Texas GEAR UP SG staff continue raising student awareness about the benefits of these courses when they go to college.

**Transition to High School.** Students described their perceptions of high school as compared to middle school in the following ways:

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<sup>155</sup> The TSI is used to determine readiness for college coursework and identifies needs for any developmental coursework. For more information see <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=C92F1DAA-D49E-03F0-0750060AA756E807>

- teachers are willing to help you as long as you try;
- school projects require more effort, yet are more interesting; and
- not passing a class has greater consequence.

To assist students in their transition from middle school to high school, Fish Camp allowed students to obtain their class schedules and tour the high school campus. Fish Camp was described by students, parents, and teachers as having eased the students' transition into high school. One activity of the Fish Camp was for students in Grade 9 to read letters that the seniors had written to them including on how to succeed in high school, an aspect of the camp that many participants noted as successful. The Fish Camp was also an opportunity to encourage students to go directly to class instead of spending time in the hallways in-between their classes, something that was a challenge for students in Grade 9 in past years. Students added that participating in high school activities allowed them to become acclimated. These activities lessened the stress that students, as well as parents, often endure when navigating this transition by helping them know where to go for support.

Texas GEAR UP SG efforts in having students develop a portfolio was noted to have helped raise students' grades by using binders to have students store projects and work samples. Parents mentioned that some of Texas GEAR UP SG activities teach students how to track recognitions, awards, letters of recommendation, and community service hours and they found that to be a relevant skill to have as students begin to apply for jobs, scholarships, and colleges. One teacher expressed an interest in having her students transition from the binder to digital format using students' touch screen smart tablets. This way, the information within their portfolio is more readily available.

Parents appreciated their children being able to have opportunities to ease into the transition from middle school. They described one activity in particular – a discussion about class ranking – helped to motivate students to check their grades through healthy competition.

Teachers noted that the students lacked some essential skills related to being able to succeed academically in high school. For example, concerns with students' note-taking abilities, study skills, motivation to complete homework, and responsibility. Teachers shared how this presented challenges in being able to increase academic rigor and improve college preparedness. Accordingly, teachers emphasized the need for vertical alignment to introduce these skills earlier.

**Events and Programs.** Similar to prior years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, students enjoyed attending college visits as an opportunity to explore a college campus and make college attendance seem more feasible.

College visits to three universities in the state, including large and small campuses, offered students an opportunity to compare various college options. In some cases, college visits were planned last minute due to delayed district approval; as a result, only a small number of students were able to attend. Additionally, Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school administrators reported being unable to plan college visits in the fall semester and indicated they delayed planning these visits because the Year 3 award to the technical assistance provider contract had not been completed. This reasoning was provided even though TEA staff indicated schools should proceed with activities and the school had received their notice of grant award. Challenges in scheduling college visits in the spring semester, as described by various participants, related to standardized testing (i.e., the district only allowed college visits during a two-week window in April). An administrator captured these two major challenges to implementing college visits: “[Teachers] have to cover so much, especially during the spring. It’s really a crunch time. And with the budget not being available to us in the fall, we could have

accomplished a lot of those field trips and guest speakers early on, versus waiting to right before our state assessments.” Other barriers included district requirements to have six-week notice for transportation requests. Once approved, Texas GEAR UP SG staff faced the hurdle of trying to secure chaperones and have students return forms on short notice; without these final requirements in place, some college visits were cancelled altogether. As one Texas GEAR UP SG staff member stated, “a lot of field trips got cancelled because the planning happened so rockily.”

Teachers provided feedback about student participation in college visits and other TX GEAR UP SG-sponsored trips. Some suggested the need for being more selective about who is able to attend as students with poor grades or behavior were permitted to go which rewarded and took them out of classes they were not doing well in. Teachers also shared challenges with Texas GEAR UP SG being able to offer endorsement-specific college visits given that some endorsements have over 100 students. One example was a college visit to a university that focused on criminal justice. The university was unable to accommodate the visit due to its large size; therefore, students within this endorsement were unable to attend an endorsement-specific field trip.

Students spoke about the summer programs in which they had participated during the previous summer (2014). These camps included a writing camp at a nearby university, programs through Upward Bound, trips with Geoforce, and programs with a theme park. Students stated how much they appreciated the variety in summer programs and how it prepared them for high school classes.<sup>156</sup> For example some students participated in a criminal justice camp which helped prepare them for courses related to their endorsement. These students also suggested that criminal justice field trips during the school year would be a useful extension of the summer program. Students expressed interest in having Texas GEAR UP SG offer or provide information about more summer activities for the upcoming summer (2015). Some parents who participated in focus groups stated that Texas GEAR UP SG did not provide them with any information about summer programs, suggesting the need for a better system to communicate opportunities with parents. As discussed in more detail on the Challenges in Implementation section, delays in district approval had a negative impact on the capacity of Texas GEAR UP SG to offer timely information about available summer programs.

District 4 provided some activities during Year 3 related to career exploration. Field trips to a local manufacturer and blood bank exposed students to a few career options. Some students mentioned that not all Texas GEAR UP SG students were notified of these field trips. Additionally, many participants (from various stakeholder groups) stated that the career assessment that students completed was not helpful because it pointed students to careers that they had minimal or no interest in.

Site visit data about financial lessons from TG represented mixed reactions. Students shared how the lessons provided them with a stronger understanding of the financial aspects of college; for example, the difference between loans and scholarships and options to make postsecondary education affordable. One Texas GEAR UP SG staff member reported that some TG presentations were not engaging for students (in particular a lesson on how to monitor your spending) requiring the individual to re-teach the material in a different way to make sure students received and understood the information.

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<sup>156</sup> Upward Bound is a federal program that provides fundamental support to participants in their preparation for college entrance. More about the program can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/trioupbound/index.html>. GeoFORCE is an experiential outreach program. See <http://www.jsu.utexas.edu/geoforce> for additional information about this program.

District 4 hosted a panel of high school senior students to discuss their advice on preparing for college. Teachers thought this was helpful because it provided the students with a peer perspective on things they should consider as they continue through high school but suggested that it should have been planned more thoughtfully by having participants think of questions in advance. Other resources from District 4 in Year 3 included collaboration with a city-funded center that serves as a “one-stop-shop” for college access advice, guidance, and workshops; teachers spoke positively about students’ use of those resources.

**Endorsements and Graduation Plans.** District 4 offered various Texas GEAR UP SG activities related to endorsements in Year 3. For example, some students took a questionnaire about their interests and received guidance from their school counselors in exploring these interests. Students also had the opportunity to speak with high school teachers, attend presentations on each of the endorsements, and visit information booths set up in the auditorium. Texas GEAR UP SG staff report how they work together with school counselors to reinforce the importance of grades and inform students about their endorsements. However, some teachers stated that students continued to be confused about what endorsements were and which ones they had selected; additionally one teacher explained that, “most [students] didn’t know what their endorsements were.” They suggested that Texas GEAR UP SG staff present details about endorsements to teachers as well as students.

Students have created four-year plans to map out the requirements for their endorsements. During a site visit, one of the school counselors mentioned that only a few students have changed their endorsement even though they have the option to do so. Feedback from students and school administrators noted the need for endorsement to allow for paths other than four-year college degrees (such as technical school) and that there is an overemphasis of STEM fields.

**Community Alliances.** Community organizations that supported Texas GEAR UP SG in District 4 in Year 3 included Big Brother/Big Sisters and Communities in Schools (CIS), although they were not necessarily initiated through Texas GEAR UP SG.<sup>157</sup> The collaboration with Big Brothers/Big Sisters in the high school began in Year 3. The program allowed for some Texas GEAR UP SG students to receive mentoring from college students. CIS helped to connect a subset of Texas GEAR UP SG students (as well as students in other grades) to various community supports such as city-funded organization that offers a boys’ group, teambuilding activities, and guest speaker events. Although CIS is able to support Texas GEAR UP SG events/activities when possible, there are times when CIS responsibilities took priority (such as not attending a GEAR UP SG-sponsored college visit due to commitments to offer one-on-one services to others students at the high school. As CIS only provides their individualized supports to a subset of the Texas GEAR UP SG students in the primary cohort (students in Grade 9 in Year 3), collaboration with the College Preparation Advisor is a way to reassess who might benefit from those services.

**Parental Engagement.** Texas GEAR UP SG staff stated that there has not been significant change in parental involvement since the program’s inception. Teachers echoed this finding by describing minimal, if any, parental involvement. For example, parents participating in focus groups were generally unaware of the Texas GEAR UP SG website and no parents who participated in focus groups reported attending financial literacy events over the past year. Although, some parents expressed interest in scholarship information sessions. For those who

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<sup>157</sup> Big Brothers Big Sisters of America is a volunteer-supported mentoring network. More about the program can be found at <http://www.bbbs.org>.

attended the Texas GEAR UP conference, they described positive experiences saying that there were “great motivational speakers” and the breakout sessions were informative. Other events that parents did attend included information sessions with Princeton Review, which parent participants said included useful information about college entrance requirements.<sup>158</sup> Parent events are an opportunity for parents to learn about students’ transcripts, the importance of class rank, and available summer programs. Parents expressed that they enjoyed these opportunities because the school explores ways to “make it interesting and fun for them to learn” and reported that they provide “lots of information.”

Parents who are currently involved in Texas GEAR UP SG activities (as well as students) would like to see increased parental involvement. District 4 explored different methods of communication, such as post cards, marquee messages, and automated phone messages. Although parents stated a preference for communication via telephone (call or text) or email, Texas GEAR UP SG staff reported difficulty maintaining parents’ current contact information. Parents also shared how the automated phone message system, used for many school events/activities is very long and includes so much information that it is not a useful strategy for outreach. Incentives such as food was well-received by parents, especially for evening sessions. To accommodate parents’ various schedules and availability, offering meetings at multiple times during the day was something parents and other site visit participants reported as a useful strategy. During the focus group, many parents stated that they are often unaware of events or learn about it at the last minute. Parent participants suggested that an online calendar with details on Texas GEAR UP SG events would be an effective strategy to notify parents of upcoming events; parents also suggested text message reminders as a way to encourage them to attend an activity. Other suggested strategies included information packets for parents unable to attend specific events.

**Teacher Professional Development.** Teachers also expressed interest in receiving trainings that would help them to incorporate other subjects into their classroom to teach cross-subject lessons. Vertical alignment trainings in District 4 were not sustained for the duration of the school year; teachers from both schools reported that it was not a priority over aligning the curriculum to new benchmarks. Additionally, instances in which vertical alignment occurred it was within the high school and did not include collaboration with middle schools. For example, Pre-Advanced Placement courses in the middle schools do not follow a specific curriculum (and was often not sufficiently rigorous) making it difficult to ensure the content sufficiently prepares students for Advanced Placement courses in high school. Teachers also expressed a need for more PD in differentiating curriculum to both offer rigorous curriculum but also teach students at their instructional levels.

Some teachers who participated in the focus groups spoke about the usefulness of sessions they attended at the Texas GEAR UP conference; one example was how a teacher learned more about using tablet devices and applied that to classes for students in Grade 9 (the primary GEAR UP SG cohort) and in upper grades as well. The District primarily sent teachers who teach students in Grade 9 and those who did attend suggested that having sophomore-level teachers attend would facilitate Texas GEAR UP SG implementation for the forthcoming year (Year 4). Some teachers even suggested that Texas GEAR UP SG staff provide PD so they can help “[prepare] the students for rigorous courses, [make] sure that they are successful in high school and ready for college.” Various participants requested for early notification about available PD to enable teachers to prioritize and plan ahead of time.

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<sup>158</sup> Princeton Review is a [test preparation](http://www.princetonreview.com/) and [college admission](http://www.princetonreview.com/) services company offering test preparation services, tutoring and admissions resources, online courses, and books. More details about the organization are available at <http://www.princetonreview.com/>.

## CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout the site visits, participants shared various challenges that created barriers to implementing Texas GEAR UP SG in District 4. In many cases, these are issues that emerged in prior years but manifest slightly differently in the high school setting and as the program finished the third year of implementation.

In an effort to meet students' emotional and social needs, in addition to their academic needs, the district conducted an emotional intelligence test with all students in Grade 9 in the beginning of the school year or during summer programs. Teachers received an hour and a half PD presentation on emotional intelligence and how to interpret the test results, yet the presentation did not seem to have any connections to Texas GEAR UP SG. District leaders who participated in interviews spoke positively including the following statement: "the kids really enjoyed it." Contrastingly, Texas GEAR UP SG staff did not describe a role in its planning and one stated: "I don't know much about it, but from what I've heard from other people who are involved, they are also very unhappy that they're spending all this money on a program that they're not necessarily seeing the value of, and it also takes up a lot of time and a lot of organization on our part." A school counselor expressed concerns about students' negative perceptions in that it may deter students from participating in future summer camps; this individual stated that, "the kids really hated it. I heard it all year long. I continue to hear about it, because the kids will say, 'I hope [the summer program] is not going to be like last year.'"

Overall, teachers and parents expressed an interest in increased communication from the Texas GEAR UP SG staff. Teachers stated that they were unaware of the Texas GEAR UP SG program prior to the beginning of the 2014–15 school year and that they would have benefited from an overview presentation. As stated in the prior section, teacher participation in field trips is limited due to the last minute planning; parents reported a similar challenge in being able to attend Texas GEAR UP SG events. This is similar to concerns various participants expressed with being able to offer and notify students of available summer programs. For example, Texas GEAR UP SG staff waiting for district approval on the list of summer programs for over seven months. By the time they received that approval, many application deadlines had passed and students/parents had already made summer plans.

A few teachers also described need for more professional norms with common trends in students requesting to leave class to go to the GEAR UP office while not always engaging in substantive activities while there. A few participants from various stakeholder groups spoke about how students sometimes request to go to the GEAR UP office without any specific purpose and as one teacher stated, "They just want to go and hang out." Teachers would like to see other potential opportunities that Texas GEAR UP SG can bring by seeing how the program has evolved and improved other schools and their students. Similarly, parents stated that their students "envy" students at another high school that is implementing GEAR UP because the administration at that school is perceived as more supportive. Some parents also shared their own perceptions that they thought the school was not doing enough GEAR UP activities. One school counselor explained that she sees how the Texas GEAR UP SG program has good intentions and suggested it could be more effective if it were cohesive by aligning GEAR UP efforts to the school schedule, curriculum, and student population. A school counselor offered a suggestion to have the Texas GEAR UP SG schedule planned out for the school year.

When asked about sustainability during interviews or focus groups, many participants indicated that District 4 has minimal focus in this area. As two Texas GEAR UP SG staff members shared, the district operates in a compliance-focused manner with less interest in the actual program efforts or long-term goals. This includes predominantly last minute coordination of activities and events that are not as successful or effective as they could be. According to this

individual, “the [district is not] interested in sustainability” explaining that the district is compliance-motivated, rather than focused on effective strategy implementation and maintaining that over time.

College Preparation Advisor responsibilities (as intended) include one-on-one student advising, field trip coordination, and activity planning. However, taking on responsibilities of grant management (developing programs, maintaining compliance, and managing the budget) as well as leading tense conversations with school administrators has reportedly hindered the capacity to engage in direct student services (such as advising). As one participant shared, “it takes a lot of time out from working with the kids, planning events that aren’t necessarily GEAR UP-backed or something that we didn’t come up with and we just got told what to do.” The lack of Texas GEAR UP SG activities in the fall semester frustrated school administrators who then “came down pretty hard” on Texas GEAR UP SG staff.

With the Texas GEAR UP SG district coordinator’s time split between GEAR UP and other district responsibilities, many participants noted that the individual has minimal engagement directly with the school. For example, one school administrator commended the College Preparation Advisor for playing a stronger leadership role than the Texas GEAR UP SG district coordinator who, according to the school administrator, serves more as a “messenger than the full-on coordinator.” A counselor specified how Texas GEAR UP SG has the capacity to do more for the district and would like to see all of the staff utilized to increase the impact and reach more families.

### FUTURE PLANS

Upcoming activities that Texas GEAR UP SG staff discussed includes a ropes course, a showing of *First Generation* a documentary that follows students who are demographically similar to the district’s student population), events with guest speakers, an increased number of parent nights, a PSAT camp, and a scavenger hunt. A college readiness camp will also be offered to STEM students.<sup>159</sup>

English teachers were hopeful about continuing to collaborate with Texas GEAR UP SG staff on helping students practice writing college application essays. However, some teachers spoke about how students will receive a novel to read over the summer for Texas GEAR UP SG. According to these participants, this assignment was not communicated to them and conflicts with the summer reading that they already assigned. In the future, the hope to communicate and coordinate to avoid such overlap.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff, parents, and teachers all suggested the need to improve communication. For example, Texas GEAR UP SG staff would like better communication with other Texas GEAR UP SG staff and the district to improve program planning. Parents and teachers wanted more advanced notice about events and activities. For example, parents need to plan ahead in order to find childcare, leave work early, and plan around the needs of their other children. Many expressed interest in more regular contact so that they could learn more about GEAR UP and assist their child in becoming college ready. Teachers suggested providing “an overview presentation” at the beginning of the school year that covers specifically Texas GEAR UP SG. An administrator recommended that it would be helpful to provide teachers with “a brochure of professional development for the summer.”

Forthcoming site visits to District 4 will inquire follow-up discussion about the extent to which these plans have been implemented.

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<sup>159</sup> More information about the documentary can be found at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1218505/>.

### E.5.2 Summary of Parent Survey Results

The response rate for the Spring 2015 parent survey in this district was 7%, compared to 38% for the Spring 2014 survey.

**Educational Expectations.** Table E.16 provides an overview of parent educational expectations. At the end of Grade 9, 71% of parents who responded to the spring 2015 survey indicated that they expected their child to obtain a four-year college degree or higher and 12% did not expect their child to obtain any college degree.

**Table E.16. District 4 Parents' Educational Expectations for Their Children: Spring 2015**

	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree	More than a Four-Year College Degree
What is the highest level of education that you <u>want</u> your child to complete?	53	11.3%	7.5%	5.7%	28.3%	47.2%
What is the highest level of education that you expect your child will obtain?	51	7.8%	9.8%	11.8%	37.3%	33.3%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Discussions about College Entrance Requirements and Financial Aid.** Table E.17 includes survey data on the discussions parents had with Texas GEAR UP SG staff, school staff, and students about college entrance requirements. At the end of Grade 9, just over 40% of the parents (41%) who completed the spring 2015 survey reported that they had spoken to someone from their child's school or Texas GEAR UP SG about college entrance requirements. However, the majority of the parents responding to the survey indicated they had spoken with their child about attending college (90%). Almost half of parents (43%) had spoken to someone from their child's school or Texas GEAR UP SG about the availability of financial aid.

**Table E.17. District 4 Parents' Reported Discussions with School Staff/GEAR UP staff and Their Child, Spring 2015**

	n	Percentage Selecting Yes	Percentage Selecting No
Has anyone from your child's school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?	51	41.2%	58.8%
Have you talked with your child about attending college?	52	90.4%	9.6%
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?	51	43.1%	56.9%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Knowledge of Financial Aid.** Just over a quarter of parents (36%) reported not being knowledgeable regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of their child pursuing postsecondary education (Table E.18); 10% of parents considered themselves extremely knowledgeable.

**Table E.18. District 4 Parents’ Knowledge Regarding Financial Aid and the Costs/Benefits of Pursuing Postsecondary Education: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Spring 2015**

	n	Not Knowledgeable	Slightly Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
How much do you know about financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education?	50	36.0%	28.0%	26.0%	10.0%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Perceived Ability to Afford Postsecondary Education.** Although parents’ self-reported knowledge of financial aid and the cost and benefits of postsecondary education was low (Table E.19), parents’ perception of their child/family being able to afford to attend a public four-year college was relatively high. As shown in Table E.19, 86% of parents who responded to the survey reported they could probably or definitely afford it (59% and 28%, respectively). However, 14% of parents reported that they either definitely or probably could not afford for their child to attend a four-year college.

**Table E.19. District 4 Parents’ Perceptions of Affordability, Spring 2015**

	n	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Probably	Definitely
Do you think that your child could afford to attend a public four-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family’s resources?	51	3.9%	9.8%	58.8%	27.5%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Overall Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG.** Overall, parents were satisfied with Texas GEAR UP SG as 95% of parents responding to the survey indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied (Table E.20).

**Table E.20. District 4 Parents’ Satisfaction with GEAR UP Overall, Spring 2015**

	n	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your child’s school?	36	0.0%	5.6%	63.9%	30.6%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2015)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

## Appendix F: Implementation Analyses Technical Detail

To facilitate ease of reading, much of the data provided in Chapter 2 has been summarized to highlight issues of particular interest. This appendix provides more detailed tables related to the range of findings reported in Chapter 2.

### F.1 Characteristics of Students Participating in Texas GEAR UP State Grant, 2014–15

As of March 2015, 2,155 Grade 9 students attended one of the six participating Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) state grant (SG) high schools. Demographic information about the students is presented in Table F.1. At four of the six high schools, the majority of students were Hispanic/Latino (ranging from 62% to 98%). The percentage of students identified as limited English proficient (LEP), which averaged 11% across all schools, varied by campus, with High School J and High School L having lower percentages of LEP students (2% and 4%, respectively) as compared to other campuses (9% to 18%). The comprehensive report analyzes outcomes with regard to both current and former LEP status students. Additional demographic and prior performance information on students are available in that report.

**Table F.1. Primary Cohort Student Demographic Characteristics by School, 2014–15 (Grade 9)**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Number of Students	Hispanic/Latino Students	Limited English Proficient
High School H	475	98.3%	9.9%
High School I	474	98.1%	9.5%
High School J	197	47.2%	1.5%
High School K	572	61.7%	17.5%
High School L	117	47.9%	4.3%
High School M	320	89.1%	9.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,155</b>	<b>79.8%</b>	<b>10.7%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2015.

### F.3 Advanced Course Taking, 2012–13, 2013–14, 2014–15

**Table F.2. Enrollment of Primary Cohort Students in Advanced Courses, by Grade Level and Number of Advanced Courses: 2012–13 (Grade 7), 2013–14 (Grade 8), 2014–15 (Grade 9)**

Advanced Course Enrollment Status	Grade 7, 2012–13		Grade 8, 2013–14		Grade 9, 2014–15	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Not enrolled in any advanced course	1,370	68.2%	885	46.0%	957	44.4%
Enrolled in 1 advanced course	234	11.6%	583	30.3%	271	12.6%
Enrolled in 2 advanced courses	190	9.5%	131	6.8%	191	8.9%
Enrolled in 3 advanced courses	216	10.7%	141	7.3%	229	10.6%
Enrolled in 4 advanced courses	n/a	n/a	184	9.6%	507	23.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,010</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1,924</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,155</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2015.

Note: There were no social studies advanced courses offered in Grade 7.

**Table F.3. Enrollment of Primary Cohort Students in Advanced Courses, by Content Area, Grade Level, and School: 2012–13 (Grade 7) and 2013–14 (Grade 8)**

Grade and Content Area	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G	Total
<b>n (Grade 7, 2012–13)</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>2,010</b>
Mathematics (Pre-Algebra and Other)	18.8%	22.9%	19.8%	28.4%	21.9%	26.0%	19.6%	22.2%
English Language Arts	15.6%	26.3%	14.4%	37.8%	0.4%	31.3%	14.6%	19.6%
Science	19.1%	26.6%	18.7%	41.3%	0.7%	26.3%	18.3%	20.9%
<b>n (Grade 8, 2013–14)</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>1,924</b>
Mathematics (Algebra I and Other)*	27.7%	26.8%	27.8%	27.0%	98.2%	31.3%	54.6%	42.5%
English Language Arts*	20.4%	32.3%	20.9%	36.2%	0.0%	37.5%	0.6%	20.7%
Science*	20.8%	29.1%	20.4%	38.8%	0.0%	38.7%	0.6%	20.7%
Social Studies*	16.4%	36.1%	19.1%	33.7%	0.0%	36.5%	1.0%	20.2%

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, Spring 2013 and Spring 2014.

\* Grade 8, Between School Differences by Content Area: Mathematics:  $\chi^2(6) = 477.0, p < 0.001$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(6) = 257.8, p < 0.001$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(6) = 264.8, p < 0.001$ ; Social Studies:  $\chi^2(6) = 268.5, p < 0.001$

Note: Percentages are slightly different than the percentages of students enrolled in Algebra I or equivalent that was reported in the Annual Performance Report. These percentages include mathematics courses that are considered advanced although not equivalent to Algebra I.

**Table F.4. Enrollment of Primary Cohort Students in Advanced Courses, by Content Area, Grade Level, and School, 2014–15 (Grade 9)**

Grade and Content Area	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M	Total
<b>N (Grade 9, 2014–15)</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>2,155</b>
Mathematics*	50.1%	37.1%	19.3%	29.2%	96.6%	31.3%	44.6%
English Language Arts*	59.4%	46.2%	35.5%	26.6%	100.0%	38.1%	38.6
Science*	46.1%	38.2%	21.8%	26.7%	100.0%	35.9%	38.4%
Social Studies*	42.9%	25.9%	18.8%	26.6%	100.0%	35.3%	34.6%

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2015.

\* Percentage of enrollment was significantly different across schools for each subject area. Mathematics:  $\chi^2(5) = 252.5, p < 0.001$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(5) = 274.9, p < 0.001$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(5) = 256.1, p < 0.001$ ; Social Studies  $\chi^2(5) = 289.5, p < 0.001$ .

Note: Taking Algebra I in Grade 9 was not defined as advanced unless student was enrolled in a pre-AP or AP mathematics course.

**Table F.5. Percentages of Primary Cohort Students by Endorsements and by School, 2014–15 (Grade 9)**

Grade and Content Area	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M	Total
<b>N (Grade 9, 2014–15)</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>2,155</b>
<b>One Endorsement Selected</b>							
Arts and Humanities	9.5%	8.6%	4.6%	32.2%	17.9%	5.9%	14.8%
Business and Industry	19.4%	31.2%	37.1%	29.5%	16.2%	23.1%	26.7%
Multidisciplinary Studies	0.0%	0.0%	7.6%	1.0%	4.3%	0.0%	1.2%
Public Service	30.5%	40.9%	33.5%	28.5%	8.5%	3.1%	27.3%
STEM	19.2%	0.2%	8.6%	8.4%	53.0%	9.4%	11.6%
<b>Two or More Endorsements</b>							
Arts and Humanities							
Business and Industry	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	1.1%
Arts and Humanities Public Service	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5%	1.0%
Arts and Humanities STEM	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	0.8%
Business and Industry Public Service	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.7%	1.5%
Business and Industry STEM	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.2%	2.4%
Public Service STEM	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	1.2%
<b>No Endorsement Selected</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>
<b>Not on Foundation High School Program</b>	<b>19.8%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2015.

Note: All students selecting two endorsements were at School M, with 60% of students at that school selecting more than one endorsement. During site visits, this was described as selecting a major and a minor.

#### F.4 Student Support Services: Tutoring (Implementation Year 3)

**Table F.6. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Mathematics Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in Mathematics by School, 2014–15**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade 9 (Start of School Year- March 31, 2015)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring
High School H	475	2.7%	1.2
High School I	474	24.1%	2.7
High School J	197	75.1%	10.9
High School K	572	71.9%	6.0
High School L	117	17.1%	1.5
High School M	320	40.6%	12.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,155</b>	<b>32.6%</b>	<b>7.1</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2015.

\* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 9:  $\chi^2(5) = 699.9, p < .0001$ .

**Table F.7. Primary Cohort Students Receiving English Language Arts Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in English Language Arts by School, 2014–15**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade 9 (Start of School Year- March 31, 2015)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring
High School H	475	4.6%	1.4
High School I	474	3.0%	2.3
High School J	197	30.5%	5.1
High School K	572	8.6%	6.0
High School L	117	6.0%	2.5
High School M	320	6.3%	11.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,155</b>	<b>8.0%</b>	<b>6.7</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2015.

\* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 9:  $\chi^2(5) = 161.3, p < .0001$ .

**Table F.8. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Science Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in Science by School, 2014–15**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade 9 (Start of School Year- March 31, 2015)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring
High School H	475	16.8%	2.5
High School I	474	1.5%	0.6
High School J	197	33.5%	9.3
High School K	572	40.9%	7.3
High School L	117	0.0%	-
High School M	320	16.6%	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,155</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>7.0</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2015.

\* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 9:  $\chi^2(5) = 309.9, p < .0001$ .

**Table F.9. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Social Studies Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in Social Studies by School, 2014–15**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade 9 (Start of School Year- APR DATE)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring
High School H	475	0.0%	-
High School I	474	6.3%	0.9
High School J	197	18.3%	6.4
High School K	572	0.0%	-
High School L	117	0.0%	-
High School M	320	10.9%	15.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,155</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>7.8</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2015.

\* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 9:  $\chi^2(5) = 169.5, p < .0001$ .

## F.5 Student Support Services: Mentoring (Implementation Year 3)

**Table F.10. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Mentoring and Average Number of Hours Mentored, by School, 2014–15**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade 9 (Start of School to March 31, 2015)		
	n	% of Students Received Mentoring	Average Hours of Mentoring
High School H	475	10.5%	10.0
High School I	474	3.8%	5.9
High School J	197	12.7%	2.6
High School K	572	5.4%	1.0
High School L	117	21.4%	16.8
High School M	320	20.0%	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,155</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>5.8</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2015.

\* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 9:  $\chi^2(5) = 88.6, p < .0001$ .

## F.6 Student Support Services: Counseling (Implementation Year 3)

**Table F.11. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Counseling and Average Number of Hours Couseled, by School, 2014–15**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade 9 (Start of School to March 31, 2015)		
	n	% of Students Received Counseling	Average Hours of Counseling
High School H	475	51.2%	1.0
High School I	474	66.2%	2.1
High School J	197	99.5%	1.3
High School K	572	57.0%	1.5
High School L	117	86.3%	0.8
High School M	320	93.8%	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,155</b>	<b>68.7%</b>	<b>1.8</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2015.

\* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 9:  $\chi^2(5) = 302.8, p < .0001$ .

## F.7 Parent Events

**Table F.12. Number of Parent Events/Workshops, Average Number of Participants, and Average Event Length, by School, 2014–15**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Number of GEAR UP Students	Number of Events	Average Number of Participants (range)	Average Event Length (in hours)
High School H	475	30	21 (1-129)	1.9
High School I	474	36	15 (1-114)	1.8
High School J	197	30	11 (1-65)	2.1
High School K	572	18	21 (2-103)	2.4
High School L	117	14	8 (1-15)	2.8
High School M	320	31	24 (1-155)	2.2

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2015.

\* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 9:  $\chi^2(25) = 217.9, p < .0001$ .

## Appendix G: Student and Parent 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 Chapter 3.

### G.1 Survey Data, 2014–15

#### G.1.1 Survey Administration

In May 2015, ICF conducted surveys with students in Grade 9 in the six Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grant (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. All six schools were provided Spanish-language translated surveys, both online and paper-based; 31 students completed the Spanish-language translated surveys.

Project objectives, evaluation questions, and prior GEAR UP surveys informed the development of questions to include in the surveys. Analysis from the initial round of data collection in spring 2014 informed ways to improve construct measurement and response options for fall 2014 and spring 2015 versions. 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.

Strategies for increasing the response rate included engaging College Preparation Advisors and Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators in the survey process. Schools were strongly encouraged to utilize the online version of the surveys, and three of the six participating schools did so for at least some surveys in spring 2015.<sup>160</sup> In Year 3, ICF created Quick Response codes for participants to scan and obtain the online survey link more easily. ICF also shipped schools hard-copy versions of the survey in an effort to increase response rates. Surveys were also provided in both English and Spanish. Texas GEAR UP SG staff were encouraged to identify a parent event during which to conduct the survey. Finally, the evaluation team offered to be on hand to assist the schools with survey collection, although no school requested this assistance.

#### G.1.2 Data Cleaning

A total of 1,570 students submitted the Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2015 survey. In order to ensure data integrity to the extent possible, analyses included only surveys with at least 50% of items completed. That is, the respondent needed to respond to at least 50% of items in order to be considered as having completed the survey. The majority of the surveys excluded under this rule completed less than 10% of the survey typically answering only the first few questions. 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 50% of the survey, declaring having already taken the survey, and indicating a different grade from survey primary cohort) to minimize the need for exclusion in the future. After data cleaning (a standard practice to prepare data for analysis by removing invalid

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<sup>160</sup> At High Schools H and K, 100% of parent surveys were completed online. At High School M, 36% of parent surveys were completed online with the remainder completed on hard copy.

responses), 1,333 student surveys (85% of the surveys received) remained for analyses (Table G.1 includes reasons for exclusion).<sup>161</sup> All of the following analyses in this report are based on these revised survey samples. Of those that remained valid (1,333), the majority of the students (1,301 respondents) completed the survey online during the school day; 32 students completed hard-copy paper surveys.

In an effort to analyze responses for items that included a response option of “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 Student Surveys, Spring 2015**

Reason for Exclusion	Number of Student Surveys Excluded
Dissented to take the survey	24
Declared that they already took surveys in the other format (online or paper)	0
Indicated Grade other than Grade 9/ Indicate they don't have any child in Grade 9	0
Completed less than 50% of survey (50% of survey items missing)	213
<b>Total Excluded</b>	<b>237</b>
<b>Total Received</b>	<b>1,570</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

## G.2 Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

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 Table G.2 below for student responses to items about ethnicity/race, gender, free- or reduced-price lunch participation, language spoken, and parent education level.

The majority of the students (67% of respondents) identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino in Spring 2015; given that this is somewhat different than Spring 2014 data (81%) this could reflect that survey respondents were slightly different over time or that how students identify changed in high school. However, students reported participation in free- or reduced-price lunch in similar percentages over time (66% in Spring 2015). This consistency over time was also the case for the percentage of students who reported speaking English at home (55% in Spring 2015) and speaking English with their friends (78% in Spring 2015).

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<sup>161</sup> Reasons for exclusion included the following: dissenting to taking the survey, indicating not having a child in Grade 9, and completing less than 50% of the survey items. Excluding surveys based on lack of data is a generally accepted practice within an evaluation, given the perception that the lack of completeness of a high number of items may indicate disinterest or a lack of focus on the part of the respondent. The surveys is voluntary for the students and some students respond by indicating that they do not wish to complete the survey.

**Table G.2. Student Survey Respondent Demographic Characteristics: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015**

	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>			
Asian	<1%	1%	<1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	<1%	2%	3%
Black or African American	11%	7%	8%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	79%	81%	67%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	0%
White	4%	3%	8%
Two or more races	2%	2%	2%
Race unknown	2%	4%	12%
<b>Child Gender</b>			
Female	49%	48%	42%
Male	51%	52%	43%
<b>Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation</b>			
Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation	62%	67%	66%
<b>Language Spoken at Home</b>			
English	66%	56%	55%
Spanish	27%	13%	13%
Both English and Spanish	7%	30%	31%
Other or Multiple	<1%	1%	1%
<b>Language Spoken with Friends</b>			
English	90%	78%	78%
Spanish	3%	3%	3%
Both English and Spanish	6%	19%	18%
Other	<1%	1%	1%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2015; Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

### G.3 Educational Expectations and Aspirations

**Table G.3. Students' Educational Aspirations and Expectations: Spring 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015**

	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree	More than a Four-Year College Degree
Aspirations (Spring 2013)	1,269	5.9%	14.6%	17.0%	62.5%	
Expectations (Spring 2013)	1,156	6.7%	17.8%	30.0%	45.4%	
Aspirations (Fall 2013)	1,280	8.6%	5.8%	14.5%	34.5%	36.6%
Expectations (Fall 2013)	1,250	11.7%	10.0%	20.2%	34.7%	23.3%
Aspirations (Spring 2014)	1,251	10.6%	7.5%	13.5%	31.5%	36.9%
Expectations (Spring 2014)	1,238	14.2%	10.2%	18.1%	34.5%	23.0%
Aspirations (Spring 2015)	1,326	9.0%	6.8%	12.4%	39.7%	32.1%
Expectations (Spring 2015)	1,324	11.3%	11.0%	18.7%	37.3%	21.6%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Fall 2013; Spring 2014; Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Spring 2013 surveys only asked about four-year degree or higher whereas fall 2013 and spring 2014 surveys asked about four-year degree and more than a four-year degree separately.

**Table G.4. Students' Educational Aspirations by Expectations,\* Spring 2015**

	n	Expect Less than High School	Expect High School	Expect Some College	Expect Two-Year College Degree	Expect Four-Year College Degree	Expect More than Four-Year College Degree
Aspire for Less than High School	9	11.1%	11.1%	22.2%	0.0%	33.3%	22.2%
Aspire for High School or Less	109	9.2%	54.1%	11.9%	10.1%	10.1%	4.6%
Aspire for Some College	90	2.2%	35.6%	45.6%	13.3%	1.1%	2.2%
Aspire for Two-Year College Degree	164	0.6%	11.6%	25.6%	45.1%	14.6%	2.4%
Aspire for Four-Year College Degree	526	0.2%	3.6%	7.2%	24.7%	58.0%	6.3%
Aspire for More than Four-Year College Degree	422	0.0%	1.2%	1.9%	4.7%	35.3%	56.9%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\*Student aspirations significantly differ from student expectations:  $\chi^2(1) = 56.0, p < .001$ .

**G.3.1 Comparisons by School: Aspirations, Expectations, and College Plans**

**Table G.5. Students' Educational Aspirations by School,\* Spring 2015**

School	n	Less than High School	High School	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree	More than Four-Year College Degree
High School H	297	0.7%	8.1%	5.7%	13.8%	40.1%	31.5%
High School I	291	0.7%	8.9%	11.7%	13.1%	36.1%	29.6%
High School J	110	0.9%	9.1%	6.4%	11.8%	41.8%	30.0%
High School K	241	0.0%	7.9%	7.5%	17.8%	36.5%	30.3%
High School L	103	1.0%	2.9%	1.0%	3.9%	42.7%	48.5%
High School M	284	1.1%	9.9%	4.6%	9.2%	44.0%	31.3%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,326</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>39.7%</b>	<b>32.1%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Students' educational aspirations differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(25) = 53.1, p < .01$

**Table G.6. Students' Educational Expectations by School,\* Spring 2015**

School	n	Less than High School	High School	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree	More than Four-Year College Degree
High School H	295	1.0%	7.5%	11.2%	20.0%	36.9%	23.4%
High School I	291	1.7%	15.1%	16.2%	15.1%	32.6%	19.2%
High School J	110	2.7%	12.7%	10.9%	18.2%	42.7%	12.7%
High School K	241	1.2%	10.8%	10.0%	22.4%	33.6%	22.0%
High School L	103	0.0%	5.8%	5.8%	14.6%	44.7%	29.1%
High School M	284	0.4%	8.1%	8.5%	19.7%	40.8%	22.5%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,324</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>18.7%</b>	<b>37.3%</b>	<b>21.6%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Students' educational expectations differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(25) = 49.6, p < .01$

**Table G.7. Student Differences by School: Attending College is Important for My Career Goal and Future,\* Spring 2015**

School	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
High School H	209	4.8%	3.8%	38.3%	53.1%
High School I	286	3.5%	8.0%	37.8%	50.7%
High School J	96	5.2%	5.2%	30.2%	59.4%
High School K	193	4.7%	7.3%	37.3%	50.8%
High School L	88	0.0%	8.0%	28.4%	63.6%
High School M	270	2.2%	4.8%	26.7%	66.3%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,142</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>33.8%</b>	<b>56.6%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Student levels of agreement differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 29.4, p < .01$ .

**Table G.8. Percentage of Students Who Perceived Impact of Texas GEAR UP SG Participation on College Plans by School,\* Spring 2015**

School	n	GEAR UP helped me decide to go to college	I was already planning on going to college	I still don't plan to go to college
High School H	269	62.5%	33.1%	4.5%
High School I	272	55.9%	34.9%	9.2%
High School J	100	61.0%	33.0%	6.0%
High School K	204	49.5%	37.8%	6.4%
High School L	96	28.1%	68.8%	3.1%
High School M	277	65.3%	26.7%	7.9%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,218</b>	<b>56.7%</b>	<b>36.7%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Student responses differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 100.8, p < .0001$ .

## G.4 Discussions and Knowledge about College

**Table G.9. Students' Reported College Information Sources: Percentages by Source, Spring 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**

Select the sources of information that have helped you to think about your child's/your future college education. (Select all that apply)	Spring 2013 (n= 1,339)	Fall 2013 (n= 1,143)	Spring 2014 (n= 1,146)	Spring 2015 (n= 1,308)
Research on GEAR UP website	15.0%	13.6%	14.7%	18.2%
Information from GEAR UP staff/events	28.8%	37.6%	46.2%*	33.6%
Information from or discussions with parents/family members	60.8%	50.2%	48.7%*	41.8%
Information from or discussions with friends or other people my age	33.2%	32.0%	38.3%*	39.7%
Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors	50.3%	31.5%	37.4%*	35.9%
Research that I have done on my own	34.0%	29.1%	29.2%*	35.9%
College field trip	--	--	--	51.7%
College fair <sup>a</sup>	--	--	--	26.2%
Program other than GEAR UP (e.g., AVID, Breakthrough) <sup>a</sup>	1.3%	19.2%	21.6%	20.9%
Watching sports <sup>a</sup>	.5%	23.0%	21.1%	20.1%
Television <sup>a</sup>		19.9%	21.0%	21.7%
Information from a class activity or assignment <sup>b</sup>	0.4%	41.3%	45.1%	47.3%
Other (please specify other sources)	5.2%	3.3%	1.8%*	2.1%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2015; Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

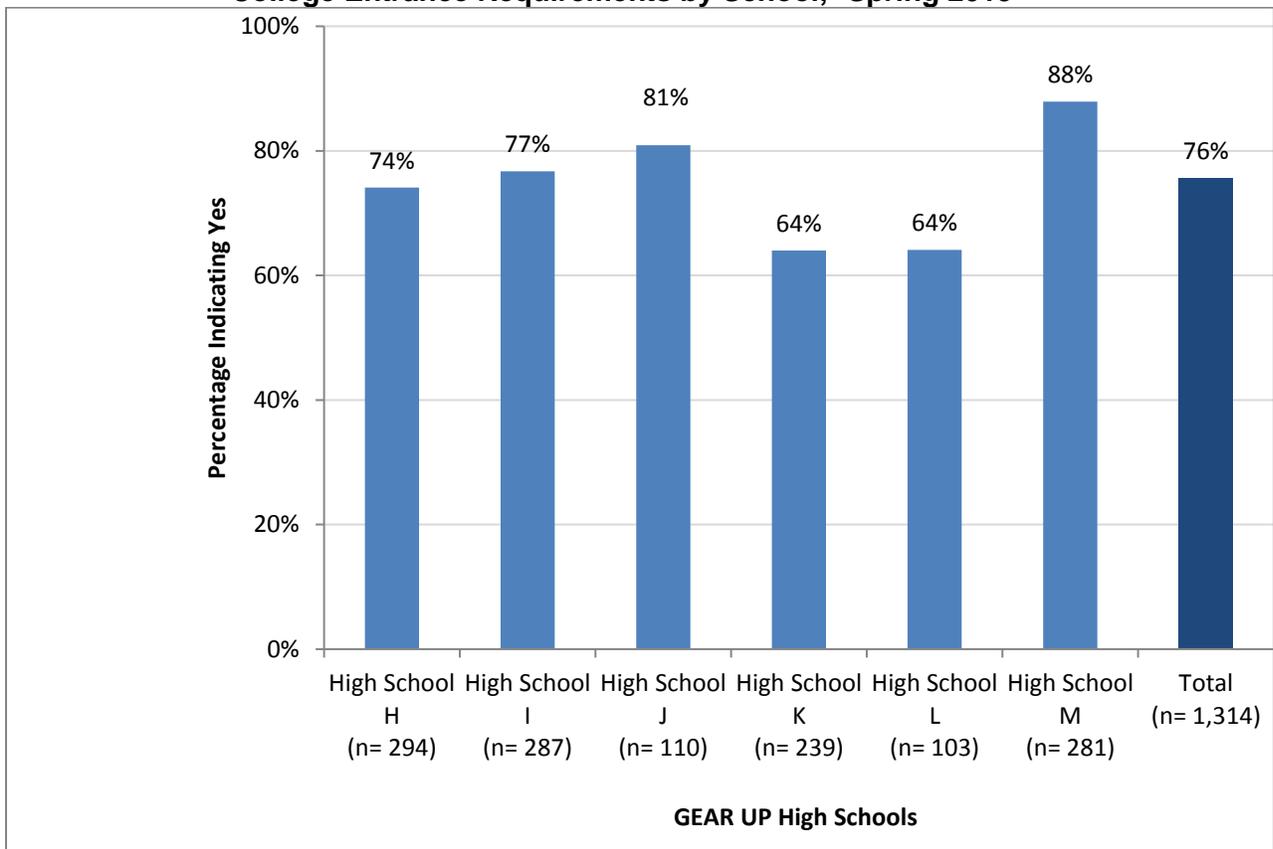
**Table G.10. Students’ Reported College Information Sources of Information by School, Spring 2015**

School	n	GEAR UP Website*	Discussions with GEAR UP staff/ Information at GEAR UP events*
High School H	295	15.6%	27.5%
High School I	287	18.1%	31.7%
High School J	108	27.8%	43.5%
High School K	238	12.6%	22.7%
High School L	102	10.8%	24.5%
High School M	278	24.8%	50.7%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,308</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>33.6%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

\* Student responses differed significantly across schools: GEAR UP Website-  $\chi^2(5) = 23.6, p < .0001$ ; Discussions/event-  $\chi^2(5) = 61.2, p < .0001$ .

**Figure G.1. Percentage of Students Reporting “Yes” to GEAR UP Discussions about College Entrance Requirements by School,\* Spring 2015\***

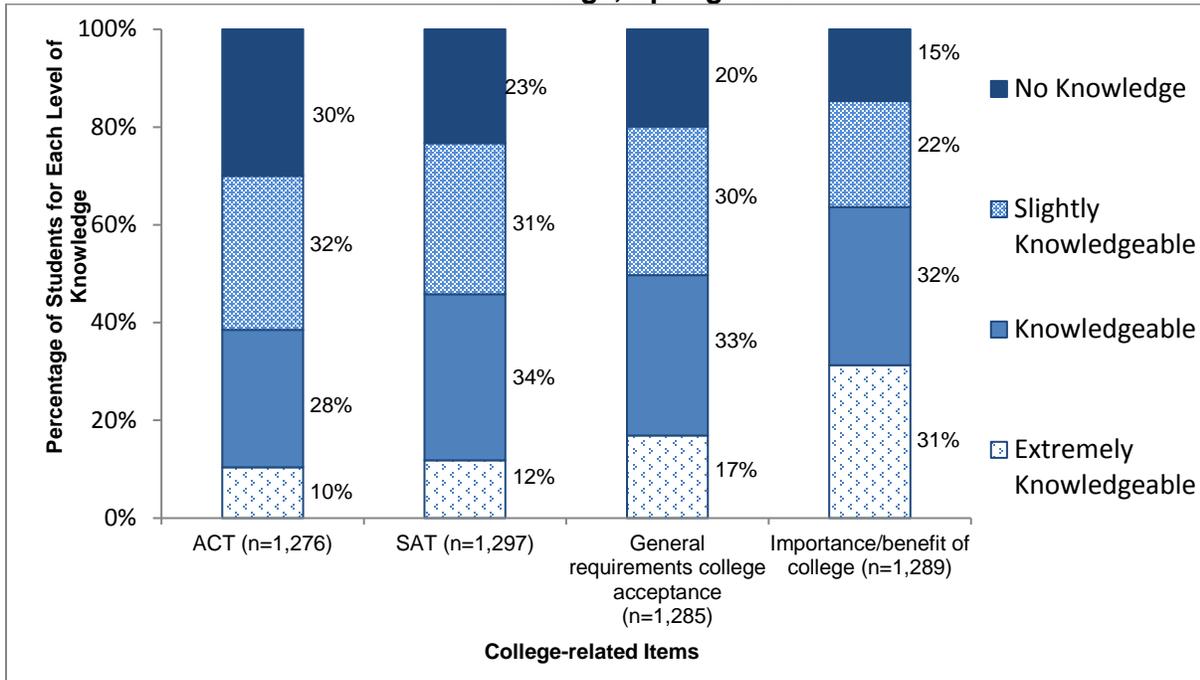


Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: These data include responses to the following item: “Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?”

\* Student responses differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 45.0, p < .0001$ .

**Figure G.2. Students' Perceived Knowledge about College: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. STAAR: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness®

**Table G.11. Students' Average Knowledge of College Terms and Concepts: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**

College Term/Concept	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015
Importance/Benefit of College	2.7	2.8	2.8
General Requirements for College Acceptance	2.3	2.4	2.5
ACT	1.8	1.9	2.2
SAT	2.0	2.1	2.3

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014; Spring 2015).

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.

**Table G.12. Average Student Knowledge of College Terms, By School, Spring 2015**

School	n	SAT*	n	ACT*	n	General Requirements for College Entrance*	n	Importance/Benefit of College*
High School H	289	2.2	278	2.0	286	2.4	284	2.7
High School I	283	2.2	280	2.1	281	2.3	282	2.6
High School J	107	2.5	105	2.5	104	2.7	105	2.9
High School K	239	2.1	236	2.0	236	2.4	237	2.7
High School L	103	2.6	101	2.4	102	2.5	103	3.1
High School M	276	2.6	276	2.4	276	2.7	278	3.1
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,297</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1,276</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>1,285</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1,289</b>	<b>2.8</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

\* Students' average self-reported knowledge differed significantly across schools each item: Importance/benefit of college-  $F(5, 1,283) = 8.11, p < .001$ ; General requirements for college acceptance-  $F(5, 1,279) = 5.95, p < .001$ ; SAT-  $F(5, 1,291) = 12.31, p < .001$ ; ACT-  $F(5, 1,291) = 11.27, p < .001$ .

**Table G.13. Students' Plans to Take Advanced Courses: Percentages by Level of Agreement and Content Area, Comparisons Across Spring 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring 2015**

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.	Spring 2013	1,215	11.2%	20.6%	37.5%	30.7%
	Fall 2013	1,237	8.1%	23.0%	42.4%	26.5%
	Spring 2014	1,235	10.1%	20.4%	39.8%	29.7%
	Spring 2015	1,131	7.3%	24.6%	42.7%	25.5%
I am planning to take an advanced course in English/writing next year.	Spring 2013	1,207	9.8%	22.8%	40.1%	27.3%
	Fall 2013	1,247	7.1%	25.1%	42.5%	25.3%
	Spring 2014	1,240	8.1%	20.8%	39.7%	31.4%
	Spring 2015	1,131	5.0%	21.7%	45.8%	27.5%
I am planning to take an advanced course in science next year.	Spring 2013	1,210	11.4%	21.0%	36.3%	31.3%
	Fall 2013	1,248	7.0%	25.0%	38.9%	29.1%
	Spring 2014	1,243	8.8%	22.3%	38.2%	30.7%
	Spring 2015	1,127	5.9%	24.4%	41.7%	28.0%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014; Spring 2015).

**Table G.14. Student Differences by School: Student Plans for Taking Advanced Mathematics, Spring 2015**

School	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Mathematics*</b>					
High School H	207	5.8%	14.5%	50.2%	29.5%
High School I	286	9.1%	22.4%	47.9%	20.6%
High School J	96	8.3%	28.1%	40.6%	22.9%
High School K	189	10.6%	33.9%	33.9%	21.7%
High School L	87	6.9%	28.7%	43.7%	20.7%
High School M	266	3.8%	25.6%	38.0%	32.7%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,131</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>24.6%</b>	<b>42.7%</b>	<b>25.5%</b>
<b>English Language Arts*</b>					
High School H	207	2.4%	18.4%	48.3%	30.9%
High School I	284	5.6%	17.6%	52.8%	23.9%
High School J	95	5.3%	29.5%	41.1%	24.2%
High School K	189	7.9%	25.9%	39.7%	26.5%
High School L	87	6.9%	34.5%	42.5%	16.1%
High School M	269	3.7%	18.6%	43.5%	34.2%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,131</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>45.8%</b>	<b>27.5%</b>
<b>Science*</b>					
High School H	204	3.9%	19.1%	47.1%	29.9%
High School I	284	6.7%	26.4%	41.5%	25.4%
High School J	95	6.3%	32.6%	37.9%	23.2%
High School K	189	10.6%	28.6%	33.9%	27.0%
High School L	88	5.7%	28.4%	42.0%	23.9%
High School M	267	3.0%	19.1%	44.6%	33.3%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,127</b>	<b>5.9%</b>	<b>24.4%</b>	<b>41.7%</b>	<b>28.0%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages of those who responded with some level of agreement may not total exactly 100% due to rounding.

\* Student responses differed significantly across schools: mathematics-  $\chi^2(15) = 47.5, p < .0001$ ; English Language Arts-  $\chi^2(15) = 40.0, p < .0001$ ; science-  $\chi^2(5) = 33.2, p < .01$ .

## G.5 Understanding of Financial Aspects Related to Postsecondary Education

In addition to the narrative in chapter 3 that includes in depth discussion about parent and student understanding of aspects about financing college, the tables and figures that follow provide additional data about this topic.

**Table G.15. Percentage of Students Who Reported Engaging in Discussions with GEAR UP Staff about Financial Aid, By School, Spring 2015\***

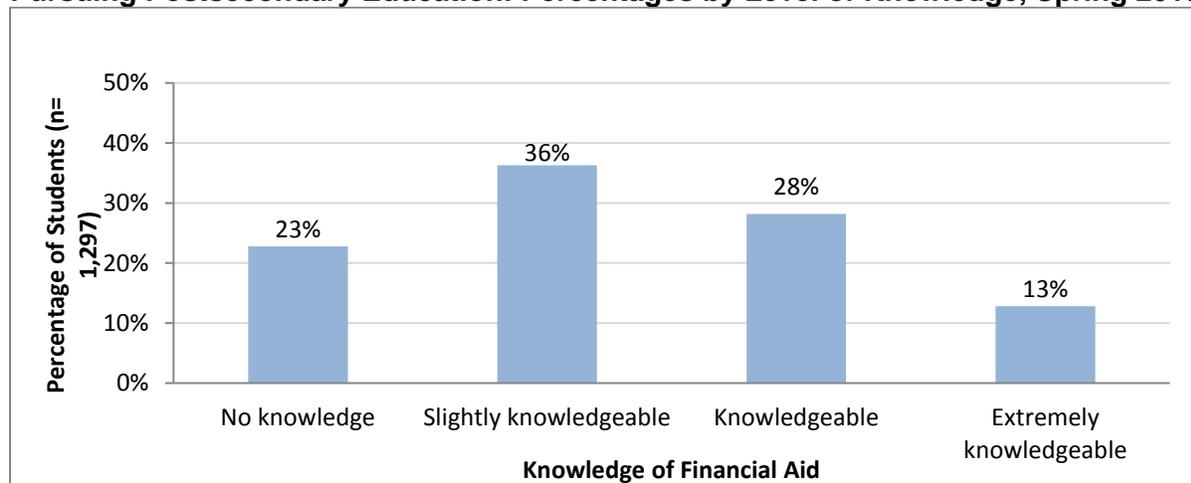
School	n	Yes
High School H	281	65.5%
High School I	278	71.2%
High School J	105	75.2%
High School K	233	54.9%
High School L	102	52.0%
High School M	266	75.6%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,265</b>	<b>66.6%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Data are responses to the following question: "Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about financial aid?"

\* Student-reported engagement in discussions about the availability of financial aid differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 40.1, p < .001$ .

**Figure G.3. Students' Knowledge Regarding Financial Aid and the Costs/Benefits of Pursuing Postsecondary Education: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Spring 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Data are responses to the following questions: "On a scale of 1–4, to what extent are you knowledgeable about financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education (1 = no knowledge; 4 = extremely knowledgeable).

**Table G.16. Student Knowledge about Financial Aid Terms, Spring 2015**

How much do you know about each of the following?	n	No Knowledge	Slightly Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
FAFSA <sup>a</sup>	1,295	47.1%	32.3%	16.3%	4.3%
Federal Pell Grants	1,271	55.2%	27.7%	12.0%	5.0%
Federal student loans	1,280	24.3%	36.8%	29.8%	9.1%
Federal work-study	1,255	43.8%	31.5%	19.0%	5.7%
Scholarships	1,289	7.1%	20.1%	37.5%	35.4%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup> FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid. However, the survey items used only the acronym.

**Table G.17. Students' Perceptions of Affordability, Spring 2015**

Type of Postsecondary School	n	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Not Sure	Probably	Definitely
Local public community college	1,318	3.8%	7.2%	27.4%	39.8%	21.8%
Public 4-year college	1,295	6.3%	11.4%	34.3%	33.7%	14.3%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Table G.18. Student Differences by School: Perceived Affordability of College, Spring 2015**

School	n	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Not Sure	Probably	Definitely
<b>Community College</b>						
High School H	293	3.1%	7.2%	28.7%	41.6%	19.5%
High School I	290	4.5%	10.7%	30.3%	40.7%	13.8%
High School J	109	7.3%	10.1%	33.9%	33.9%	14.7%
High School K	242	5.0%	8.7%	25.2%	36.4%	24.8%
High School L	103	1.9%	4.9%	22.3%	39.8%	31.1%
High School M	281	2.1%	2.1%	24.2%	42.3%	29.2%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,318</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>27.4%</b>	<b>39.8%</b>	<b>21.8%</b>
<b>Four-Year College</b>						
High School H	292	6.5%	11.6%	34.6%	34.6%	12.7%
High School I	283	8.5%	14.8%	36.7%	33.2%	6.7%
High School J	104	9.6%	12.5%	42.3%	26.9%	8.7%
High School K	239	7.5%	13.4%	31.8%	28.9%	18.4%
High School L	103	2.9%	13.6%	32.0%	35.0%	16.5%
High School M	274	2.9%	4.4%	31.4%	39.8%	21.5%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,295</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>34.3%</b>	<b>33.7%</b>	<b>14.3%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

## G.6 Perceptions of Texas GEAR UP State Grant

**Table G.19. Student Perceptions of Effectiveness, Spring 2015**

Activity	n	Not Effective	Slightly Effective	Mostly Effective	Very Effective
Taking Algebra I	733	5.9%	28.6%	43.1%	22.4%
Taking an advanced mathematics course other than Algebra I	535	5.4%	20.6%	46.5%	27.5%
Taking an advanced English/writing course	687	4.1%	22.4%	45.9%	27.7%
Taking an advanced science course	604	4.5%	26.8%	42.9%	25.8%
Taking other advanced courses (history, Spanish)	578	9.5%	26.0%	40.5%	24%
Tutoring/homework assistance in math	489	4.9%	30.5%	36.0%	28.6%
Tutoring/homework assistance in English	309	3.6%	32.7%	38.2%	25.6%
Tutoring/homework assistance in science	319	5.0%	31.3%	38.9%	24.8%
Tutoring/homework assistance in social science	215	6.0%	34.4%	35.3%	24.2%
Mentoring	195	5.6%	23.6%	39.5%	31.3%
2013 GEAR UP summer program	326	4.9%	21.8%	33.1%	40.2%
Academic or career counseling/advising	304	4.3%	29.3%	45.7%	20.7%
Financial aid counseling/advising	205	5.4%	25.9%	43.9%	24.9%
College visits/college student shadowing	348	10.3%	25.0%	40.2%	24.4%
Job site visit/job shadowing	263	3.8%	26.2%	44.1%	25.9%
Educational field trips	391	12.0%	27.4%	35.3%	25.3%
Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	299	4.3%	28.4%	40.8%	26.4%
Family/cultural events	319	7.8%	30.4%	34.2%	27.6%
Met with College Preparation Advisor	400	3.0%	28.0%	44.3%	24.8%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages exclude "No" responses to the initial question of "Have you/your child participated in this activity during this school year?" N value includes total responding that they participated in activity, percentages are based on that number. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Table G.20. Student Differences by School: Average Perceptions of Effectiveness, Spring 2015**

School	n	GEAR UP Summer Program*	n	Educational Trips*	n	College Visits*	n	Meeting With College Preparation Advisors*	n	Academic or Career Counseling/Advising*	n	Tutoring, Any Subject*
High School H	105	2.2	106	2.7	94	2.6	93	2.5	78	2.5	144	2.6
High School I	131	2.2	173	2.7	144	2.6	135	2.5	125	2.2	196	2.4
High School J	52	2.4	56	3.1	54	3.1	45	2.8	39	2.6	65	2.5
High School K	90	2.4	82	2.5	70	2.4	53	2.5	60	2.2	122	2.4
High School L	24	2.8	75	2.8	47	2.7	27	2.5	17	2.2	51	2.7
High School M	160	2.7	194	2.9	186	2.9	172	2.8	136	2.6	167	2.4
<b>Overall</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>686</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>2.5</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

\* Average student responses were significantly different across schools: GEAR UP Summer Program-  $F(5, 556) = 3.6, p < .01$ ; Educational trips-  $F(5, 680) = 4.4, p < .001$ ; College Visits-  $F(5, 1,063) = 21.1, p < .001$ ; Meeting with the College Preparation Advisor-  $F(5, 1,049) = 17.9, p < .001$ ; Academic or Career Counseling/Advising-  $F(5, 449) = 3.0, p < .05$ ; Tutoring, Any Subject-  $F(5, 739) = 2.3, p < .05$ .

**Table G.21. Student Differences by School: Participation in Select GEAR UP Activities, Spring 2015**

School	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M	Overall
<b>Tutoring, Any subject</b>	n= 226 67.3%	n= 277 62.1%	n= 95 64.2%	n= 204 61.3%	n= 90 54.4%	n= 271 54.6%	n= 1,163 60.8%
<b>Mentoring</b>	n= 219 22.8%	n= 270 16.2%	n= 94 28.7%	n= 195 16.4%	n= 89 5.6%	n= 267 30.3%	n= 1,134 21.3%
<b>College Preparation Advisor</b>	n= 152 61.2%	n= 187 64.2%	n= 67 58.2%	n= 102 38.2%	n=41 53.7%	n= 231 73.2%	n= 780 61.8%
<b>GEAR UP Summer Program</b>	n= 215 29.8%	n= 275 25.2%	n= 96 33.3%	n= 198 30.8%	n= 89 21.3%	n= 265 53.6%	n= 1,138 34.1%
<b>Academic Advising</b>	n= 196 32.1%	n= 267 33.0%	n= 87 43.7%	n= 180 33.9%	n= 83 13.3%	n= 258 44.6%	n= 1,071 35.1%
<b>Financial Aid Counseling</b>	n= 196 23.0%	n= 266 21.1%	n= 86 32.6%	n= 181 23.8%	n= 83 8.4%	n= 254 32.3%	n= 1,066 24.5%
<b>Job Site Visiting/Shadowing</b>	n= 195 33.3%	n= 269 30.5%	n= 87 37.9%	n= 173 23.1%	n= 83 10.8%	n= 257 40.9%	n= 1,064 31.4%
<b>College Visits</b>	n= 193 42.0%	n= 270 48.5%	n= 89 62.9%	n= 175 37.7%	n= 83 57.8%	n= 259 78.0%	n= 1,069 54.6%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

Note: Percentages include those who responded yes to the following item: "Have you participated in this activity in this school year (2013–2014)?"

**Table G.22. Student-Reported Reasons for Attending Summer Programs, Fall 2014**

Select the reasons that you attended the GEAR UP summer program.	n= 497
I wanted to participate in the summer program.	47.9%
My parents wanted me to participate in the program.	39.2%
The academic content focus of the program was of interest to me.	35.0%
The summer program provided an opportunity for me to spend time with friends.	38.0%
I thought it would help me to learn more about succeeding in high school.	47.5%
I thought it would help me to do well in my Grade 9 classes.	52.5%
The summer program was scheduled on days that I could attend.	26.0%
The summer program was scheduled at a time of day that I could attend.	26.4%
The school strongly encouraged me to attend the summer program.	35.0%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Fall 2014).

Note: Response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.

**Table G.23. Student-Reported Reasons for NOT Attending Summer Programs, Fall 2014**

If you did NOT attend the GEAR UP summer program, select the reasons that you were NOT able to attend.	n= 796
I did not want to participate in the summer program.	33.4%
My parents did not want me to participate in the program.	3.8%
The academic content focus of the program was not of interest to me.	4.8%
None of my friends were attending the summer program.	6.4%
Our family was not in the area during the time that the summer program was scheduled (e.g., on vacation).	18.0%
The summer program was scheduled at a time of day that did not work for me.	11.6%
I had a job and could not miss work to attend.	6.3%
I had family responsibilities and could not attend (e.g., watching siblings).	16.0%
The school did not inform me about the summer program.	18.3%
The school did not encourage me to attend the summer program.	6.4%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Fall 2014).

Note: Response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.

## G.7 Overall Perceptions of and Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP State Grant

**Table G.24. Students' Overall Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG: Percentages by Level of Satisfaction By School\*, Spring 2015**

School	n	Does Not Apply	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
High School H	205	14.6%	5.9%	6.3%	47.8%	25.4%
High School I	286	8.0%	5.9%	11.2%	51.0%	23.8%
High School J	99	12.1%	3.0%	9.1%	39.4%	36.4%
High School K	191	25.7%	6.3%	9.9%	38.2%	19.9%
High School L	88	11.4%	5.7%	4.5%	58.0%	20.5%
High School M	270	2.2%	4.1%	5.6%	42.6%	45.6%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,139</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>	<b>45.8%</b>	<b>29.4%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015).

\* Student-reported satisfaction with GEAR UP differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(20) = 116.5, p < .001$ .