Year 2 Annual Implementation Report

Texas GEAR UP State Grant Evaluation

August 2015

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

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

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym/Abbreviation	Description
AEIS	Academic Excellence Indicator System
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
AP	Advanced Placement
APR	Annual Performance Report
ASPR	Annual Strategic Planning Reports
AVID	Advancement Via Individual Determination
AYD	Academic Youth Development
CIS	Communities In Schools
DAP	Distinguished Achievement Program
DGB	Data Governance Board
ELA	English Language Arts
ELL	English Language Learners
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FHSP	Foundation High School Program
FY	Fiscal Year
GEAR UP	Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs
GPA	Grade Point Average
HB	House Bill
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	Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test
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
TG	Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation
THECB	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
T-STEM Centers	Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Centers
USDE	U.S. Department of Education
UT	The University of Texas
UT-IPSI	The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives

Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) 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), seven participating middle schools are providing services to a cohort of students and their parents from Grade 7 (2012–13 school year) through their first year of postsecondary education (2018–19 school year). In order to meet the federal purpose of the grant, Texas GEAR UP SG includes nine project goals, provided in Appendix A of the main report. Three goals are related to improved rigor in instruction, advanced coursework, and student support services. Other goals intend to increase data-driven instruction, community partnerships, and access to postsecondary information. Outcome goals include 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 Texas GEAR UP SG, there is a goal to provide statewide services 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 A, School B) in order to protect confidentiality. In these districts, Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators and College Preparation Advisors take the lead on providing 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. Texas GEAR UP SG services are intended to impact teachers through the provision of professional development (PD) and schools/districts through changes in academic rigor (paired with student support services). Finally, the Texas GEAR UP SG is intended to make a statewide impact, primarily through the provision of the website (i.e., www.texasgearup.com), where coordinated information and resources regarding postsecondary opportunities for students and their parents throughout Texas are made available.

Table ES.1. List of Texas GEAR UP SG Middle Schools

Middle School	District
Brentwood	Edgewood Independent School District
Garcia	Edgewood Independent School District
Wrenn	Edgewood Independent School District
Dunbar	Lubbock Independent School District
Decker	Manor Independent School District
Manor	Manor Independent School District
Somerset	Somerset Independent School District

Evaluation of Texas GEAR UP State Grant

The evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP SG program is being conducted to examine implementation and outcomes (including the relationship between the two) and to identify 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 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 cohort (the primary cohort that the evaluation focuses on). This report focuses on Year 2 implementation when the primary cohort was in Grade 8. (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 second implementation report focuses primarily on formative feedback regarding Year 2 implementation, but also provides relevant comparisons to Year 1 implementation. Both reports were informed by analysis of student- and campus-level data from statewide databases, interviews with TEA and its collaborators, review of grantee action plans, GEAR UP federal annual performance reporting (APR) data, student and parent surveys, and qualitative site visit data.[1] In making comparisons between Year 1 implementation and Year 2 implementation, readers need to be aware that the time of implementation in Year 1 was considerably truncated. In Year 1, schools received a notification of grant award (NOGA) in October, followed by the beginning of implementation in November/December 2012, well after the start of the school year. TEA completed Year 2 NOGAs for the four districts participating in the Texas GEAR UP SG in October 2013. During summer 2013, TEA informed grantees that Texas GEAR UP SG funding would continue, but that the Year 2 NOGAs would be delayed, and encouraged districts to proceed with Year 2 implementation as planned pending NOGA. While at least one district reported that they were not able to proceed with full implementation until receipt of the Year 2 NOGA, generally, Year 2 implementation began during summer 2013, making Year 2 the first full school year that the Texas GEAR UP SG operated. One explanation for differences between implementation in Year 1 and Year 2 is that grantees had more time to implement the program in Year 2 than in Year 1.

In addition, districts submitted implementation data in line with federal APR reporting requirements. Therefore, APR data reflected implementation from the date of each district's NOGA through March 31, 2013 in Year 1, and from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014 in Year 2.[2] In Year 1, this was approximately three months of implementation, with limited additional implementation data collected in Year 1 site visits (May 2013). Additional Texas GEAR UP SG Year 2 implementation activities occurred through summer 2014, but are not discussed in this

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[1] TEA's service providers on the Texas GEAR UP SG during Year 2 include the Texas GEAR UP Support Center staffed by personnel from the University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI) and AMS Pictures, both of which were providers in Year 1, as well as Abriendo Puertas and GeoFORCE, which were added in Year 2. TG (formerly Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation) and the College Board no longer have formalized collaborations with TEA to implement this grant.

[2] APR data used in the Year 2 report are from summer 2013 and the 2013–14 school year, but only through March 31, 2014, 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 2014.

report because APR data from April 1, 2014 forward will be included in the Year 3 implementation report. Readers should keep in mind the time points when data were collected while forming ideas about the program based on this report, 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 and Year 2
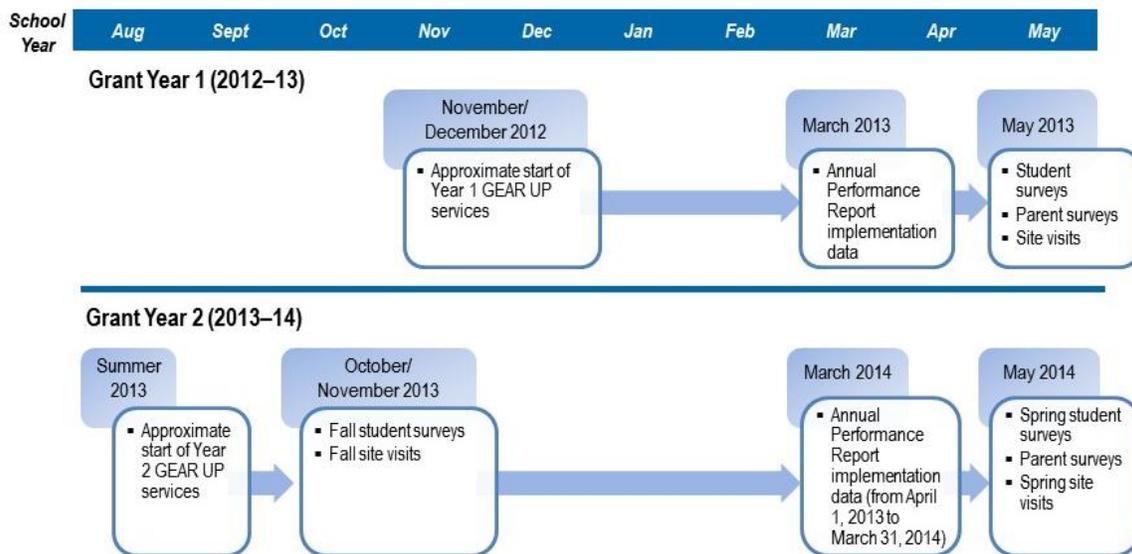
Key Findings

Key findings presented in this executive summary are organized into two categories: (1) implementation data findings and (2) survey (student and parent) findings. Findings were 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: 30% of students will successfully complete Algebra I by the end of Grade 8.
- 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 will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.
- Project Objective 4.1: 75% of students will receive student support services by the end of Grade 8.
- Project Objective 4.2: 30% of students will be involved in summer programs.
- Project Objective 7.3: 50% of parents will participate in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events each year.

Interested readers should view the full report for additional information on all key findings. Select evaluation questions relevant to Year 2 implementation, which are addressed in the report, include the following:

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

- What were students, parents, teachers, and school staff perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation?
- What facilitators and barriers were associated with implementation?
- 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 most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness? To what extent have these perceptions changed in Year 2?
- How did TEA and schools budget for and spend money to support implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG?

In Year 1, implementation varied across schools, although participation by students in Texas GEAR UP SG was high across schools (39% in student support services and 81% in any activity). Districts made progress toward enrollment in advanced mathematics (22% enrolled in a pre-Algebra course), but had low levels of parental involvement (no parents participated in at least three events) and minimal teacher PD. Year 2 findings reflect overall higher implementation (with continued variability across schools), with higher levels of overall student participation in Texas GEAR UP SG (78% in student support services and 99% in any activity). Districts also reported higher levels of student enrollment in advanced mathematics courses (43%), slight increases in parent attendance (7% attended at least three events), and more teachers engaged in vertical teaming events.

Implementation

LEVEL AND MIX OF IMPLEMENTATION

> **Key Takeaway:**
> Overall, the level of implementation was much higher across all schools in Year 2 compared to Year 1, although variability in the mix of implementation among schools remained. School G continued to be successful in implementing a broad range of activities (similar to their successes in Year 1). Most of the remaining schools made progress in implementing a broader range of services compared to Year 1. School D continued to demonstrate difficulty implementing the full range of Texas GEAR UP SG strategies, implementing the lowest number of strategies in Year 2.

The federal GEAR UP program encourages grantees, including the Texas GEAR UP SG, to engage in a wide range of implementation practices in order to support project objectives, referred to here as the "mix of implementation." Table ES.3 provides a high-level overview of the range of implementation activities engaged in to any extent by the seven middle schools in Year 1 and Year 2. In Year 2, all seven schools implemented the core Texas GEAR UP SG activity types: advanced course enrollment, student support services (e.g., tutoring, comprehensive mentoring, counseling/advising), college visits, parent events, teacher PD, and community alliances. The evaluation will continue to monitor the implementation of program components at each site in order to determine the impact of components and combinations of components on program outcomes. School D had fewer strategies in place in Year 2 than all other schools (11 compared to 14 to 16 in the remaining schools). If the remaining schools sustain or increase the level of implementation and School D continues to face challenges, then outcomes could be lower for School D. It is also possible that School D is engaging in a

sufficient range to contribute to the desired program outcomes; future reports will examine the relationship between implementation and outcomes for all schools. Notably, School D appeared to struggle with implementing parent-related involvement in Texas GEAR UP SG activities.

Table ES.3 also identifies schools that have met project objectives. Three schools were on target to meet Project Objective 1.1 (Grade 8 Algebra I enrollment ≥ 30%), and three schools were on target to meet Project Objective 4.1 (Grade 8 students receiving student support services ≥ 75%). None of the schools was on target to meet Project Objective 7.3 (parent attendance at three or more Texas GEAR UP SG events [annually] ≥ 50%).

Table ES.3. Overview of Implementation Strategies by School, Year 1 and Year 2

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G
Implementation Strategies							
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[a]	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Alliances	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Use Statewide Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total Number of Strategies Implemented by Year							
Year 1 (out of 12)	4	6	5	5	8	7	11
Year 2 (out of 19) based on total of number of Xs above	15	14	15	11	16	15	16

Table ES.3. Overview of Implementation Strategies by School, Year 1 and Year 2 (continued)

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G
On Target to Meet Project Objectives							
Project Objective 1.1: 30% of students will successfully complete Algebra I by the end of Grade 8.	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Project Objective 4.1: 75% of students will receive student support services by the end of Grade 8.	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Project Objective 7.3: 50% of parents will participate in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events each year.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

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. Asterisks note new implementation categories captured in Year 2. Grey-filled cells are strategies that schools implemented in Year 2 but not in Year 1.

[a] School D did not report any vertical teaming or Texas GEAR UP SG-specific teacher professional development (PD). School A and School 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).

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

> **Key Takeaway:**
> Overall, the Texas GEAR UP SG schools have succeeded in enrolling students in Algebra I and, with the supports that are in place, including tutoring and afterschool programs, it is reasonable to expect that Project Objective 1.1 (30% of students completing Algebra I by Grade 8) will be met at the project level. Specific to this goal, the seven schools collectively enrolled 43% of Grade 8 students in Algebra I or an equivalent course. Given that supports and enrollment in Algebra I varied across schools, some schools may not reach the goal.

Successful completion of Algebra I is a key early outcome; Project Objective 1.1 is to have 30% of students by the end of Grade 8 and 85% of students by the end of Grade 9 complete Algebra I. On average, across all primary cohort students, 43% were enrolled in advanced mathematics (including Algebra I and other advanced mathematics courses), an increase from the 22% of students enrolled in Pre-Algebra in Year 1.[3] Student enrollment in advanced mathematics in Grade 8 was above 30% at three schools and only slightly less than 30% at the remaining four schools. Grade 7 advanced mathematics enrollment in Year 1 led to enrollment in Algebra I in Year 2 for most students. However, some students who were not enrolled in an advanced mathematics course in Grade 7 were enrolled in Algebra I in Grade 8.

Tutoring efforts in Year 2 also emphasized mathematics tutoring, an emphasis that is likely to contribute to meeting Project Objective 1.1. Across all schools, 44% of students received tutoring in mathematics at the end of Grade 7 and at the beginning of Grade 8, indicating that, in

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[3] The percentage of Grade 8 students enrolled in Algebra I or an equivalent course reported in the APR was lower (33%) than this report (43%), because this report includes mathematics courses that are considered to be advanced for the grade level, although not equivalent to Algebra I, such as Pre-Algebra or Introduction to Algebra.

general, schools are prepared to provide this support service to students. However, the full report explains in more detail how some schools are engaging a higher percentage of mathematics-related student support services with students than other schools. For example, at School B, only 7% of students received mathematics tutoring. In addition, in summer 2013, four schools indicated that 10% of combined primary cohort students participated in programs intended, in part, to support preparation for Algebra I, and received, on average, 20 hours of mathematics focus. It is likely that these student support services and other strategies (e.g., afterschool mathematics) helped participating students enroll in and potentially complete Algebra I by the end of Grade 8.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

> **Key Takeaway:**
> Collectively, Texas GEAR UP SG schools met Project Objective 4.1 with 78% of Grade 8 students participating in student support services. When taking into account other strategies, nearly all Texas GEAR UP SG students participated in at least one Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activity.

Project Objective 4.1 of the Texas GEAR UP SG is to have at least 75% of Grade 8 students in Year 2 be involved in student support services, including comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring. Collectively, the seven schools met this project objective, with 78% of Grade 8 students involved in these student support services in Year 2 in comparison to 39% in Year 1. When the mix of implementation includes workshops/events, parent events, a college visit, or other academic support, 99% of students across schools in Year 2 had participated in some Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activity, which is an increase from 81% in Year 1.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT WITH TEXAS GEAR UP STATE GRANT

> **Key Takeaway:**
> Schools offered more Texas GEAR UP SG parent events in Year 2 than they did in Year 1, and more parents attended events; however, parent engagement still proved to be challenging for schools. None of the schools met the annual Project Objective 7.3 of having 50% of parents attend at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events.

As was the case in Year 1, no school met the annual Project Objective 7.3 of having 50% of parents attend at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events annually. As of March 31, 2014, 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. The Texas GEAR UP SG will need to continue to work on overcoming the challenges in engaging parents in order to meet the project objective by the end of Year 2 and in each of the coming program years.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND VERTICAL TEAMING

> **Key Takeaway:**
> Schools improved the amount of teacher PD offered in Year 2, but only two schools had held the five planned vertical teaming events by March 31, 2014.

Schools improved the amount of teacher PD offered in Year 2 and followed through on their plans related to Project Objectives 3.1 and 3.2 by offering teacher PD in summer 2013 and into fall 2013, when all schools offered teacher PD. However, in Year 2, only two schools had held the five planned vertical teaming events by the APR submission of data through March 31, 2014, the end of the evaluation period. 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. Some teachers had clear suggestions, conveyed during site visits, regarding how teachers could motivate students, enhance student social skills, improve organization, and manage time effectively in reinforcing Texas GEAR UP SG strategies. These suggestions indicate that teachers could benefit from training that reinforces collaborative efforts to motivate and impact Texas GEAR UP SG students.

SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION: YEAR 1 AND YEAR 2

In the report, differences in implementation from Year 1 to Year 2 are highlighted. Table ES.4 summarizes some of the key implementation data comparisons between the first two years of Texas GEAR UP SG.

Table ES.4. Summary Comparison of Year 1 to Year 2 Implementation Data

Implementation Area	Year 1	Year 2
Level and Mix of Implementation	Varied across schools. School G implemented the widest range of activities.	Variability remained; however, overall, implementation was higher. School G continued to implement the widest range of activities, as did School E. School D implemented the smallest range of implementation activities.
Student Participation in Texas GEAR UP SG Student Support Services	39% of students participated.	78% of students participated.
Student Participation in Any Texas GEAR UP SG Activities	81% of students participated.	99% of students participated.
Enrollment in an Advanced Mathematics Course	22% of students were enrolled in advanced mathematics.	43% of students were enrolled in advanced mathematics, including Algebra I.
Parent Attendance at Three or More Texas GEAR UP SG Events	No parent at any school attended three or more events.	7% of parents attended three or more events.
Teacher Professional Development and Vertical Teaming	Most schools had already designed and scheduled PD for the school year.	Two schools held five vertical teaming events.

Student and Parent Surveys

> **Key Takeaway:**
>
> Although the gaps between educational aspirations and expectations narrowed from Year 1 to Year 2, both students and parents continued to have aspirations that exceeded their educational expectations. That is, students and parents do not expect to achieve as high of an educational outcome as indicated by their aspirations. Student aspirations and expectations both significantly increased from spring 2013 to spring 2014.
>
> There continued to be multiple indicators in Year 2 that parents and students both need and want financial information as it relates to postsecondary education. With proper implementation of planned Texas GEAR UP SG activities, students and families will gain knowledge and information about the financial aspects of college and will view affordability as less of a barrier to educational aspirations.

Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students and parents completed surveys in spring 2014. 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.

EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

For both parents and students, educational aspirations were significantly higher than educational expectations. However, the gaps between educational aspirations and expectations narrowed from Year 1 to Year 2, and student aspirations and expectations both significantly increased. School G, where the implementation mix was the most broad, particularly in Year 1 but also in Year 2, had the highest percentage of students who indicated that participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities had positively influenced their decision to go to college (58%). That is, these students suggested that before Texas GEAR UP SG participation, they were not committed to attending college, but now expected to do so. Across schools, the greatest percentage of students who do not plan to go to college selected *concerns about cost* as a main reason for not continuing onto postsecondary education (48%).

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COLLEGE

Evaluation survey data indicate that the 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. Students reported being significantly more knowledgeable than did parents about general requirements for college acceptance and the importance/benefit of college. In Year 2, it may be that schools emphasized Algebra I as a critical step toward college acceptance. That is, schools exposed students to more information about college requirements through their discussions to encourage Algebra I enrollment. Parents appear to need information on requirements for college (particularly ACT, SAT, and general requirements for acceptance). Students and parents did not differ on their knowledge about ACT or SAT, which was generally low for both groups. Students' average perceived knowledge of each of the relevant items were statistically significantly different across schools. As noted, parent participation in Texas GEAR UP SG activities remained generally low. Therefore, addressing how to engage parents will likely contribute to changes in knowledge going forward.

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. However, the percentage

of students reporting this concern decreased from spring 2013 to spring 2014.[4] In general, there is low knowledge and high interest regarding strategies for paying for college. Most parents and students fell somewhere in the middle on feeling knowledgeable about financing college. Continuing 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 an important area of focus.

PERCEPTION OF TEXAS GEAR UP STATE GRANT ACTIVITIES

On average, both parents and students found each type of activity that they participated in to be *mostly effective*. Average levels of student perceptions of effectiveness were lower than parent perceptions for all activities.[5] College Preparation Advisors were a resource new to schools in Year 2, and about 40% of students met with a College Preparation Advisor in Year 2. Most students and parents found meeting with a College Preparation Advisor to be *mostly effective* or *very effective*. Both parents and students continued in Year 2 to report low use of the Texas GEAR UP website as a source of information, even though the program released a newly designed website (launched in November 2013). In Year 2, student-reported use of Texas GEAR UP SG staff/events as a source of information significantly increased from Year 1. A greater percentage of parents also reported use of Texas GEAR UP SG staff/events as a source of information.

Key Facilitators and Barriers: Implementation

College Preparation Advisors

> **Key Takeaway:**
> College Preparation Advisors helped facilitate students' participation in student support services, as well as implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG program activities.

A key facilitator for implementation progress in Year 2 was the addition of the College Preparation Advisors to the Texas GEAR UP SG staff. Each school was assigned a College Preparation Advisor. Grant coordinators continued to provide oversight on program implementation, but now had support at each school. In particular, the College Preparation Advisors, even in the absence of regularly scheduled times to engage with students one-on-one, were able to increase individual student counseling in Year 2.

Limited Support From School Administrators

> **Key Takeaway:**
> A key barrier was limited support from school administrators. Long approval processes were a particular barrier for one of the schools.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff at one school reported that services were delayed and, in some cases, eliminated due to the complexity of the local approval processes that staff needed to navigate prior to implementing the activities. This serves as a reminder that as school administrators change, TEA, in collaboration with the Support Center, needs to leverage opportunities to educate and engage campus staff regarding key grant initiatives. School D experienced initial resistance from school administrators regarding the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TG) modules, but a new school administrator allowed Texas GEAR UP SG staff to plan an assembly to present the TG modules to students.

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[4] These changes were statistically significant. Additional details are provided in Chapter 3.
[5] These changes were statistically significant. Additional details are provided in Chapter 3.

Parents' Perceived Facilitators and Barriers

> **Key Takeaway:**
> Parents reported that encouragement from their child facilitated their own engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG program activities; however, work schedules and other barriers continued to inhibit parent engagement.

For parents, encouragement from their child was the most commonly identified facilitator for participation. Texas GEAR UP SG should consider ways to leverage students with regard to encouraging their parents to participate in program activities, and perhaps offer more activities in which both groups can participate together. The most common parent-reported barrier to participation was work schedule. These trends are consistent with parent-reported facilitators and barriers during Year 1 of implementation. As such, ensuring that parent activities have a clearly articulated purpose/value, as well as scheduling them at times that are appropriate to parents and engaging students in bringing parents to events, remain key to successful engagement with activities.

Potential Promising Practices

The following four potentially promising implementation activities were identified in Year 2.

COLLEGE PREPARATION ADVISORS

College Preparation Advisors were a new resource to schools in Year 2. College Preparation Advisors were able to offer counseling and financial aid advisement—practices that were difficult to implement in Year 1. Various stakeholders indicated positive reactions to College Preparation Advisors. Students and parents who had met with a College Preparation Advisor had more knowledge of college, knowledge of financial terms, and higher educational expectations.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

An emerging promising practice for a few schools were programs offered in summer 2013. In summer 2013, four schools indicated that primary cohort students participated in programs intended, in part, to support preparation for Algebra I, and received, on average, 20 hours of mathematics focus. Participants in summer programs positively perceived their experiences, and indicated that participation in these programs improved knowledge about college enrollment requirements and financial literacy, as well as feeling better prepared to succeed in Algebra I. Much like the afterschool programs discussed in the Year 1 report, summer programs engaged students with mathematics in fun and challenging ways.

CAREER EXPLORATION

Career exploration and career-to-education alignment activities were a focus of events at several schools.[6] These activities were positively perceived by participants, and given their

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[6] These activities included, for example, Reality Check, an interactive game in which students explore real-life scenarios to help them understand what it might take to achieve the life they desire for themselves in the future. Students describe the lifestyle they would like for themselves. Careers associated with achieving the desired lifestyle are identified for the student to explore. Activities also included exposing students to adults with careers in a range of fields and Career Cruising, a career interest survey (used by School E to help students find careers based on their interests). Details about

direct focus on connecting future life with a career, may be contributing to general changes in the educational aspirations and college readiness perceptions of parents and students.

LEADERSHIP CLUB

Finally, a leadership club at one school provided opportunities for the students in Grade 8 to become involved with volunteer opportunities and to mentor peers. Participants reported that they enjoyed their experiences with the club. This club provides both short-term opportunities for personal growth and the long-term opportunity to build content that may distinguish the students when applying for postsecondary education, potentially increasing the likelihood of successful postsecondary enrollment.

Recommendations

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

- **Increase Awareness of Summer Programs.** A primary reason given by parents and students for not attending summer programs was that they were either not aware of or they did not feel encouraged to attend the programs. Given the potential for summer programs, schools should increase student and parent awareness regarding planned summer programs, engage as broad a range of students as possible, and continuously encourage participation.
- **Continue Progress With Regard to Student Perceptions.** Early successes included improved perceptions regarding students' desire to go to college and their awareness of financial options in order to be able to do so. In order to reach their goals related to these important aspects of the program, additional activities regarding college requirements and enrollment, as well as the financial costs associated with secondary education, are needed.
- **Seek to Better Understand and Potentially Model School G Implementation.** In both Year 1 and Year 2, School G had engaged in the full range of implementation expected by the Texas GEAR UP SG program. A few of the other schools, particularly School E, began to demonstrate clear improvements in Year 2; however, School G built capacity to engage in a large number of activities much more quickly. Overall, School G held the greatest number of events and boasted the greatest percentage of mentored students. Notably, School G also had parents and students with the highest rates of knowledge about college readiness in many cases (see Chapter 3 for a full list of findings regarding success at this school). School G had the highest percentage of students who indicated 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. They were also the school whose students reported the highest level of engagement with the Texas GEAR UP website. While there were some exceptions to these generally favorable findings, collectively, the findings suggest that School G may serve as an example for replicating 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 in addition to Texas GEAR UP SG at play, such as an environment that is particularly receptive to Texas GEAR UP SG services, related programming that reinforces Texas GEAR UP SG project objectives, and so forth. During future site visits, the evaluation team will continue to seek to understand why Texas GEAR UP SG appears to be so successful at this school.

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these programs emerged from site visits. Additional information about Reality Check is available at http://www.texasrealitycheck.com. Additional information about Career Cruising is available http://public.careercruising.com/en.

- **Focus on Targeted Support From the Support Center to Schools.** Schools were generally positive about their interactions with the Support Center, although teachers and administrators at some schools reported minimal engagement with the Support Center staff. TEA should encourage the Support Center to examine some of the implementation challenges identified through the evaluation to identify ways to target activities based on prior school challenges in order to assist schools in overcoming these challenges. Schools who faced the most challenges in Year 2 with regard to implementing activities across the range of activities seem to be in particular need of targeted support. For those schools that were effectively implementing programs in both Year 1 and Year 2, ongoing support can help to maintain those efforts, especially to facilitate the transition to high school.
- **Intensify Strategies to Reach Out to Parents.** All schools need intensive strategies to improve parent engagement with Texas GEAR UP SG activities and TEA should work with the Support Center to continue providing leadership in this area. This may include adjusting activities based on the facilitators and barriers to participation identified by the evaluation.
- **Continue to Support Grant Coordinators and College Preparation Advisors.** The College Preparation Advisors appear to have made positive contributions to the Texas GEAR UP SG programs. Based on consistent feedback, it is recommended that appropriate times and locations for one-on-one interaction between students and College Preparation Advisors be identified. TEA, in collaboration with the Support Center, should provide the College Preparation Advisors with additional training and supports as they move from the middle school to the high school environment.
- **Increase Statewide Implementation Efforts.** While the statewide efforts have made significant resources available through the website, use by Texas GEAR UP SG schools continues to be low (although TEA reported that website hits and retweets are increasing overall). Similarly, Project Share (a tool intended for delivering statewide teacher PD) was allocated funds in the budget but (as of March 31, 2014) was not implemented. TEA and its collaborators will want to continue to focus efforts on these statewide project objectives. More success was associated with implementation of the statewide coalition and conference opportunities; TEA should continue to use these outlets to communicate and educate about additional statewide resources as they become available.

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 (USDE). The broad purpose of the federal GEAR UP program is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Through the Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG), participating schools provide services to a primary cohort of students from Grade 7 (2012–13 school year) through their first year of postsecondary education (2018–19).[7] Texas GEAR UP SG services are intended to impact individual students and their parents, as well as to impact teachers through the provision of professional development (PD) and schools/districts through changes in academic rigor. In addition, the Texas GEAR UP SG is intended to make a statewide impact through the widespread provision of coordinated information and resources for students and their parents regarding postsecondary opportunities. TEA contracted with ICF International to provide an external, third-party evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, including annual implementation reports.

Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013) focused on implementation that occurred in the 2012–13 school year. This second annual implementation report focuses on implementation events that occurred in summer 2013 and during the 2013–14 school year. These annual reports provide a snapshot of how the Texas GEAR UP SG participating schools (n=7)/districts (n=4) and TEA and its collaborators are implementing the program. Throughout this report, districts are identified by the same number (District 1 through District 4), and schools are identified by the same letter (Schools A through G) as used in the prior report in order to mask the school and maintain the confidentiality that was promised for the site visits. The upcoming comprehensive report will examine the relationship between implementation and outcomes in the first two years.

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) is provided as a point of comparison for the Year 2 implementation data presented in this report. Specific Year 1 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], 2014a). Data show that only 7% of low-income youth attain a college degree by age 26, compared with 51% of students from the highest socioeconomic status quartile (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006). Nationally, in 2010, the immediate college enrollment rate of high school completers from low-income families was 52%, compared to 67% of students from middle-income families and 82% from high-income families (USDE National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012a). Hispanic youth immediate enrollment in college (60%) was also significantly lower in 2010 than that for either White or Black youth

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[7] Additional information about the cohort evaluation design of Texas GEAR UP SG is included in Appendix B.

(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 16% of those in higher education. Postsecondary graduation rates also lag for minority students. In 2010, 34% of Black youth who first enrolled in postsecondary education in 2004, as compared to 50% of Hispanic youth and 62% of White youth, had graduated college within six years (USDE NCES, 2012b). The most recent Texas data suggest that postsecondary enrollment growth in the state has slowed and actually fell in fall 2013 (THECB, 2014b). In fall 2013, in-state college-going rates of Hispanic students (51.5%) and African-American students (48.7%) continued to lag behind White and Asian student enrollment rates (56% and 79.4%, respectively).

While 56% 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.[8] While improving enrollment is a critical first step, students must also be prepared at a level that will move them from enrollment to graduation. In Texas, significant percentages of students do not meet this definition of college readiness, with 41% of students enrolled in postsecondary education in fall 2010 requiring developmental education coursework in one or more content areas of education (THECB, 2012). Community and technical colleges are particularly likely to experience students with a need for developmental education courses. According to the THECB (2012) report, in fall 2010, 55% of students enrolled in Texas community and technical colleges and 16% of students enrolled in four-year public institutions were not college ready. The impact on students in terms of time, money, and outcomes is significant when developmental education courses are required. For example, Texas students who did not require developmental coursework were twice as likely as students who did require such coursework to have graduated with a degree (THECB, 2012).[9]

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 motivation factors play a critical role in determining a student's ability to succeed in college (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). 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 to get a good job" (67%). GEAR UP programs, including the Texas GEAR UP SG, are encouraged to 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 rose from 80.6% for the Class of 2009 to 88.0% for the Class of 2013 (TEA, 2014). Economically disadvantaged students in the Class of 2013 had improved graduation rates

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[8] The 56% enrollment 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).

[9] 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 4-year institution within six years. Data reflect graduation in 2009 for community college and 2010 for 4-year college graduation.

(85.2%) compared to the Class of 2009 (78.3%), but still lagged relative to the state overall (88.0%). These trends reinforce the need for Texas GEAR UP SG to support schools with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students. English Language Learners (ELL), Hispanic, and African-American youth are also targeted by the Texas GEAR UP SG. TEA data also indicates concerns with the graduation rates for these student populations; rates are improving over time, but are still below state averages. For example, students identified as ELL at any point between Grades 9 and 12 had a much lower high school graduation rate (71.3%) than the state average (88.0%) in 2013.[10] Both Hispanic and African-American groups continued to lag behind White, non-Hispanic youth in the state as well.[11] Texas has taken steps to improve college readiness and access among primary and secondary students, as well as reach a greater number of students, specifically students from low-income families. For example, House Bill (HB) 3 (81st Texas Legislature, 2009) ushered in State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness® (STAAR®) with requirements regarding college readiness. In addition, the Texas College Preparation Program (TCPP) included TEA collaboration with the College Board and ACT, Inc. during the following school years: 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12; it included components targeting Grade 8, Grade 10, and Grade 11 students. In an effort to increase access, TCPP provided funding for high school juniors to take one college admissions test (either the SAT or the ACT) without cost.[12] Texas schools have also generally supported and encouraged college readiness through improved course content.

In addition to high school graduation, one way to prepare students for enrollment in higher education is to offer dual (college and high school) credit 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. However 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). 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 address the remaining concerns.

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 (83rd Legislative Session) in June 2013 (LegiScan, 2013). The passage of HB 5 initiated substantial changes to the assessment and graduation requirements in the state to create a rigorous but flexible educational program for students that promotes both college access and career readiness. The Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort, students who will begin 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 the districts 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 options. Some endorsements provided under HB 5 may be sufficient for high school graduation, but may create impediments to student participation in postsecondary education related to meeting college entrance requirements for high school coursework.

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[10] Similar ELL data were not provided for the Class of 2009. For that class, those students identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) had a graduation rate of 49.3%.

[11] 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%).

[12] Please see http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/taa/stanprog113010.html and http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/taa/tcpp09132011.html for additional information.

Specifically, prior to HB 5, in order to graduate high school under either the 26-credit recommended high school program (RHSP) or distinguished achievement program (DAP), students were required to successfully complete four courses in each of four content subject areas: English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies. These course requirements were in line with college entrance requirements. HB 5 replaced RHSP and DAP plans with a flexible 22-credit Foundation High School Program (FHSP), accompanied by a required endorsement (total credits: 26). Students select an endorsement upon entering high school. Students are permitted to choose, at any time, to earn an endorsement other than the one the student previously selected at the beginning of Grade 9. Students are generally discouraged from graduating with only the minimal FHSP and cannot do so without consent from a parent or guardian.[13] Essentially, the endorsements provide the basis for entering a career pathway, similar to a major in college. While five endorsements have been identified under HB 5, not all schools are 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. HB 5 permits students to complete more than one endorsement. The 22-credit FHSP includes four credits in English (I, II, III, and one advanced English course), three in mathematics (Algebra, Geometry, and one advanced mathematics course), three in science (Biology, Integrated Physics, and Chemistry or an advanced science course), and three in social studies (U.S. History, U.S. Government, Economics, and either World History or World Geography).

To graduate with a distinguished level of achievement, students must exceed FHSP requirements. Students must complete Algebra II as one of the four mathematics credits and must complete at least one endorsement. In addition to better meeting college entrance requirements, one 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 Top 10 percent automatic admission law.[14] In August 2014, TEA published a Graduation Toolkit to support students, parents, and schools in understanding the new graduation requirements.[15] Anecdotal evidence suggests that many schools are also publishing their own tools to inform students and parents about the HB 5 changes. 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 STAAR 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.

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[13] This permission cannot be provided until after the student completes Grade 10.
[14] Graduating with a distinguished level of achievement is one of multiple requirements for the Top 10 Percent automatic admission. Additional information on the rules associated with this is available at http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/5358.PDF?CFID=23401714&CFTOKEN=94753953.
[15] The TEA Graduation Toolkit is available online at http://tea.texas.gov/communications/brochures.aspx.

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). While 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 parent financial literacy regarding postsecondary education. Ideally, aspirations and expectations for postsecondary education are aligned and influence decisions (e.g., to take Algebra I in Grade 8, to apply for postsecondary enrollment in Grade 12). Texas GEAR UP project objectives, such as offering college awareness workshops to all students and parents by the end of the project's first year, support this effort.

2. **Strengthening academic preparation and achievement.** This goal focuses on providing academically rigorous opportunities for students (e.g., achieving college readiness benchmarks on state/national tests, completion of college credit in high school). GEAR UP PD opportunities for teachers are made available to increase academic rigor in the classroom. Grantees monitor, and students can self-monitor, progress on achieving early and intermediate outcomes that indicate postsecondary readiness (e.g., timely progress 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 8 (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.

Figure 1.1. Overall GEAR UP Goals

Raise Postsecondary Participation

Strengthen Academic Preparation and Achievement

Increase Postsecondary Awareness and Aspirations

Source: CoBro Consulting (2010).
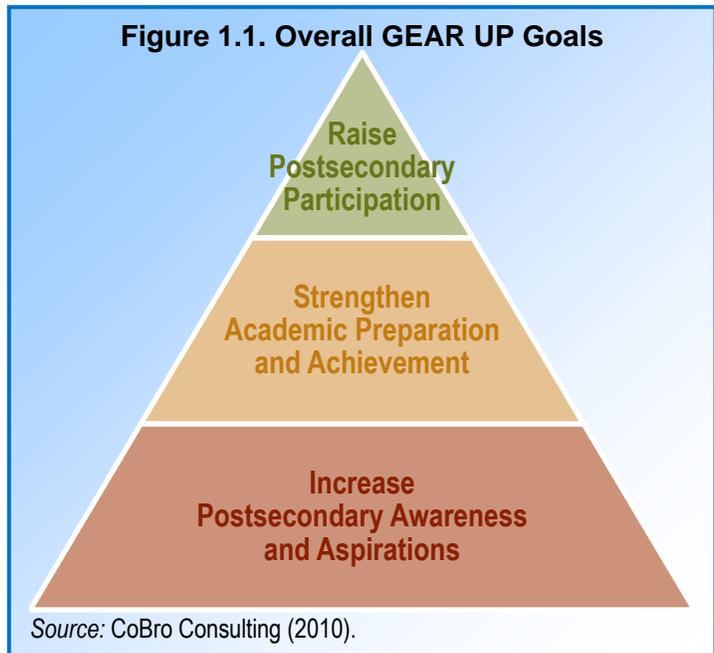
3. **Raising postsecondary participation.** Finally, GEAR UP seeks to improve high school graduation rates and enrollment in postsecondary education. This goal is at the top of the pyramid, in part, because it is the intended long-term outcome. However, implementation activities intended to aid grantees 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 summer transition programs are of particular interest for the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation. Texas GEAR UP

SG project objectives for participation in GEAR UP activities, as well as graduating from high school with college-ready skills in mathematics and English, support this goal.

1.1.4 Overview of Texas GEAR UP State Grant

TEA was awarded a federal GEAR UP grant in April 2012 with a start date of July 2012. As described in Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel 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 (seven middle 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 series are provided through existing and newly developed TEA college and career information services, which provide a rich array of resources and tools to help guide students and parents toward postsecondary education.[16]

TEA based 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.[17] At that time, all seven Texas GEAR UP SG middle schools in the four selected districts had greater percentages of economically disadvantaged students and at-risk students as compared to 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).[18] 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 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 the 2013–14 school year. Appendix F, related to implementation findings, presents demographic data for students. As previously mentioned, schools will be

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[16] This includes the statewide website: www.texasgearup.com.

[17] 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).

[18] Texas statutory criteria for at-risk status include each student who is under 21 years of age and who (1) was not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more school years; (2) is in Grades 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 and did not maintain an average equivalent 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 LEP; (11) is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official; (12) is homeless; or (13) resided in the preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential placement facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home (http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/tapr/2013/glossary.pdf).

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 Middle Schools

Middle School	District
Brentwood	Edgewood Independent School District
Garcia	Edgewood Independent School District
Wrenn	Edgewood Independent School District
Dunbar	Lubbock Independent School District
Decker	Manor Independent School District
Manor	Manor Independent School District
Somerset	Somerset Independent School District

TEXAS GEAR UP STATE GRANT COLLABORATORS

Prior to receiving the Texas GEAR UP SG, TEA had identified five organizations with which to collaborate: Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center (technical assistance provider); Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TG); Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) Centers; the College Board; and AMS Pictures. In Year 2, TEA retained two of these collaborators, the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center and AMS Pictures, and added two new collaborators: Abriendo Puertas and GeoFORCE. While TG is no longer an identified state collaborator, TG is committed to providing training to schools, including Texas GEAR UP SG schools, on financial literacy as it relates to postsecondary education. Similarly, the College Board no longer had a formalized relationship with the Texas GEAR UP SG during Year 2. However, TEA provided grant funds through the technical assistance provider for districts to purchase services directly from the College Board. Two of the districts chose to purchase services in 2013–14. The remaining two districts reported not having the time to take advantage of the services. In Year 3, TEA will provide funds for Texas GEAR UP SG districts to purchase College Board services directly. Data collected in Year 2 clarified the role of existing collaborators, as reported in the first Texas GEAR UP SG implementation report (O'Donnel et al., 2013), and offered information about new collaborators.

Texas GEAR UP State Grant Support Center: The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives' (UT-IPSI) Office for College Access manages and staffs the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center. As TEA program staff describe, technical assistance from the Support Center includes grant training (most of which is required for all districts), grant documentation support, grant management training, or assistance with using grant tools/forms. They also provide quarterly reports to TEA that are formatted similar to the Annual Performance Report (APR) and house the GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System. These data support TEA in aligning reporting to project objectives, provide student- and teacher-level implementation data for the evaluation, and serve as formative information for TEA and the districts. One role of the Support Center is ensuring that the school districts comply with grant requirements. This is achieved, in part, through working with the districts on a district Annual Strategic Planning Report (ASPR) on which Support Center staff provide guidance and feedback to the districts on their plans for the upcoming school year, Support Center staff visit each school monthly and engage in calls/email, as needed, in between. The Support Center is also responsible for the annual statewide conference, including contracting with keynote speakers and reviewing papers.

In Year 2, there was a large focus by Support Center staff on getting College Preparation Advisors in place at each participating school prior to the start of the 2013–14 school year. The Support Center was responsible for hiring and supporting/training the College Preparation Advisors provided to each Texas GEAR UP SG school in Year 2. Support Center staff trained College Preparation Advisors in the Texas GEAR UP SG project objectives, school characteristics, student success strategies, and college access and readiness strategies.

AMS Pictures: At the end of Year 1, AMS Pictures launched the revised Texas GEAR UP website at www.texasgearup.com. The content on this website is publically available. In Year 2, AMS Pictures has continued to manage product development for Texas GEAR UP SG grantees, as well as the population throughout the state. This includes creating videos (about finding and paying for college for students, and about college and career readiness for teachers), developing the statewide website (structure and content), and reaching out to the community to assess information needs. Throughout the life of the grant, AMS Pictures will visit each school to highlight practices identified by their research as successful. For example, in Year 2, they interviewed staff, speakers, and students about career week at one school and then produced a packet with information about implementing a career week program. AMS Pictures will also continue to interact regularly with the Support Center regarding both the website and the conference (e.g., selecting a theme, visuals, promotion).

New collaborators in Year 2 include the following:

- **Abriendo Puertas** began working on a parent initiative (focused on parent advocates engaging other parents) and a curriculum in all four districts. However, it was only implemented in three districts in Year 2. This model focuses on training parents to provide content to other parents.[19] One suggested approach from a site visit participant was to have this group use the Texas GEAR UP SG website as a platform for their parent training.
- **GeoFORCE** is an experiential outreach program housed at UT-Austin and supported, in part, through TG Public Benefit.[20] It is a long-term college access initiative based on geosciences in which 32 students from the seven Texas GEAR UP SG schools applied and were selected to participate in a summer 2014 residential program. College Preparation Advisors supported the application process, which occurred in January 2014, and GeoFORCE selected the students.

1.2   Texas GEAR UP State Grant Year 1 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, while this report will focus on implementation with Grade 8 students in the 2013–14 school 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 ASPR, GEAR UP federal APR data, student and parent surveys, and qualitative site visit data informed both implementation reports. The complete first Texas GEAR UP SG implementation report (O'Donnel et al., 2013) provides additional details about the Year 1 findings summarized here, as well as all Year 1 implementation findings.

1.2.1 Shortened Timeline for Implementation

Understanding the shortened period for implementation is critical to interpreting the findings. One limitation for the annual implementation report is that the evaluation period is different from the annual program period and thus it does not allow for an understanding of each program year of implementation. In Year 1, the Texas GEAR UP SG was operating for approximately six months before data collection for the first implementation report was completed. This was due, in large part, to participating schools receiving their first awards over the course of November

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[19] See http://ap-od.org for additional information about this program.
[20] See http://www.jsg.utexas.edu/geoforce for additional information about this program.

and December 2012, after the start of the 2012–13 school year.[21] Some data were further limited due to the timeline of APR data collection, which reflected grantee activity through March 31, 2013, and were submitted to USDE in April. That is, APR data such as student participation in support services (e.g., tutoring, mentoring) and in events (e.g., workshops, college visits) had only been collected formally through March at the time of the Year 1 report. Participation by students, parents, and teachers in services and events from April 1, 2013, to the end of the school year is not included in this report.

The Year 2 timeline for implementation was also somewhat shortened, but not to the extent that it was in Year 1. Due to administrative delays, schools did not receive their Notification of Grant Award (NOGA) for fall 2013 until a few months into the school year (October 2013). Although NOGAs indicated a start date of September 1, 2013, and allowed expenditures occurring from this date forward, some districts have policies prohibiting certain expenditures until receipt of a formal state NOGA. While districts were encouraged to continue implementation based on the anticipated award, Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators and district administrators indicated during site visits that they were not able to conduct all planned activities in the fall because of the lack of available funds. In some cases, activities were delayed, but occurred only after receipt of the NOGA; in other cases, local decisions eliminated planned activities. In addition to the delays in receipt of the NOGA, APR data used in the Year 2 report are from summer 2013 and into the 2013–14 school year, but only through March 31, 2014. In other words, the data collection timeline does not reflect the full school year in which Year 2 program services were implemented.

In general, Year 2 was a more complete time frame of implementation than what occurred in Year 1. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators were in place and ready to go, and were able to continue some activities as expected during the delay in grant award notification (e.g., College Preparation Advisors were in place in all schools from the start of Year 2). When making comparisons in implementation across the two school years, these differing timelines must be kept in mind. In general, Year 2 may differ not only because it is the second year of the Texas GEAR UP SG program in schools and reflects experiences in Grade 8 as compared to Grade 7 (following the primary cohort of students), but also because the amount of time for implementation varied across the two years.

1.2.2 Year 1 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. Level and mix of implementation varied across schools in the first six months of implementation in Year 1 (see Table 1.2 for an overview of Year 1 implementation strategies by school). School G appeared to have made the most progress on implementing the wide range of GEAR UP practices as designed/intended, although at least three additional schools (Schools B, E, and F) appeared to make excellent Year 1 progress at implementing a range of practices as well. The remaining three schools implemented a smaller range of activities. 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. 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.

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[21] TEA first applied for the GEAR UP grant in July 2011 with plans for implementation to begin in the 2011–12 school year. Based on this application, USDE awarded the Texas GEAR UP SG in April 2012 during a second cycle of awards. TEA had experienced staffing changes during this period, and there were leadership changes in some of the districts and schools that had agreed to participate in the program when the application was first submitted. Ultimately, awards were made to the four districts participating in the Texas GEAR UP SG in October 2012.

Table 1.2. Overview of Year 1 Implementation Strategies by School, 2012–13

Implementation Strategy	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G
Advanced Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Tutoring in Multiple Subjects	X[b]	X[b]	X[b]	X			X
Student Support Services: Tutoring in Mathematics Only					X	X	
Student Support Services:[a] Mentoring					X		X
Student Support Services: Counseling/ Advising							X
Student Support Services: Other Activities (Afterschool Mathematics Program)					X	X	
College Visit	X	X		X			X
Job Site Visit/Job Shadowing							X
Student Workshops/ Events	X	X	X		X	X	X
Parent Events		X	X		X	X	X
Teacher Professional Development[c]				X	X	X	X
Community Partners		X	X	X			X
Use Statewide Services					X	X	X
Total Number of Strategies Implemented	**4**	**6**	**5**	**5**	**8**	**7**	**11**

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

[a] An additional student support service, financial advising, had not been implemented by any schools at the time of the Year 1 report.

[b] Schools A, B and C each indicated in the Annual Performance Report that students had participated in virtual tutoring relatively extensively. During the site visit, the actual level of tutoring at these schools was reported to be minimal. Still, given that tutoring had occurred to some extent, the schools were credited with having implemented tutoring.

[c] For this table, attendance at the national GEAR UP conference was not included in professional development. All schools sent staff to the conference.

1.2.3 Algebra I: Advanced Course Taking, Tutoring, and Enrichment Programs in Year 1

Successful completion of Algebra I is a key early outcome measure that sets a 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). Grade 7 students' enrollment in an advanced mathematics course averaged 22% and ranged from 18% (School G) to 29% (School D). Based on this, it seemed unclear if sufficient percentages of students would be prepared to complete Algebra I successfully in Grade 8. That is, student enrollment in advanced mathematics in Grade 7 fell below 30% at all schools and was well below this at two of the schools (Schools C and F). Tutoring efforts across schools in Year 1 emphasized

mathematics tutoring, which is likely to support Project Objective 1.1. Two schools (Schools E and F) engaged in an afterschool mathematics enrichment program targeting students who were expected to take Algebra I in Grade 8. All schools indicated in their spring 2013 site visits that they were planning summer 2013 mathematics enrichment programs.

1.2.4 Parent Engagement With Texas GEAR UP State Grant in Year 1

TEA set a project objective that each year at least 50% of parents would participate in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events (Project Objective 7.3). No school met this project objective in Year 1 and parents participating in focus groups during site visits generally reported having little to no knowledge of the program. Across schools, only 4.5% of primary cohort parents attended an event. During site visits, Schools E and F reported some success with a three-part series of parent engagement workshops.[22] The schools reported feeling successful at engaging parents in the series, as compared to previous experiences with engaging parents. The schools used flyers, personal calls from teachers, and robo-calls to build parent awareness and interest in the events.[23] They provided free childcare to parents and Spanish translation for parents with limited English skills. The schools were optimistic that they could build on their successes in the future and attain Project Objective 7.3 of 50% attendance at three events.

1.2.5 Teacher Professional Development and Vertical Teaming in Year 1

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

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

Most Texas GEAR UP SG schools had designed and scheduled their teacher PD activities for the 2012–13 school year prior to TEA awarding the Texas GEARUP SG in November/December 2012 and 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 by May 2013. This included training on project-based learning (PBL) that occurred with a vertical team of teachers from the middle school and high school. During site visits, staff at all schools indicated plans for summer teacher PD related to Texas GEAR UP SG Project Objectives 3.1 and 3.2. Across schools, teachers who participated in focus groups expressed an interest in both PD on PBL and pre-AP training for teachers. Teachers participating in focus groups at all schools also reported that few vertical teaming activities had occurred, although they indicated they valued such opportunities. Schools reported to TEA that they were engaging in vertical teaming, so it may be that teachers who participated in site visits were not engaged with that activity or that progress from vertical teaming was not communicated broadly.

1.2.6 Student and Parent Year 1 Key Survey Findings

In Year 1, both primary cohort parents and students were surveyed in spring 2013. These data are considered baseline. However, several of the survey findings are worth noting. First, both parents and students had educational aspirations that were significantly higher than educational expectations. That is, they would like to attain a higher degree of education than they actually believe they will. School G, where the implementation mix was the most broad, had the highest

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[22] Parent attendance at these events was not available at the time of the Year 1 report.
[23] Robo-calls are automated phone messages used as an efficient system to send information out to a large audience.

percentage of students who indicated that participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities had positively influenced their decision to go to college (58%). That is, these students suggested that before Texas GEAR UP SG participation, they were not committed to attending college, but now expected to do so. Across schools, the greatest percentage of students who do not plan to go to college selected *concerns about cost* as a main reason for not continuing on to postsecondary education (48%).

Survey data indicate that one reason that parents and students were concerned about attaining the educational goals they aspired to is cost. Both parents and students tended to overestimate how much college will cost as compared to the actual state average. One in four parents and 12% of students indicated that they have no knowledge about college financial aid. 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.[24] 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.

1.2.7 Key Facilitators and Barriers: Year 1 Implementation

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

GRANT COORDINATOR TIME COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT FROM CAMPUS/DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

School G, where the greatest range of implementation activities occurred, was the only school to have a Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator who was located at the school and was committed full time to implementing the project at that school. Schools E and F, where the implementation mix was also high, had a coordinator with a significant time commitment for Texas GEAR UP SG. At the remaining four schools, all with lower levels of implementation, the coordinator was responsible for a range of other programs, and in some cases, was responsible for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation at more than one school. The grant coordinator's level of time commitment to a single school's implementation was the most obvious difference among the schools, suggesting that it may explain, in part, the varying levels of implementation. In addition, at Schools E, F, and G, there were more obvious signs of support from both campus and district administrators, further supporting the high level of implementation at these schools.

IMPROVED ACADEMIC RIGOR

A potential barrier identified during site visits was concern about the need to improve academic rigor in advanced courses. Teachers at several schools who participated in focus groups noted that while they have students in advanced courses, the content was not as rigorous as needed to facilitate postsecondary success. If the course content is less rigorous than teachers who participated in focus groups thought it should be, it may be less likely that students in the advanced courses will ultimately be successful academically, particularly as they enter postsecondary education.

1.2.8 Parents' Perceived Facilitators and Barriers in Year 1

Parents who responded to the survey indicated that they were more likely to be engaged in parent event activities held at the school when their students encouraged them to be engaged. This suggests that schools may benefit from working with students on involving parents, which can be difficult at the middle school level. Parents also identified picking a topic that was of

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[24] 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.

interest to them as critical to their engagement in the activity. The greatest percentage of parents (49%) and students (28%) indicated that information about financing college was a topic of interest. Not surprisingly, parents most commonly identified time/schedule conflicts as a barrier to participation. Some parents indicated that schools needed to offer events in Spanish as well as in English.

1.2.9 Enhanced College Visits in Year 1

In Year 1, School G tied classroom activities to college visits in order to better facilitate learning from the visit. For example, in one activity, students researched colleges for a paper in English class. Students also wrote and decorated college brochures. Linking these visits to classroom practice is part of the development of a college-going culture at the school. Site visit participants suggested that engaging in this type of enhanced activity associated with college visits was a potential promising practice from Year 1 implementation.

1.3 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 formative 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.
- 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.

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

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

As in Year 1, the Year 2 implementation report focuses primarily on formative feedback regarding early implementation and any early indication of promising practices. In the context of these objectives, this first report, as well as future reports, addresses a broad range of evaluation questions (see Appendix A). These questions are aligned with understanding the extent to which the overarching goals and 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 participating schools? To what extent does implementation change over time?
- What were students', parents', teachers', and school staff's perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation to date?
- What facilitators and barriers were associated with 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?
- How did schools budget for Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 2?

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 as compared to the state average and/or the comparison group schools?[25]
- 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 partners? 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 level? 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 to sustaining implementation?[26]

1.4   Evaluation Design and Methods

The Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation will utilize a longitudinal design to evaluate the Texas GEAR UP SG over the seven years of the program and to examine change over time in the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort of students.[27] In addition, a quasi-experimental design will be utilized in order to compare outcomes for students in Texas GEAR UP SG schools to outcomes for students in comparable schools. Throughout the evaluation, a mixed-methods approach will be undertaken. 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 and parent surveys and site visits will provide information regarding perceptions of the program, knowledge about postsecondary education, and educational aspirations and expectations. Appendix B

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[25] Comparison groups will be selected through propensity score matching for the upcoming comprehensive report.

[26] 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.

[27] The primary cohort of students in Grade 7 in the 2012–13 school year were 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.

provides additional information regarding the evaluation design, methods, and analyses. Appendix C provides an overview of data submitted to the APR, and Appendix D contains copies of all surveys and site visit protocols. Appendix E provides detailed summaries of the site visits conducted in spring 2013.

1.4.1 Logic Model

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

In the logic model, the first column on the left identifies important inputs for the program. These inputs are 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. 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 8, 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

Inputs	Program Implementation/ Process/Activities	Outputs/ Participation	OUTCOMES		
			Short Term (Year 1 and Annually)	Intermediate (Years 2–5)	Long Term (Year 6+)

Student Characteristics
- Number of students in Grade 7 primary cohort
- Economically disadvantaged status (free/reduced lunch eligible)
- Limited English Proficiency status
- Race/Ethnicity
- Gender
- Special education status
- At-risk status

Schools and Teachers
- 100% Title I
- district/campus graduation rate and annual dropout rate
- Teacher years of experience, degree

Parents/Community
- Parent aspirations and expectations
- Parent/community education level
- Parent/community employment status

Program Implementation/Process/Activities
- Improve instruction and expand mathematics and science opportunities.
- Increase access to, and participation and success in, advanced academic programs.
- Provide strong student support services.
- Promote high school completion and college attendance.
- Provide professional development for differentiated instruction, vertical teaming, advanced instructional strategies, and project-based learning.
- Increase availability of post-secondary information and knowledge-building opportunities.
- Build and expand community partnerships.
- Promote college readiness statewide.

Outputs/Participation
- Number of students participating in mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring programs
- Number of students enrolled in summer programs and institutes
- Number of school-based school completion and college attendance activities offered to students
- Number of high school college credit courses taken (e.g., Advanced Placement, dual credit, concurrent enrollment)
- Number and combination of professional development workshops participated in
- Number of state publications distributed regarding college options, preparation, and financing
- Number of participants in workshops and information sessions
- Number of new community partnerships

Short Term (Year 1 and Annually)
- Annual number/percentage of students in the primary cohort working at or above grade level
- Percentage of primary cohort enrolled in/completing pre-Algebra or equivalent; successful completion of Algebra I in Grade 8
- Annual number/percentage of students being promoted on time
- Student aspirations and expectations for postsecondary enrollment and financial literacy

- Annual student feedback (focus groups, interviews, or surveys) on the quality of interactions from mentoring, counseling, tutoring programs, and/or summer institutes

- Annual change in percentage of teachers and counselors completing college process training
- Annual change in number of vertical teams meetings across middle and high school
- Annual number of educators participating in GEAR UP professional learning

- Parent expectations and aspirations regarding postsecondary enrollment/success and financial literacy
- Annual parent attendance at workshops and information sessions
- Number of parents accessing resource sites
- Number/percentage of parents attending college awareness activities
- Annual number and type of community partnerships and alliances established

Intermediate (Years 2–5)
- Number/percentage of students in the primary cohort completing:*
  - Algebra I in Grade 9, Pre-Advanced Placement, or Advanced Placement course
  - College credits
  - Progress on graduation plan
- Average scale score and number/percentage of Levels I, II, and III students on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) 7th, 8th, and end-of-course exams*
- Number/Percentage of students earning college credits*
- Percentage of students taking the PSAT, ACT, and SAT [a]
- Average ACT Aspire, PSAT, ACT, and SAT score*[a]

- Percentage of teachers in target districts and across the state trained through at least one Texas GEAR UP opportunity
- Parents' perceptions of the workshops and information sessions (focus groups, interviews, or surveys)
- Parents' expectations and aspirations regarding postsecondary enrollment/success and financial literacy

Long Term (Year 6+)
- Number of students meeting or exceeding the college-ready criterion on the ACT/SAT [a]
- Average number of college applications*
- Number/percentage of the primary cohort completing high school on time; Number/percentage graduating with an endorsement or with distinguished level of achievement
- Number/Percentage of students in the primary cohort enrolled in postsecondary education in the fall following high school graduation, in the spring after high school graduation, and a second year after high school graduation*
- Number/Percentage of students in the primary cohort enrolled in college remediation courses (mathematics and English)*

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.

[a] 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 2 implementation activities. Information regarding the second year of implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, including summer 2013 and the 2013–14 school year, is found in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides findings from Year 2 (fall 2013 and spring 2014 with relevant references to Year 1 data from spring 2013) surveys of Texas GEAR UP SG students and parents on issues regarding educational expectations and knowledge regarding postsecondary enrollment and costs. Chapter 4 provides descriptive information regarding Year 2 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 same letters and numbers as in the Year 1 report.

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. In addition, in both Year 1 and Year 2, the timeline for the start of the grant was delayed to some extent, although the impact of this was more extensive in Year 1. Given these limitations, 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). Data on student participation in advanced course taking in Year 1 were considered baseline data rather than outcome data, as schools would have already assigned students to courses prior to receiving their NOGA. In addition, while enrollment in advanced courses was known, data on successful completion of courses (the outcome of interest) was not yet available for the writing of the annual implementation reports in either year. Given the preliminary nature of the data and the lack of availability of outcome data, implementation reports do not examine connections between implementation and outcomes. A future report will include these types of connections.

NEXT STEPS

TEA will publish annual implementation reports each year. ICF will prepare a comprehensive report that includes an examination of all the 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. If TEA chooses to exercise its option to extend the evaluation contract, additional comprehensive reports will be submitted in spring 2017 (through the 2015–16 school year) and spring 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 the implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG overall and comparatively across the seven participating middle schools in four districts. It is based on analysis of program documents, data submitted for the APR (April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014, including summer 2013), and data from site visits (conducted in fall 2013 and again in spring 2014). 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 Texas GEAR UP SG implemented overall and at each of the participating schools?
- What are students', parents', and staff's perceptions of student support services implementation strategies?
- What facilitators and barriers were associated with the implementation of strategies?
- What practices implemented by districts are perceived by students, parents, and staff to be effective, and therefore a potential best practice?

Year 2 findings are compared to Year 1 findings (reported in Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013) only descriptively. As noted in Chapter 1, Year 1 implementation occurred during a truncated timeline. Therefore, in many cases, the change between Year 1 and Year 2 implementation may be due to the amount of time for implementation. Tables with additional details on the findings reported here, including the levels of statistical significance, can be found in Appendix F.[28] The upcoming comprehensive evaluation report will include additional findings on the level of implementation across the first two years. In addition, final implementation data from Year 2 will be presented in the upcoming comprehensive evaluation report, 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, as related to the implementation to date:[29]

- **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.
- **Advanced Course and Pre-Advanced Placement (AP)/AP Course Taking.**[30] 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.
- **Strong Student Support Services.** By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the Grade 8 students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on results of teacher/counselor input and/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.

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[28] 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.

[29] A list of all project goals and objectives is provided in Appendix A.

[30] Schools self-selected whether a course was considered advanced based on the following definition: Advanced courses are classes that are identified as above grade level by the student's school. Most honors and pre-AP courses are considered advanced. Algebra I, by definition, is considered as above grade level when completed in Grade 8.

- **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 regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL.
- **Vertical Teaming.** In each grant year, teams of teachers at the middle and high school will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.
- **Community 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   Service Planning and Program Leadership at Schools

ASPRs from the four districts outlined processes for planning student services, PD, parent outreach, and an advisory council at the seven Texas GEAR UP 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 2 implementation activities included a focus on providing PD opportunities for teachers to improve academic rigor, fostering parental involvement, and overall improvement of college readiness. Support from community stakeholders, PD opportunities (focused on vertical teaming and PBL), and student support services (including mentoring, counseling/advising, and tutoring) were planned in order to build capacity within school districts to improve students' academic achievement and increase students'/parents' college awareness.

Table 2.1. Examples of Year 2 Planning Processes by Service Area, 2013–14

Service Area	Planning Processes
Student Services	- Convene planning meetings every three weeks. - Use progress reports, attendance records, daily grades, formative assessments, parent feedback, and teacher input. - Review individual students through the Universal Review Systems process.
Professional Development	- Identify high priorities, such as project-based learning, differentiated instruction, advanced academics, positive behavior intervention systems, and vertical alignment. - Use student data, teacher performance, district/campus improvement plans, and counseling/advising records. - Conduct a faculty needs assessment.
Parent Outreach	- Consider multiple strategies for outreach, such as mailers, home visits, and websites. - Offer material in English and Spanish. - Convene parent liaisons quarterly.
Advisory Council	- Use GEAR UP project objectives and student/campus data. - Establish plans to identify and recruit members. - Convene quarterly meetings.

Source: Analyses of district 2013–14 Annual Strategic Planning Reports.
NOTE: This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all planning processes implemented by districts and schools.

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These planning processes demonstrate a range of approaches in which districts and schools engage. Although seemingly comprehensive, it is anticipated that these practices will become more refined over the course of Texas GEAR UP SG to strategize the delivery of programming.

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), the levels of visibility or awareness of the Texas GEAR UP SG among teachers, parents, students, and administrators varied from very low (Schools A, B, C, and D) to relatively high (Schools E, F, and G) in Year 1. Year 1 implementation plans included plans to disseminate information at school events, parent meetings/events, websites, staff meetings/PD presentations, student assemblies, and newsletters. In Year 2, districts enhanced their communication plans by incorporating additional strategies, such as putting information on campus websites, using robo-calls to communicate with parents, emailing and mailing information, posting flyers in the school/community, creating school bulletin boards, disseminating brochures, and posting announcements on digital signs.[31]

One recommendation in Annual Implementation Report #1 was for schools to consider engaging in additional program kickoff activities at the start of the 2013–14 school year. Site visit data included reports of districts providing activities at the start of the 2013–14 school year to re-introduce and roll out the program to students and parents. Held by four districts in Year 2, these kickoff events helped to (re)introduce the program to students and parents, which was missing in Year 1, according to one state collaborator.

These expanded approaches may have contributed to the site visit findings that point to a somewhat greater awareness of the program by the end of Year 2 than there was during Year 1 among some students, parents, teachers, and administrators. However, challenges with branding and communicating with parents remain. Parents at three schools (Schools D, E, and F) who participated in fall 2013 focus groups seemed to have little knowledge of the Texas GEAR UP SG program as of a few months into the 2013–14 school year. One issue may have been that having students bring home information to their parents, a strategy used at these schools, was not a reliable method of communication. Plans for one district described in the fall 2013 site visit included initiating a Parents' Club based on the suggestion of parents.

During site visits, administrators suggested that students' and teachers' lack of knowledge about specific Texas GEAR UP SG activities was often due to a lack of Texas GEAR UP SG branding and/or co-sponsoring of events with other, more well-known programs in the schools (e.g., Advancement Via Individual Determination [AVID], Communities In Schools [CIS]). Site visit data also suggest that it is important for administrators to have a detailed understanding of the Texas GEAR UP SG structure to integrate it with existing programs and to avoid barriers to implementation. For example, one College Preparation Advisor indicated that a school

> **Quotes From the Field: Texas GEAR UP SG Visibility to Parents, Spring 2014**
>
> Year 2 shows progress in stakeholders' understanding of the Texas GEAR UP SG across districts and schools. For example:
> - "Initially, I didn't know what it was; I thought it would be helping them but didn't know how. Now, I see it is focused on prepping them for college." (Parent)
> - "They know that there is GEAR UP throughout the state and that it is just for this graduating class. They feel very fortunate that their child gets to participate in it and wish that their other children would have the opportunity to participate in it also." (Parent via translator)

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[31] Robo-calls are automated phone messages used as an efficient system to send information out to a large audience.

administrator had assigned, or tried to assign, school responsibilities outside of their role as a College Preparation Advisor.

There were varying levels of support for the Texas GEAR UP SG program across districts and schools, as well as among stakeholder groups (i.e., district leaders, campus leaders, teachers, and students). One of the state collaborators described buy-in at the schools as contingent upon school leadership, but that, overall, it is better than it was in the first year of implementation. For example, administrators in one district "hold the keys very tightly," which slows processes to get approval and proceed with Texas GEAR UP SG tasks, activities, and events. In other cases, lack of collaboration between participating schools and state collaborators required schools to implement programs differently than intended. For example, one state collaborator directly presented financial literacy modules to a large group of students at one school instead of training College Preparation Advisors and teachers as they did in other schools.

In one district, a central office administrator discussed how the Texas GEAR UP SG is coordinated with related district and grant-funded activities to minimize duplication and coordinate services. In another district, strong support for the program from the district central office has been particularly important in maintaining progress at a school with a new Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator in Year 2.

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.

2.1.2   Texas GEAR UP State Grant Coordinators

Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators play a crucial role in implementing program activities in each of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools. Their responsibilities include planning and implementing activities for students and events for parents, coordinating with collaborators, collaborating with school and district personnel to deliver programming, collecting data to input into the student tracking data system, and collaborating with College Preparation Advisors. 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 might benefit from PD in some of the following areas: how to use data entry systems, communications for sharing necessary information with appropriate individuals, and ways to increase the participation of students and parents in activities.

With the students in the primary cohort moving from middle schools to high schools, the Texas GEAR UP SG's function in the schools and the role of the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator may be slightly different starting in the 2014–15 school year. In one district, the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator left this position toward the end of the 2013–14 school year and was not replaced prior to the end of the school year. As of spring 2014, the other three Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators will remain the same as the primary cohort advances to their respective high schools. 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 in the high school context.

2.1.3   Texas GEAR UP State Grant College Preparation Advisors

The 2013–14 school year was the first year that each Texas GEAR UP SG school was provided with a College Preparation Advisor, who brought additional visibility to the Texas GEAR UP SG program. College Preparation Advisors across the seven schools engaged with students often through informal interactions (e.g., discussions in the hallways, working with students during lunch). The goals of these interactions were to make connections with students and increase

awareness of available student supports and services; they also helped students complete applications for summer programs. In addition to these interactions with individual students, College Preparation Advisors designed Texas GEAR UP SG activities on their campuses and went into the classrooms to provide informational sessions to students (e.g., TG financial modules, information about high school, college awareness information). In districts with multiple Texas GEAR UP SG schools, the College Preparation Advisors often communicated and collaborated with each other on activities and strategies.

During site visits, students, parents, school staff, and Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators indicated that the College Preparation Advisors have been an effective addition to the schools. Feedback indicated that College Preparation Advisors were providing valuable resources to students and parents, while encouraging the students to think about and strive for college. One school administrator said, "It is different because the advisor is here this year; there are more people to help and support students." A student shared that, "The GEAR UP advisor encourages us to go to college. He is always around in the hallways and at lunch." College Preparation Advisors' offices had a college-going culture with college posters and information related to college and careers. These "GEAR UP" rooms, as some students referred to them, were places where students and some of their parents brought their questions about high school or college.

Despite their noticeable presence, there was very limited time in the daily school schedule at all schools for College Preparation Advisors to meet with students one-on-one. The College Preparation Advisors intended to meet one-on-one with a larger number of students to help them by providing general advice, reviewing current academic performance and barriers, or creating personal graduation plans. There is a consensus among school administrators in the district (as relayed by middle school administrators, College Preparation Advisors, and Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators in the four school districts) that College Preparation Advisors should have greater one-on-one access to students in high schools starting in the 2014–15 school year. College Preparation Advisors who worked with the students in Grade 8 will follow primary cohort students into high schools. TEA anticipates that this will offer students continuity in working with the same College Preparation Advisor whenever possible.

2.2   Student Participation in Texas GEAR UP State Grant Activities

Texas GEAR UP SG schools are encouraged to engage in a broad mix of student-focused implementation activities. These types of activities include having students enroll in advanced courses with presumed high levels of academic rigor, student support services (i.e., tutoring, mentoring, and counseling), college visits, job site visits, and Texas GEAR UP SG-related events/workshops. For some types of activities, schools make decisions regarding which students will participate in which activities, as well as the extent of participation expected. For other types of activities, particularly with one-time events, students and parents self-select activities in which to participate. While districts do not expect that all students will need to participate in all activities in order for the Texas GEAR UP SG to have positive outcomes, participation in a broad mix of activities is generally encouraged. This section includes findings organized by each type of activity, followed by a discussion about the mix of implementation. Comparisons are also made to Year 1 findings based on Grade 7 primary cohort students as reported in Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel, 2013).

2.2.1   Student Enrollment in Advanced Courses

One project objective of the Texas GEAR UP SG is to have 60% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students successfully complete a pre-AP or AP course (i.e., advanced course) by the end of Year 5 of the grant (Project Objective 2.2). Enrollment in advanced courses is a benchmark toward accomplishing this objective, assuming that the Grade 8 students stay enrolled in and successfully complete their advanced course for the remainder of the school

year. Just over half of the Texas GEAR UP SG Grade 8 primary cohort students (54%) were enrolled in at least one advanced course during the 2013–14 school year (as shown in the pie chart on the left in Figure 2.1). This was an increase of 22 percentage points over the enrollment of Grade 7 primary cohort students in advanced courses during the 2012–13 school year (32%).[32] Of the 1,039 Grade 8 students enrolled in at least one advanced course, most (56%) were enrolled in only one advanced course, while 18% were enrolled in four advanced courses, 14% were enrolled in three advanced courses, and 13% were enrolled in two advanced courses (as shown in the pie chart on the right in Figure 2.1). Assuming that students successfully complete at least one advanced course, these percentages appear to be a good start toward achieving 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.

Figure 2.1. Percentage of Grade 8 Students Enrolled in Advanced Courses by Number of Advanced Courses, 2013–14
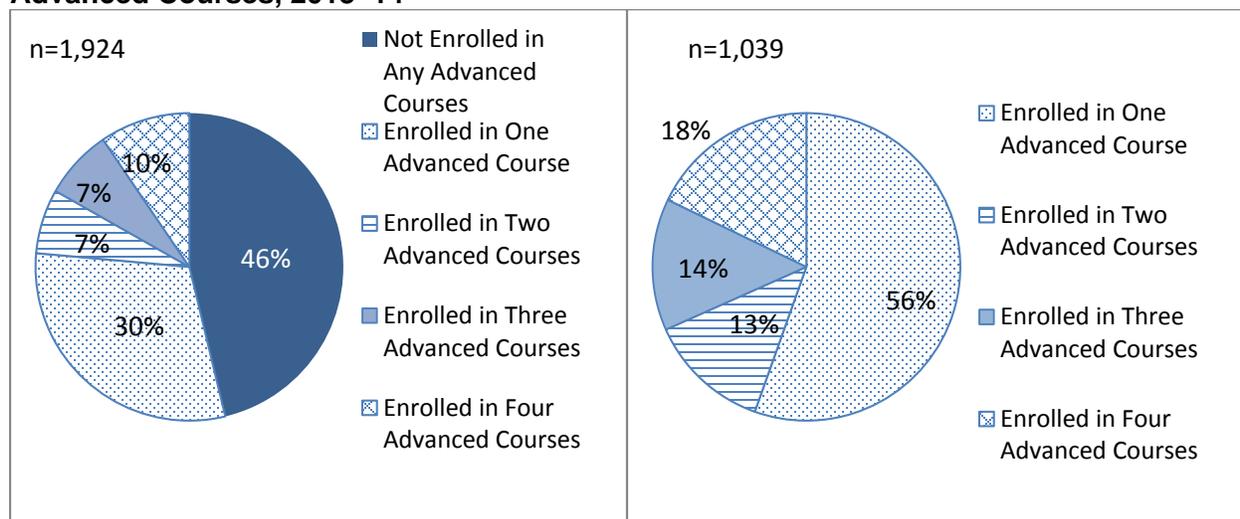
Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data Through March 31, 2014.

ADVANCED COURSE ENROLLMENT BY CONTENT AREA

In addition to understanding advanced course enrollment in general, exploring Grade 8 student enrollment in advanced courses by content area is another way to gauge progress toward Project Objective 2.2, having students complete pre-AP/AP (advanced) courses, and specifically toward Project Objective 1.1, having students complete Algebra. It helps develop an understanding of the content areas in which students are enrolled more commonly, and in Grade 8, more students enrolled in advanced mathematics (including Algebra I and other advanced mathematics courses) than in other content areas (Table F.3 in Appendix F). On average, across all schools, 43% of Grade 8 students were enrolled in an advanced

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[32] 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 such as 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 figure numbers due to rounding.

mathematics course, 21% were enrolled in an advanced ELA course, 21% were enrolled in an advanced science course, and 20% were enrolled in an advanced social studies course.[33]

Figure 2.2 provides details about enrollment in advanced coursework, by content area and by school; findings about Grade 8 student enrollment in each content area are discussed after Figure 2.2. Enrollment in advanced mathematics, advanced ELA, advanced science, and advanced social studies all varied significantly by school.[34] School E indicated that almost all of their Grade 8 students (98%) were enrolled in advanced mathematics. As was the case when primary cohort students from School E were in Grade 7, mathematics was the only content area in which Grade 8 students from School E were enrolled in an advanced course. The results were similar to Grade 7 students (based on Year 1 data) at School G, where 55% of Grade 8 students in Year 2 were enrolled in advanced mathematics, but only 1% of primary cohort students were enrolled in each of the other content areas.

Figure 2.2. Percentages of Grade 8 Students Enrolled in Advanced Courses by Content Area and by School, 2013–14
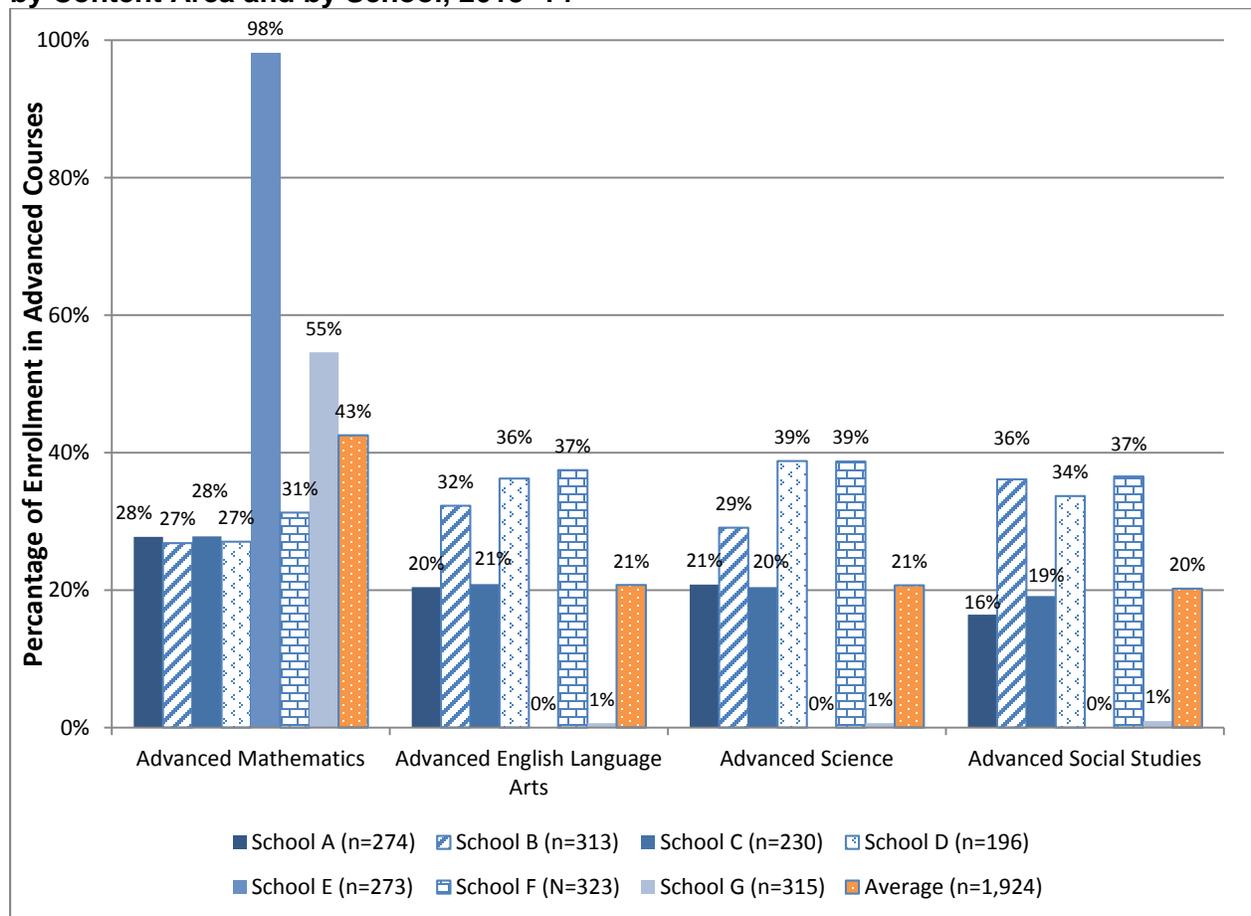
Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data Through March 31, 2014.

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[33] The percentage for mathematics is slightly different from the 33% of students enrolled in Algebra I or the equivalent that were reported in the APR. This percentage includes mathematics courses that are considered to be advanced, although not equivalent to Algebra I.

[34] Algebra I: $\chi^2(6) = 477.0$, $p < 0.001$; advanced ELA: $\chi^2(6) = 257.8$, $p < 0.001$; Science: $\chi^2(6) = 264.8$, $p < 0.001$; Social Studies $\chi^2(6) = 268.5$, $p < 0.001$.

Advanced Mathematics. On average, across all schools, 43% of Grade 8 students enrolled in advanced mathematics (including Algebra I and other advanced mathematics courses, an increase from Year 1 when 22% of Grade 7 students were enrolled in advance mathematics).[35] Student enrollment in advanced mathematics in Grade 8 was above 30% at three schools and only slightly less than 30% at the remaining four schools. As noted, Schools E and G focused on enrolling Grade 8 students in advanced mathematics as they did for students when they were in Grade 7 in Year 1. Overall, the Texas GEAR UP SG grantees appear to be on track for meeting Project Objective 1.1 of at least 30% of students completing Algebra I in Grade 8, although not all schools may reach the project objective. Of all students enrolled in Grade 8 Algebra I in Year 2, 40% had also been enrolled in an advanced mathematics course in Grade 7 in Year 1. Of all Grade 7 students enrolled in advanced mathematics in Year 1, 83% enrolled in Algebra I in Grade 8 in Year 2. In other words, Grade 7 advanced mathematics enrollment in Year 1 led to enrollment in Algebra I in Year 2 for most students. However, there were also Grade 8 students enrolled in Algebra I who had not enrolled in an advanced mathematics course in Grade 7.

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). As noted, School E had no students enrolled and School G had few students (1%) enrolled in advanced courses other than advanced mathematics. Schools D and F each enrolled just over one-third of their students in advanced ELA courses and advanced science courses. Schools B and F each enrolled just over one-third of their students in advanced social studies. Given Project Objective 1.1 to increase enrollment in Algebra I, it is not surprising that Texas GEAR UP SG schools generally focused on advanced mathematics over other content areas, but students should realize some college readiness benefits from participating in advanced courses in other content areas.

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

One project objective of Texas GEAR UP SG is to involve students (at least 75% of Grade 8 students) in a mix of appropriate student support services, including tutoring, comprehensive mentoring, and counseling based on teacher/counselor recommendations and diagnostic data (Project Objective 4.1).[36] This section includes findings about primary cohort students' participation in each individual type of student support services during the first seven months of the 2013–14 school year (start of Grade 8 through March 31, 2014), and comparisons are made to their participation during the same time frame in Grade 7 (start of Grade 7 through March 31, 2013) in Year 1.[37]

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[35] The percentage for Grade 8 is slightly different from the 33% of students enrolled in Algebra I or the equivalent that were reported in the APR. This percentage includes mathematics courses that are considered to be advanced, although not equivalent to Algebra I.

[36] 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).

[37] Primary cohort students' participation in student support services during the same period in Grade 8 during Year 2 and their participation in student support services during a similar period in Grade 7 (the start of Grade 7 through March 31, 2013) in Year 1. Note that some schools did not start offering student support services at the very beginning of Grade 7 given the truncated implementation period in Year 1. Also, Tables F.4 through F.9 in Appendix F list the minimal student participation in student support services at the end of Grade 7 (April 1, 2013 to the end of the 2012–13 school year) and in summer 2013

STUDENT ACADEMIC TUTORING

As required by their subgrants, all schools offered academic tutoring to primary cohort students. As of March 2014, schools reported that, on average, 63% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students were receiving tutoring in at least one subject in Grade 8. Of the 1,223 Grade 8 students who participated in any tutoring, the largest percentage received tutoring in one subject (48%), while an additional 27% received tutoring in two subjects, and 25% received tutoring in three or more subjects. The number of subjects in which students received tutoring also differed significantly by school (Figure 2.3).[38] Tutoring was most limited at Schools B and G, but even at these two schools, more than half of the students participated in tutoring (51% and 57% of primary cohort students at these schools, respectively, were tutored). At School D, only 2% of students were not participating in tutoring in at least one subject, and 92% of students received tutoring in three or more subjects.

Figure 2.3. Percentages of Grade 8 Students Participating in Tutoring by Number of Subjects Tutored In, 2013–14
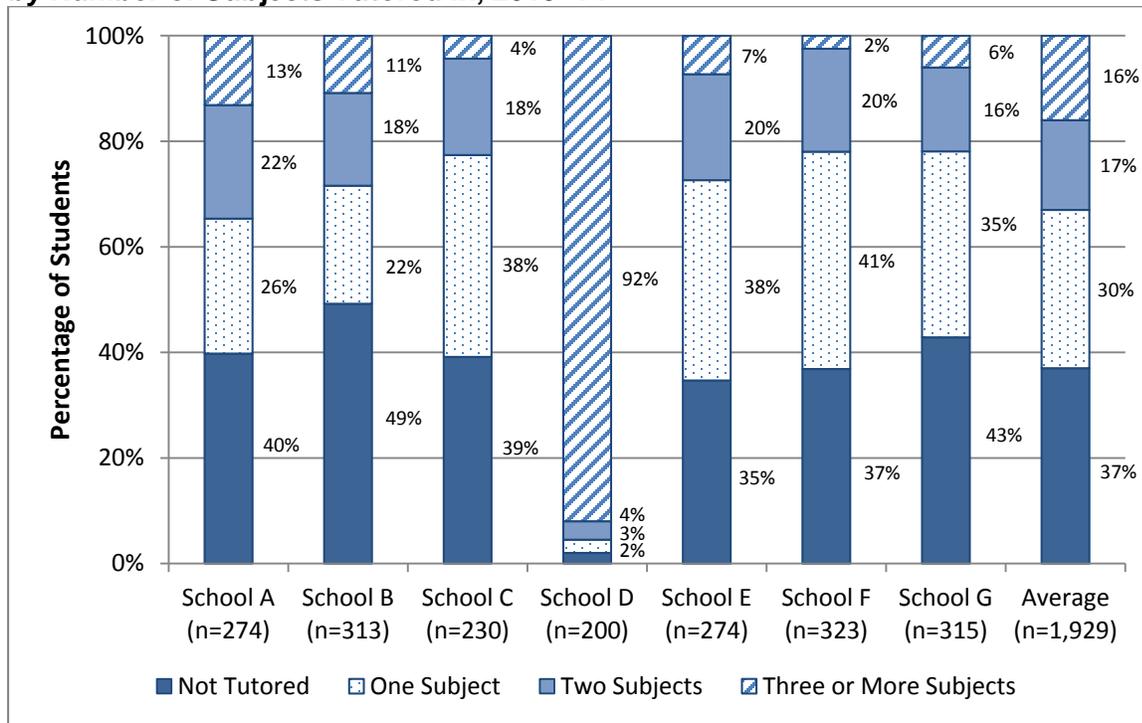
Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data Through March 31, 2014.
Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Difference across schools: χ^2 (18) = 196.8, *p* < 0.001.

The average total number of hours that Grade 8 students received in tutoring, across all subjects, was 9.2 hours. The average total number of hours tutored varied significantly by school, from approximately 4 hours at School C to 26 hours at School D.[39]

(for tutoring only). These data will be merged for analysis in the upcoming comprehensive evaluation report.
[38] Difference across schools: χ^2(18) = 196.8, *p* < 0.001.
[39] F (6, 1,216) = 133.4, *p* < 0.001.

The extent of student tutoring varied across both school and course content.[40] Similar to when primary cohort students were in Grade 7 in Year 1, the largest percentage of students (44%) received tutoring in mathematics in Grade 8. The percentage of students tutored in science grew from 10% in Grade 7 in Year 1 to 33% in Grade 8 during Year 2. Tutoring in ELA also increased from 14% in Grade 7 to 20% in Grade 8. Finally, 14% of students in Grade 8 received tutoring in social studies and 17% received tutoring in other subjects. School D reported the greatest percentage of Grade 8 students participating in tutoring in each subject (see Tables F.4 through F.8 in Appendix F).

STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COMPREHENSIVE MENTORING

As required by their subgrants, all Texas GEAR UP SG schools offered comprehensive mentoring to primary cohort students. As was the case in Year 1, mentoring as a student support service occurred far less frequently than tutoring did in Year 2. Across Texas GEAR UP SG schools, 14% of Grade 8 students were receiving comprehensive mentoring as of March 2014.[41] The majority of the students participating in mentoring came from School G, which reported that 37% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort Grade 8 students had a mentor, primarily through an already established alliance with CIS. At Schools E and F, 5% or less of Grade 8 students had a mentor and, overall, the difference in the percentage of students mentored differed significantly across schools (see Table F.9 in Appendix F).[42]

Mentoring included a variety of activities at each of the schools, and most mentoring occurred in a one-on-one setting. One school reached out to a nearby university to ask college freshmen to mentor Texas GEAR UP SG students. The idea was to have college students take the primary cohort students on a college visit and match the mentors with the students throughout their four years of college. In another school, mentors came to the school once a month for one hour to coordinate team-building and goal-setting activities with students.

Feedback collected during site visits indicated a need for improvement in some specific aspects of mentoring. Teachers in focus groups at School A would like to see mentors assist with tutorials or work in a buddy system that focuses on setting future goals. School D discussed the possibility of having high school alumni serve as mentors to students. School B reported that they did not have a comprehensive mentor component to the program (only 8% of Grade 8 students had a mentor), but would like to incorporate the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America program to provide this support for students.[43]

STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COUNSELING

Counseling is another student support service that all Texas GEAR UP primary cohort schools offered to students beginning in Year 2. A major shift occurred between Year 1 and Year 2 with regard to the number of students who have guidance from counselors. In Year 1, none of the schools reported that Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students were participating in financial aid counseling/advising as of March 31, 2013. By March 31, 2014, all schools indicated that counseling as a student support service had occurred. On average, across schools, 36% of

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[40] Tutoring is used in this chapter, although in the definition, it is referred to as tutoring or homework help. Tutoring in Mathematics: $\chi^2(6) = 439.2$, $p < .001$; Tutoring in ELA: $\chi^2(6) = 784.6$, $p < .001$; Tutoring in Science: $\chi^2(6) = 405.0$, $p < .001$; Tutoring in Social Studies: $\chi^2(6) = 536.7$, $p < .001$; Tutoring in Other Subjects: $\chi^2(6) = 516.7$, $p < .001$.

[41] Data in the APR about comprehensive mentoring reflects both Grade 7 and Grade 8. Data presented here include only Grade 8 because that is the primary cohort for this evaluation.

[42] $\chi^2(6) = 197.4$, $p < .001$.

[43] Big Brothers Big Sisters of America is a volunteer-supported mentoring network. Additional details about the program is available at http://www.bbbs.org.

Grade 8 students participated in counseling, and this varied significantly across schools (see Table F.10 in Appendix F).[44] School F reported that 96% of students had participated in counseling, while less than 1% of students in School C received counseling. On average, Grade 8 participating students each experienced about one hour of counseling by the end of March 2014.

Like mentoring, counseling support included a variety of activities at each of the schools. College Preparation Advisors mostly met with students during lunch. School B, for example, had the Lunch Bunch, a group of students who ate lunch in the Texas GEAR UP SG office while they received counseling or support in filling out summer program applications. However, at School E, the College Preparation Advisors met with students during elective class time. Printing out lists of available summer camps to provide to the students is one way that the College Preparation Advisor at School C reached out to encourage summer involvement. Students participating in focus groups in School G noted that it was helpful for College Preparation Advisors to make themselves available in the school hallways outside of class. In a few instances at School E, teachers utilized their own class time to meet with students, and meetings with the College Preparation Advisor were focused on helping high-achieving students identify ways that they could continue to progress. Conversations about HB 5 and its impact on students were also part of counseling services, and College Preparation Advisors worked to educate parents and students on the implications for students' academic plans. Going forward, a state collaborator suggested that TEA could use the information gathered on the primary cohort of students to set the standard for how to advise students under HB 5. Parents participating in focus groups at School B reported feeling reassured knowing that over the next few years, the same advisor will continue to work with their children.

2.2.3 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, 2014, all schools had involved at least some students in at least one college visit. School G had offered the most college visits to Grade 8 students with six college visits, while School E offered four college visits, Schools A and F each offered three college visits, School B offered two college visits, and Schools C and D each offered one college visit. By the time of the spring 2014 site visits, each school conducted at least two college visits for students.

While on the college visits, students attended college classes, toured the campus, discovered different programs or schools within the universities, and learned about campus housing and transportation. These college visits exposed students to a variety of college and university campuses in general, as well as to specific academic programs (e.g., arts, marine biology, turbine technology). Two schools allowed parents to attend college visits with their children.

> **Quotes From the Field: Experiences With College Visits, Spring 2014**
>
> Participants shared positive experiences with college visits. For example:
> - "We learned what it would be like to be on a college campus and what the routine would be. We learned about what classes we need to prepare us for college." (Student)
>
> - "We also brought parents [on the college visit], so it was good for the parents to be able to see the college with the students." (College Preparation Advisor)
>
> - "I think that taking students to different universities is great because then they can see themselves there and not be afraid. They can see students at the schools that look like them. Exposing them to these colleges and experiences is good." (Parent)

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[44] $\chi^2(6) = 713.2$, $p < 0.001$.

The colleges visited included The University of Texas at Austin and at San Antonio, Huston-Tillotson College, St. Phillip's College, Texas A&M University, and the University of the Incarnate Word. Focus group parents from School G shared that they appreciated their children's exposure to the various state colleges. When asked about ways to improve Texas GEAR UP SG in the future, students at all seven schools indicated that they would like more experiences such as college visits.

2.2.4 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. Two schools reported that students had engaged in job site visits or job shadowing in the April 2014 APR; School E reported one activity, while School G reported three activities.

Site visit data offered specific insights about job shadowing programs at School G. Job shadowing took place at a medical manufacturer, museum, bank, and a local governmental agency. The school ensured that this experience exposed students to careers currently in high demand. The timing of some job shadowing conflicted with course schedules, prohibiting certain students from attending. Site visit participants reported that job shadowing which allowed for more personal interaction or small breakouts was more successful. A noted challenge in coordinating job shadowing was the ability to develop alliances to secure job site visitation opportunities.

2.2.5 Participation in Texas GEAR UP State Grant Student Workshops/Events

Texas GEAR UP SG Project Objective 7.2 is about making information and workshops (focused on linking college attendance to career success) available to 100% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students and their parents. In Year 1, when the time frame was truncated, 23 events were held as of March 2013 and one school had not held any student events. By March 2014, 165 student events/workshops had been held 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 2014, less than 2% of Grade 8 students at any of the schools had not participated in at least one event/workshop. At Schools A and D, more than half of the students participated in 11 to 19 events/workshops, while at the remaining schools, the majority of the students attended from 1 to 10 events. School G held the largest number of events at 42, while School C held the fewest events at 14. Schools A, B, and C had the highest average number of participants at events, suggesting that many of their events were open to a broad range of students. Across schools, the average length of events ranged from 1.1 hours to 2.8 hours.

Table 2.2. Number of Grade 8 Student Events/Workshops, Average Number of Participants, and Average Event Length by School, 2013–14

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Number of Events	Average Number of Participants (range)	Average Activity Length (in hours)
School A	17	177 (2–265)	2.8
School B	19	148 (9–286)	2.2
School C	14	159 (20–227)	1.3
School D	22	69 (2–194)	1.1
School E	20	40 (6–262)	2.7
School F	31	93 (1–324)	1.7
School G	42	82 (3–305)	2.2

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

The topics of the events/workshops held in the Texas GEAR UP SG schools for Grade 8 students focused on academic success and college and career readiness. Specific event/workshop activities focused on literacy improvement, college and career goal setting, academic success, career exploration, career pathways, motivation and inspiration, summer program opportunities, and how HB 5 would be realized in the district (e.g., available endorsements that students would need to select from).

STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EVENTS

In addition to workshops/events targeting students only, schools were encouraged to offer parent events for students and parents. Parent events may provide an opportunity for schools to support parents in engaging with each other about postsecondary education. As of March 31, 2014, all seven schools had completed at least three parent events, and the seven schools offered a combined 39 events for both parents and students to attend. Overall, 52% of students had participated in a parent event. Schools A and E each reported that 20% of students participated in an event, the lowest percentage of all schools, followed by School D (23%). Schools B and C each had more than 90% of students participate in a parent event. Schools F and G each had more than half of the students participate in a parent event (54% and 60%, respectively). Parent participation in these events is described in the section on parent engagement (Section 2.3).

2.2.6 Mix of Student Texas GEAR UP State Grant Implementation

So far, data have been presented by activity type (e.g., tutoring, mentoring). 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 will be presented next. Preliminary steps in this process include the data presented in previous sections on the number of advanced courses in which students enrolled and the number of subjects in which students received tutoring. Prior to the upcoming comprehensive report, additional efforts will be made to identify how implementation varies by student. In addition, knowing that a school engaged in an activity is not the same as knowing that the implementation occurred with a high level of quality that produced the desired outcome. Schools may be choosing to engage in a given activity based on their own 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. Here the mix of implementation is a marker of each school's success at implementing the range of implementation activities encouraged by the federal GEAR UP program.

As of March 31, 2014, 78% of all Grade 8 students had participated in at least one type of student support service (Figure 2.4), achieving Project Objective 4.1 of 75% of students receiving student support services by the end of Year 2.[45] However, in the APR submitted in April 2014, TEA provided data that were specific to the project objective as actually written, which was not met: The percentage of Grade 8 students who had participated in student support services *based on the results of teacher/counselor input and/or diagnostic data* was 67%.[46] Schools were making progress toward meeting this project objective by the end of the 2013–14 school year, and additional data on how students were referred to participate in

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[45] Percentage reported in the APR is slightly different because duplicate counts were removed in the analyses for this report.

[46] Data on how decisions were made about which students would receive particular services were not made available to the evaluation team for this report. These data will be requested to be included in the additional implementation submission.

student support services will be collected and analyzed to determine whether this project objective is met.

Students participated in a mix of student support services to a varying degree, even though 22% of students did not participate in any student support services. The largest percentage of Grade 8 students (47%) participated in a single student support service, which was tutoring, while 27% of students participated in two types of student support services and 4% participated in all three types of student support services. This differed significantly by school.[47] Schools D, E, and F each individually met Project Objective 4.1 of at least 75% of Grade 8 students participating in student support services. Of the remaining schools, three had approximately 70% of Grade 8 students participating in student support services, while School C had the lowest provision of student support services to students at 64%. Final determination about meeting the project objective will be based on implementation data provided through the end of the 2013–14 school year and presented in the annual implementation report for Year 3.

Figure 2.4. Percentages of Grade 8 Students Participating in Student Support Services by Number of Support Services and School, 2013–14
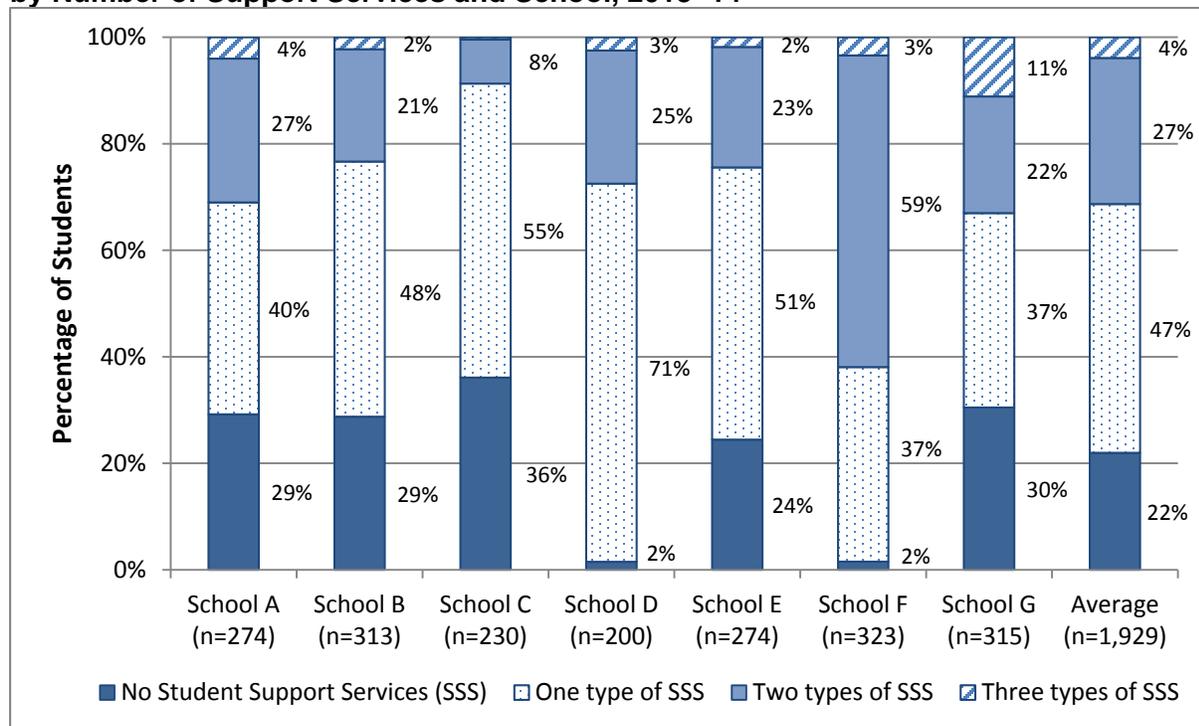
Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data Through March 31, 2014.
Note: Difference across schools: $\chi^2(18) = 402.7$, $p < 0.001$.

STUDENT IMPLEMENTATION MIX OVERALL

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. Specifically, students were considered as having participated or not participated in at least one workshop, at least one parent event, a college visit, or other academic support. While 22% of students had not participated in a mix of student support services (see Figure 2.4 in an earlier section), less than 1% of Grade 8 students had not participated in at least one Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activity overall, and an additional 4% had participated in only one to three events. In other words, most Grade 8 students (95%) had participated in four or more

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[47] Difference across schools: $\chi^2(18) = 402.7$, $p < 0.001$.

Texas GEAR UP SG events. Tutoring, mentoring, counseling, parent events, college visits, and student workshops occurred at all Texas GEAR UP SG schools in the 2013–14 school year.

Some events did not occur at all schools. Job shadowing/job site visits occurred at only Schools E and G. Educational field trips were held at all schools, except for School G. Events to prepare students to transition to high school occurred at four schools (Schools A, C, E, and G). While all schools reported in spring 2013 that they would conduct summer 2013 mathematics programs, only four schools (Schools B, E, F, and G) indicated in spring 2014 APR data that students had actually enrolled in a summer 2013 program. Finally, Schools D, E, F, and G all reported that they conducted other activities that did not fit into one of the named categories.

In general, the Texas GEAR UP SG schools were more successful at implementing a mix of activities and events in Year 2 than they were in Year 1, particularly given the truncated time frame in Year 1. As noted, the upcoming comprehensive evaluation report will present additional information about implementation at the student level (e.g., determining whether each student participated in college visits in each year).

2.3   Parent Engagement in Texas GEAR UP State Grant Activities

Parent participation in Texas GEAR UP SG activities is also encouraged in the federal GEAR UP model. Project Objective 7.3 is that 50% of parents attend at least three events each year. As was the case in Year 1, no school in Year 2 was successful at achieving this project objective, although in Year 2, at least some parents had attended at least three events. The average across all schools was 7% for parents who attended three or more events.[48] School C, where 25% of parents attended three or more events, came closest to achieving the project objective, followed by School G where 8% of parents participated in three or more events. At School D, no parent attended three or more events, and only 2% of parents at both Schools A and E attended three or more events. Overall, 38% of parents attended at least one event. Schools C and G again led on this measure (96% and 60%, respectively). At School D, only 15% of parents had attended at least one event, followed by School A where 19% attended at least one event.

Feedback received during site visits indicated that communication and outreach to parents were critical to their engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG activities. The topics of parent events held in the Texas GEAR UP SG schools for parents of Grade 8 students in Year 2 focused on college awareness, high school preparedness, and college financing. Specific event/workshop activities focused on financial aid and scholarships, graduation requirements, HB 5, and career exploration. Parents indicated that they preferred a variety of communication and outreach methods, including phone calls, text messages, mail, and flyers sent home with students. Schools with a majority Hispanic population were used to consistently communicating to parents in English and Spanish, but schools with more diverse populations still experienced language barriers when communicating about Texas GEAR UP SG activities.

2.4   Participation by Teachers in Professional Development Activities

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

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[48] Percentage reported in the APR is different because data in the APR about events reflect both Grades 7 and 8. Data presented here include only Grade 8 as that is the primary cohort for this evaluation and also reflects the removal of duplicates attendance, as well as activities related to the GEAR UP evaluation.

academic rigor at participating schools. In contrast to a truncated Year 1 time frame that limited services to teachers that year, all Texas GEAR UP SG schools provided some GEAR UP-supported PD in summer 2013 (the end of Year 1) and/or in fall 2013 (the beginning of Year 2). PD opportunities included the following topics: SpringBoard, PBL, financial literacy, Academic Youth Development (AYD), pre-AP, and STAAR.[49] As of March 31, 2014, only Schools E and F had held five vertical team events. School F also provided the largest number of teacher PD opportunities (14), followed by Schools E and G (7 each). The following subsections include findings about some of the common PD topics covered by primary cohort middle schools.

2.4.1 Vertical Teaming

Vertical teaming allows schools to align instruction, increase academic rigor, achieve sustainability, and ease the academic transition from middle school to high school. District administrators reported more vertical alignment activities in Year 2 compared to Year 1, although most teachers in the focus groups indicated that they were not aware of such activities in Year 2. Lack of a shared understanding of what constitutes vertical alignment may be a factor in this dissention.

During site visits, teachers and administrators from six schools (all schools except School D) reflected on their experiences with vertical teaming:

- At School A, some teachers participating in focus groups expressed that they would like to receive more writing-related PD in order to help students improve their writing skills across various content areas.
- At School B, mathematics vertical alignment consisted of creating a calendar of the school year, sharing lesson plans, and offering feedback on lessons; they maintained consistent collaboration.
- Teachers from School C had positive feedback, saying that they enjoyed the collaboration between schools. Vertical alignment training varied from subject to subject in School C, which had vertical alignment training for Spanish but not for science.
- Site visit participants from School D did not report engaging in vertical teaming. However, vertical teaming was included in the district's ASPR, including plans to have 17 teachers participate in vertical teams and offer three days of vertical team training.
- Coupling projects between classes allowed students to work on different content areas within an assignment. For example, School E assigned their mathematics classes to create large puppets while the ELA students wrote scripts for the puppets.
- A School F administrator suggested giving high school teachers a program overview so that they have more knowledge of the overall program goals and implementation activities.
- Teachers from School G recalled that the open dialogue helped them to feel less isolated among the district's other campuses, and have identified their writing and social studies courses as being a priority for vertical alignment.

2.4.2 Project-Based Learning

PBL PD was a primary focus of two districts, while the other two districts plan to emphasize PBL training in future PD. All schools, except Schools A and C, provided teacher PD on PBL and integrated PBL strategies into other activities funded through the Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 2.

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[49] 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. Academic Youth Development is a program through Agile Mind that provides knowledge emerging from the psychological and other learning sciences about how students' mind-sets, motivation, and engagement affect the effort they put into school, and, ultimately, their ability to be successful. More details about this program are available at http://www.agilemind.com/programs/academic-youth-development.

Overall, 31 teachers from the four districts participated in at least some PBL PD; however, 29 of these teachers were from two of the four districts. The other two districts only sent one teacher each, and one of these districts utilized a non-Texas GEAR UP SG source for PBL training. Two districts held their PBL training at nearby universities. School G has identified PBL as a priority and the school now uses it in all of its classes. They have even started training teachers at the high school on PBL. An Algebra I class, for example, completed three PBL projects that required students to utilize their presentation and research skills, and the teachers plan to continue with PBL. On a site visit, a principal in School F expressed being excited about integrating PBL into the school's curriculum, which worked well for the lower-performing students as well. PBL, such as designing catapults and creating large puppets, had a positive effect on students' learning in Schools E and G. These activities effectively reinforced the algebra skills that students had learned, while also fostering team-building skills in School E.

2.4.3 Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation Financial Literacy

Some schools experienced challenges and opportunities with teacher PD on financial literacy. At School C, social studies teachers received financial literacy training, but did not agree that the material was appropriate for Grade 8 students. Accordingly, one teacher modified the content and then presented it to the class in a manner perceived to be more relevant. A teacher at School B also attended the training and believed the content to be appropriate for both students and adults. It was challenging for teachers in School B to find the time needed to implement the modules.

2.4.4 Academic Youth Development and Pre-Advanced Placement

Another PD strategy used in Texas GEAR UP SG districts and schools included implementing the AYD and Pre-AP activities. AYD activities focus on helping students understand their own emotions, build problem-solving skills, build teams, communicate, and set goals. Pre-AP training focused on providing teachers with tools and strategies to make their courses more rigorous. The AYD activity training received mixed reviews from school faculty. School C offered Saturday training on AYD activities, which teachers enjoyed. However, AYD implementation was not reinforced after the training, according to site visits. Information that teachers learn from AYD activities is reportedly sustainable because teachers believe that they can apply it to their Pre-AP training (School C). For School B, teachers participated in AYD training and some took pre-AP, but they did not view AYD activity training as useful because their instructors did not seem to be knowledgeable and the activities required a significant amount of preparation. In addition, some teachers indicated that their classes would have been too large for the hands-on activities they learned; furthermore, issues with technology made the integration of these activities initially difficult at School B. Other teachers from School A thought that the training was helpful and liked the idea of AYD, but did not find the program to be particularly user friendly. Overall, teachers from School A liked the AYD content, but did not think that it was implemented effectively.

In Year 2, teachers also participated in Pre-AP, Support Center, and SpringBoard training.[50] According to the teachers, pre-AP training in School B was useful in helping them to eliminate the misconceptions that students may have regarding their courses. School B planned to offer pre-AP training again for the core classes in summer 2014. District 2 reported that teachers attended a one-day workshop on pre-AP topics, as well as Support Center training. The workshop was very useful according to teachers and offered them new strategies and books of worksheets for use in the classroom. The Support Center training covered strategies and data use. School E was the only school where teachers reported attending the College Board

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[50] 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.

SpringBoard training. Teachers from School D reported that they did not receive any PD specific to the Texas GEAR UP SG. Overall, it appears that teachers find this training to be useful when offered and the focus seems to align with GEAR UP goals.

2.5 Participation by Community Stakeholders in Texas GEAR UP State Grant

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

- All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration (Project Objective 8.1).
- 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 Objective 8.2).

In Year 2, all seven 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. All four districts collaborate with CIS to provide their students with social and academic support. Other activities in which schools engaged with community stakeholders varied, and included college visits and the mentoring/tutoring components of the Texas GEAR UP SG for their students. Alliances with a local faith-based establishment and Amerifund will allow School B to expand their student support services by providing students with mentors.[51] Teachers at School G spoke enthusiastically about PITSCO Labs, which include STEM-focused PBL, made possible by local alliances.[52] For other schools, alliances with the Knights of Columbus and the Veterans of Foreign Wars have provided more scholarship opportunities for students.[53] In addition, local business community stakeholders include Wells Fargo and Randalls, and other alliances include the Girl Scouts and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.[54]

Although all schools engaged with community stakeholders in Year 2, the strength of these alliances was difficult to assess in Year 2 across most of the schools. Lasting alliances with educational institutions and local businesses can help to sustain the Texas GEAR UP SG's resources and benefit students for years to come. School G stood apart from other primary cohort middle schools in Year 2, having received strong support from their community; even the local mayor plays a role in the program. One barrier to working with community stakeholders, as noted by School G, includes school location; alliances are difficult to form if the stakeholder sees the school as being in a location that is too far away from stakeholders' offices.

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[51] More details about PITSCO Labs (e.g., hands-on, student-focused curriculum modules) are available at http://www.pitsco.com.

[52] More details about Amerifund (a commercial financing company dedicated to providing customized commercial lease or finance programs to meet the needs of new and growing companies) are available at http://www.amerifund.cc.

[53] More details about the Knights of Columbus (a fraternal benefit society) are available at http://www.kofc.org. More details about the Veterans of Foreign Wars (a nonprofit veterans service organization) are available at http://www.vfw.org.

[54] More details about Wells Fargo (a multinational banking and financial services holding company) are available at https://www.wellsfargo.com. More details about Randalls (a Texas-based grocery chain) are available at http://www.randalls.com. More details about the Girl Scouts (a youth organization for girls) are available at https://www.girlscouts.org. More details about Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (a volunteer-supported mentoring network) are available at http://www.bbbs.org.

2.6   Statewide Services

So far, implementation has focused on Texas GEAR UP SG activities that occurred within the primary cohort middle schools. Another element of the Texas GEAR UP SG is 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:

- By the end of the first year, the Support Center will make information regarding college options, preparation, and financing available to students, parents, and educators throughout the state (Project Objective 7.1).
- 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 (Project Objective 9.2).
- 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 (Project Objective 9.1).

As described in Chapter 1, Texas GEAR UP SG includes collaboration between TEA and two organizations—the Texas GEAR UP technical assistance provider and AMS Pictures. These collaborators play a crucial role in meeting the Texas GEAR UP SG statewide goals. TEA also continued to provide information and funding for schools to work with TG and the College Board—two former collaborators on the grant. Under TEA's direction, these organizations develop and disseminate supplemental statewide materials, set up groups in Project Share, support the statewide coalition of GEAR UP grantees, and plan and implement the annual Texas statewide GEAR UP conference. The following sections include descriptions of the statewide services provided by TEA and its collaborators in Year 2.

2.6.1   Supplemental Statewide Materials for Parents and Students

In Year 2, TEA continued to use the Texas GEAR UP SG to expand tools and resources for students and parents statewide regarding the road to college. In Year 2, TEA continued to provide a GEAR UP-related website as the primary means for sharing supplemental statewide materials to parents and students. The Texas GEAR UP SG website (www.texasgearup.com) acts 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 has continued to update and populate content for the website.[55]

The website has many interactive lessons, guides, and college planning toolkits, including grade-level guides. TEA intends to grow the use of the website because there is a perception that it is under-utilized compared to the number of students and parents who potentially could benefit from these online resources. As of now, the website continues to be available statewide, although data on the percentage of districts accessing the website cannot be determined from the site usage data. Generally, analytics reports show increases in unique visitors (an increase of 97 percentage points since January 2013, totaling more than 10,200 unique visitors) based on APR data. AMS Pictures did report emerging progress in increased use of the website, with an increase in web activity in the Fort Worth area where no Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort schools or GEAR UP partnership grant programs were implemented.

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[55] A second Texas GEAR UP SG-related website, www.ownyourownfuture.com, was integrated into the main website during Year 2 and is no longer promoted by the program.

Feedback obtained during site visits indicated that the resources and features of the website have expanded in Year 2. Going forward, there is interest in increasing outreach efforts so that the entire state is using the resources developed through the Texas GEAR UP SG.

AWARENESS OF TEXAS GEAR UP STATE GRANT WEBSITES

The Year 2 APR pointed to the program's presence on social media and the extensive market research conducted to make the Texas GEAR UP SG website (www.texasgearup.com) a highly effective and engaging resource as a reason for increased utilization of the website. Texas GEAR UP SG staff in two of the districts shared during site visits that they found the website useful for retrieving resources and gaining insight on best practices. Community stakeholders at School G access the website to create lessons and activities for the students; both stakeholders and Texas GEAR UP SG staff called it "useful," but Texas GEAR UP SG staff at School G stated a lack of time as a reason for not utilizing it more frequently. Site visit participants from Schools A and C also explained that remembering to promote the website is difficult with so many other things going on. TEA should consider ways to encourage Texas GEAR UP SG staff to do so at parent meetings as this is potentially a valuable strategy.

Plans are also underway to increase usage of the website through social media campaigns as primary cohort students transition to high school.

2.6.2 Project Share: Providing Statewide Teacher Professional Development Opportunities

To provide statewide teacher PD, the Texas GEAR UP SG still plans to capitalize on a tool already in use statewide by TEA—Project Share. Project Share is an online communication and teaching platform that is available to teachers statewide. While Project Share use during Years 1 and 2 was minimal, Texas GEAR UP SG did create a Project Share group that includes the seven Texas GEAR UP SG schools, as well as the organizations in Texas that are implementing GEAR UP partnership grants. TEA still plans to make an investment in Project Share to provide PD courses statewide. Texas GEAR UP SG expects to add new online PD opportunities under Project Share in Year 3 of the grant. 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. In terms of the PD component, TEA reports their intention to use Project Share, through competitive award, in Year 3 as a primary hub for PD courses. At the request of TEA, AMS Pictures will be increasing their involvement in Project Share going forward.

2.6.3 Statewide Coalition of GEAR UP Grantees

As detailed in Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel, et. al, 2013), 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, based on Year 2 APR data, develops "research, action, and practice resources related to three working issues: Parent Engagement, State Policy Impacting College Enrollment, and College Readiness Professional Development. The Texas GEAR UP Coalition has continued to meet throughout [Year 2] to develop and implement statewide products. The group is on track to meet formally five to six times each program year, with committees convening more frequently through teleconferencing." Additional data from site visits offer more nuance about the implementation of this aspect of the program. Given the staff changes at TEA, the Texas GEAR UP Coalition's progress reportedly stalled in Year 2. However, they met regularly with a focus on the statewide conference and statewide resources/messaging. At the time of the interviews, program staff anticipated that once a full-time director was in place at TEA, the Texas GEAR UP Coalition would be able to move forward with their priorities, including attention to parental involvement. The annual implementation report in Year 3 will explore the extent to which that occurred after getting that staff position filled.

2.6.4 Statewide GEAR UP Conference

As in Year 1, TEA and the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center delivered an annual statewide GEAR Up conference in Year 2 to promote GEAR UP practices statewide. Approximately 275 GEAR UP professionals attended the 2013 Texas GEAR UP conference, including representatives from each of the seven primary cohort middle schools. The Support Center is responsible for the conference, which includes arranging keynote speakers and reviewing proposals. AMS Pictures is responsible for creating a conference website. Teachers from School F who attended the conference gave positive feedback about how it is an exceptional way for Texas GEAR UP SG staff from primary cohort schools to see how big the program is; participants described it as eye opening and motivating. Being able to meet the leaders of the programs gives others ideas for future activities that they may want to implement (District 1). However, Texas GEAR UP SG staff at School D chose not to disseminate materials from the conference because they did not think that the materials provided a lot of information that would have been relevant to their teachers. In addition to this statewide conference, site visit participants at School C stated how national GEAR UP conferences are also good resources for information and networking.

2.7 Conclusions and Next Steps

2.7.1 Key Implementation Findings

The following findings regarding implementation are considered key to understanding Year 2 Texas GEAR UP SG implementation:

- **Improved Visibility of Texas GEAR UP SG.** In Year 1, knowledge and visibility of GEAR UP varied widely across the schools, which was not surprising given the shortened implementation period during the 2012–13 school year. In Year 2, schools made progress in enhancing stakeholders' understanding of the Texas GEAR UP SG across the districts and schools. In Year 2, the districts provided activities at the start of the 2013–14 school year to re-introduce and "roll out" the program to students and parents. They also enhanced their communication plans by incorporating additional outreach strategies to communicate with parents. However, some concerns about the awareness of Texas GEAR UP SG persisted in Year 2.

- **Progress Toward the Algebra I Completion Project Objective.** Overall, the seven primary cohort schools continued to engage in practices that may facilitate success at meeting the Year 2 project objective of having at least 30% of students successfully complete Algebra I (Project Objective 1.1). Specific to this project objective, the seven schools collectively enrolled 33% of Grade 8 students in Algebra I or an equivalent course. In considering all advanced mathematics courses, 43% of Grade 8 students were enrolled in Year 2 (compared to 22% of the primary cohort students enrolled in advanced mathematics in Grade 7) (see Table F.3).[56] However, four of the seven schools (Schools A, B, C, and D) enrolled less than 30% of their students in advanced mathematics, and School F enrolled 31%, just over the project objective of 30% completion. Schools E and G contributed the most to meeting the collective project objective, with 98% and 55% of Grade 8 students enrolled in advanced mathematics, respectively. Although the successes at the two schools show promise, the low levels of student enrollment in advanced mathematics courses at Schools A, B, C, and D are still cause for concern about achieving the Year 2 project objective. Approximately 44% of the students received tutoring in mathematics at the end of Grade 7 and at the beginning of Grade 8, indicating that, in general, the schools are

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[56] The percentage for Grade 8 is slightly different from the 33% of students enrolled in Algebra I or the equivalent that were reported in the APR. This percentage includes mathematics courses that are considered to be advanced, although not equivalent to Algebra I.

prepared to provide this support service to students. In the first implementation report, evaluators reported that perhaps successful execution of summer 2013 mathematics enrichment programs would be key to helping the schools achieve Project Objective 1.1. In summer 2013, four schools indicated that 10% of the combined primary cohort students participated in programs intended, in part, to support preparation for Algebra I, and received, on average, 20 hours of mathematics focus. It is likely that this support service helped participating students enroll in and potentially complete Algebra I by the end of Grade 8. Other strategies implemented by the schools in Year 2 to support Algebra I completion included afterschool mathematics, art time, afterschool mathematics programs, and theater camp with mathematics integrated.

- **College Preparation Advisors Increased the Amount of Students Receiving Counseling.** A major shift was seen from Year 1 to Year 2 regarding students receiving counseling. On average, across the seven schools, 36% of the primary cohort students received about one hour of counseling. All schools provided financial aid counseling/advising to the primary cohort students in Grade 8, a marked improvement since Year 1 when none of the schools had offered financial aid counseling/advising to primary cohort students when they were in Grade 7.

- **Strong Student Support Services and Overall Mix of Implementation.** By March 31, 2014, toward the end of Year 2, all seven schools had established a strong foundation of providing robust student support services; on average (across all primary cohort students), 78% of Grade 8 students participated in at least one type of student support service. Three of the seven schools met the Year 2 implementation project objective of having 75% of students involved in comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring (Project Objective 4.1). These same three schools exceeded this project objective in Year 1. The remaining four schools did not meet the project objective, but came closer in Year 2. More effort still needs to occur in order to achieve Project Objective 4.1 for each of those individual schools. At these four schools, 29% to 36% of the primary cohort students had not participated in any type of student support services in Grade 8; however, this was an improvement over the 67% to 73% of primary cohort students in these schools not participating in any type of student support services in Grade 7.

- **Engaging Parents Was Still Challenging.** As was the case in Year 1, no school met the annual project objective of having 50% of parents attend at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events (Project Objective 7.3). As of March 31, 2014, only 7% of parents from all schools had participated in at least three events. Schools offered more parent events in Year 2 (65 across all schools, ranging from 3 to 16 events) than they did in the limited Year 1 implementation period. Engaging the parents of middle school students is often difficult. Hill and Tyson (2009) offer reasons such as the size and complexity of middle schools, the large number of students on middle school teachers' rosters (making it difficult to foster relationships with all parents), and the multiple teachers that students have (making it difficult for parents to know which teacher to contact). The Texas GEAR UP SG schools will need to continue to work on overcoming the challenges of engaging parents in order to meet Project Objective 7.3 by the end of Year 2 and in each of the coming program years.

- **Improved Levels of Teacher PD.** Schools improved the amount of teacher PD offered in Year 2 and followed through on their plans to offer teacher PD in summer 2013 and into fall 2013, when all schools offered teacher PD. However, in Year 2, only two schools had held the five planned vertical teaming events by March 31, 2014. Texas GEAR UP SG schools will need to continue to offer teacher PD each program year on the topics of advanced instructional strategies, vertical teaming, and college access/preparation, and could benefit from listening to some of the teachers' suggestions regarding focusing on how teachers can motivate students, enhance students' social skills, improve organization, and manage time effectively.

Another way to summarize Year 2 implementation, as was done in Year 1, is to view at a high level each school's level of implementation of various activity types. This summary builds on the work of identifying a mix of implementation relative to the students, while adding in the 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 19 activities tracked in Year 2 and 12 activities tracked in Year 1.[57] 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. In addition, the summary includes an indicator regarding whether each school was on target to meet Project Objective 1.1 (Grade 8 Algebra I enrollment ≥ 30%), Project Objective 4.1 (Grade 8 students receiving student support services ≥ 75%), and Project Objective 7.3 (Attendance by ≥ 50% of Grade 8 parents at three or more Texas GEAR UP SG events). Table 2.3 summarizes Texas GEAR UP SG strategies implemented by each school in Year 2.

Table 2.3. Overview of Texas GEAR UP SG Implementation Strategies by School, 2013–14

Implementation Strategy	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G
Advanced Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Project Objective 1.1 on Target: Grade 8 Algebra I Enrollment ≥ 30%	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
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 (Afterschool Mathematics Program; Saturday Camp)				X	X	X	
Project Objective 4.1 on Target: Grade 8 Students Receiving Student Support Services ≥ 75%	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
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

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[57] The seven additional activities tracked in Year 2 that were not tracked in Year 1 are Algebra I summer 2013 support, educational field trips, high school knowledge activity, parent counseling/advising, parent event on college preparation/financial aid, parent high school visit, and parent college visit.

Table 2.3. Overview of Texas GEAR UP SG Implementation Strategies

by School, 2013–14 (continued)

Implementation Strategy	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G
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
Project Objective 7.3 on Target: ≥ 50% of Parents Attend at Least Three Events	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Teacher Professional Development[a]	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Stakeholders	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Use Statewide Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total Number of Strategies Implemented (out of 19)	**15**	**14**	**15**	**11**	**16**	**15**	**16**
Total Number of Project Objectives on Target (out of 3)	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**1**

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

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

In Year 2, all seven schools implemented the following activity types, which are the core Texas GEAR UP SG activity types: advanced course enrollment, student support services (tutoring, mentoring, and counseling/advising), college visits, parent events, teacher PD, and community alliances.

In Year 1, School G implemented the broadest range of types of activities by implementing 11 of the 12 activities reported, while the other six schools lagged behind in implementation. In Year 2, School G continued to implement a broad range of activities (16 of the 19 types of activities reported in Year 2), and School E caught up to School G by also implementing 16 of the 19 types of activities. Like School E, the other five middle schools began to implement a broader range of activities in Year 2 than they did in Year 1. Schools A, C, and F each implemented 15 of the 19 activities; School B implemented 13 of the 19 activities. School D implemented the narrowest range of activities (11 of the 19 types of activities) in Year 2 compared to all other schools.

While it is not yet known whether any particular activity, as compared to engaging in a range of activities, will be linked to desired outcomes, the Texas GEAR UP SG certainly encourages

participation in a broad range of activities. Given this approach, some schools could benefit by initiating a broader range during the remainder of Year 2 and moving forward. This is true for the other schools as well, but to a lesser degree. It is hoped that the broad range of implementation activities at these schools will be sustained in future years.

2.7.2 Facilitators and Barriers to Texas GEAR UP State Grant Implementation

It was evident from APR data and site visits that there were several facilitators, as well as barriers, affecting progress and successful Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in Year 2. Understanding facilitators and barriers to implementation provides needed guidance to schools that may be struggling.

FACILITATORS TO IMPLEMENTATION

College Preparation Advisors. The addition of College Preparation Advisors in Year 2 built on the support for program implementation received from the Support Center, the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators, and campus/district administrators who facilitated implementation in Year 1. College Preparation Advisors helped the primary cohort schools increase Grade 8 student participation in counseling because their main purpose is to counsel and advise students. Furthermore, College Preparation Advisors were a valuable resource for increasing the visibility of the Texas GEAR UP activities. Students, parents, school staff, and Texas GEAR UP SG staff indicated that the College Preparation Advisors have been a good addition to the schools and that they are providing valuable resources to students and parents, while also encouraging the students to think about and strive for college.

Continued Facilitators From Year 1. Other facilitators described in Year 1 remained helpful in implementing Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 2. For example, local universities continued to play a key role in supporting various student services. This support appeared to be expanded in Year 2, with greater involvement in activities such as college visits and mentoring. The Support Center also continued to play a valuable role by delivering PD on data use and coordinating the statewide conference. In addition, in Year 2, they played an instrumental role in deploying the College Preparation Advisors to schools.

OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS DESCRIBED IN YEAR 1

Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013)lists various barriers related to implementation, which were less of an issue in Year 2. For example, insufficient academic rigor emerged as an issue in Year 1 and, in Year 2, some schools offered pre-AP training that helped address this concern. In the years of implementation that follow, TEA should work with the Support Center to expose more teachers to this training, which may help enhance academic rigor for more students. In addition, the section about introducing the Texas GEAR UP SG to the school community demonstrates ways that program staff have addressed the lack of visibility. Texas GEAR UP SG visibility is an area around which Texas GEAR UP SG staff are encouraged to continue to strategize. Although Year 1 data pointed to coordinators having other responsibilities, the introduction of College Preparation Advisors seems to have provided additional supports to implement program activities.

CONTINUED AND NEW BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION IN YEAR 2

Limited Support From School Administration. One school struggled with the lack of support and buy-in from school administration as perceived by the coordinator and the College Preparation Advisor. A lack of buy-in and trouble navigating red tape led to a lack of individual interaction between the College Preparation Advisor and students until February 2014. In addition, this lack of support meant that other Texas GEAR UP SG activities could not be implemented. For example, regarding the TG Financial Modules, the College Preparation Advisor said, "We really wanted to implement those, but the principal pushed back and wouldn't let us implement them." A change in administration led to the eventual ability to implement the

modules, but delivery was delayed. The administration change reduced difficulties in gaining approval for many activities, including interactions with students.

Limited Time to Meet With Students. Another barrier was a lack of time available to meet with the middle school students, which persisted at most of the schools. One Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator highlighted the lack of time that is available for personal interactions with the students. This challenge of a lack of access, as well as an inability to reach all students, was also noted by a teacher, who said,

> "I love that GEAR UP is introducing the idea of college, but it doesn't seem like the majority of the 8th graders are having access to many of the GEAR UP events. There are some things that we do schoolwide, but the field trips and things have been more selective. It seems like it is the same top tier students who are going on the trips."

At some schools, College Preparation Advisors were able to overcome this challenge to work individually with students. A College Preparation Advisor explained that there are barriers in meeting with students, but that he learned that he could sometimes access students during elective classes or through a sport that he coaches, because it is not possible to take kids out of core classes to meet with them. A student also commented on this challenge, saying, "GEAR UP could improve by having us come here [to the GEAR UP room] more often. Maybe they could schedule a time for us to come to the GEAR UP room and talk about things."

Geographic Location. Another barrier at one district has been its geographic limitations as a rural school. Parents noted that access to the Internet is spotty outside the public schools, which can be a barrier to learning. Parents and school volunteers also must travel substantial distances to attend programs and provide assistance. During focus groups, some parents noted that the district seeks to address this challenge by offering parent programs at various times of the day to try to meet the parents' diverse needs. Another related barrier, as noted by one school, is that alliances are difficult to form when the stakeholder sees the school as being in a location that is too far away from the stakeholders' offices.

Employee Turnover. Another key barrier to implementation at one school for 2013–14 was employee turnover. A new Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator began work less than three weeks before the start of the 2013–14 school year, and then left in spring 2014, meaning that the site will get its third coordinator since the start of the grant. The original College Preparation Advisor also left after three months, moving to another job in the district. Despite this barrier, school and district administrators cited several factors in their favor, including a Texas GEAR UP SG advisory council that met regularly to review activities and set goals.

Approval Processes. While the delay in grant award notifications led to a truncated timeline for implementation in Year 1, other barriers to being able to proceed with GEAR UP activities in Year 2 related to getting the necessary approval. The time required to gain approval for grant activities was an obstacle cited by several individuals at one school. This was most evident in two examples: the rollout of an online mathematics tutoring service, which was not made available to students until nearly the end of the academic year, and outreach to students about summer 2014 camps. Several individuals interviewed at this school suggested that delayed approvals gave students little time to apply for the competitive GeoFORCE summer program, as well as other summer camp opportunities outside the district, resulting in fewer students being able to take advantage of these opportunities.

2.7.3 Potential Promising Practices

In addition to engaging facilitators (e.g., leveraging support from College Preparation Advisors, the Support Center, and local universities) and seeking ways to overcome barriers, there are several emerging promising practices related to Year 2 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 four potential promising implementation practices based on the information collected to date.

SUMMER 2013 PROGRAMMING

Programming in summer 2013 was a promising practice for a few schools, based on Year 2 findings. In particular, one school offered an array of activities during summer 2013 that helped prepare students for rigorous classes, particularly Algebra I, in Grade 8. While addressing the short-term needs of students, these summer 2013 activities also supported other long-term goals. For example, the mathematics program held within the district was based heavily on PBL activities, with teachers using the information that they had received at recent Texas GEAR UP SG-supported PD activities. The mathematics program conducted at a local college featured opportunities for students to learn more about college as well.

This district shows evidence of leveraging Texas GEAR UP SG funding to broaden its goals because it uses braided funding (using both Texas GEAR UP SG and non-Texas GEAR UP SG funds) to support both district goals and the goals of the grant. This was most evident in the area of pre-AP and AP training. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator said the district planned to use grant funding to support training for teachers of existing pre-AP and AP classes to enhance instruction and curriculum, while using non-GEAR UP funds to explore the possibility of introducing new AP classes during high school.

Although effective in a few schools, other schools faced challenges in getting students to enroll, making potential participants aware of programs, and encouraging more individuals to engage.

CAREER DAYS

The implementation of career days at one of the middle schools was also a Year 2 promising practice. During Year 2, two career days were conducted in different ways. For the first career day, Texas GEAR UP SG staff identified 18 professionals from the local community who volunteered to come to the school to talk to students about their jobs. They asked these professionals to wear the attire that they would actually wear to work and to bring any props to describe their career. They then went into classrooms and gave presentations to students about their career. The second career day, occurring in the school gym, included approximately 30 professionals. Each professional had a table in the gym that was set up to show what they do at work, which provided visuals for the students. Students from the entire school came to the gym and were able to talk to all of the career professionals. These career days included a wide variety of professionals, from firefighters to a video game creator to a disc jockey.

Teachers had high praise for the career days and described them as well executed. One teacher said, "I took my students to the second career day in the gym, and the students really enjoyed it. I was really impressed with both career days. It was amazing to have actual professionals come here. [The College Preparation Advisor] did an amazing job in organizing it, and the kids really enjoyed it. I think that the kids learned things and took away valuable information."

REALITY CHECK

An activity that was beneficial for Texas GEAR UP SG students at one middle school was a Reality Check program offered by the College Preparation Advisor.[58] The interactive game focused on making the students aware of real life and what their future could look like. This activity provided information to students about the cost of living and the types of expenses that are a part of daily life. Based on a specified job and salary, students had to create a budget and determine how much their chosen lifestyle would cost compared to what their education level

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[58] During the site visit at one school, participants spoke about the Reality Check program. Details included in this section reflect the extent of the information provided from this data source.

and job type would typically pay. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator indicated that students enjoyed this activity and that it opened their eyes to the real world and future expectations.

AFTERSCHOOL MINI-CAMP

Another innovative and effective practice in one district was the afterschool mini-camp, specifically a theater mini-camp for students. During this camp, students had to write a script for a play, make puppets to use in the play, and do mathematics calculations to determine measurements such as stage size. The teacher who designed this class explained that they wrote the curriculum to focus on objectives in different areas that students typically struggle on, such as surface area in mathematics and plot lines in language arts. A goal of the mini-camp was to reach students who had not been reached by the Texas GEAR UP SG in other ways, such as students who had not been able to participate in the college visits. During the 12-week camp, students created the script and learned about ELA concepts with which they were not familiar. They then had to create their puppets, which involved using mathematics skills such as surface area and budgeting to determine the amount of money that they would need for supplies. The students then had to build the puppets based on their previous work, and finally they performed the play that they wrote at elementary schools in the district. The teacher for this mini-camp had high praise for the camp, saying, "[It was the] greatest enrichment activity that I have ever done. What is really shocking is to see the students learning and adapting."

LEADERSHIP CLUB

One school established a leadership club for Grade 8 students. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator and College Preparation Advisor said that this activity promoted volunteer service and that club members began to serve as peer mentors to other students. During a student focus group, those who participated in the club said that it was a constructive activity and that they learned more about leadership. Not only did the club offer opportunities for personal growth, but it also provided long-term opportunities for those students to distinguish themselves when applying for postsecondary education.

2.7.4 Recommended Next Steps

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

ENGAGE IN YEAR 3 TEXAS GEAR UP STATE GRANT OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Despite the improved visibility of the program across stakeholders and schools, it is recommended that Texas GEAR UP SG outreach and awareness activities (especially to parents) continue into Year 3 of the grant, particularly with the transition to high schools and the challenges that students might face during the transition. Such outreach also should include a greater focus on the Texas GEAR UP SG statewide websites because knowledge of these continued to be low across all schools. These efforts will likely ensure that the districts are able to sustain the gains.

TRAINING FOR TEXAS GEAR UP STATE GRANT COORDINATORS

Most teachers, administrators, and College Preparation Advisors indicated general satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators and their work. However, some feedback indicated that coordinators would benefit from various training or PD, such as programming to help students transition to high school, how to use data entry systems, communications for sharing the necessary information with appropriate individuals, and ways to increase the participation of students and parents in activities. As such, these areas could be focus areas for improving the quality of the work done for Texas GEAR UP SG by the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators.

CONTINUING TO OFFER SUMMER PROGRAMS

All schools had plans to offer Texas GEAR UP SG activities in summer 2014, including student academies and camps, as well as teacher PD activities. Through Texas GEAR UP SG funding, one district planned a large array of summer 2014 camp opportunities for students. These included internal district camps on STEM, robotics, and preparation for Algebra I. Camp options in the community included an adventure camp, digital media academy, art camp, young writer's camp, and nature camps available in the community. A small number of students attended the GeoFORCE science camp, which includes a trip to Florida. Texas GEAR UP SG paid fees for students to attend the non-district camps, but parents were required to provide their own transportation.

The mathematics emphasis was expected to continue in summer 2014 as one district, with Texas GEAR UP SG support, planned to offer another Algebra I prep camp for students who were taking the class starting in fall 2014. Those who complete Algebra I in Grade 8 were offered an opportunity to attend a summer Geometry prep camp to prepare for the next course in the district mathematics sequence. Grade 9 teachers were expected in summer 2014 to receive PD in Agile Mind, a program designed to promote student motivation, confidence, and engagement to succeed in rigorous mathematics and science courses. School and district administrators said that college readiness activities would be embedded in this program.[59]

One district had plans to continue and increase teacher PD during summer 2014. Specifically, they planned to expand SpringBoard training to a wider group of teachers, including Grade 9 teachers that have the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort as students in the 2014–15 school year. Based on comments from Grade 8 teachers who have already received the SpringBoard training and materials, this will be most effective if teachers have the training and materials with enough advance time to plan for the school year.

Given these data about summer programs, recommendations include continuing activities for teachers and students in the summer. Replicating programs described as being effective, such as GeoFORCE, is something to consider in future implementation years. In addition, TEA should work with Texas GEAR UP staff and collaborators to consider focusing on other content areas beyond mathematics going forward.

CONTINUING TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECEIVING MENTORING AND COUNSELING

In one district, the College Preparation Advisors indicated that in Year 3, they plan to continue activities that they started in Year 2, such as one-on-one counseling and mentoring with the students and the GEAR UP club. They stated that they would like to expand on and grow these activities, in addition to involving students in new activities to help prepare them for college and a career. As such, continued implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG should include efforts to expand the reach of services to include more students.

STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION

Texas GEAR UP SG continued to increase efforts in Year 2 for statewide implementation of resources and supports for students and parents, as well as schools. As promised, access to these resources statewide has been provided. However, actual use of these materials is low. Moving forward, TEA and its collaborators will focus efforts on improving the level of usage of these materials statewide. Once usage improves, TEA will make progress on meeting their statewide goals.

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[59] 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.

The chapter that follows offers another layer of understanding about the implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG by summarizing the data from parent and student surveys, overall and across schools.

3.   Students' and Parents' 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 the 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. The findings in this chapter discuss survey data on postsecondary plans, discussions and knowledge about college, understanding of financial aspects related to postsecondary education, and perceptions about Texas GEAR UP SG. Related insights drawn from site visits are also included to a limited extent.

As of the end of the 2013–14 school year, parents have been surveyed in spring 2013 (parents of Grade 7 students) and spring 2014 (parents of Grade 8 students). Students have been surveyed in spring 2013 (Grade 7), and in fall 2013 and spring 2014 (Grade 8). This chapter focuses primarily on the findings from the spring 2014 surveys with connections to Year 1 data as relevant (O'Donnel et al., 2013). Student fall 2013 survey data with respect to their participation in Texas GEAR UP SG summer 2013 programs are also reported in detail. Statistically significant differences between parents and students, from spring 2013 to spring 2014, and across schools are noted where appropriate. Appendix G provides tables with additional details on the findings reported here, including the results of statistical significance testing and significance level.[60]

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 that students may have had. For parents, the relatively low response rate at both time points warrants caution in interpreting changes in parent responses over time because it is unknown to what extent the responding parents are representative of parents overall and at each time point.

To better understand the survey findings presented here, a couple of points are worth highlighting:

- While data for parents and students on the same item are presented together and compared, caution should be taken in making comparisons given a low parent response rate and the potential for self-selection bias. That is, parents who completed the survey may have been more interested and/or more involved in the Texas GEAR UP SG program than those who did not respond.
- 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.

Findings from survey data provide helpful insight on participants' perceptions of implementation. It will be important to determine if and how these perceptions change over the course of

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[60] Statistically significant results reported in this chapter are significant at the $p < .05$ level, indicating that there is less than a 5% chance that the difference occurred due to chance alone. Throughout this section, the term *significant* is only used to refer to statistical significance. USDE requires that all GEAR UP programs include several specific items on surveys for national evaluation purposes. Throughout this section, the required items are noted.

implementation; such analyses will be the focus of forthcoming reports. The following questions are addressed in this chapter:

- What are students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, college readiness, financing college)?
- What are student, parent, and staff perceptions of student support services implementation strategies?
- What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by grantees (students, parents, staff) to be effective, and therefore potential best practices?
- What information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness?
- During each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students? To students' families?
- What facilitators and barriers do schools and parents report regarding participation in college readiness activities?

In addition, the upcoming comprehensive report will include spotlight analyses of summer transition programs. The spotlight analyses will primarily be focused on understanding and making the transition to high school, including understanding the role of Texas GEAR UP SG in supporting a successful transition. However, because the schools indicated during Year 1 site visits that summer programs would be a key strategy for transitioning students successfully to enroll in and complete Algebra I, the decision was made to also track their participation in and perceptions of summer 2013 and summer 2014 activities because these may be related to students' successful completion of Algebra I. Project Objective 1.1 is that by the end of Year 2, 30% of students will have successfully completed Algebra I and that by the end of Year 3, 85% of students will have successfully completed Algebra I.

3.1 Survey Response Rates

Texas GEAR UP SG surveys were collected in May 2014 from the primary cohort of students in Grade 8 and parents served in the 2013–14 school year.[61] See Appendix G for details about the spring 2013 survey administration, data cleaning, and the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents. After data cleaning (a standard practice to prepare data for analysis by removing invalid responses), 1,295 student surveys (87% of the surveys received) and 471 parent surveys (94% of the surveys received) remained for analyses.[62] This represents an overall response rate of 26% for parents and 72% for students. In Year 2, schools, on average, continued to struggle to achieve the 50% response rate for parent surveys and the 80% response rate for student surveys goal set by USDE. TEA must report the findings from student and parent 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 APR enrollment data (TEA Year 2 APR, 2014).[63] The response rates by school for parents and students are included in Table 3.1. Appendix G provides additional information.

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[61] The term *parent* is used here to simplify reporting. The surveys indicated that an appropriate parent, family member, or guardian could complete the survey.
[62] Reasons for exclusion included the following: dissenting to taking the survey, declaring that they already took the survey in another format, indicating a grade other than Grade 8 (student), indicating not having a child in Grade 8 (parent), 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.
[63] 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 and Student Survey Response Rates by School, 2013–14

School	Number of Students	Number of Valid Parent Surveys Received	Parent Survey Response Rate	Number of Valid Student Surveys Received	Student Survey Response Rate
School A	251	58	23.1%	221	88.0%
School B	286	108	37.8%	229	80.1%
School C	222	120	54.1%	204	91.9%
School D	189	48	25.4%	51	27.0%
School E	256	14	5.5%	208	81.3%
School F	306	13	4.2%	150	49.0%
School G	297	110	37.0%	232	78.1%
Total	**1,807**	**471**	26.1%	**1,295**	71.7%

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data Through March 31, 2013; Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).

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

School C met both the USDE requirement of a 50% response rate for parent surveys (54%) and the requirement to survey at least 80% of the students (92%). Schools A, B, and E also met the student response rate requirement of 80%; School G nearly achieved that goal with a 78% student survey response rate. Overall, parent response rates increased 5 percentage points from Year 1 (21%) to Year 2 (26%) and student response rates remained relatively the same (71% in Year 1, 72% in Year 2). Given the low percentages of parents who responded to the survey at four schools, comparisons across schools on the parent survey were made only for those campuses where at least 25% of the parents responded.

TEA and the evaluation team engaged in a range of strategies to encourage completion of the surveys. Communication occurred early in the school year and again as the survey administration period approached, including a reminder about the importance of the survey and the response rates that schools had agreed to reach. Surveys were provided to the schools in both paper and online versions, and in both English and Spanish. Schools were strongly encouraged to utilize the online version of the surveys, and three of the seven participating schools did so in spring 2014. For parents, schools 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. The evaluation team will continue to work with TEA and its collaborators to reduce any barriers that schools may be experiencing in survey administration related to response rates. Additional strategies for meeting the required response rates will be explored, such as resending surveys, encouraging online versions, providing time for parent survey completion at Texas GEAR UP SG activities/events, engaging College Preparation Advisors and coordinators in the survey process, and on-site support from evaluation team members. Opportunities to use such strategies will be considered across all seven schools, with an intensive effort at schools where the response rates were considerably lower. In making comparisons among the schools with regard to student survey responses, School D, where the response rate was below 25%, was excluded. Similarly, school comparisons on parent survey responses will only include Schools B, C, D, and G, where response rates exceeded 25%.

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. In other words, knowing that most students want to go to college positions Texas GEAR UP SG to respond with efforts to increase the knowledge about how to do so and spend less time convincing students of the importance of a college education. It will be imperative to track changes over time regarding the extent to which students report that 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 2013 to spring 2014?

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 both the parent and student surveys asked about the highest level of education desired (aspirations), as well as the anticipated actual level achieved (expectations).[64] Figure 3.1 illustrates the percentage of parents and students who selected a four-year degree or higher for each time point. Analyses examined the overall distribution of responses and compared them over time. Within parents, while it appears from the figure that greater percentages were indicating expectations and aspirations aligned with a four-year degree or higher, these differences were not statistically significant. Students' aspirations and expectations both significantly increased over time.[65] As was the case in Year 1, students' educational aspirations significantly exceeded their expectations.[66] While students' aspirations for at least a college degree increased by five percentage points, student expectations for a four-year degree or higher increased by 13 percentage points between Year 1 and Year 2. Ultimately, this means that by the end of spring 2014, the gap between student aspirations and expectations, while still significant, was much smaller than in spring 2013 (10 and 18 percentage points, respectively). Percentages for each response option are displayed in Table G.3, Appendix G.

Most parents who responded to the survey (81%) would like their child to obtain at least a four-year (bachelor's) degree; the majority of students (68%) indicated such aspirations for themselves (Figure 3.1). Most parents (74%) also expect their child to obtain at least a four-year degree, but only 58% of students expect such of themselves. Parents' aspirations are generally higher than their expectations for their child's education (see Table G.4, Appendix G). Within parents who would like their child to earn a four-year degree, 75% expect their child to attain that level or higher, while 25% currently expect that their child will not earn at least a four-year degree. Students' educational expectations were also significantly lower than their aspirations (see Table G.5, Appendix G). Within students who aspire to a four-year degree, 63% expect to achieve at that level or higher, while 37% expect to achieve a two-year degree or less.

Parent aspirations and expectations to achieve at least a four-year college degree were significantly higher than that of the students (see Figure 3.1).[67] One possible explanation for this is that parents who participated in the survey have higher educational aspirations and expectations than parents who did not participate. Participating parents may be more engaged with the school and with their child's education. In order to better understand the influence that Texas GEAR UP SG may be having on parents over time, it would be important to have a higher percentage of parents participate in the survey. The significantly higher number of

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[64] The question regarding educational expectations is required by USDE for both the student and parent surveys.

[65] Changes were significantly different across time points: Student Aspirations: $\chi^2(2) = 22.1$, $p < .001$; Student Expectations: $\chi^2(2) = 48.4$, $p < .001$.

[66] Parents: $\chi^2(25) = 418.2$, $p < .001$; Students: $\chi^2(25) = 1,149.6$, $p < .001$. A small percentage of parents (11%) and students (9%) 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 one had aspired to high school or less.

[67] Student-reported aspirations differed significantly from parent-reported aspirations: $\chi^2(1) = 28.2$, $p < .001$; student-reported expectations differed significantly from parent-reported expectations: $\chi^2(1) = 39.2$, $p < .001$.

students from spring 2013 to spring 2014 who aspire and who expect to attend college suggests that Texas GEAR UP SG schools may be encouraging students to have a college-going mentality.

Figure 3.1. Percentages of Parents and Students* Who Aspire and Expect to Obtain a Four-Year College Degree or Higher, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014
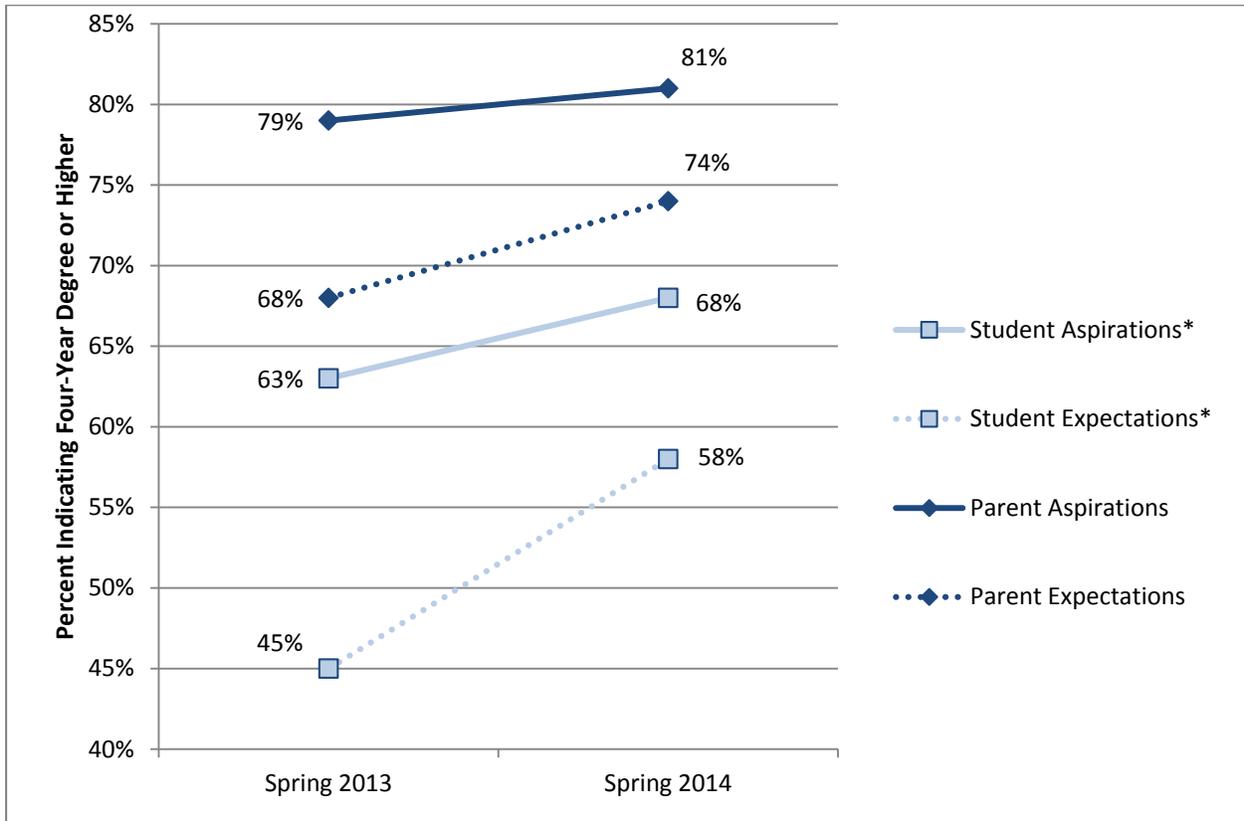
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014).

Note: Low parent response rates across both time points warrant caution in interpreting trend data 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.

*Within students, the distribution of responses were significantly different across time points: Student Aspirations: $\chi^2(2) = 22.1$, $p < .001$; Student Expectations: $\chi^2(2) = 48.4$, $p < .001$. Within students in spring 2014, educational aspirations were significantly higher than expectations $\chi^2(25) = 1,149.6$, $p < .001$. Within parents in spring 2014, educational aspirations were significantly higher than expectations, $\chi^2(25) = 418.2$, $p < .001$.

Survey responses across schools are included in Appendix G (Tables G.6 through G.8). The percentage of students who aspire to some college or less was highest at School A (23%) and School B (26%), while at School G, only 12% have aspirations at this lower level. To the extent that educational aspirations influence students' actual choices, this suggests that Schools A and B, in particular, have considerable work to do in order to engage students in seeing themselves as both completing high school and at least a two-year college degree. Data from site visits point to different approaches across schools in how the program is working to influence aspirations. Career Cruising, a career interest survey, was a tool that School E used to help

students find careers based on their interests.[68] Students at School B proclaimed their aspirations by signing a pledge to attend college. Participants at one school, School C, reported the perceived need for additional activities to help them consider various career options, such as a Dream Board Night.[69]

3.2.2 Perceptions of College Plans

Two items on the parent and student surveys addressed more specifically 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, while 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 will be made about attending college. In the first case, if students and parents believe that the student can attain their goals and the future they want without attending college, then college attendance becomes less relevant to these families. Similarly, if parents and students believe that it is too early to be thinking about college, then they likely are not having discussions that will support this decision. Although college may appear to be something that middle school students and parents can think about once they get to high school, working toward those goals early on is important in making initial steps in the direction of college requirements.

The results for the two items are displayed in a series of pie charts in Figure 3.2. Nearly all parents and students *agreed* or *strongly agreed (*94% and 92%, respectively) that attending college is important for career goals and the future. Although seemingly high overall, examining trends at each school suggests that student agreement about the importance of attending college differed significantly across schools, with the percentage of students who *strongly agree* that it is important ranging from a high of 75% at School G to a low of 55% at School A (see Table G.9, Appendix G).[70] Differences were also statistically significant across schools for parent agreement on the importance of attending college, ranging from a high of 89% *strongly agree* at School G to a low of 70% at School C (Table G.10, Appendix G).[71] Similar to data reported on Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in Year 1, Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students, as well as their parents, have an overall "readiness level" to receive information and services about college (O'Donnel et al., 2013).

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[68] More details about Career Cruising (a self-exploration and planning program that helps people of all ages achieve their potential in school, career, and life) are available at http://public.careercruising.com/en.
[69] Site visit data offered limited details about this event that helped guide students in considering career goals.
[70] Student-reported agreement differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(18) = 39.0$, $p < .01$.
[71] Parent-reported agreement differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(9) = 29.9$, $p < .001$.

Figure 3.2. Parents' and Students' Perceptions of College Plans, Spring 2014
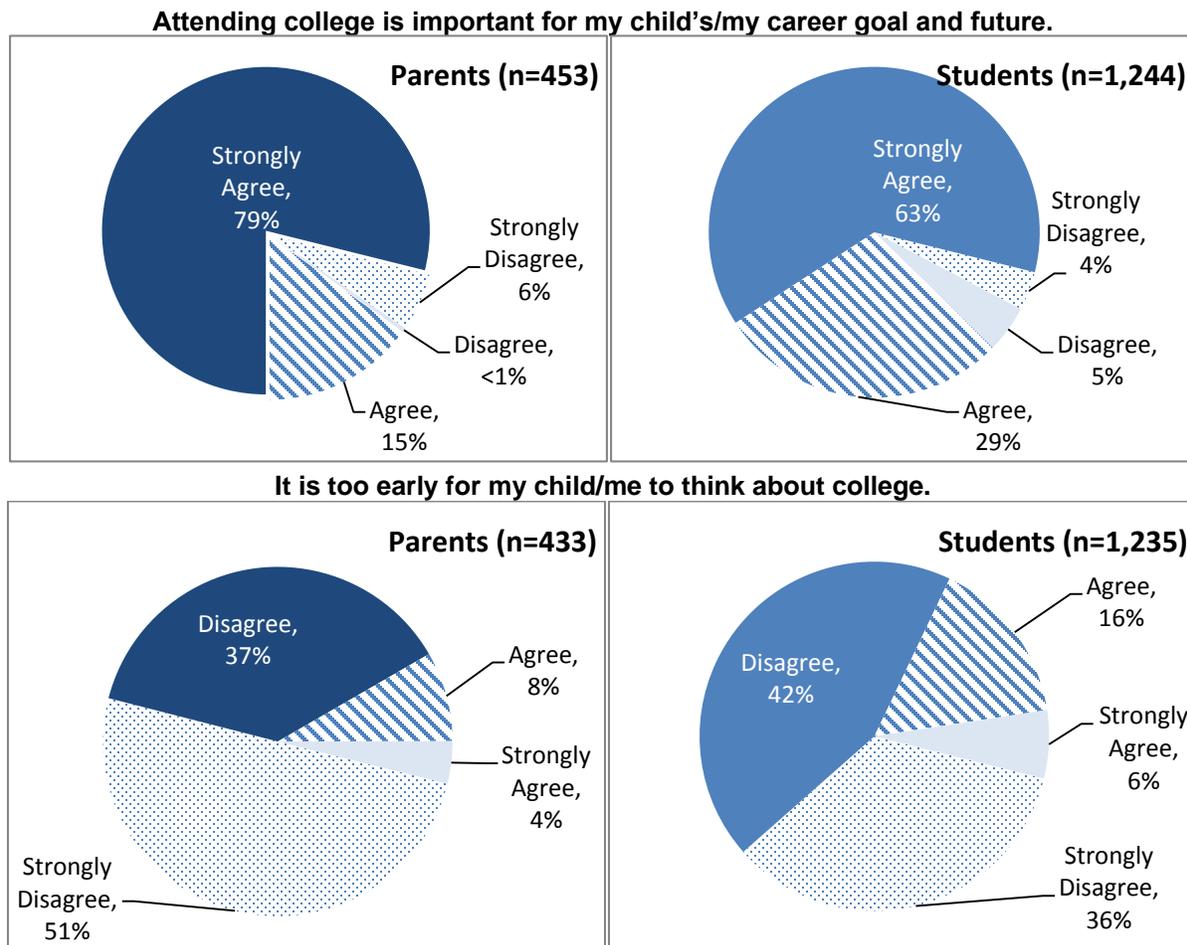
Attending college is important for my child's/my career goal and future.

Parents (n=453) pie chart: Strongly Agree, 79%; Agree, 15%; Disagree, <1%; Strongly Disagree, 6%

Students (n=1,244) pie chart: Strongly Agree, 63%; Agree, 29%; Disagree, 5%; Strongly Disagree, 4%

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

Parents (n=433) pie chart: Disagree, 37%; Agree, 8%; Strongly Agree, 4%; Strongly Disagree, 51%

Students (n=1,235) pie chart: Disagree, 42%; Agree, 16%; Strongly Agree, 6%; Strongly Disagree, 36%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
Note: Percentages across those who responded with some level of agreement may not total 100% due to rounding.

Relatively few parents (12%) or students (22%) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that it is too early to think about going to college, although the percentage of students was significantly greater than the percentage of parents (Figure 3.2).[72] While the percentages are low, this suggests that Texas GEAR UP SG activities and events may not yet be resonating with all parents and students. Texas GEAR UP SG should continue to communicate about why thinking about college should begin now in order to help ensure that these percentages drop even lower as students enter high school and the window of time to start thinking about college narrows. As the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort enters high school, the schools will also want to engage in activities to ensure that students enroll in the appropriate courses that will facilitate their successful enrollment in college. TEA should encourage GEAR UP strategies that concomitantly address supporting students and parents who already recognize the importance of college with activities focused on the smaller percentage of parents and students who currently do not understand the importance of college and/or are not thinking about it yet.

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[72] Student-reported agreement differed significantly from parent-reported agreement: $\chi^2(1) = 19.0$, $p < .001$.

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

Given the goals of GEAR UP, 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 graduation (see Figure 3.3). Although nearly half of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students (42%) indicated that they already planned to attend college, 51% of students indicated that participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities in Year 2 helped in making the decision to go to college. This reflects an increase of 13 percentage points since 2012–13.[73] However, it is also important to understand that, overall, 93% of the respondents plan to go to college, similar to the 95% who indicated this in Year 1.

Students' perceived impact of Texas GEAR UP SG, as it relates to postsecondary plans, differed significantly across schools (see Table G.11, Appendix G).[74] In School G, 65% of the responding students indicated that Texas GEAR UP SG participation was impacting their plans to go to college; this is particularly notable as this school was highest in Year 1 and increased 7 percentage points since then (O'Donnel et al., 2013). 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, as well as to maintain the remaining 93% who currently do plan to attend college. Additional efforts should focus on School B, where 12% of students do not plan to go to college, compared to 5% at that school in Year 1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013).

Figure 3.3. Percentages of Students Who Perceive That Participating in Texas GEAR UP SG Has Impacted College Plans, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014

Students Spring 2013 (n=1,230)

No, I was already planning on going to college, 57%

No, I still don't plan to go to college, 5%

Yes, 38%

Total percentage of students planning to go to college is shown in the solid sections of the graph, 95%.

Students Spring 2014 (n=1,207)

No, I was already planning on going to college, 42%

No, I still don't plan to go to college, 7%

Yes, 51%

Total percentage of students planning to go to college is shown in the solid sections of the graph, 93%.
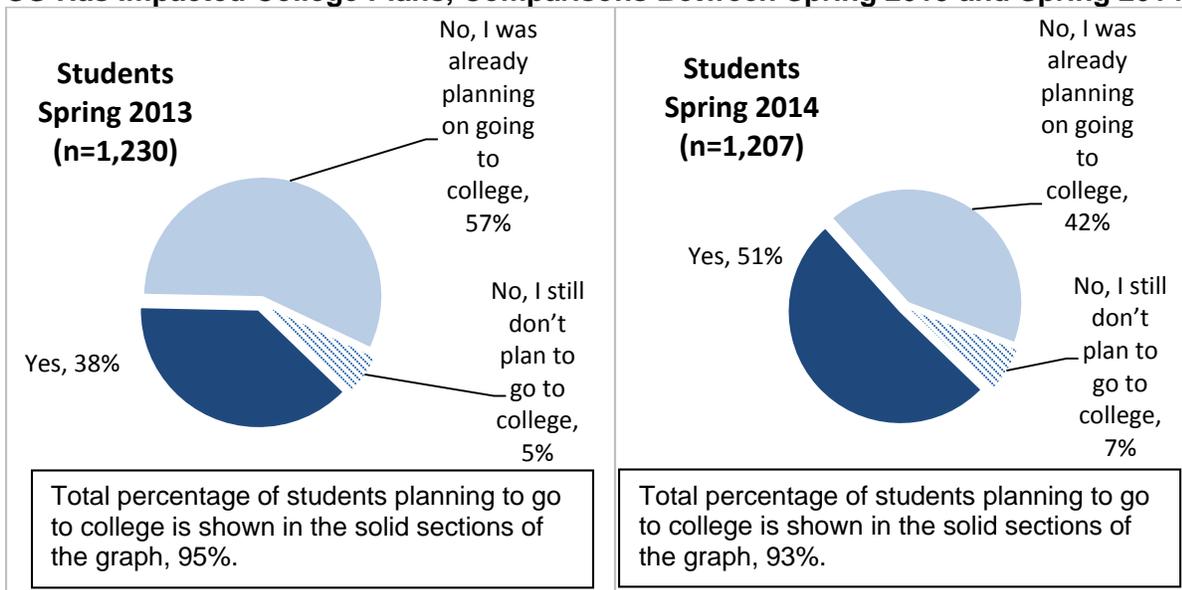
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014); Has participating in GEAR UP activities at your school helped you to decide to go to college after high school graduation?

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

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[73] Student perceptions differed significantly across time points: $\chi^2(1) = 48.3$, $p < .001$.
[74] Student perceptions differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(12) = 87.3$, $p < .001$.

3.2.4 Reason for Not Continuing Education

In an effort to better inform and influence those who do not plan on attending college, it is important for Texas GEAR UP SG to know some of the reasons why students do not think that they will be able to continue their education past high school. 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, Figure 3.4 displays what students identified as potential reasons for not continuing their education. The results for the spring 2014 survey were generally consistent with the spring 2013 survey; concerns about costs (39%), wanting to work (38%), needing to work (22%), and poor grades (19%) were among the most frequently selected reasons. TEA should work with Texas GEAR UP SG staff and collaborators to alleviate ongoing concerns about poor grades by schools introducing additional student support services for students who are struggling in courses. Although costs remain the most frequently reported reason for not continuing postsecondary education, spring 2013 (48%) to spring 2014 (39%) shows a significant decline (9 percentage points) on this item [$\chi^2(1) = 5.1$, $p < .05$]. Perhaps services through Texas GEAR UP SG are helping students to understand strategies for affording postsecondary education. However, a large percentage of students still see this as a barrier, so 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 in connection to the other reported reasons; in other words, Texas GEAR UP SG could help students understand options regarding being able to work while also going to school, or similar strategies.

Figure 3.4. Percentages of Texas GEAR UP SG Students by Reason for Not Continuing Education, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014
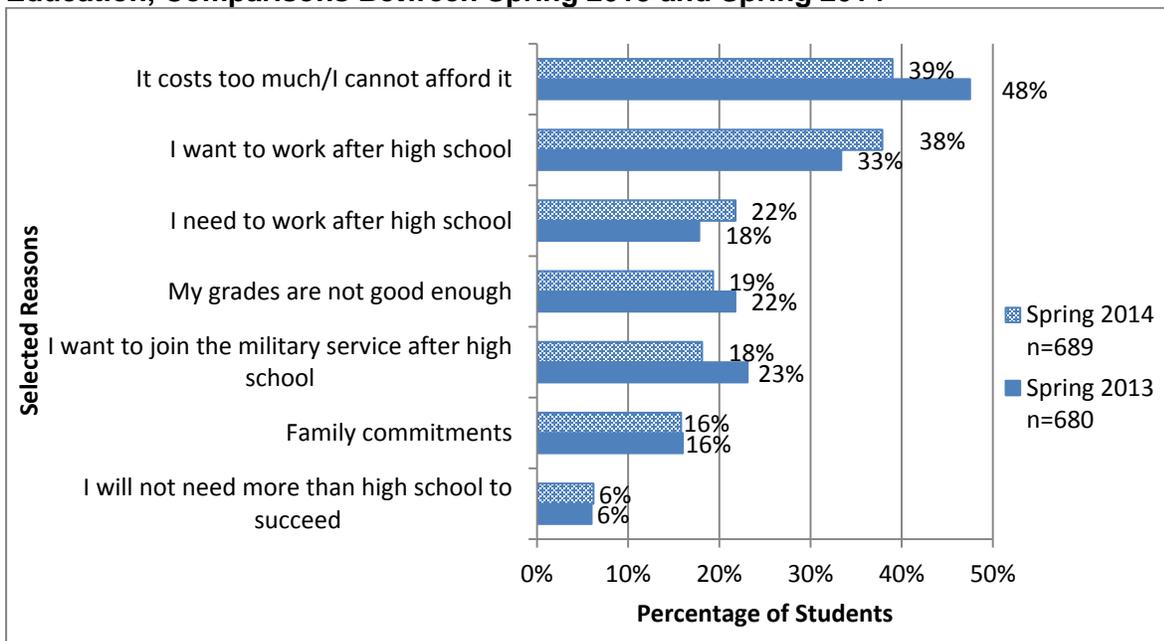
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Fall 2013; Spring 2014).

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

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 that facilitates their discussions about postsecondary education. Texas GEAR UP SG activities can be a platform to facilitate the very conversations and knowledge-building necessary to achieve Project Goal 7. Site visits offered details about how students are coming to understand college requirements. Students are learning how important academic success is for their acceptance into college (School C). School G conducted several in-class presentations for its students on how to effectively plan and prepare for college acceptance. College visits were another opportunity for students to hear about what is required in order to be accepted into college, with an emphasis on grade point average (GPA) (School A). 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   Discussions About Attending College and College Entrance Requirements

Five items on the parent survey (in both spring 2013 and spring 2014) asked about their preparedness for and engagement in discussions with their child about college (see Figure 3.5).[75] On the spring 2014 survey, a majority of parents reported engaging in discussions with their child about attending college (88%) and, to a lesser extent, the entrance requirements to be able to do so (58%). While 58% of parents reported having conversations with their child about entrance requirements, only slightly more than one-third of parents (39%) indicated that they have enough information about college entrance requirements, although most (65%) indicated that they generally know what their child needs to do in order to be accepted into college. Percentages of parents indicating "Yes" increased for each of the five items on college discussions between spring 2013 and spring 2014. The largest increase was in the percentage of parents who reported speaking to someone from their child's school or Texas GEAR UP SG about college entrance requirements, a statistically significant increase of 15 percentage points.[76] This change points to early efforts by Texas GEAR UP SG to have program staff initiate these discussions and an area of anticipated increase throughout the implementation years. Although more than half of the parents reported engaging in discussions with their child about college requirements, there remains an opportunity for Texas GEAR UP SG to reach out to those who have not engaged in these discussions and to better equip the parents who are already doing so with the necessary information about college requirements.

A survey item asked students to indicate whether anyone at school or from Texas GEAR UP SG had spoken to them about college entrance requirements. Students were significantly more likely than parents to indicate that they had had these discussions (74% and 53%, respectively).[77] The majority of students (74%) indicated that someone had spoken to them, but

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[75] The following questions are required on the APR by USDE: "Have you talked with your child about college entrance requirements?" and "Has anyone from your child's school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?"

[76] Changes were significantly different across time points: $\chi^2(1) = 20.2$, $p < .001$.

[77] Student-reported engagement in discussions about college entrance requirements differed significantly from parent-reported discussions: $\chi^2(1) = 68.4$, $p < .001$.

this differed significantly by school (Figure G.1, Appendix G).[78] More than 75% of students at three schools indicated that someone from their school/Texas GEAR UP SG had spoken to them about college entrance requirements (School B: 81%, School C: 75%, School G: 88%); TEA should explore practices at these schools to shed some light on the ways that they have gone about initiating these discussions.

Figure 3.5. Percentages of Parents Having and Being Prepared for College Discussions, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014
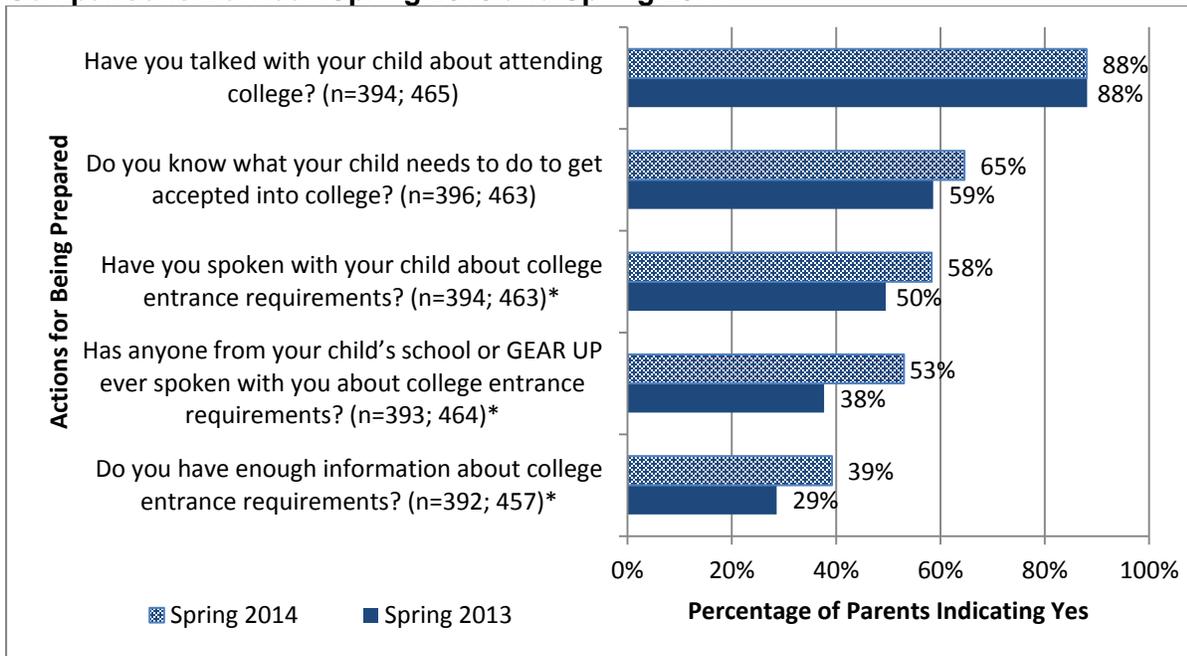
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014).
Note: Low parent response rates across both time points warrant caution in interpreting trend data on parent surveys. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. N counts for each response option are presented for spring 2013, then spring 2014.
* Percentage of parents indicating "Yes" was significantly different between time points: "Spoke with child about college entrance requirements": $\chi^2(1) = 10.5$, $p < .01$; "Discussions with GEAR UP about college entrance requirements": $\chi^2(1) = 20.2$, $p < .001$; "Enough information about college entrance requirements": $\chi^2(1) = 9.2$, $p < .01$.

In addition to discussions about college requirements as reported in the surveys, site visit data also pointed to the ways that schools are informing students and parents about new requirements under HB 5 regarding high school graduation requirements. School Districts 2 and 4 described HB 5 Nights, which educated parents on graduation requirements and the different endorsements from which their children may choose at the district when they enter Grade 9 in 2014–15. The Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator at School District 4 reported that the district used mandatory parent meetings to discuss endorsements and goal setting; they also had students meet with high school counselors to discuss available endorsements during the same time. School District 2 also had informational sessions for parents in addition to meetings with local colleges and the development of an iTunes U course.[79] Students from this district described being knowledgeable about the different endorsements, perhaps related to GEAR UP efforts, including displaying posters and conducting classroom presentations about

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[78] Student-reported engagement in discussions about college entrance requirements differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(6) = 61.8$, $p < .001$. This question is required by USDE.
[79] More details about iTunes U (an application to create and complete courses online) are available at https://www.apple.com/education/ipad/itunes-u.

requirements. School D reported minimal involvement addressing emerging issues related to HB 5 due to the district's delay in choosing its endorsement offerings. Site visit participants pointed to a need for increased efforts, perhaps including support from Texas GEAR UP SG staff, to clarify the implications of HB 5 as they relate to postsecondary education. The College Preparation Advisor at School E described efforts to encourage students to take classes that would be helpful for college (such as Algebra II) even if the classes were not part of their endorsement. However, parents from School C expressed concern about the endorsements because they do not want them to limit students' academic experience. Similarly, some students at School B were confused by the new requirements and parents would have liked the school to provide more one-on-one time with the students to clarify the changes. Students in School G were exposed to different pathway options and have an idea regarding which paths they would like to follow in high school.

3.3.2 Sources of Information

In an effort to build both parent and 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, parents and 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.12 and Table G.13 in Appendix G). Perhaps a testament to more intensive efforts on behalf of Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 2, student-reported use of Texas GEAR UP SG staff and events as a source of information significantly increased over time by 17 percentage points.[80]

About the same number of students reported using the Texas GEAR UP website overall from spring 2013 to spring 2014, but Year 2 data varied significantly across schools (see Table G.14, Appendix G). For example, 36% of students at School G reported using the Texas GEAR UP website, compared to 5% in School A. As with students, parent use of the Texas GEAR UP website is low (10%). This indicates a potential need from all schools to direct more students to those resources 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.

Texas GEAR UP SG discussions/events as a source of information increased over time for both parents and students (6 and 17 percentage point increases, respectively). For spring 2014, student responses varied significantly across schools; 75% of students from School G but only 27% from School F selected this option (Table G.14, Appendix G). As expected, this is consistent with previously reported school-level trends in the percentage of students who reported engaging in discussions about college entrance requirements. Texas GEAR UP SG might consider offering targeted support to schools particularly low in these areas.

Given the survey data indicating that 78% of students selected two or more sources of information and 73% of parents selected two or more sources of information in spring 2014 (compared to 65% and 49%, respectively, in spring 2013), it appears that perhaps Texas GEAR UP SG has encouraged the use of multiple sources of information. Texas GEAR UP SG events and activities can be leveraged as opportunities for parents and students to engage in information-rich discussions with each other and with Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school

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[80] Students' indication of GEAR UP staff/events as a source of information differed significantly across time: $\chi^2(1) = 80.5$, $p < .001$.

staff. In fact, site visit data indicated how multiple stakeholders identified the need for College Preparation Advisors to have more opportunities for one-on-one interactions with students. These interactions can also be a chance for Texas GEAR UP SG staff to point parents and students to available resources (such as the Texas GEAR UP SG website).

Figure 3.6. Parents' and Students' Reported College Information Sources: Percentages by Source, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014

Percentage of Respondents Selecting Each Information Source
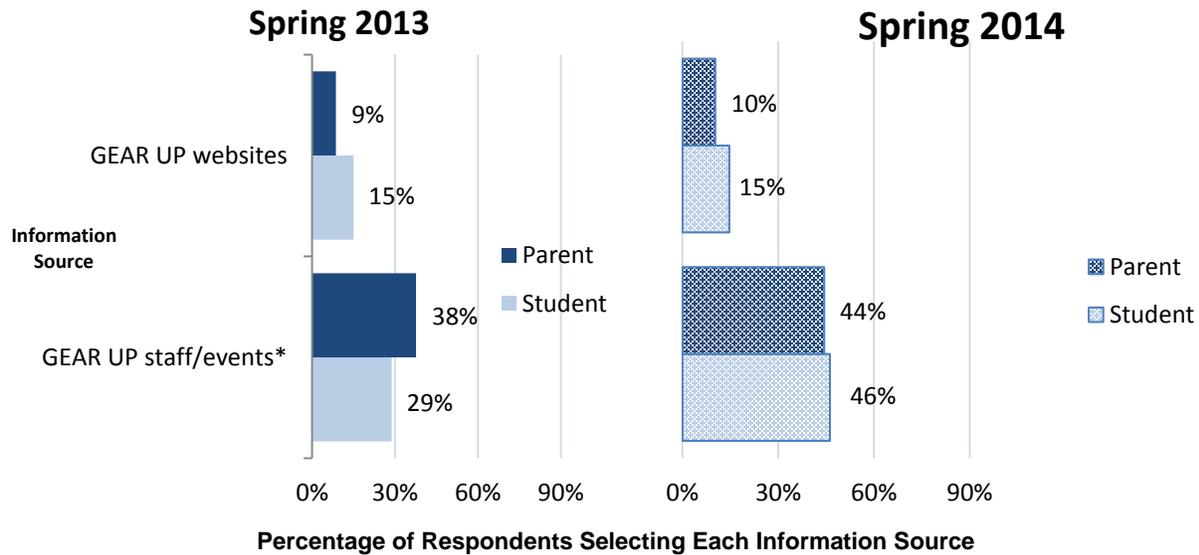
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013 and Spring 2014).

Note: Response percentage will not add up to 100% because respondents were able to select multiple responses. Additional data from fall 2013 is in Table G.12 in Appendix G. 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.12 and Table G.13, Appendix G. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

* Student-reported Texas GEAR UP SG staff/events as a source of information differed significantly across time: $\chi^2(1) = 80.5$, $p < .001$.

3.3.3 Knowledge About College

A detailed understanding about specific terms and concepts related to college is essential for parents and students making decisions that align with their plans; knowing parents' and students' levels of knowledge can help Texas GEAR UP SG focus on particular low-knowledge areas of concern. Both the parent and student surveys asked for respondents to indicate how knowledgeable they were about various college-related terms on a 4-point knowledge scale (see Figure 3.7, as well as Figure G.2 and Figure G.3 in Appendix G). Higher average scores indicate higher knowledge, with an average of 1 equaling *no knowledge* and an average of 4 equaling *extremely knowledgeable*. Most averages fell between 2 (*slightly knowledgeable*) and 3 (*knowledgeable*). Relatively small changes over time may be realistic in that a change in knowledge across all parents and students may require time. These data are primarily important to guide Texas GEAR UP SG schools in possible directions for future events, activities, and resources.

Students reported being significantly more knowledgeable than their parents about the general requirements for college acceptance and the importance/benefit of college.[81] It may be that the

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[81] In the 2013–14 school year, average parent knowledge about the following items significantly differed from average student knowledge: Importance/Benefit of college: $F(1, 1,723) = 4.75$, $p < .05$; General Requirements: $F(1, 1,720) = 11.02$, $p < .001$.

increased emphasis on Algebra I in Year 2 was paired with discussions about this course being a critical step in working toward the requirements for college acceptance. Parents appear to need information on the requirements for college (particularly ACT, SAT, and general requirements for acceptance). Students and parents did not differ on their knowledge about ACT or SAT, which was generally low for both groups.

Students' average perceived knowledge of each of the knowledge items different significantly across schools, as shown in Table G.15 (Appendix G). For example, the general requirements for college acceptance differed significantly across schools in spring 2014,[82] with average student responses as low as 2.0 at School C and as high as 2.7 at School G.

Figure 3.7. Parents' and Students' Average Knowledge of College Terms and Concepts, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014
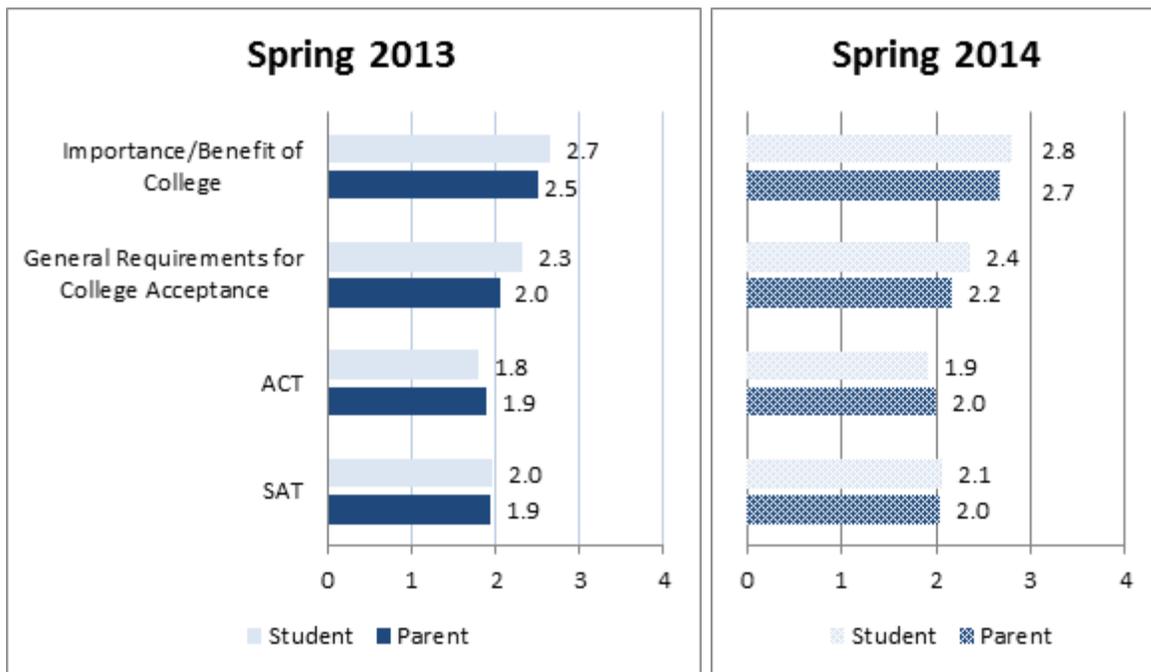
Average Level of Knowledge

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

Note: Response options to the question "How much do you know about each of the following?" were scaled as follows: 1 – No Knowledge; 2 – Slightly Knowledgeable; 3 – Knowledgeable; 4 – Extremely Knowledgeable. N counts for each item are included in the full data presented in Figure G.2 and Figure G.3, Appendix G. Low parent response rates across both time points warrant caution in interpreting trend data on parent surveys. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

3.3.4 Advanced Course-Taking Plans

Prior research points to the importance of taking advanced courses for college readiness and college enrollment. For example, Chajewski, Mattern, & 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

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[82] Average student knowledge about college requirements significantly differed across schools: $F(6,1,261) = 8.58$, $p < .001$.

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.

As shown in Figure 3.8, most students *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they were planning to take advanced courses in mathematics (70%), English/writing (71%), and science (69%) in the following school year (2014–15). Each of the response options are in Table G.16 in Appendix G. In spring 2014, a majority of parents (93%) agreed that they would encourage their child to take advanced courses (in general), compared to 95% in spring 2013.

Students' plans for taking advanced courses differed significantly across schools for mathematics (Table G.17, Appendix G).[83] At Schools A (19%) and F (24%), fewer than 25% of students *strongly agreed* that they had plans to take an advanced mathematics course, compared to 43% in School G. 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 encouraging other schools to draw on lessons learned from School G. With science as the lowest area, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should also look for ways to leverage STEM initiatives, which are not necessarily part of Texas GEAR UP SG, to promote taking advanced courses in this area. In addition, STEM is one of the HB 5 endorsement areas, providing another opportunity to encourage the taking of advanced courses in this content area.

Figure 3.8. Students' Plans to Take Advanced Courses in the Next School Year: Percentages of Agreement Across Content Areas, Spring 2014
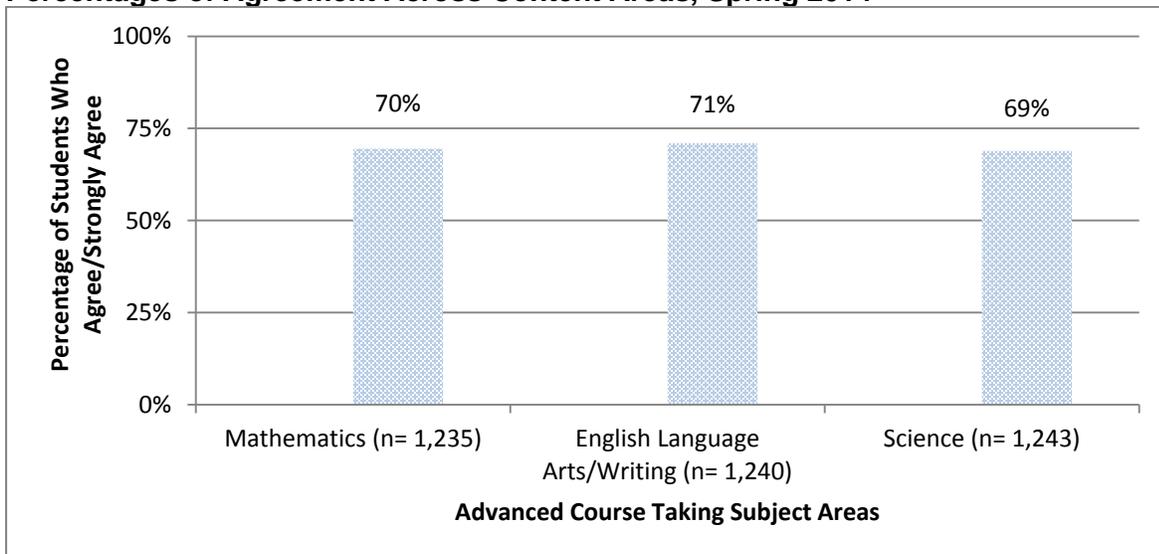
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
Note: Percentages across those who responded with some level of agreement may not total exactly 100% due to rounding.

In Year 1, the following percentages of Grade 7 students reported that they planned on taking advanced courses in Grade 8 (selecting *agree* or *strongly agree*): mathematics, 69%; ELA, 68%; and science, 68% (O'Donnel et al., 2013). Year 2 APR data indicate that the following percentages of students were reported by schools as actually being enrolled in advanced courses in Grade 8: mathematics (including Algebra I and other advanced mathematics courses), 43%; ELA, 21%; science, 21%; and social studies, 20%.[84] In other words, more students intended on being in an advanced course than actually enrolled in an advanced

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[83] Student perceptions differed significantly across schools in mathematics: $\chi^2(18) = 52.6$, $p < .001$.
[84] The percentage for mathematics is slightly different from the 33% of students enrolled in Algebra I or the equivalent that was reported in the APR. This percentage includes mathematics courses that are considered to be advanced, although not equivalent to Algebra I.

course; this is the case across all three subjects. 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. Regardless of the driver, Texas GEAR UP SG can play an important role in capitalizing on student plans to actually get students enrolled in advanced courses and, of course, 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, School G offered financial literacy sessions that covered information on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and student loans; they also provided TG student modules (20-minute presentation on financial literacy) that helped student learn the importance of saving money, financial aid, and scholarships. Two schools (Schools A and C) offered a Princeton Review event for parents to learn how to finance college, which was well received, especially for parents who have not attended college themselves. However, site visit data pointed to the need for sessions in Spanish and students suggested the need to make them more interesting. 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 both parents' and students' thinking about money and college. In general, these findings suggest that there is low knowledge and high interest in receiving more information about paying for college. In addition to these data, an analysis of survey items about the understanding of financing college address the following research question: What are students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, college readiness, financing 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 parents and students understand the financial aspects of college; as such, it is essential to know the extent to which these stakeholders report having conversations related to this critical topic. Parents and students were asked if anyone from the school or Texas GEAR UP SG staff had spoken with them about the availability of financial aid to help pay for college.[85] In spring 2014, more than half of the students (61%) indicated that they had engaged in these conversations; this represents a significant increase of 9 percentage points from spring 2013 (see Figure 3.9).[86] Nearly half of the parents (46%) reported engaging in these discussions; this is also a significant increase of 12 percentage points from spring 2013.[87] Although these increases are encouraging, about half of the parents and students have not reported interactions with Texas

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[85] The following question is required on the APR by USDE: "Has anyone from your school/your child's school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about the availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?"

[86] Student responses differed significantly over time: $\chi^2(1) = 22.7$, $p < .001$.

[87] Parent responses differed significantly over time: $\chi^2(1) = 12.2$, $p < .001$.

GEAR UP SG staff regarding financial aspects. In addition, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should provide additional information and continued guidance to those who have already been engaged. This is particularly important given that 64% of parents also reported, on a different survey item, that they did not have enough information about financial aid to help pay for college.

Student discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff about financial aid differed significantly across schools, with 78% of students at School G, but only about 41% of students at School F indicating "Yes" (Table G.18, Appendix G).[88] As such, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should target efforts to reach out to parents and students, which may help to increase their perceptions of affordability.

Figure 3.9. Parents' and Students' Discussions With School or GEAR UP Staff About Financial Aid, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014
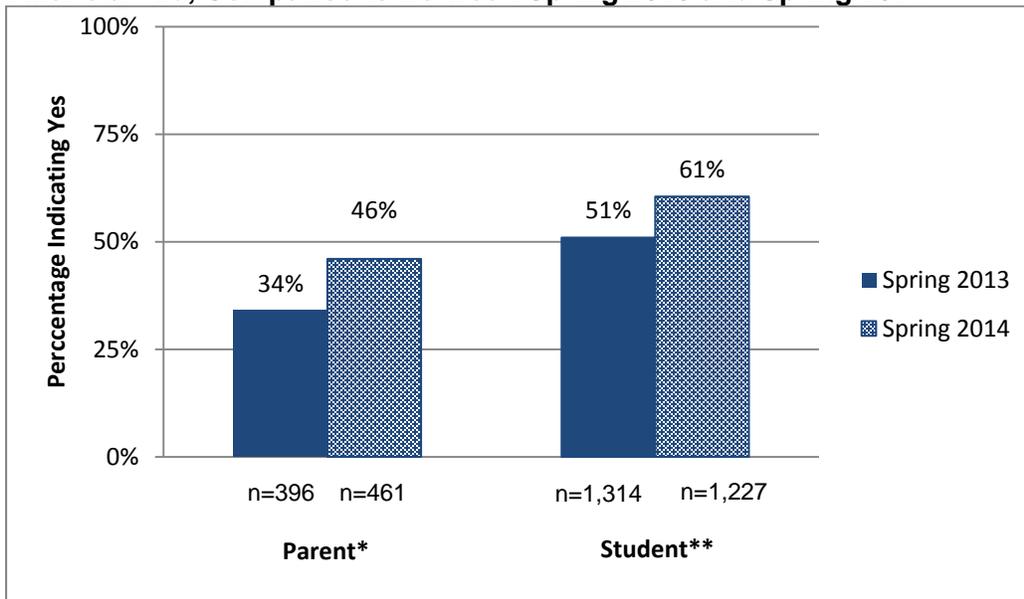
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
Note: Low parent response rates across both time points warrant caution in interpreting trend data on parent surveys. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.
* Parent responses differed significantly from spring 2013 to spring 2014: $\chi^2(1) = 12.2$, $p < .001$.
**Student responses differed significantly from spring 2013 to spring 2014: $\chi^2(1) = 22.7$, $p < .001$.

3.4.2 Knowledge About Financing College

Existing literature points to the importance of both students and parents being aware of the financial aid process. In one study, helping their parents fill out financial aid forms increased the college enrollment rates of high school seniors by 30%. Increased parental involvement in the college application process makes the student more likely to enroll in any type of higher education (Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulos, & Sanbonmatsu, 2009). Most parents and students fell somewhere in the middle regarding feeling knowledgeable about financing college. Nearly a third of the parents (31%) and 28% of students reported having *no knowledge* regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of their child pursuing postsecondary education.[89] At the

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[88] Student-reported engagement in discussions about the availability of financial aid differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(6) = 81.4$, $p < .001$.
[89] 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?"

other end of the scale, only 8% of parents and 12% of students reported feeling *extremely knowledgeable* on this topic (see Figure G.4, Appendix G). Perhaps Texas GEAR UP SG services are helping students have more realistic perceptions about their knowledge of this topic, but TEA should also focus on addressing those reporting *little or no knowledge*.[90]

In addition to overall perceptions about parent and 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.19 in Appendix G shows the percentages for each response option). On average, parents reported their familiarity with each of the five terms to be *slightly knowledgeable*. On average, students reported being *knowledgeable* about scholarships and being *slightly knowledgeable* regarding other financial aid-related terms. There was not a significant change between Year 1 and Year 2. Texas GEAR UP SG staff need to focus activities on each of these aspects of financial aid in order to increase perceived knowledge, and presumably actual knowledge, about financial aid.

Figure 3.10. Parents' and Students' Average Knowledge of Financial Aid Terms, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014
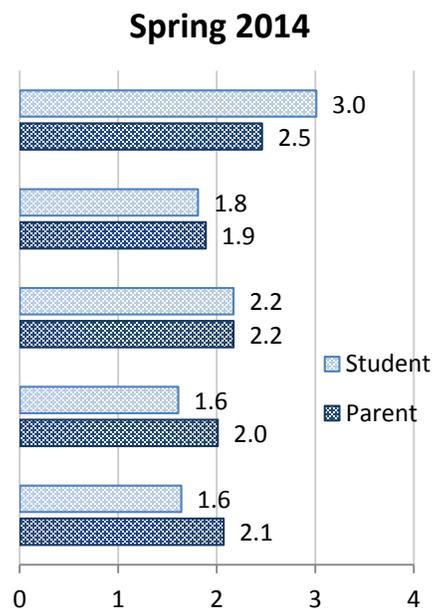
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014).
Note: Response options to the question "How much do you know about each of the following?" are scaled as follows: 1 – No Knowledge; 2 – Slightly Knowledgeable; 3 – Knowledgeable; 4 – Extremely Knowledgeable. 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.19, Appendix G. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.
*FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid. However, the survey items used only the acronym.

3.4.3 Perceived Ability to Afford Postsecondary Education

In addition to knowing the costs, it is important that parents and students have enough knowledge about financing options to perceive college as being affordable through one or more

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[90] Scale items changed in spring 2014 to move from a 5-point scale to a 4-point scale, thus comparisons over time should be made with caution.

of the many financing options available.[91] In spring 2014, a significantly greater percentage of parents than students reported perceiving that they would *probably* or *definitely* be able to afford a four-year college (80% and 52%, respectively).[92] Figure 3.11 shows that parent perceptions of affordability of a four-year college increased between spring 2013 and spring 2014 by 11 percentage points,[93] and student perceptions of affordability of community college decreased by 4 percentage points. Table G.20 in Appendix G displays the response options for each category. Most parents (71%) and most students (82%) indicated at least some concern about their ability to afford a four-year college by selecting *probably*, *not sure*, *probably not*, or *definitely not*.

Figure 3.11. Parents' and Students' Perceptions of College Affordability, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014
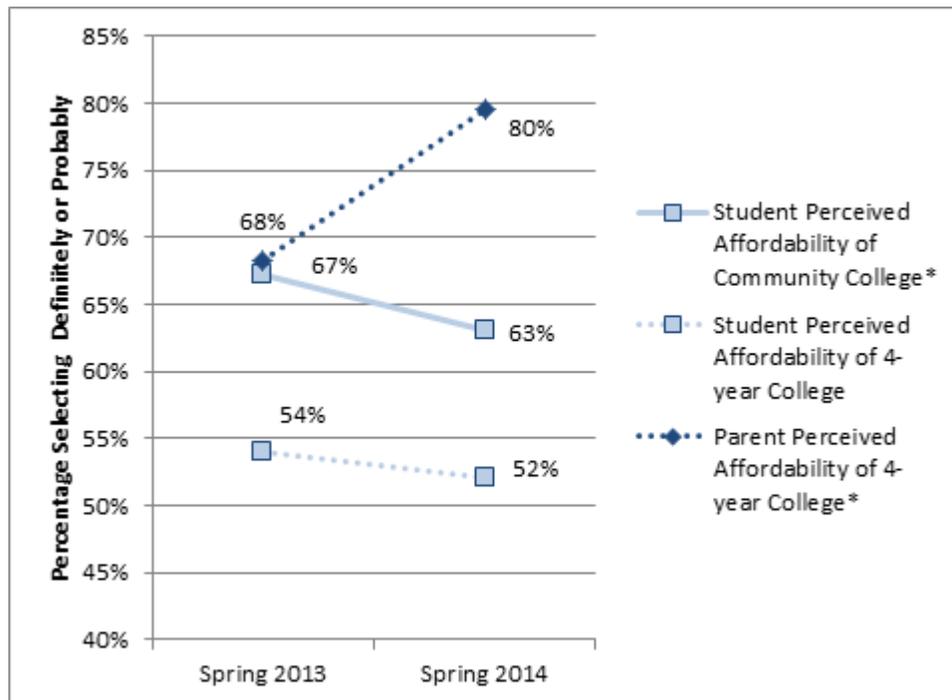
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014).
Note: Response options include *Definitely not*, *Probably not*, *Not sure*, *Probably,* and *Definitely*; however, *Not sure* was not available as a response option for parents on the spring 2014 survey. The spring 2013 parent survey did not ask about perceived affordability of a local community college. Low parent response rates across both time points warrant caution in interpreting trend data 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.20, Appendix G.
* Perceptions of affordability differed significantly over time: Parent – Four-year college: $\chi^2(1) = 14.1$, *p* < .001; Student – Community college: $\chi^2(2) = 6.3$, *p* < .05.

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[91] The following question regarding perceived affordability is required by USDE for both the student and parent surveys: "Do you think that you/your child could afford to attend a public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?"

[92] Parent and student perceptions of college affordability differed significantly: $\chi^2(1) = 26.2$, *p* < .001.

[93] Parent perceptions of affordability differed significantly over time: $\chi^2(1) = 14.1$, *p* < .001. Parents were asked about the affordability of community college in spring 2014 only, with 86% of parents indicating that they perceived they would be able to afford community college.

Students' perceived ability to afford college differed significantly across schools for both community colleges and four-year colleges.[94] Table G.21 in Appendix G shows the response options across schools. For example, the percentage of students who indicated that they would *probably* or *definitely* be able to afford a four-year college was 60% at School G and less than 50% at School A (42%) and School B (49.5%). This may reflect community differences, although all schools were selected for participation in the Texas GEAR UP SG based on high percentages of economically disadvantaged students. Students' perceptions about the affordability of college may be affecting their future plans about attending college because nearly 40% of students (39%) indicated college cost as a reason for not continuing their education after high school (refer back to Figure 3.4 earlier in this chapter).

3.4.4 Perceived Cost of Higher Education

One possible reason for students' and parents' perceiving postsecondary education as unattainable may be that they overestimate costs (O'Donnel et al. 2013). Accurate knowledge about the cost of postsecondary education is one step toward perceiving postsecondary attendance as a possibility. This knowledge may also make it seem to be out of reach; as such, building awareness about the actual costs of various types of schools can be a way for Texas GEAR UP SG to reach out to parents and students who may have otherwise seen college 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 $2,466 (tuition and fees only), and the actual average cost of tuition and fees for one year at a public Texas four-year college or university (tuition and fees only) is $4,978 and $7,986, respectively (THECB, 2014b; THECB, 2014c). Both parent and student surveys asked about how much they thought college costs (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Parents' and Students' Perceived Cost of Higher Education, Percentages by Cost Grouping, Spring 2014

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 $5,500	$5,501 to $12,000	More than $12,000
Parents						
Your local public two-year community college?	449	8.7%	18.0%	26.9%	35.6%	10.7%
A four-year public college in your state?	449	1.8%	1.3%	6.9%	31.2%	58.8%
Students						
Your local public two-year community college?	1,275	19.6%	23.6%	22.0%	23.4%	11.5%
A four-year public college in your state?	1,245	4.3%	5.4%	10.6%	34.1%	45.6%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).

Parents and students correctly perceived that there were lower costs associated with one year of attendance at a local public two-year community college as compared to a four-year public college in the state. Parents and students generally overestimated the costs as compared to the average actual costs. For example, 73% of parents and 57% of students thought that one year at a two-year community college would cost $3,001 to $5,500. Similarly, 59% of parents and 46% of students estimated the cost of one year at a four-year college to be more than $12,000,

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[94] Student perceptions differed significantly across schools: Community college: $\chi^2(24) = 50.4$, $p < .001$; Four-year college: $\chi^2(24) = 39.0$, $p < .05$.

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 (both in spring 2013 and spring 2014 surveys) suggests that helping parents and students understand actual college costs may 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 address 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; in other words, it allows stories about what is working well to emerge. Given that participation in these many activities was generally low in Year 1, and the format of many items was revised slightly, this section does not compare the changes between Year 1 and Year 2.

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

ACTIVITIES OFFERED DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Parents were asked about their perception of the effectiveness of the activities in which their child participated (e.g., counseling, tutoring, informational events); students also reported their perceived effectiveness regarding these various activities. 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. In each case, parents and students were able to first indicate that they could not rate the activity because their child/they had not participated in the activity. As in Year 1, students appear to have generally overestimated their participation in some activities. For example, across schools, 56% of students indicated that they considered themselves to be in an advanced mathematics course, whereas schools indicated that 43% of students were enrolled in advanced mathematics (Algebra I or another advanced mathematics course).[95] In the case of taking advanced courses, this may be based on students' perceptions of academic rigor; that is, if students find a course to be difficult, they may consider it to be advanced. In general, the Texas GEAR UP SG schools should think about ways to communicate more effectively when students are participating 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 parents/students perceived the activity as being less effective in preparing their child/them for college, and inversely, higher scores indicating that they perceived the activity as being more effective. On average, both parents and students found each type of activity in which they participated to be *mostly effective*. Average levels of student perceptions of effectiveness were significantly lower than parent perceptions for all activities. Figure 3.12 shows the perceptions of select activities by parent and student, and Table G.22 and Figure G.5 in Appendix G show all response options and additional activities.

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[95] Percentage is slightly different from the 33% of students enrolled in Algebra I or the equivalent that was reported in the APR. This percentage includes mathematics courses that are considered to be advanced, although not equivalent to Algebra I.

Figure 3.12. Average Perceptions of Effectiveness About Student Activities: Parent and Student Differences, Spring 2014
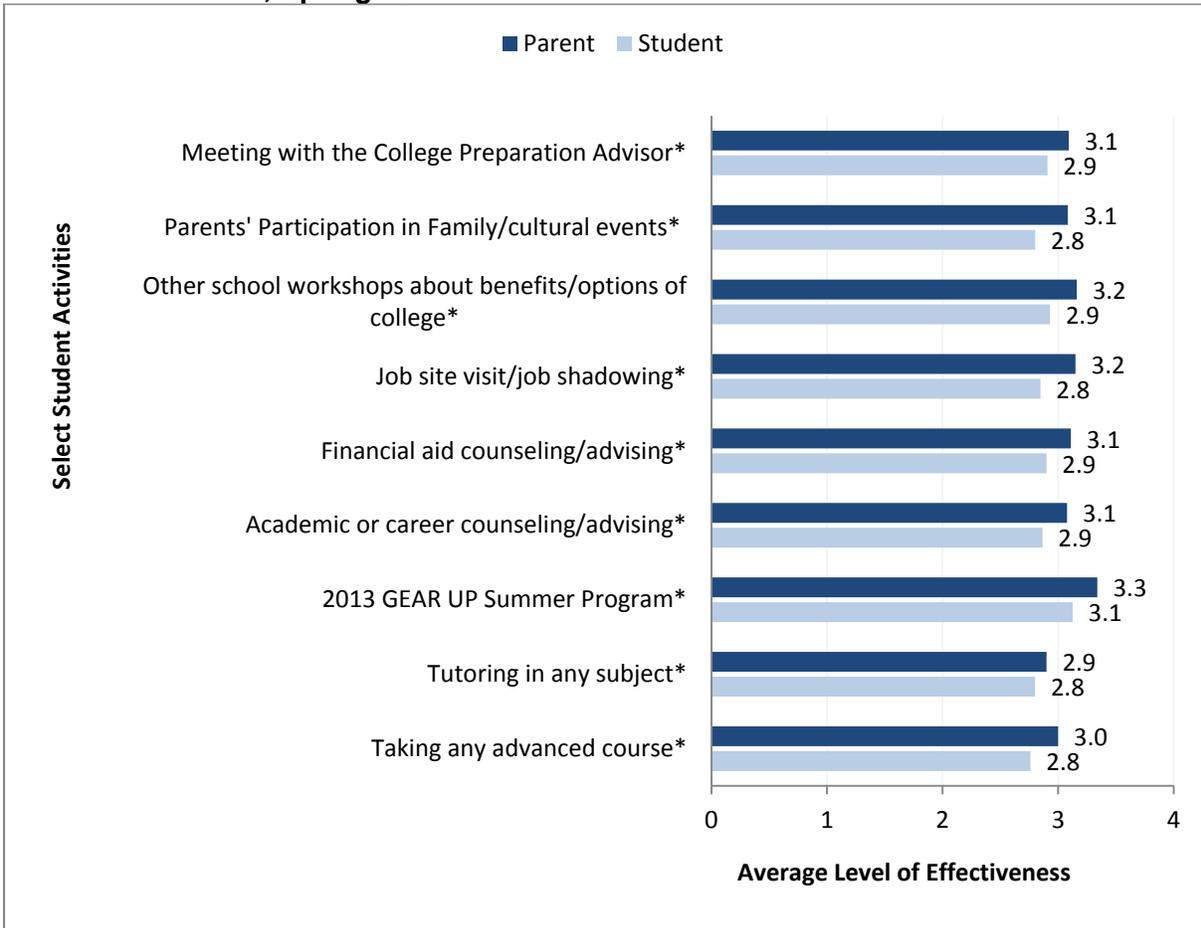
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
Note: Scale is as follows: 1 – Not Effective; 2 – Slightly Effective; 3 – Mostly Effective; 4 – Very Effective. N counts for each item are included in the full data presented in Table G.22, Appendix G.
* Average parents' perceived effectiveness about the following activities significantly differed from average student perceptions – Taking any advanced course: $F(1) = 18.5$, $p < .001$; Tutoring in any subject: $F(1) = 4.5$, $p < .05$; 2013 GEAR UP Summer Program: $F(1) = 4.4$, $p < .05$; Academic or career counseling/advising: $F(1) = 6.1$, $p < .05$; Financial aid counseling/advising: $F(1) = 4.1$, $p < .05$; Meeting with the College Preparation Advisor: $F(1) = 5.0$, $p < .05$; Job site visit/job shadowing: $F(1) = 6.4$, $p < .05$; Other school workshops about benefits/options of college: $F(1) = 7.8$, $p < .01$; Parent(s) participation in parent events: $F(1) = 6.1$, $p < .05$.

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. Beginning in Year 1, as reported in the implementation report, schools focused on meeting this early objective. In Year 2, 43% of students across schools enrolled in Algebra I or another advanced mathematics course (see Chapter 2).[96] Of the students who self-reported that they enrolled in Algebra I, 50% rated taking Algebra I as *very effective* and 36% rated it as *mostly effective*. Parent responses indicated that 48% thought that their child's participation in Algebra I was *very effective* and 41% thought that it was *mostly effective*. Taken together, these results indicate that the Algebra I courses will generally be an effective activity to prepare students for college; schools might

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[96] Percentage is slightly different from the 33% of students enrolled in Algebra I or the equivalent that was reported in the APR. This percentage includes mathematics courses that are considered to be advanced, although not equivalent to Algebra I.

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.

Although the levels of perceived effectiveness did not differ significantly across schools, there were meaningful differences in participation across schools (Table G.23, Appendix G). For example, only 11% of students reported participating in mentoring at School F, and reported participation was low overall (19%), although this was higher than the 14% reported by schools in the APR. Also notable was that 73% of students at School G reported going on college visits, as compared to less than half of the students at all other schools reporting participation in a college visit. As noted in Chapter 3, School G also engaged in the greatest number of college visits 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

College Preparation Advisors were a resource new to schools in Year 2 (see Chapter 1). Figure 3.13 illustrates the perceptions of effectiveness of the College Preparation Advisors based on the 41% of students and 39% of parents who indicated that they or their child met with a College Preparation Advisor during the 2013–14 school year. Among these, 69% of students and 78% of parents found meeting with a College Preparation Advisor to be *mostly effective* or *very effective*. At the same time, 32% of students stated that they were not aware that there was a College Preparation Advisor at their school. As Texas GEAR SG schools continue to implement this new aspect of the program, it will be important to ensure that students and parents are aware of and access this resource.

Statewide collaborators reported that College Preparation Advisors performed valuable tasks in ensuring the implementation of activities through a regular, consistent presence in schools. Interactions with students were often informal (discussions occurred between classes and during lunch); students also stopped by their offices, which College Preparation Advisors decorated to promote a college-going culture by displaying pennants/posters from colleges and universities. One GEAR UP collaborator stated that school buy-in with regard to GEAR UP was greater in Year 2 due to the presence of College Preparation Advisors. This links to the ways they effectively worked with other statewide collaborators, as well as each other, supporting website enhancements, helping with scheduling events, and serving as a sounding board.

Some necessary qualities for College Preparation Advisors, according to a program staff member at TEA, include the following: a strong interest in college readiness; the ability to interact with students, parents, and school staff; a clear understanding of their role on campus; a motivating spirit; and a cooperative work style. A state collaborator added that College Preparation Advisors need to be effective leaders and mentors, address difficult issues with humility, and be respectful of the school environment with a focus on the students. This individual stated the following about the College Preparation Advisors: "It feels good that I know the CPAs and that I can trust them in the schools." There were various challenges in getting College Preparation Advisors into the schools, such as the lack of time in the school schedule to access students. Across the board, site visit participants noted the importance of enabling this role to focus more on being a one-on-one resource for students and not an activity coordinator. The plan is for the College Preparation Advisors who worked with the students in Grade 8 to transition with the

> **Quotes From the Field: Perceptions About College Preparation Advisors, Spring 2014**
>
> Many site visit participants spoke highly of the College Preparation Advisors. For example:
>
> - "She has always been there whenever I needed her. I like that she returns calls or emails right away. She has been great and very informative. She provides information to me, and I go to her when I have questions." (Parent)
>
> - "[The College Preparation Advisor] is a great support system to these 8th graders. This position has been a great addition to our school." (School Administrator)
>
> - "The GEAR UP advisor encourages us to go to college. He is always around in the hallways and at lunch." (Student)

students into high school, which means some will likely work at two schools. TEA anticipates that this will offer students continuity in who they are working with and where they can access resources. However, College Preparation Advisors reported being somewhat apprehensive regarding this transition.

Figure 3.13. Perceived Effectiveness of College Preparation Advisors, Spring 2014*
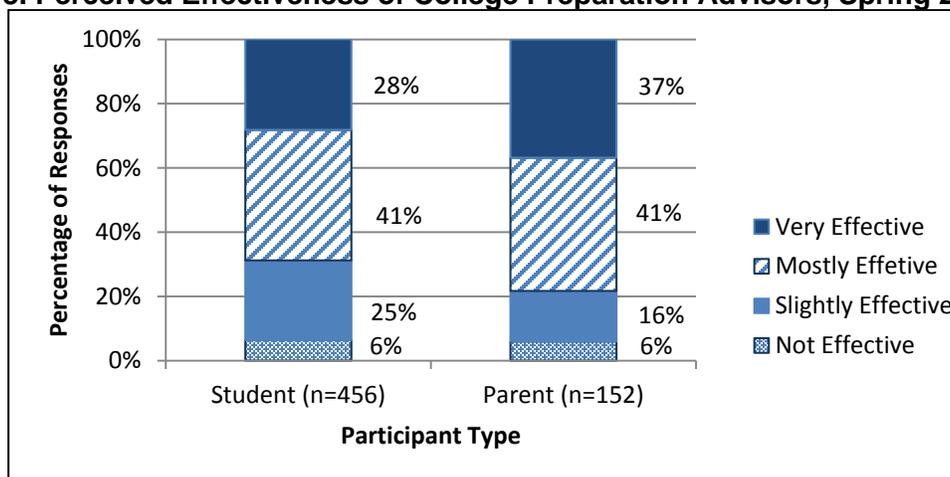
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
* Parent perceived effectiveness differed significantly from student perceived effectiveness: $\chi^2(3) = 4.1$, $p < .05$.

ACTIVITIES OFFERED IN SUMMER 2013 AND PLANS FOR SUMMER 2014

In Year 1, each of the schools indicated that they planned to conduct a summer 2013 program with a focus on engaging in activities that would further support student success in Algebra I in Grade 8 (Project Objective 1.1), as well as general college readiness content. In the APR, only four schools reported that students actually enrolled in a summer 2013 program (see Chapter

2). In the fall 2013 survey, 24% of students stated that they participated in a Texas GEAR UP SG summer program at their school. The spring 2014 parent survey included 26% of parents reporting that their child participated in the Texas GEAR UP SG summer program.[97] Figure 3.14 shows student and parent perceptions about the summer program. Perhaps most compelling is the extent to which participating students stated that, after participating in the summer program, they had a better understanding of the benefits of college (80%), college entrance requirements (77%), and financial aid (68%). A majority of both students and parents plan to attend (or have their child attend) the schools' Texas GEAR UP SG summer 2014 program (85% for parents and 79% for students) and would recommend it to others (83% for parents and 85% for students). Texas GEAR UP SG staff should focus more on financial aid in future summer programs.

Additional data from spring 2014 surveys asked about a range of Texas GEAR UP SG activities, including summer programs (see Table G.22, Appendix G).[98] Of the students who indicated that they participated, 42% rated the 2013 GEAR UP summer program as *very effective* and 36% rated it as *mostly effective*. Parent responses indicated that 56% thought that the program for their child was *very effective* and 28% thought that it was *mostly effective.*

Table G.24 and Table G.25 in Appendix G list parent- and student-reported reasons for attending and not attending summer programs in 2013. Both parents and students commonly reported that participation was driven by the child's interest in the program (72% for parents and 58% for students), parent interest in the child's participation (64% for parents and 52% for students), and anticipated help in Grade 8 classes (67% for parents and 66% for students). Nearly half of both parents (51%) and students (46%) stated that they attended due to being strongly encouraged by the school. Commonly cited reasons for not attending included not being in the area during the time (25% for parents and 21% for students) and not being informed about it (23% for parents and 22% for students). In addition, 39% of students stated that they did not participate because they did not want to. Given that Year 3 marks the transition of the primary cohort into high school, summer programming in 2014 that works to bridge that transition will be important to evaluate and will be a focus of a spotlight analysis in the upcoming report. Texas GEAR UP SG and individual schools are encouraged to consider the facilitators and barriers to recruiting more participants. For example, making it clear how it will help with high school courses and having school/Texas GEAR UP SG staff encourage parents and students (and make sure that they are aware of the option) might be a helpful strategy.

Students, teachers, and administrators in two of the districts believed that the summer programs helped prepare the students for success in Algebra I in the 2013–14 school year. In these two districts, many of these students said that they enjoyed attending the programs, which included other activities such as college visits, recreation options, and other hands-on activities. In another district that focused solely on Algebra preparation, there were mixed opinions about the success of the summer program from teachers and administrators, and student enrollment was lower than that for other districts. Based on the success with preparation for Algebra in summer 2013, one district described plans for transition-to-Geometry activities for these same students

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[97] Given the different time periods in which data were collected, caution is advised regarding comparing parent spring 2014 and student fall 2013 survey responses.
[98] The percentage of respondents who indicated that they or their child participated in a summer program are as follows: Student fall 2013 survey item: "Did you participate in the GEAR UP summer 2013 program at your school?": 24%; Student spring 2014 survey item: "Have you participated in this activity during this school year?": 24%; Parent spring 2014 survey item: "Thinking back to last summer (Summer 2013), did your child participate in the GEAR UP summer program?": 26%; Parent spring 2014 survey item: "Has your child participated in this activity during this school year?": 32%. Internal inconsistency in items on the parent survey warrants caution in interpretation.

in 2014, as well as an Algebra I transition program for those Grade 8 students who are not taking Algebra I in the 2013–14 school year.

Figure 3.14. Parents' and Students' Perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG Summer Programs by Types of Experiences, 2013–14 School Year
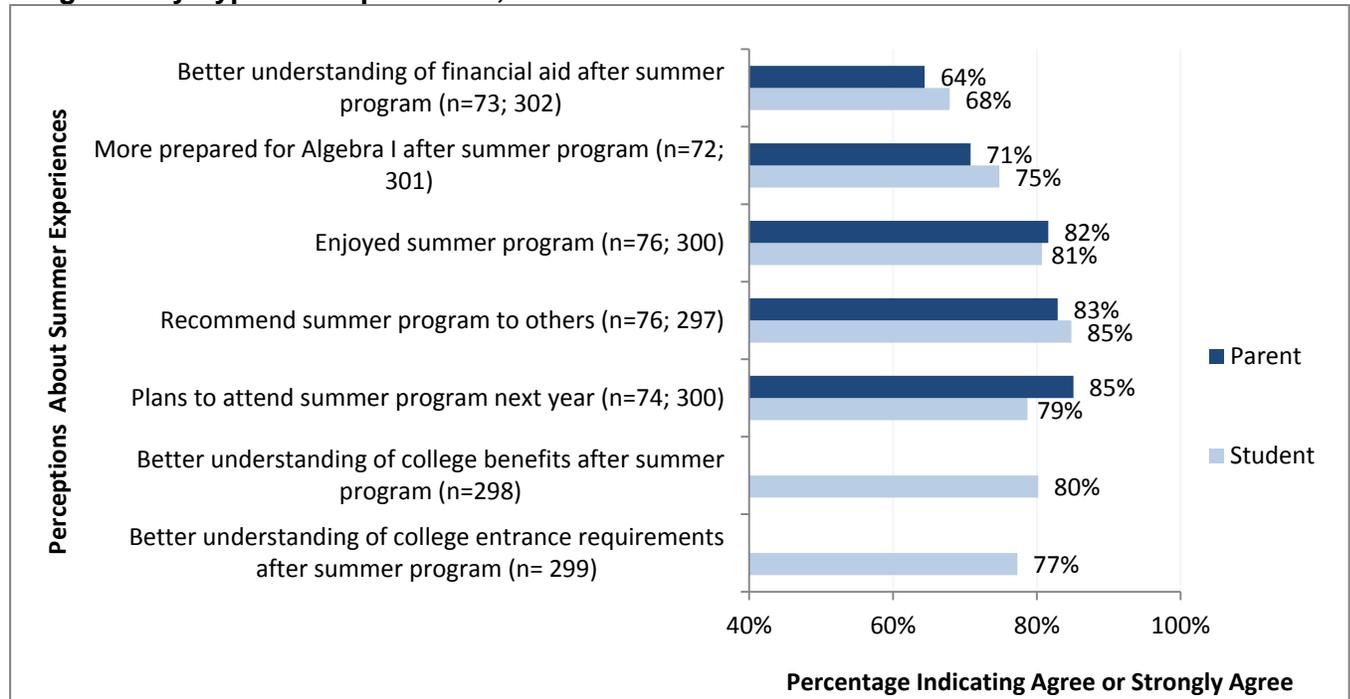
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Fall 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014).
Note: Percentages across those who responded with some level of agreement may not total exactly 100% due to rounding. Given the different time points in which data were collected, caution is advised regarding comparing parent and student responses. The parent spring 2014 survey did not include items about the summer program affecting the understanding of college benefits or college entrance requirements. N counts for each response option are presented for parents, then students.

3.5.2 Perceived Effectiveness of Parent Activities

Parents were asked to rate the effectiveness of the activities in which they participated; average perceived effectiveness ranged from 2.7 for parent workshops about financing college, to 2.9 for meetings with Texas GEAR UP SG staff and workshops on the importance/benefit of college (see Figure 3.15). In other words, parents generally perceived activities close to *mostly effective*, regardless of the activity. As such, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should focus on providing more of these activities and focusing to a lesser extent on improvements in the design and implementation of these activities. Table G.26 in Appendix G includes all percentages across response options for both time points.

Figure 3.15. Parents' Average Perceived Effectiveness of Texas GEAR UP SG Activities in Which They Participated, Spring 2014
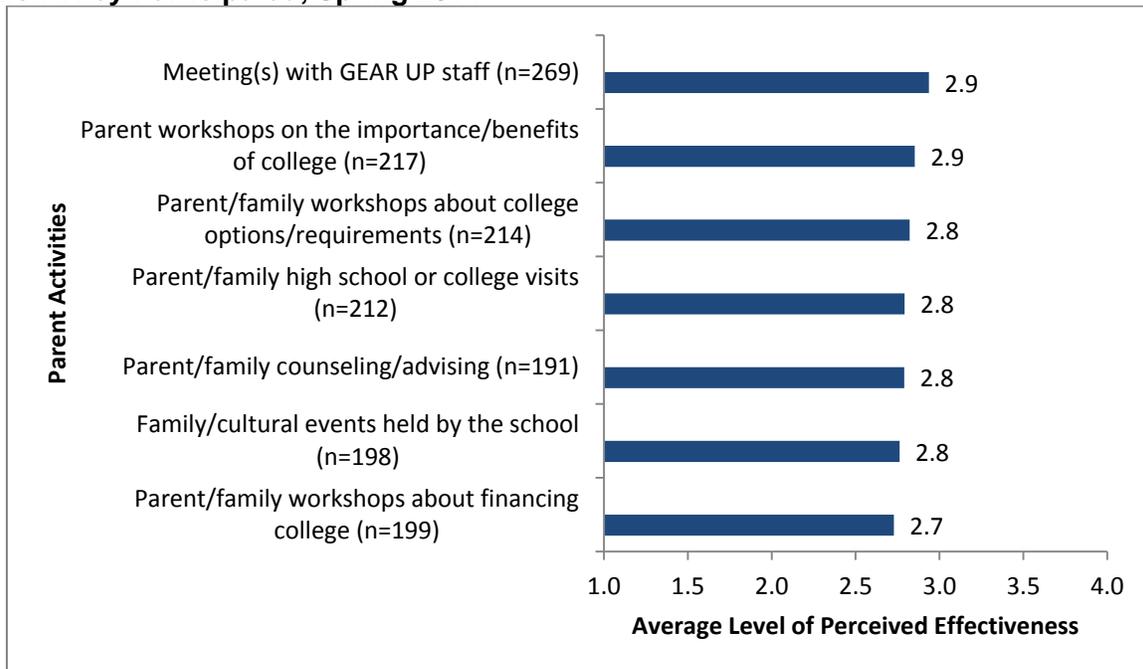
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014).

Note: Response options to the questions "Think about the GEAR UP events/activities you participated in this school year" and "How effective was each in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?" are scaled as follows: 1 – Not Effective; 2 – Slightly Effective; 3 – Mostly Effective; 4 – Very Effective. The Survey Data Appendix displays the percentages for each response option, as well as standard deviations and subject-specific data on advanced course taking and tutoring. The averages above reflect the portion of those who selected some level of effectiveness; for each item, 37.9% to 55.2% of respondents indicated "Not applicable/Did not participate or attend" across the items.

3.5.3 Overall Perceptions of Texas GEAR UP State Grant

Beyond feedback about specific activities, parents were also asked about their overall perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG with regard to the two primary goals of the program (i.e., helping students succeed in school and be better prepared for college). Among the parents who indicated a level of agreement, the majority indicated that they either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that Texas GEAR UP SG had helped their child to be more successful in school and be better prepared for college (87% and 86%, respectively).

In addition to the items on the parent survey about specific project goals, parent and student surveys asked about overall perceptions of the program. As shown in Figure 3.16, there are significant changes over time for both parents and students in their overall perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG. For example, the percentage of parents who were *very satisfied* was 46% in Year 1, but was 37% in Year 2; similarly, the percentage of parents who were *very satisfied* was 28% in Year 1, but was 26% in Year 2. It will be important going forward for Texas GEAR UP SG to focus on offering more services that both parents and students want in order for them to be more satisfied with the program. However, it is important to note that, overall, 85% of parents and 84% of students reported being *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with Texas GEAR UP SG.

Student satisfaction differed significantly across schools (Table G.28, Appendix G).[99] The percentages of students who reported being *very satisfied* were below 25% at School B (20%) and School F (18%), and highest at School G (34%). While all schools engaged in a broader range of Texas GEAR UP SG activities in Year 2, School G clearly engaged in the broadest range in Year 1. In addition, this involved the greatest range of students in college visits in Year 2. These may have contributed to the overall higher satisfaction rating at School G.

Figure 3.16. Parents' and Students' Satisfaction With Texas GEAR UP SG Overall, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014*
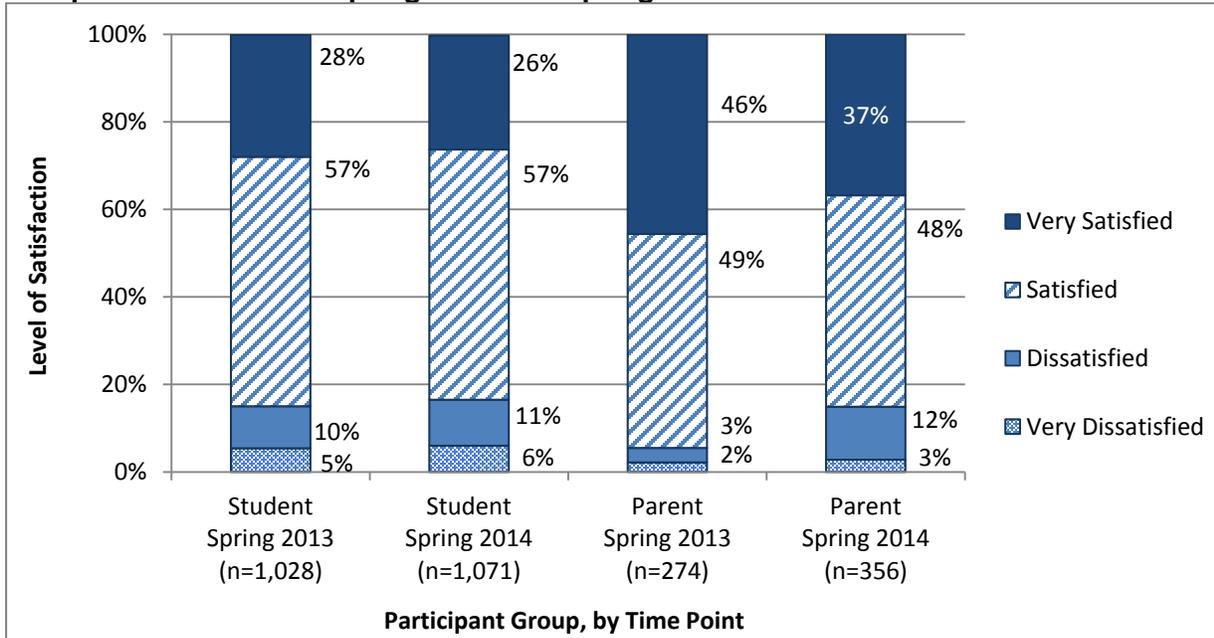
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Fall 2013; Spring 2014).

Note: Low parent response rates across both time points warrant caution in interpreting trend data on parent surveys. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. Data for fall 2013 student surveys are included in Table G.27, Appendix G.

* Student-reported satisfaction with GEAR UP differed significantly across time: $\chi^2(6) = 6.8$, $p < .05$. Parent-reported satisfaction with GEAR UP differed significantly across time: $\chi^2(3) = 14.7$, $p < .001$.

3.6   Relationships Between Perceptions

In this section, relationships between 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 impacting or causing levels on another variable. Still, understanding that these relationships were occurring is helpful in order to better understand the program by seeing the extent to which various constructs are associated with each other. For example, knowing 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.

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[99] Student-reported satisfaction with GEAR UP differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(18) = 44.1$, $p < .01$.

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 (aggregate of items such as SAT, general requirements, and importance/benefit of college).[100] 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. This trend is similar with parents; discussions about college entrance requirements with someone from their child's school or Texas GEAR UP SG staff was significantly positively correlated with parents' perceived knowledge about college (aggregated similar to student knowledge).[101] The results of these correlations mirror the findings in the Year 1 report (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 for both parents[102] and students.[103] In other words, higher levels of parents' and students' knowledge were associated with higher educational expectations. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should focus on increasing opportunities to engage parents and students in discussions about college acceptance through events, meetings, advising sessions, and so forth.

3.6.2 Knowledge About Financing College

Student discussions about the availability of financial aid with someone from their school was significantly positively correlated with students' perceived knowledge about financial terms (an aggregate of the following variables: scholarships, federal student loans, federal work-study, federal Pell grants, FAFSA).[104] In other words, students who had participated in such conversations had higher levels of knowledge about financial aid. Parent engagement in discussions with the school and Texas GEAR UP SG staff about the availability of financial aid was also significantly positively correlated with knowledge of financial terms.[105] These results are consistent with the correlations found in Year 1 (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.[106] Parent correlational data yielded similar results.[107] In other words, higher levels of knowledge were associated with higher educational expectations. 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 College Preparation Advisors

The introduction of College Preparation Advisors in Year 2 of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation presented an opportunity to examine the correlations between students having met with this individual from their school and various desired program outcomes. Meeting with a College Preparation Advisor was significantly positively correlated with knowledge of college,[108]

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[100] $r(1,248) = .24$, $p < .001$.
[101] $r(456) = .27$, $p < .001$.
[102] $r(459) = .17$, $p < .001$.
[103] $r(1,237) = .29$, $p < .001$.
[104] $r(1,224) = 303$, $p < .001$.
[105] $r(459) = 379$, $p < .001$.
[106] $r(1,244) = .22$, $p < .001$.
[107] $r(464) = .17$, $p < .001$.
[108] $r(715) = .17$, $p < .001$.

knowledge of financial terms,[109] and expectations.[110] Based on this information, it will likely be important for Texas GEAR UP SG to continue leveraging the College Preparation Advisors to reach more students with a higher frequency because they are a potentially influential player in students' college preparation.

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 2, parent and student survey data suggested several potential directions for continued implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, many related to students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding college readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, financing college). There are several key findings reported in this chapter, highlighted below. In many cases, the findings differed significantly by school.

- **Better Use of Resources to Understand College Requirements.** In Year 2, significantly more parents indicated having spoken to someone from the school or Texas GEAR UP SG, although more students than parents had engaged in conversations about college requirements. Parents and students were also significantly more likely in spring 2014 than in spring 2013 to indicate that the Texas GEAR UP SG website and staff were important sources of information about postsecondary goals. Discussions around HB 5 regarding high school graduation and selecting endorsements were a central focus of student/parent meetings with Texas GEAR UP SG staff, and were often aligned with a general understanding about college enrollment requirements. As noted in Chapter 1, under HB 5, students need to be aware that selecting some endorsements may not position the student well for college acceptance.

- **Positive Interactions With GEAR UP Staff.** In general, awareness of, and increased interaction with, Texas GEAR UP SG staff (including the new College Preparation Advisor) suggest that at least parts of the intended GEAR UP message may be reaching students and parents. The students and parents who interacted with them generally perceived College Preparation Advisors as being effective. School staff and statewide collaborators also reported very positive perceptions of the contributions of College Preparation Advisors overall. Although perceptions were generally positive, nearly one-third of the parents and about one-fifth of the students reported that they did not perceive the College Preparation Advisor as being effective. This suggests a need for Texas GEAR UP SG staff to provide some additional training and/or support to increase effectiveness.

- **Narrowed Gap Between Aspirations and Expectations.** Both parents and students continue to have educational aspirations that exceed their educational expectations. However, within both parents and students, the difference between aspirations and expectations was significantly lower in Year 2 than in Year 1. Across schools, a range of

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[109] $r(702) = .07$, $p < .001$.
[110] $r(691) = .08$, $p < .05$.

activities were identified that may be contributing to the reduced level of difference, although work remains to alleviate concerns about actually achieving the desired goals.

- **Awareness of the Importance of College.** The majority of students and parents agreed that attending college will be important for meeting career goals and that it is not too early to be thinking about college. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should plan activities that resonate with these parents and students, as well as with parents and students who think otherwise. That is, at least some events should continue to focus on the alignment of career and educational goals, and on understanding that discussions regarding thinking about college should be occurring, while at the same time moving beyond this for parents and students who already understand the importance.

- **Increased Focus on Career Exploration.** Career exploration and career to education alignment activities were a focus at several schools. These types of activities may contribute to general changes in the college readiness perceptions of parents and students.

- **Continued Concerns About College Costs.** Concerns about the ability to afford postsecondary education remained the most common reason reported for not continuing their education. However, the percentage of students with this concern decreased significantly from spring 2013 to spring 2014. In general, there is low knowledge and high interest in learning more about strategies for paying for college. Continuing efforts to increase parents' and students' knowledge of the financial aspects of college, such as specific financial aid terms and the actual cost of attending, remain an important area of focus.

- **Successful Summer Programs.** Most participants in summer 2013 activities perceived the program as helping students to be more prepared to succeed in Algebra I, a stated school goal of the programs. Students who participated also noted having a better understanding of the benefits of college and of college entrance requirements. Parents and students who participated in the program generally reported being encouraged to attend, while those who did not participate indicated that they either had not been made aware or did not perceive that they had been encouraged to participate.

3.7.2 Consistent Implementation and Perception of Successes at School G

Throughout this chapter, significant differences across schools have been discussed within individual items. It is also important to connect this across items. In particular, School G stands out as exceeding other schools on multiple survey items. This school had the highest percentage, among schools with sufficient response rates to be included in this group analysis, for each of the following items:

- Percentage of students who would like to obtain a four-year college degree or higher
- Percentage of parents who expect their child to obtain a four-year college degree or higher
- Percentage of students and parents who s*trongly agree* about the importance of attending college
- Percentage of parents who *strongly agree* that attending college is important for their child's career goal and future
- Percentage of students who reported an impact of Texas GEAR UP SG on college plans
- Percentage of students indicating that they had discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG or someone from their school about college entrance requirements
- Percentage of students' using the Texas GEAR UP SG website, as well as the percentage of students' using Texas GEAR UP SG discussions/events as a source of information
- Average student knowledge of each of the following items: SAT, ACT, general requirements for college acceptance, and the importance/benefit of college
- Percentage of students planning on taking advanced mathematics courses
- Percentage of students indicating that they had discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG or someone from their school about financial aid

- Percentages of students indicating that they would *probably* or *definitely* be able to afford community college, as well as those indicating the same for a four-year college
- Percentage of students reporting that they went on college visits
- Percentage of students who reported being *very satisfied* with Texas GEAR UP SG

Not only was School G high compared to the other schools in Year 2, but there were also positive increases from Year 1 in many areas, such as the higher percentage of students reporting the impact that Texas GEAR UP SG is having on college plans. In addition, student-reported rates of participation in some activities (e.g., summer program, job shadowing, college visits) were the highest among the schools. There were some exceptions to the generally favorable findings related to School G. Most notably, the participation of students in tutoring and mentoring was significantly lower at School G than at some other schools. Collectively, the findings suggest that School G 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

In order for events/activities to be successful, it is important to understand any potential facilitators and barriers to participation. Survey items asked parents to select from a list of potential facilitators and barriers; responses are displayed in Figures 3.17 and 3.18, respectively. Analyses of survey items related to participants' reported facilitating and constraining factors around their participation in Texas GEAR UP SG activities/events address the following evaluation question: What facilitators and barriers do schools and parents report regarding participation in college readiness activities?

For parents, encouragement from their child was the most commonly identified facilitator for participation (65%) and work schedule was the most commonly identified barrier (58%). The interest/relevance of the topic was described as a facilitator by 44% of the respondents, but as a barrier by only 8% of the respondents. These trends are consistent with parent-reported facilitators and barriers during Year 1 of implementation (O'Donnel et al., 2013). As such, ensuring that parent activities have a clearly articulated purpose/value, as well as scheduling them at times that are appropriate for parents and engaging students in bringing parents to events, may remain key to successful activities. As suggested in Annual Implementation Report #1, Texas GEAR UP SG should engage in intensive planning and utilize information regarding facilitators and barriers in planning parent events (O'Donnel et al., 2013).

Figure 3.17. Percentages of Parents Identifying a Given Practice as Facilitating Engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG Activities, Spring 2014
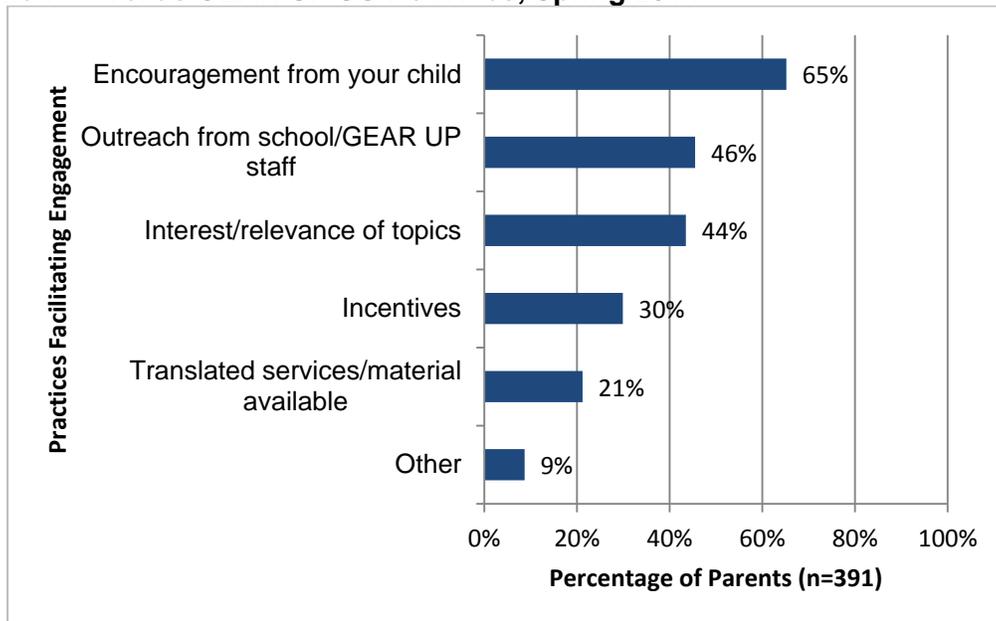
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014).
Note: For this survey question, "Have any of the following contributed to your being able or willing to attend school-sponsored GEAR UP events? (Select all that apply)," the response percentage will not add up to 100% because respondents were able to select multiple responses. Table G.29 provides comparisons by school.

Other barriers that emerged during site visits included issues related to technology. Participants from two schools (Schools A and G) described Internet access and parent computer literacy as barriers; suggestions included having Texas GEAR UP SG schools provide a central location where students can go to work on their homework. Some teachers at schools utilizing tablet devices experienced technical issues when incorporating the iPads in the classroom and would like to have more training on them (School B). Offering this training may be an important lynchpin to leverage this technology given that students from other schools (Schools C, D, and F) reported positive experiences using iPads for tasks like group essays and researching topics for their classes. Other issues with iPads included parent aversion to taking on responsibility for the device and instances of students having their electronic devices stolen (School B).

Figure 3.18. Percentages of Parents Identifying a Given Practice as a Barrier to Engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG Activities, Spring 2014
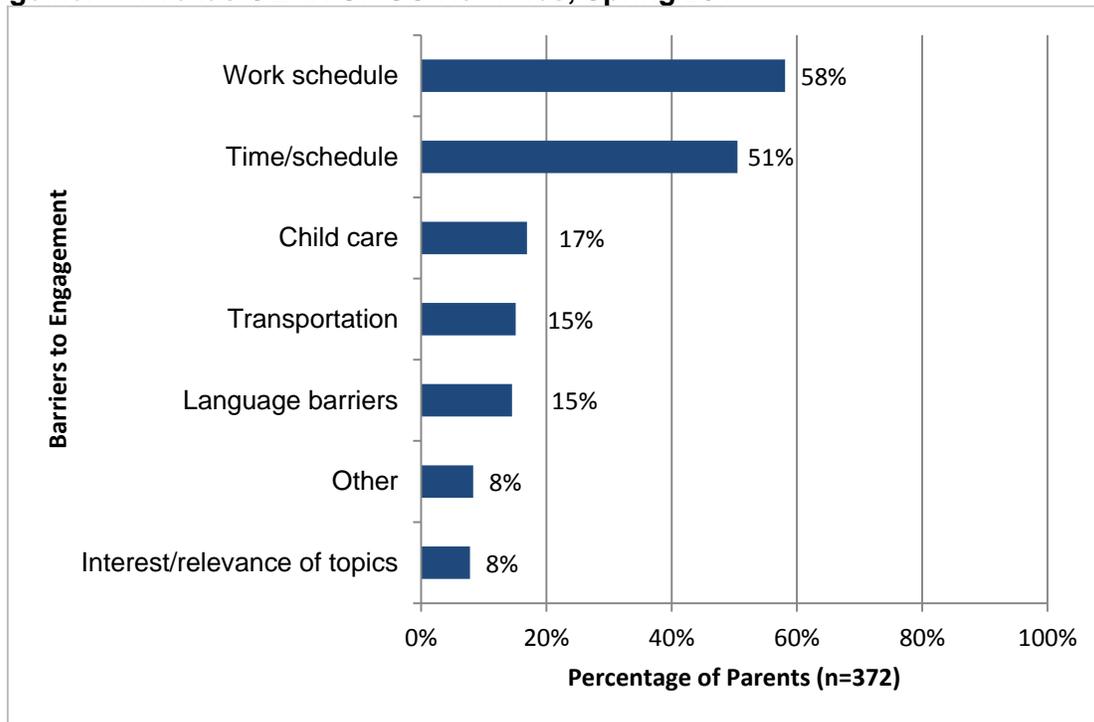
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014).

Note: For this survey question, "Have any of the following contributed to your not being able or willing to attend school-sponsored GEAR UP events? (Select all that apply)," the response percentage will not add up to 100% because respondents were able to select multiple responses. Table G.30 provides comparisons by school.

Finally, parents and students were asked for direct input on the kinds of information, support, or activities that would help their child/them to be successful in school and prepared for college. As shown in Table 3.3, information on financing college was commonly selected by both parents and students (63% and 45%, respectively). This, once again, affirms the need for Texas GEAR UP SG to focus more on the financial aspect of college. The most commonly identified need for students was field trips (76%), followed by college tours (51%); 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. Given that more than half of the parents (56%) are reporting that they need more information on the Texas GEAR UP SG program, including how to participate, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should recommit their efforts with regard to parent outreach.

Table 3.3. Parents' and Students' Input on Needed Information/Support/Activities, Spring 2014

Information/Support/Activity	Parents Spring 2014 (n=429)	Students Spring 2014 (n=1,226)
More information on college entrance requirements	54.5%	44.9%
More information on GEAR UP program/how to participate	55.5%	N/A
Tutoring/Individualized care	45.7%	34.9%
More information on financial aid/scholarships	62.5%	44.9%
College tours	59.9%	51.0%
Bilingual	22.1%	25.7%
Field trips	N/A	75.9%
More information on GEAR UP events	N/A	36.4%
More advanced classes	N/A	47.3
Sports, activities, and clubs	N/A	41.3%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
Note: Table G.31, Appendix G, includes response options for fall 2013.

The chapter that follows includes an analysis of Texas GEAR UP SG budgets and expenditures in order to understand trends in the spending of TEA funds and school district funds, with further breakdown by categorical areas.

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

The following section includes an analysis of how TEA and the schools budgeted and expended funds for Texas GEAR UP SG in fiscal year (FY) 2013 (September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013), as well as budget data for FY 2014 (September 1, 2013 through August 31, 2014).[111] 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 (which include payroll, professional and contracted services, supplies and materials, other operating costs, and 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?
- For what services and activities do grantees use matching funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
- To what extent were grantees able to secure matching funds?
- How did schools budget for Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 2?

4.1 Overall Texas GEAR UP Budget and Expenditures

In the first year of the Texas GEAR UP SG (FY 2013), TEA received $5 million from USDE. 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.[112]

Table 4.1 provides an overview of how TEA allocated and expended federal GEAR UP grant funds for state FY 2013. With 79% of funds expended on "other program activities," this table details the various projects that TEA funded under this category.[113] Projects on which TEA expended the highest percentage of funds included the following: product development (47%), technical assistance (21%), and grants to districts (15%). Product development reflects the significant investment made by TEA in revising the Texas GEAR UP website (www.texasgearup.com), which became available statewide by the end of FY 2013. In some cases, expended amounts reflect a lower amount than allocated funds. Aforementioned delays

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[111] The Year 3 Annual Implementation Report will include final data for Year 2, including expenditures.
[112] Section 404C(b) of the Higher Education Act requires that at least 50% of the total cost of a GEAR UP project to 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 can be in the form of cash or documented in-kind contributions.
[113] "Other program activities" include the following: product development, technical assistance, Project Share, TG, PD, College Board, and GEAR UP evaluation. Other costs include grants to districts and indirect costs (i.e., salaries and wages, employee benefits, travel, materials and supplies, and other indirect costs).

in implementation in Year 1 may have contributed to these lower-than-expected expenditures. For example, the expended amount for "grants to districts" reflects only 65% of the funding originally allocated. In other cases, difficulties implementing statewide PD through Project Share is reflected in the lack of expended funds in this area. TEA expended the full amount of allocated funding in Year 1 for the following projects: product development, TG contract, Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation, and direct and indirect administrative costs. Unexpended funds from state FY 2013 totaling $1.8 million were carried forward into the agency's FY 2014 budget.[114]

Table 4.2 provides information about how TEA budgeted to use funds in FY 2014.[115] USDE awarded $5 million to TEA to implement the second year of the Texas GEAR UP SG. This award and carryover from the prior year (just under $1.8 million) were set up in the agency's FY 2014 budget. Funds were allocated to projects from this budget (combining funds originating in Year 2 and funds carried over from Year 1). The total amount allocated for FY 2014 projects was $6,709,225. Overall, TEA allocated $4,880,375 (73%) for the "other program activities," a similar amount to Year 1.[116] Also consistent with trends in Year 1, projects to which TEA allocated the highest percentage of funds included the following: product development (36%), technical assistance (33%), and grants to districts (21%). In Year 2, technical assistance costs budgeted for included the salaries for College Preparation Advisors. Due to the changes in how TEA collaborates with TG and the College Board (as described in Chapter 1), Year 2 did not include budgeted funds for contracts with these organizations; however, TEA allocated funds for districts to purchase services (such as training on financial literacy) directly from collaborators.

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[114] Texas federal GEAR UP funds have a life from the first date of award each year through the end of the program on July 22, 2019. This is in compliance with USDE federal regulations.

[115] The Year 3 implementation report will present final expenditure data for Year 2 (FY 2014) because these were not yet available for this report.

[116] "Other program activities" include the following: product development, technical assistance, Project Share, TG, PD, College Board, and GEAR UP evaluation. Other costs include grants to districts and indirect costs (i.e., salaries and wages, employee benefits, travel, materials and supplies, and other indirect costs).

Table 4.1. Texas GEAR UP SG Award Funds and Matching Contributions, Fiscal Year 2013

Categorical Cost Data for Year 1				
Category	Budgeted Grant Funds[a]	Allocated Grant Funds	Expended Grant Funds	Unexpended Grant Funds[b]	Match Contributions
Total Fiscal Year 2013 Federal Award	$5,000,000	$3,686,600.00	$3,225,186.00	$1,774,814.00	$498,579.00
Project	Funding Level	Allocated	Expended	Remaining	Project Match
Grants to Districts	$750,000.00	$750,000.00	$485,158.00	$264,842.00	$216,360.00
Technical Assistance (UT-IPSI)[c]	$800,000.00	$800,000.00	$662,886.00	$137,114.00	$73,444.00
Product Development (AMS Pictures)	$1,500,000.00	$1,500,000.00	$1,500,000.00	-	$200,000.00
Project Share Contract	$830,035.00	-	-	-	-
TG Contract[d]	$1,500.00	$1,500.00	$1,500.00	-	$8,775.00
Professional Development	$566,365.00	$83,000.00	$46,092.00	$36,908.00	-
College Board Contract	$102,100.00	$102,100.00	$79,550.00	$22,550.00	-
Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation	$250,000.00	$250,000.00	$250,000.00	-	-
Indirect Costs[e]	$200,000.00	$200,000.00	$200,000.00	-	[f]
TOTALS	$5,000,000.00	$3,686,600.00	$3,225,186.00	$461,414.00	$498,579.00

Source: Final cost data for Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 sent by the Texas Education Agency on December 31, 2014.

[a] The Budgeted Grant Funds column indicates the funding level expected for Year 1 funds (intended budget), while the Allocated Grant Funds column includes actual allocations (e.g., awards, contracts, grants).

[b] Total FY 2013 Unexpended Grant Funds accounts for both budgeted funds that were not allocated (Project Share and professional development), as well as allocated funds that were not expended. Remaining amounts include actual dollars not expended from allocated funds during the grant year.

[c] UT-IPSI: The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives.

[d] TG: Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation.

[e] Texas Education Agency matches 100% of the remaining expenditures with state-funded program expenditures on the Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate® Test Program.

[f] Indirect costs include salaries and wages, employee benefits, travel, materials and supplies, and other indirect costs.

Table 4.2. Texas GEAR UP SG Award Funds and Matching Contributions, Fiscal Year 2014

Categorical Cost Data for Year 2			
Category	**Budgeted Grant Funds***	**Allocated Grant Funds**	**Year 1 Carryover Funds Allocated**
Total Fiscal Year 2014 Federal Award	$5,000,000.00	$4,936,700.00	$1,774,814.00
Project	**Funding Level**	**Allocated**	**Additional Year 2 Allocation from Year 1 Funds**
Grants to Districts	$1,100,000.00	$1,100,000.00	$298,850.00
Technical Assistance (UT-IPSI)[a]	$1,578,350.00	$1,578,350.00	$643,640.00
Product Development (AMS Pictures)	$1,578,350.00	$1,578,350.00	$830,035.00
Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation	$250,000.00	$250,000.00	$-
Professional Development- Project Share	$63,300.00	$-	$-
Indirect Costs[b]	$430,000.00	$430,000.00	$-
TOTALS	**$5,000,000.00**	**$4,936,700.00**	**$1,772,525.00**

Source: Date provided by The Texas Education Agency in December 2014 and January 2015.
[a] UT-IPSI: The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives.
[b] Indirect costs include salaries and wages, employee benefits, travel, materials and supplies, and other indirect costs.

4.2   School Districts' Budgets and Expenditures

Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation Implementation Report 2013 reported budgeted and drawn down funds for Year 1 through May 30, 2013, reflecting only the portion of the funds drawn down to that date (O'Donnel et al., 2013). At the time of the Year 1 report, final expenditures 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 TEAs expenditure system and receiving the drawdown. Updates to Year 1 data in this report include all expenditures for FY 2013 and reflect that some districts did not expend their entire budget. Table 4.3 includes the amounts expended by districts in FY 2013, the percentage of their award expended in FY 2013, and the FY 2014 amounts awarded. The update for Year 1 is particularly important because the data at the time of the 2013 report did not include all of the funds spent, perhaps due to delays in districts drawing down FY 2013 funds. Overall, the four districts spent 65% of their grant funds, and only one district (District 2) spent nearly all of their grant funds. All districts were able to meet the requirement of matching 100% of the expended funds for Year 1. FY 2013 grant funds remaining after the districts reported their final expenditures were carried over by TEA into the next fiscal year and redistributed across FY 2014 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 2 (FY 2014), TEA budgeted for subgrants from the Texas GEAR UP SG totaling just under $1.4 million to four school districts to serve students in seven middle schools during the 2013–14 school year (September 1, 2013 through August 31, 2014). The districts were also required to provide matching funds in an amount that is at least 100% of their expenditures. The Year 3 implementation report will include data on Year 2 expenditures.

Table 4.3. Texas GEAR UP SG School District Year 1 Awarded Amounts and Expenditures, Fiscal Year 2013, and Awarded Amounts, Fiscal Year 2014

School District	Fiscal Year 2013 Amount Awarded	Fiscal Year 2013 Amount Expended	Fiscal Year 2013 Percentage Expended	Fiscal Year 2014 Amount Awarded
District 1	$175,000	$79,793	45.6%	$295,200
District 2	$175,000	$174,803	99.9%	$318,100
District 3	$125,000	$109,805	87.8%	$247,550
District 4	$275,000	$120,757	63.6%	$538,000
TOTAL	**$750,000**	**$485,158**	**64.7%**	**$1,398,850**

Source: Texas Education Agency-reported drawdowns through the end of the Year 1 grant cycle for Fiscal Year 2013 as of November 7, 2013; 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; District 4: May 8, 2014.
Note: Texas Education Agency reported at the time of this report that all districts have matched funds, but some failed to submit documentation of matched funds in the expense report system.

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4.3　Description of District Budget and Expenditures in Fiscal Year 2013 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 2013 Final

Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 show updated information for FY 2013 (Year 1), including the budgeted amounts reported in Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013), as well as new data on the final expenditures. Comparisons between planned and actual expenditures offer some information about whether districts used funds as originally planned. For example, although District 1 budgeted for the highest percentage of their funds for payroll, the district ended up expending more than half of their grant funds (51%) on supplies and materials. In District 4, no funds were expended on payroll, although 15% had been originally allocated to this cost category, while greater-than-budgeted funds were expended on professional and contracted services (33% budgeted, 54% expended) and other operating costs (29% budgeted, 44% expended). District 4 had budgeted 20% for capital outlay, but did not expend any funds in this cost category. Districts 2 and 3 generally expended funds by cost categories in line with their budgets, although District 2 did expend greater-than-budgeted funds on other operating costs (21% budgeted, 38% expended).

Figure 4.1. Percentage of Texas GEAR UP SG Award Budget by Direct Cost Category, Fiscal Year 2013
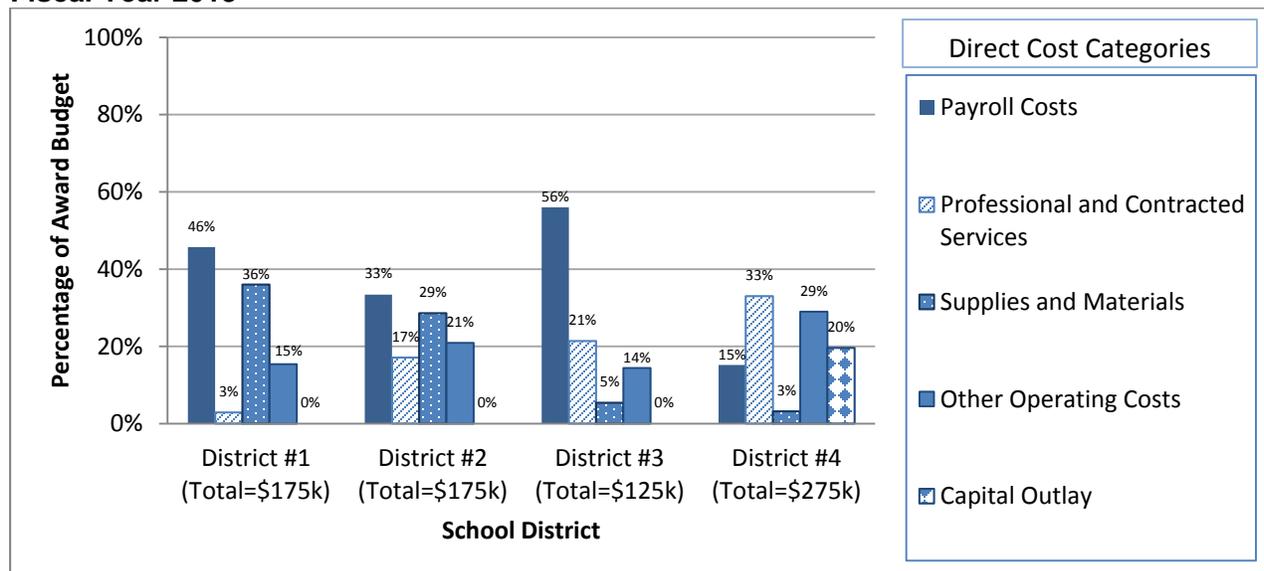
Source: District applications: District 1 – October 8, 2012; District 2 – October 10, 2012; District 3 – October 24, 2012; District 4 – October 10, 2012.
Note: This figure was also included in Annual Implementation Report #1, but it is presented again for the sake of continuity across the years.

Figure 4.2. Percentage of Texas GEAR UP SG Expenditures by Direct Cost Category, Fiscal Year 2013 Update
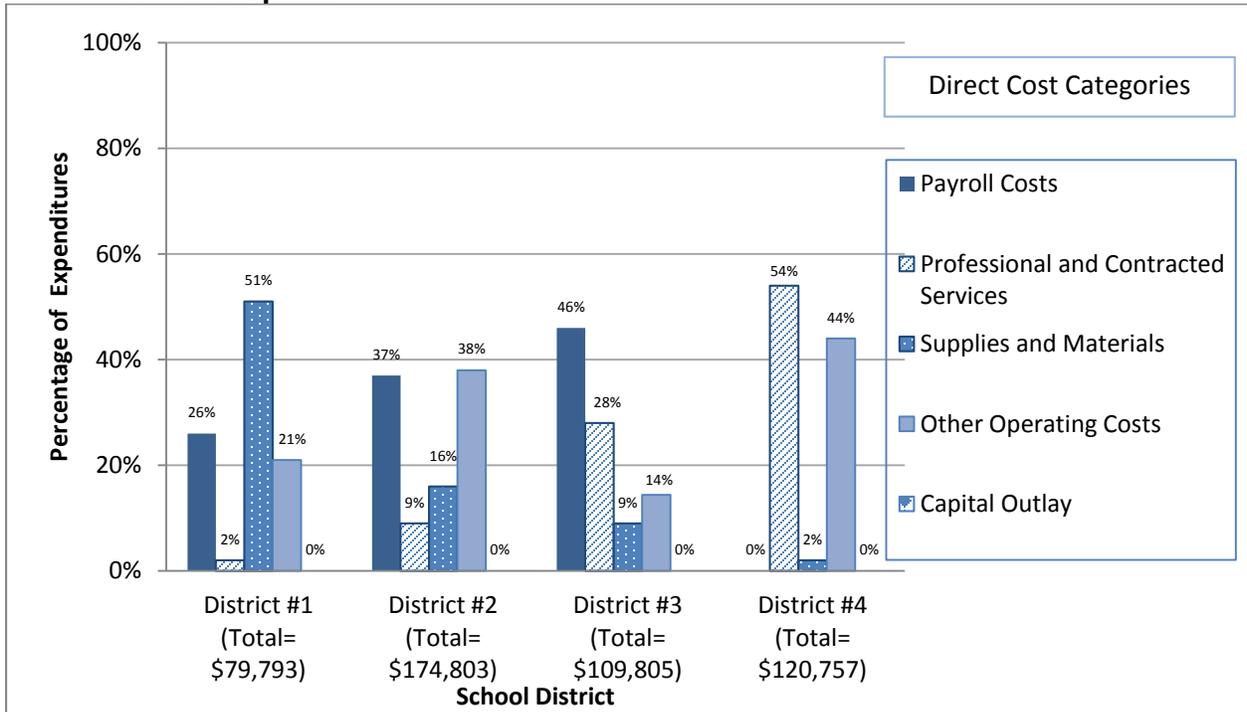
Source: Expenditure data submitted by in July 2014: District 1 – September 13, 2013; District 2 – November 7, 2013; District 3 – October 30, 2013; District 4 – November 5, 2013.

Additional expenditure analyses included looking within the cost categories given that the percentage of grant funds varied widely across districts (Figure 4.2). For payroll services, District 3 drew down 46% of their grant funds and District 4 did not draw down any grant funds in this category. As discussed in further detail in Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013), payroll services included funds for project management, project coordinators, project directors, tutors, parent coordinators, and so forth. District 4, however, drew down the highest percentage for professional and contracted services (54%), compared to the lowest percentage of 2% in District 1. Examples of professional and contracted services, as described in Annual Implementation Report #1, include staff development, student services, and parent outreach. In looking at expenses on supplies and materials (for items such as tablets and graphing calculators), District 1 drew down the highest percentage at 51% and District 4 only drew down 2%. For other operating costs (including expenses for employee conferences and student college visits), District 4 drew down the highest percentage with 44%. No district drew down funds in the capital outlay cost category. Additional time needs to pass and more data collected in order to delve deeper into these numbers, which will be done in future evaluation reports.

4.3.2   FY 2014 Budgeted Funds

Figure 4.3 shows information for FY 2014 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: 39%, District 2: 38%, District 3: 45%); District 4 only planned to spend 16% in this category. Although District 4 planned to spend nearly half of their funds (47%) on professional and contracted services, the other three districts budgeted for less than 15% of their funds in this category (District 1: 3%, District 2: 6%, District 3: 14%). Budgets for supplies and materials also varied across districts from 2% in District 3 to 32% in District 1. The Year 3

annual implementation report will summarize FY 2014 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 2014
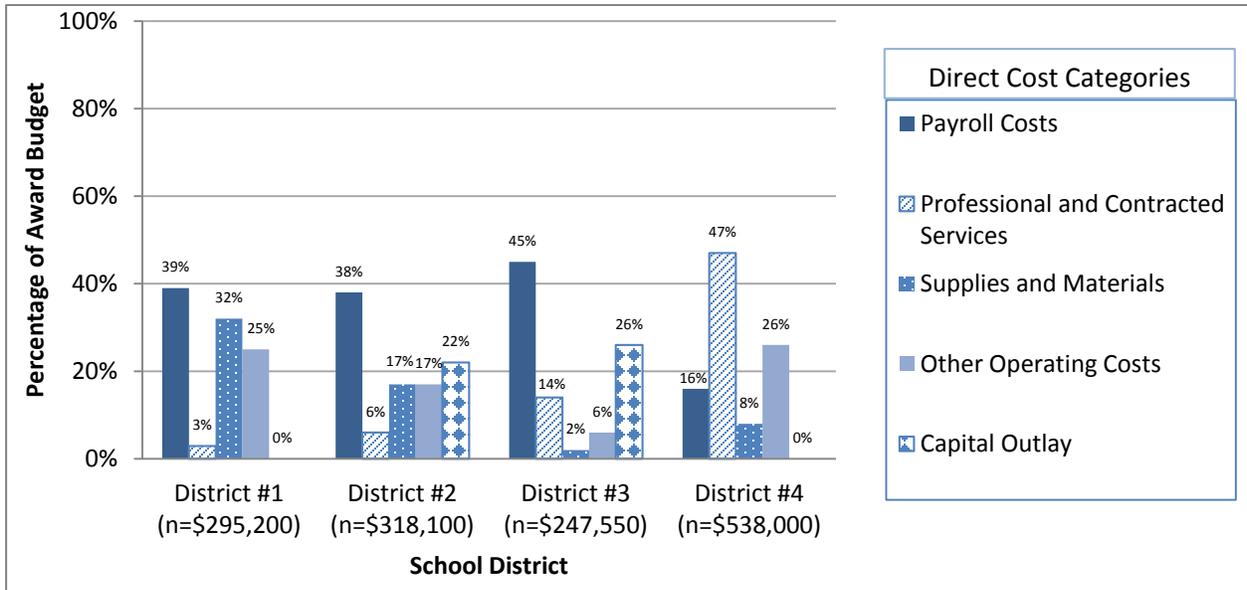
Source: District Notice of Grant Awards for Fiscal Year 2014 (as amended where relevant): District 1: June 30, 2014; District 2: December 13, 2013; District 3: December 10, 2013; District 4: May 8, 2014.
Note: The totals do not add up to 100% in Districts 3 and 4 because a 2% indirect cost is included in their program budgets.

4.3.3 Summary

USDE awarded a total of $33 million to implement the Texas GEAR UP SG initiative, which was provided to TEA in annual $5 million awards, with carryover from year to year throughout the life of the grant. TEA budgets those funds in a manner that follows federal and state required accounting processes. However, expenditures each year are not necessarily expected to total the $5 million award. The first year of implementation resulted in remaining balances that were budgeted in Year 2. A delay in the implementation of Project Share resulted in the need to move some Year 2 funds into Year 3.

This section included a look at budgeted awards compared to the final data on expenditures in FY 2013, including analyses within cost categories and comparisons between planned and actual expenses. In the upcoming comprehensive evaluation report, evaluators will begin to 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

In Year 1, the primary theme of the annual implementation report was that limited Texas GEAR UP SG implementation had occurred at the majority of the schools (School G being the exception), in part due to the shortened period of implementation that year. Many of the findings in the Year 1 report were considered baseline because the program had begun late in the school year and much of the data were collected only through March 2013. In Year 2, schools participating in Texas GEAR UP SG again faced some challenges related to the delay in district receipt of the NOGA. 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 2013 through March 31, 2014
- Site visits conducted by the evaluation team with each Texas GEAR UP SG school in fall 2013 and again in spring 2014
- Student survey data collected in fall 2013 and spring 2014
- Parent survey data collected in spring 2014
- In-person and telephone interviews with TEA and its collaborators conducted in May/June 2014

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 upcoming comprehensive report will examine outcomes in more detail, including the relationship between implementation and outcomes. The focus here is on understanding Year 2 implementation and 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 2 implementation was overall much higher than in Year 1 across all schools, although variability in the level of implementation remained. One indicator of the improved implementation between Year 1 and Year 2 was that the number of workshops/events held by March of the respective school year increased from 23 to 165. The number of opportunities to receive the information increased in Year 2. All schools, in both years, met Project Objective 7.2 of 100% of the primary cohort students and parents having access to information and workshops aimed at linking college attendance to career success. In looking at individual school progress overall, School G was the most successful at implementing a broad range of activities, and School E made progress on implementing a broader range of services compared to Year 1. The remaining schools continue to face difficulty implementing all of the components of Texas GEAR UP.

In examining a mix of implementation, each school was considered as having engaged in, or not engaged in, each of the 19 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 (i.e., Project Objectives 1.1, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, 7.3, 8.1, and 8.2). With that in mind, it is promising that tutoring, mentoring, counseling, parent events, college visits, and student workshops occurred at all Texas GEAR UP SG schools in the 2013–14 school year. On average, both parents and students found each type of activity that they participated in to be *mostly effective*, although average levels of student perceptions of effectiveness were significantly lower than parent perceptions for all activities. Levels of perceived effectiveness did not differ significantly across schools.

While it is not yet known 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 moving forward. 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 remaining schools 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 Implementation of Student Support Services

In Year 2, all seven 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, and community stakeholder involvement. By March 31, 2014, all seven schools had established a strong foundation of robust services; all seven schools collectively had 78% of Grade 8 students participate in tutoring, mentoring, counseling, and/or advising. Three schools met Project Objective 4.1 related to comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring. These same three schools had also exceeded this project objective in Year 1, suggesting that getting off to a good start in Year 1 provided a strong foundation for ongoing success in later years. The remaining four schools did not meet the project objective, but came much closer in Year 2. Once the remaining implementation data (April 1, 2014 to the end of the school year) becomes available, the remaining schools may meet Project Objective 4.1 as additional students receive tutoring, mentoring, counseling, and/or advising during this time.

5.1.2 Algebra I

TEA set a project objective for the schools to have 30% of Grade 8 students successfully complete Algebra I (Project Objective 1.1). Student enrollment in Algebra I or other advanced mathematics courses was 43% across schools in Grade 8, although three schools did not meet that project objective when disaggregating the data.[117] Data on successful completion of Algebra I will be included in the upcoming comprehensive report. All schools do appear to be on track to meet Project Objective 1.1 given that enrollment exceeds the project objective and that summer programs, especially notable at two schools, had a predominant focus on preparing students for Algebra I.

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[117] Data reported in this report reflect data that were not required to be reported in the APR. The evaluation recognizes mathematics courses that are considered to be advanced, but are not equivalent to Algebra I.

5.1.3   Parent Participation in 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). In Year 2, 7% of parents across all schools attended three events, while 38% of parents attended at least one event. Schools will have to approach this project objective much more strategically than has occurred to date. One approach that the Support Center began to introduce during the end of the 2013–14 school year was introducing a new collaborator focused on parent engagement (Abriendo Puertas), and this will be studied further in Year 3.

5.1.4   Teacher Participation in Texas GEAR UP State Grant Professional Development

All seven schools provided opportunities for teachers to participate in Texas GEAR UP SG PD opportunities in Year 2, meeting Project Objective 3.1. However, as of March 2014, only two schools had held five days of vertical teaming (Project Objective 3.2). Teachers participating in focus groups generally had positive perceptions of the training in which they participated, but also indicated a range of challenges in moving from training to classroom implementation. Time to focus on and make changes appears to be the primary challenge in making this shift. An exception to this was the overall positive response to PBL training, which occurred at five schools.

5.1.5   Participation by Community Stakeholders in Texas GEAR UP State Grant

All seven schools indicated that they had established a range of alliances in their community. CIS collaborated with all schools, and all schools reported at least one college or university stakeholder. Stakeholders played a role in college visit opportunities, mentoring, and other supports (such as PITSCO Labs at one school).[118] Although examples of engagement with community stakeholders were identified, it was difficult to assess the strength of any given alliance in Year 2 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 partners in the site visits, but, 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.

5.1.6   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. By the end of Year 1, TEA collaborator AMS Pictures had launched the revised Texas GEAR UP website and updates to the site continued during Year 2. TEA is continuing to look for ways to grow the use of the website by schools and parents statewide. Project Share, a TEA strategy to provide statewide teacher PD opportunities, was still primarily in the planning stage through Year 2. TEA has engaged AMS Pictures in Year 3 in order to move to the provision of content.

The statewide coalition of GEAR UP grantees and the statewide GEAR UP conference were both considered to be on track in Year 2. Approximately 275 GEAR UP professionals attended the 2013 conference. Notably, participants in the statewide GEAR UP conference from School D indicated that they did not disseminate materials to non-attendees from their school because they did not perceive the materials to be relevant. This suggests that TEA should work with the Support Center to identify additional strategies, such as distributing materials on the

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[118] More details PITSCO Labs (e.g., hands-on, student-focused curriculum modules) are available at http://www.pitsco.com.

conference website and working with the College Preparation Advisors, for distributing conference materials more widely with the Texas GEAR UP SG districts.

5.1.7 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 2 was the addition of the College Preparation Advisors to the Texas GEAR UP SG staff, which had previously been staffed by a grant coordinator. In particular, the College Preparation Advisors contributed to the increased counseling of students that occurred in Year 2, even in the absence of clear times to regularly engage with students one-on-one. Other facilitators described in Year 1 (such as local university alliances and support from the Support Center) continued to be useful in Year 2.

Limited support from some school administrators, mostly reported as lengthy approval processes, was a key barrier, particularly for one of the schools. The grant coordinator for this school noted that many services were delayed and some were not implemented because of the levels of processes that needed to be navigated. This serves as a reminder that as school administrators change, there is a need to educate and engage them about key grant initiatives. School D experienced initial resistance from school administrators regarding the TG modules, but a new school administrator allowed GEAR UP staff to plan an assembly to present the TG modules to students. One district experienced turnover in both grant coordinators and the College Preparation Advisor.

For parents, encouragement from their child was the most commonly identified facilitator for participation. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider ways to leverage students in playing an active role in involving their parents in program activities, perhaps offering more options for both groups to participate together. The interest in, or relevance of, the topic was described as a facilitator by 44% of respondents, but as a barrier by only 8% of the respondents. The most common parent-reported barrier was their work schedule. These trends are consistent with parent-reported facilitators and barriers during Year 1 of implementation (O'Donnel et al., 2013). As such, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should ensure that parent activities have a clearly articulated purpose/value, as well as scheduling them at times that are appropriate for parents and encouraging students to bring parents to events.

5.1.8 Potential Best Practices

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

Based on a range of data, four potentially promising implementation activities were identified. College Preparation Advisors, summer programs, career exploration activities, and the leadership club are discussed in detail here.

COLLEGE PREPARATION ADVISORS

College Preparation Advisors were a resource new to schools in Year 2, and adding a person in this role appears to be a potentially promising practice. These new staff members were able to offer counseling and financial aid advising, practices that were difficult to implement in Year 1 without the staff support to do so. Both site visit and survey data indicated that various stakeholders (e.g., school staff, Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators, students, parents) indicated positive reactions to College Preparation Advisors. Students and parents who had met with a College Preparation Advisor had more knowledge about college and financial terms, and they had higher educational expectations. However, challenges included some students not being

aware of the College Preparation Advisor at their school, the need for one-on-one interactions with students, and a lack of clarity about the distinction between the roles of the College Preparation Advisor and the Texas GEAR UP SG grant coordinator. Finally, some stakeholders noted that College Preparation Advisors might need additional training related to meeting the project objectives. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should help to address these challenges in an effort to improve their effectiveness in future years.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

An emerging success for a few schools was programs offered in summer 2013. The programs were positively perceived by those who attended, and participation in these programs reportedly improved knowledge about college enrollment requirements and financial literacy. Students who attended summer programs also reported feeling better prepared to succeed in Algebra I. Much like the afterschool programs discussed in the Year 1 report, summer programs often engaged students in fun and challenging ways. A primary reason given by parents and students for not attending summer programs was that they were either not aware or they did not feel encouraged to attend the programs. Given the potential for summer programs, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider encouraging schools to follow through on planned summer programs and to engage as broad a range of students as possible.

CAREER EXPLORATION

Career exploration and career-to-education alignment activities were a focus of events at several schools. These activities were positively perceived by participants and, given their direct focus, may be contributing to changes in the perceived college readiness of parents and students. Similarly, career days and Reality Check (an interactive game that helps students to think about the reality of the future and how careers and lifestyle are related) provided ways for students to think more about their plans.[119] Career Cruising (a career interest survey) was a specific tool used by School E to help students find careers based on their interests.[120] Students at School B proclaimed their aspirations by signing a pledge to attend college. Participants at School C reported the perceived need for additional activities to help them consider various career options, such as a Dream Board Night (an event that helped guide students in considering career goals). Job shadowing also falls in the general career exploration category and was an activity in which schools engaged, particularly School G. The school noted that they specifically looked for opportunities to shadow jobs that are in high demand. Job shadowing that allowed for more personal interaction or small breakouts was said to have been more successful. A noted challenge in coordinating job shadowing was the ability to develop alliances to secure job site visitation opportunities.

LEADERSHIP CLUB

Finally, a leadership club at one school provided opportunities for the students in Grade 8 to become involved with volunteer opportunities and to mentor peers. The activity was positively perceived by the participants. This club provides both short-term opportunities for personal growth and the long-term opportunity to build content that may distinguish the students when applying for postsecondary education, potentially increasing their enrollment opportunities.

5.1.9 Knowledge About College Readiness

What are students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing

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[119] Limited details about this program emerged from site visits.

[120] More details about Career Cruising (a self-exploration and planning program that helps people of all ages achieve their potential in school, career, and life) are available at http://public.careercruising.com/en.

college)? What information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness? To what extent did these perceptions change over time?

In Year 2, significantly more parents indicated having spoken to someone from the school or Texas GEAR UP SG, although more students than parents had engaged in conversations. Parents and students were also significantly more likely in spring 2014 than in spring 2013 to indicate that Texas GEAR UP SG websites and staff were important sources of information about postsecondary goals. Discussions around HB 5 regarding high school graduation and selecting endorsements were a central focus of student/parent meetings with Texas GEAR UP SG staff, and were often aligned with a general understanding about college enrollment requirements.

Both parents and students continued to have educational aspirations that exceed their educational expectations. However, among both parents and students, the difference between aspirations and expectations was significantly lower in Year 2 than in Year 1. That is, the percentage of parents and students for whom aspirations exceeded expectations was smaller in Year 2 than Year 1. Across schools, a range of activities were identified that may be contributing to the reduced level of difference, although work remains to alleviate concerns about actually achieving the desired goals.

The majority of students and parents agreed that attending college will be important for meeting career goals and that it is not too early to be thinking about college. Given that some parents and students do not agree with one or both of these, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider ways to plan activities that resonate with both groups. That is, there should continue to be some focus on the alignment of career and educational goals, as well as discussions regarding thinking about college. At the same time, parents and students who already understand the importance and are ready to have such discussions may need additional information.

Concerns about the ability to afford postsecondary education remained the most common reason reported for not continuing their education. However, the percentage of students with this perceived concern decreased significantly from spring 2013 to spring 2014. In general, there is low knowledge and high interest in learning more about strategies for paying for college. For example, parents and students continue to overestimate the cost of enrollment in postsecondary education. Continuing efforts to increase parents' and students' knowledge of the financial aspects of college, such as specific financial aid terms and the actual cost of attending, remains an important area of focus.

Both parents and students continued in Year 2 to report low use of the Texas GEAR UP website as a source of information, even though the new website was available. In Year 2, student-reported use of Texas GEAR UP SG staff/events as a source of information significantly increased from Year 1 by 17 percentage points. One response option (*information from parents*) was selected as a source of information by a greater percentage of students. A greater percentage of parents also reported use of Texas GEAR UP SG staff/events as a source of information.

5.1.10 Grant and School District Budgets and Expenditures

Final expenditures from the FY 2013 budget of $5 million was just over $3.2 million, an amount supplemented by 100% matching funds. It is not surprising that Year 1 expenditures were lower than budgeted and allocated amounts given the truncated timeline for implementation. Of the $3.2 million, $1.5 million was expended on product development, reflecting the significant investment made by TEA to update the Texas GEAR UP website (www.texasgearup.com) through a contract with AMS Pictures. TEA awarded a total of $750,000 to the districts in Year 1, of which the districts expended approximately 65%.

In examining district spending updates for FY 2013, the four districts expended approximately 65% of their grant funds, and only one district expended nearly all of their grant funds. All districts met the 100% match requirement. Districts also expended their budgets in FY 2013 under cost categories in ways that differed somewhat from the planned budgets. For example, District 1 expended less on payroll than budgeted and more on supplies and materials than budgeted, and District 4 expended funds on payroll while expending greater than budgeted funds on professional and contracted services.

The $5 million that TEA received from USDE to implement the Texas GEAR UP SG in FY 2014 was supplemented with 100% matching funds. TEA carried over just under $1.8 million in funds from Year 1 into the Year 2 budget allocations. It is anticipated that TEA will carry over Year 2 funds into Year 3 as well. TEA allocated approximately 21% of the total budget (just under $1.4 million) to districts in FY 2014 for their work. Remaining categories for which TEA allocated significant portions of FY 2014 funds included approximately 36% for additional product development (AMS Pictures) and approximately 33% for technical assistance from the Support Center.

In the upcoming comprehensive evaluation report, the analysis will begin to connect 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 2 are presented here. These include the following:

- **Continue Progress on Student Perceptions.** Data from Year 2 indicate a narrowing gap between student and parent postsecondary educational aspirations and expectations. In addition, perceptions regarding students' desire to go to college and their awareness of financial options improved. In order to progress on these important aspects of the program, TEA and the Support Center are encouraged to continue providing districts with various strategies related to increasing awareness and knowledge of college opportunities available to students. Ongoing attention to helping students set up aspirations and gain confidence that they can expect to achieve them will also help to maintain the momentum in this area.

- **Seek to Better Understand and Potentially Model School G Implementation.** In both Year 1 and Year 2, School G has engaged in the full range of implementation encouraged by the Texas GEAR UP SG program, building capacity to engage in a large number of activities quickly. Not only did they engage in college visits, they engaged in more than any other grantee. The same was true of job shadowing, which only one other school engaged in, but to a lesser extent. Overall, School G held the greatest number of events and mentored the greatest percentage of students. Notably, School G also had parents and students with the highest rates of knowledge about college readiness in many cases (see Chapter 3 for a full list). School G 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. They were also the school whose students reported the highest level of engagement with the Texas GEAR UP website. While there were some exceptions to these generally favorable findings related to School G, collectively, the findings suggest that School G 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.

- **Focus on Targeted Support From the Support Center to Schools.** Schools were generally positive about their interactions with the Support Center, although teachers and administrators at some schools reported minimal engagement with the Support Center staff. Texas GEAR UP SG should work with the Support Center to examine some of the implementation challenges and seek to identify ways to target activities to assist schools in overcoming them. Schools that faced substantial challenges when implementing activities in Year 2 may be in particular need of support to be able to implement the range of activities going forward. For those schools that were effectively implementing programs in both Year 1 and Year 2, ongoing support can help to maintain those efforts, especially to facilitate the transition to high school.
- **Identify Strategies to Reach Out to Parents.** All schools need to identify strategies to improve parent 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. The evaluation will continue to collect parent motivation data to inform this next step.
- **Continue to Support Grant Coordinators and College Preparation Advisors.** The College Preparation Advisors appear to have made positive contributions to the Texas GEAR UP SG programs. Based on consistent feedback, TEA is encouraged to work with the Support Center and districts to identify appropriate times and locations for one-on-one interactions between students and College Preparation Advisors. TEA and Texas GEAR UP SG staff should offer the College Preparation Advisors some additional training and supports as they move from the middle school to the high school environment.
- **Increase Statewide Implementation Efforts.** While statewide efforts have made significant resources available through the website, use continues to be low. Similarly, TEA has identified Project Share as a strategy for providing GEAR UP-related teacher PD statewide, but has not implemented this strategy to date. TEA and its collaborators will want to continue to focus efforts on these statewide project objectives. 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.

5.3   Next Steps in the Evaluation

The next step in the evaluation will be to analyze connections between outcomes and implementation. This analysis will include STAAR, promotion, and Algebra I completion as key outcomes. In order to understand the outcomes in context, the upcoming report will compare findings at the Texas GEAR UP SG schools to findings from schools selected to be statistically similar to the participating schools, but that are not participating in a GEAR UP program. The next evaluation report will also examine the primary cohort students' transition to high school and the strategies used by Texas GEAR UP SG schools to support students during the transition.

At the same time, the evaluation will continue in the 2014–15 school year, when the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort is in Grade 9. The Year 3 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 2014 focused on summer programming and transitioning to high school. Site visits and parent and student surveys in spring 2015 will focus on implementation during the school year.

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Appendix A: Evaluation Questions and Project Goals

A.1 Evaluation Questions Addressed in Year 1 Implementation Report

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

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

Evaluation Questions
1. Implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG Strategies and Identification of Potential Best Practices
1.1 To evaluate implementation of Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG) strategies intended for teacher professional development (PD) to improve academic rigor (AR) and data-driven instruction (DDI)
1.1.1 What types of PD implementation strategies were identified by grantees in their Year 1 action plans?
1.1.2 In Year 1, when and to what extent did grantees implement PD strategies?
1.1.3 What percentage of core content teachers had the opportunity to participate in PD training regarding each of the following: differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, project-based learning (PBL), other? What percentage of core content teachers actually participated in each PD opportunity? To what extent, if any, did teachers other than core content teachers have an opportunity to participate and actually participate in PD?
1.1.4 When and how did grantees provide PD regarding vertical team preparation and implementation to Middle School (MS) and High School (HS) teachers? Were appropriate teachers from all schools on the vertical team able to attend the PD?
1.1.5 What are perceptions of teachers who attend given PD regarding: training itself, impact on teacher practice, and impact on vertical alignment, as appropriate to training?
1.1.6 What facilitators and barriers can be identified to implementing PD opportunities? If barriers to implementing were identified, to what extend 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?
1.2 To evaluate implementation of student support services Texas GEAR UP SG strategies
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?

Evaluation Questions
1.2.6 During each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students? How do grantees inform students about opportunities to learn about college attendance and career success? How many activities are held for students to attend? How and to what extent do grantees provide information to students regarding information that is available through the state office?
1.2.7 By the end of the year, how many students (%) participate in each type of college readiness activity conducted by grantees? How many activities does each student attend?
1.2 To evaluate implementation of Student Support Services Texas GEAR UP SG strategies
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)?
1.3 To identify potential best practices
1.3.1 What practices implemented by the grantee might be identified as potential best practices based on Year 1 data?
1.3.2 What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by grantees (students, parents, staff) to be effective, and therefore a potential best practice?
1.3.3 What individual strategies and/or mix of strategies were provided in Year 1?
2. Family, School and Community Impact
2.1 To evaluate the impact of GEAR UP on families (parents)
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?
2.2 To evaluate the impact of GEAR UP on community partnerships
2.2.1 At the end of each grant year, how many partnerships have schools formed with business alliances? In what ways and how often have business partners offered opportunities for career exploration to students?
2.2.2 At the end of each grant year, how many partnerships have schools formed with government entities? Community groups? In what ways and how often have partners offered opportunities for career exploration to students? Opportunities to provide information regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness and readiness?
2.2.3 What are the perceptions of the school and of the community partners regarding the partnership as it relates to meeting GEAR UP goals? What facilitators and barriers to partnerships are reported? If barriers were identified, to what extent were grantees able to overcome such barriers and how? Do grantees anticipate and are they able to overcome barriers in following years?
3. Statewide Impact
3.1 To evaluate the impact of GEAR UP on statewide availability of information and professional learning opportunities
3.1.1 By the end of Year 1, what types of information regarding college readiness have been made available through the state? Are there any topics relevant to college readiness not yet available?

Evaluation Questions
3.1.2 What steps if any has the state office taken to communicate to schools and families about information available?
3.1.3 Each year, how many GEAR UP professional learning opportunities are made available to educators (e.g., Project Share, face-to-face)? How many educators, including those not at current GEAR UP campuses, are participating in such opportunities?
4. Cost and Sustainability Outcomes
4.1 To evaluate use of GEAR UP funding
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?
4.2 To evaluate sustainability of GEAR UP implementation
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 8th grade. By the end of the project's third year, 85% of students will have completed Algebra I.
- Project Objective 1.2 - By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Recommend High School Plan or Distinguished Achievement Plan, including four years of credits in each core subject, will meet or exceed the state average.

Project Goal 2 - Increase access to and success in quality advanced academic programs.
- Project Objective 2.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all participating high schools will make opportunities available for each student to complete 18 hours of college credit (through AP, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment) by the time he or she graduates from high school.
- Project Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including limited English proficient (LEP) students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course.
- Project Objective 2.3: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will graduate with college credit earned by AP exam or through dual credit.

Project Goal 3 - Provide professional development for strong data-driven instruction.
- Project Objective 3.1: In each grant year, all core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and project-based learning.
- Project Objective 3.2: In each grant year, teams of teachers at the middle and high school will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.

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

- Project Objective 4.1: By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the 8th grade students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on results of teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data.
- Project Objective 4.2: Beginning in the second year, at least 30% of the students will be involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level, ease transitions, and increase college awareness.
- Project Objective 4.3: By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, necessary academic preparation for college.

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

- Project Objective 5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the PSAT.[121] By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT.
- Project Objective 5.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of students meeting criterion on the ACT/SAT will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.3: At the end of the project's sixth year, the number of students who graduate college ready in mathematics and English will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.4: At the end of the project's sixth year, the cohort completion rate will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.5: At the beginning of the seventh year, more than 50% of cohort of students will enroll in postsecondary education in the fall after high school graduation.

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

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

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

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

Project Goal 8 - Build and expand community partnerships.

- Project Objective 8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.

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[121] 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.

- Project Objective 8.2: Participating campuses will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.

Project Goal 9 - Promote college readiness statewide.
- Project Objective 9.1: Each year, the project will increase the number of educators participating in GEAR UP professional learning, including through Project Share and face-to-face trainings.
- Project Objective 9.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 40% of Texas school districts will have utilized at least one Texas GEAR UP statewide resource, including materials and professional development.

Appendix B: Evaluation Design, Methods, and Analytics

While the current report is focused on implementation of Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grant (SG), understanding the overall evaluation design helps the reader understand the logic of the data being collected.

B.1   Longitudinal Design

One important aspect of the evaluation design is to study Texas GEAR UP SG longitudinally. The Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation is based on a cohort model design. Texas GEAR UP SG services were first provided to Grade 7 students in participating districts during the 2012–13 school year and will continue through the first year of enrollment at a postsecondary institution (the 2018–19 school year). There are two additional cohort groups of interest for the purposes of the evaluation that will be included in comprehensive reports. First, one of the comparison groups will be a retrospective comparison group of the students who are one-grade level ahead of the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort—the students at the Texas GEAR UP SG schools who were in Grade 8 in the 2012–13 school year. Examining trends in outcomes in this cohort as compared to the targeted cohort will allow Texas Education Agency (TEA) to better understand how the program has potentially created change at the school level. Similarly, while the 2012–13 Grade 7 cohort is the primary target for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, it is hoped that future cohorts of students will also benefit through sustained implementation of the program with new Grade 7 students. Therefore, the evaluation team will compare outcome data from the follow-on cohorts as well. For example, by the third annual implementation report, it will have examined trends in successful completion of Algebra I in Grade 8 for three cohorts of students (i.e., Grade 8 in the 2012–13 school year [comparison retrospective cohort], Grade 8 in the 2013–14 school year [target cohort], and Grade 8 in the 2014–15 school year [comparison follow-on cohort]). The potential cohorts of interest are presented in Table B.1.[122]

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

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

B.2   Quasi-Experimental Design

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

B.2.1 Propensity Score Matching

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

Specific details regarding the PSM will be provided in future reports when outcome data are analyzed. The information presented here represents the plan to conduct the PSM. ICF will conduct a school level PSM using an Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and Common Core Data. Each GEAR UP school will be matched with one comparison school (nearest-neighbor method).[123] Three aspects of the PSM are described here. In cases where alternatives are described, final determinations will be based on the extent to which balance on covariates between intervention and control sample is achieved.

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

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[123] The nearest-neighbor method selects the *n* comparison units whose propensity scores are closets to the treated unit.

relatively rare occurrence (i.e., only seven cases). It is anticipated this can limit the utility of the propensity score as a balancing score in the present application. However, there are alternative distance metrics that can be used, including Mahalanobis distance; robust Mahalanobis distance; weighted Mahalanobis distance where the weights are determined to maximize balance (Diamond and Sekhon, forthcoming). All the alternatives will be explored, and the final choice will be based on the covariate balance they achieve.

B.3   Methodology

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

B.4   Data Sources and Data Collection

Evaluators used several data sources for this report, including Annual Performance Report (APR) data, extant data provided by TEA, student and 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, 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, but grantees were eventually able to enter APR data in an ongoing manner. In cases in this report where there are differences from TEA's APR federal report, they are noted along with an explanation.

In order to broadly understand what is collected for the APR, we have retained the Year 1 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. 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 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.[124] In fall 2013, 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. 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).[125] 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.[126] Students and parents could choose to take the survey in either English or in Spanish. Survey data was collected anonymously.

The U.S. Department of Education has identified items that must be included on the surveys (i.e., five items each on the student and parent survey). From this basic foundation, GEAR UP

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[124] 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.

[125] 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.

[126] 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.

programs are free to add additional questions. Items were selected for inclusion in the Texas GEAR UP SG surveys from surveys developed by members of the ICF evaluation team with prior experience evaluating GEAR UP programs and based on sample surveys (i.e., CoBro Consulting, 2010). Content areas on the survey were finalized with TEA and included information regarding such items as: a) student/parent satisfaction with the program and program activities; b) student/parent questions on educational expectations and aspirations; and (c) student and parent knowledge regarding postsecondary education, including financial knowledge. Understanding what information parents and students have learned and retained that Texas GEAR UP SG 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 In-Person/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 interim Texas GEAR UP SG state director at TEA and with appropriate personnel from each of the four statewide TEA collaborators late in spring 2014 (see Appendix D for interview protocols). The interview with the interim 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 2. 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 seven Texas GEAR UP SG schools in fall 2013 and spring 2014. The evaluation team made copies of interview and focus group protocols available

to schools (see Appendix C) prior to participating in the visit. Telephone calls and emails were used to communicate with each site regarding the visit and to develop a site visit schedule. Schedules varied by school based on the availability of participants, but all schools were asked to schedule time for separate interviews with the GEAR UP coordinator, 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.

- **School Staff Interviews.** The ICF team designed interview protocols for principals, assistant principals, 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 (i.e., principal, assistant principal) as well as school-site GEAR UP SG staff. Overall, ICF conducted interviews with 19 school administrators.

- **Teacher Focus Groups.** ICF conducted teacher focus groups at all of the middle 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 three 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 2013 and spring 2014, ICF conducted 36 teacher focus groups with 106 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, 118 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 six sites where the school requested such support. At four sites, Spanish-speaking parents attended and ICF conducted two focus groups at these sites, one in English and one in Spanish. Overall, 70 parents participated in focus groups, including 22 who attended Spanish-language sessions. The typical parent focus group averaged three 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. However, no site was able to schedule such a 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 2013, ICF reviewed the data and asked TEA to follow up with schools for clarification regarding some responses. The survey data was examined for missing values, outliers, and response patterns. Once all cleaning steps were completed, a final clean data set was prepared for use in analyses.

B.6   Data Analytics

B.6.1   Descriptive & Change Statistics: Implementation Analysis

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

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.

School/district was the key grouping variable used in this report. Information on providing implementation was also grouped by provision type (i.e., virtual vs. face-to-face).In future reports, students will be grouped in several ways including gender, race/ethnicity, LEP status, and special education status. Students will also be 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 will be examined relative to the student characteristics (e.g., students with special needs or in advanced courses more or less likely to have parents participating in GEAR UP events).

LEVEL/MIX OF IMPLEMENTATION

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

B.6.2 Analyses of Site Visit Qualitative Data

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

DATA REVIEW

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

CASE STUDIES

Case studies were developed for each of the four 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

Rubin, D. B. (1973). Matching to remove bias in observational studies. *Biometrics*, *29*(1), 159–183.

Diamond, A., & Sekhon, J. S. (Forthcoming.) 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.

Rosenbaum, P. R. (1989). Optimal matching for observational studies. *Journal of the American Statistical Association, 84*(408), 1024–1032.

Appendix C: Texas GEAR UP State Grant Annual Performance Reporting Data Requested from Grantees, 2013–14

Similar instructions were provided to each Texas GEAR UP SG school to assist them in providing required annual performance reporting (APR) data due in April 2014 as was used in 2012–13 (which is provided below).

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

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

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

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

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

3. **Enter the other student data on Tabs 3 through 7.**
   a. Once the worksheets have been populated you can continue to complete Tabs 3-7

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

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

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

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU NEED HELP.

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

Descriptions of the Individual Worksheets and their Respective Columns

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
1. Main Page		Enter the contact information for the person who will be completing the report on this page in rows 2 through 6.
		This page also provides hotlinks to each of the worksheets.
2. Grade 7 Student Enrollment *TEA will input the campus' Grade 7 student enrollment based on the fall snapshot. Please review the list and identify any students who have de-enrolled or enrolled since the fall snapshot. If new Grade 7 students have enrolled, please add a new line of data for each new student.*	Column A	Local ID
	Column B	First Name: If adding names, please add as you would in PEIMS.
	Column C	Last Name: If adding names, please add as you would in PEIMS.
	Column D	Gender: Select or type Female or Male
	Column E	Race: Select or type from the following list: • 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. • 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, North Africa, or the Middle East. • Two or more races • Race Unknown

Column F   Ethnicity:

Select or type from the following:

- Yes, Hispanic or Latino – A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
- No
- Ethnicity Unknown

Column G   Limited English Proficient Status: You will select the PEIMS LEP status indicator code from the drop down list as follows:

- **0 Not LEP**
- **1 Identified As Limited English Proficient (LEP)**
- **F Student Exited From LEP Status - Monitored 1 (M1)** – student has met criteria for bilingual/ESL program exit, is no longer classified as LEP in PEIMS, and is in his or her first year of monitoring as required by 19 TAC §89.1220(l) and is not eligible for funding due to the fact that they are not LEP
- **S Student Exited From LEP Status - Monitored 2 (M2)** – student has met criteria for bilingual/ESL program exit, is no longer classified as LEP in PEIMS, and is in his or her second year of monitoring as required by 19 TAC §89.1220(l) and is not eligible for funding due to the fact that they are not LEP

Column H   Special Education Status: Select Yes/No to indicate if currently identified as special education

Column I   Enrollment Status: If this student is currently enrolled in Grade 7 at the campus select Yes from the dropdown menu; if student is not currently enrolled, select No. (You can also type Yes or No). **Only students with a Yes will populate onto further sheets where GEAR UP participation will be described.** Do not leave any blanks.

Column J   Enrollment/De-Enrollment Date: If you indicated Yes student is enrolled in Grade 7 and they are a new enrollee since the fall snapshot, please enter the date student enrolled on campus.

If you entered No to indicate a student had de-enrolled, please indicate the de-enrollment date.

It is not necessary to add enrollment dates for students who have stayed enrolled since the fall snapshot.

Dates should be entered as mm/dd/yyyy. Date must be between 8/1/2012 and 3/31/2013.

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

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

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

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

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
4. Academic Services (cont.)	Column G	How many <u>hours of Virtual ELA Tutoring/homework assistance</u> did the student receive? Tutoring/homework assistance is defined in the same way as in person but here you are counting hours provided virtually. Virtual tutoring services include services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.
		Count number of hours from enrollment in tutoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in virtual tutoring for ELA.
	Column H	How many <u>hours of In-Person Science Tutoring/homework assistance</u> did the student receive? In-Person Tutoring/homework assistance services provide additional academic instruction designed to increase the academic achievement of students. Tutoring can occur one-on-one or in small groups before school, during school, after school, during study or lunch breaks, or on weekends and be provided by GEAR UP staff, hired tutors, teachers, trained peers, and/or volunteers. In-person indicates that the tutoring is face-to-face.
		Count number of hours from enrollment in tutoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in in-person tutoring for science.
	Column I	How many <u>hours of Virtual Science Tutoring/homework assistance</u> did the student receive? Tutoring/homework assistance is defined in the same way as in person but here you are counting hours provided virtually. Virtual tutoring services include services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.
		Count number of hours from enrollment in tutoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in virtual tutoring for Science.
	Column J	<u>Decision to Tutor</u>: Please select one of the following to indicate how the decision was made to have the student be involved in tutoring/homework assistance: • Teacher/Counselor Input only • Diagnostic Data Only • Both Teacher/Counselor Input AND Diagnostic Data • Other (if other reason please specify in Column K)
	Column K	<u>Other Reason Tutor</u>: If student received tutoring based on reasons other than teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data, please specify how decision was made (e.g., student requested, parent requested).
	Column L	<u>Hours of In-Person Mentoring</u>: If the student participated in comprehensive mentoring, please indicate the number of hours of mentoring received. Count number of hours from enrollment in mentoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in mentoring.

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
		Please count in-person and virtual hours of mentoring separately.
		Comprehensive mentoring services are provided when GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff identifies students who would benefit from an ongoing supportive relationship with a trained, caring adult or older student, i.e., "mentor." Mentors meet regularly with their assigned student(s). Meetings may be on or off campus and either during or outside of the school day. Typical issues addressed during mentoring meetings include academic, social, organization or life skill development. Per the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), comprehensive mentoring must provide students with financial aid information, and encourage students to stay in school, enroll in rigorous and challenging coursework, apply for postsecondary education, and, if applicable, the GEAR UP scholarship. Mentoring Programs may include: • Traditional mentoring programs that match one youth and one adult. • Group mentoring that links one adult with a small group of young people. • Team mentoring that involves several adults working with small groups of young people, ideally with a ratio of no more than four youth to one adult. • Peer mentoring that connects caring youth with other adolescents.
	Column M	Hours of Virtual Mentoring: If the student participated in virtual comprehensive mentoring, please indicate the number of hours of mentoring received. Count number of hours from enrollment in mentoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in mentoring. Please count in-person and virtual hours of mentoring separately. The definition of mentoring is the same as for in-person mentoring. Virtual comprehensive mentoring includes mentoring services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means (E-mentoring that functions via email and the internet).
	Column N	Decision to Mentor: Please select one of the following to indicate how the decision was made to have the student be involved in tutoring/homework assistance: • Teacher/Counselor Input only • Diagnostic Data Only • Both Teacher/Counselor Input AND Diagnostic Data • Other (if other reason please specify in Column O)
	Column O	If student received mentoring based on reasons other than teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data, please specify how decision was made (e.g., student requested, parent requested).

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

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
	Column F	Hours of In-Person Counseling/Advising/Academic Planning/Career Counseling: If the student participated in this service, please indicate the number of hours received. Count hours through March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not participating. Please count in-person and virtual hours separately. Counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling services span a spectrum of activities with individual students or small groups of students. Services are defined as follows: • Counseling: Discussing personal growth issues such as decision making, problem solving, goal setting, attendance, behavior concerns, or family issues. • Advising: Providing assistance on course selection (secondary or postsecondary), college and/or career choices, or college and/or career planning. • Academic planning: Providing assistance on coursework selection, course of study choices, college major selection, assessment advising or interpretation of scores, or assistance with placement tests. • Career counseling: Providing assistance about career choices, career planning, internships, or career interests.
	Column G	Hours of Virtual Counseling/Advising/Academic Planning/Career Counseling: If the student participated in this service, please indicate the number of hours received. Count hours through March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not participating. Please count in-person and virtual hours separately. Virtual counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling is defined the same as in-person but includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
6. Student Events NOTE On this sheet each column will provide information about a given student event that multiple students may have participated in. Grade 7 student participation will be tracked on the sheet entitled 7. Events Student Attend. This page works on the assumption that length of attendance is the same for all who attend event.	Row 2	Provide the specific <u>name of the event</u> that was held for students. The name will generally describe the event. Events will include (see below for details): • College Visits • Job Site Visits • Educational Field Trips • Student Workshops
	Row 3	<u>Provide a brief description of this event</u>. For example, if it is a college visit indicate who supervised the trip; if it is a workshop indicate who presented and topics, etc. If event lasted several days, please describe here (only hours can be entered below).
	Row 4	<u>Event Cost</u>: Describe any costs associated with the event. This should include actual dollar amounts to the extent possible. For example, costs to charter a bus or to bring in a speaker.
	Row 5	<u>Event length</u>: Enter event length in number of hours. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours).
	Row 6	<u>Event Type</u>: Select from the following list: • **College visit**: A physical visit to a college campus by a student facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, college representatives, or other school staff. College visits should include an official tour, presentation(s) by admissions, financial aid, academic departments, athletics, student affairs, residence life, multicultural affairs, or other college departments. • **College student shadowing**: A one-on-one experience in which a middle or high school student spends a day on a college campus with an undergraduate student seeing typical college life. • **Virtual college visit** includes college visit services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means. Virtual college visits must be facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff and include the same elements as a physical college visit. **Job site visits** offer students exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of interest and reinforces the link between classroom learning, work requirements, and the need for postsecondary education. Students witness the work environment, employability and occupational skills in practice, the value of professional training, and potential career options. Select from: • **Physical Job Site Visit:** A physical visit to a local business/work environment

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter

facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff. Job site visits should include visits to local businesses, employers, and agencies to explore different professions or career selections, and can be followed by job shadowing.

- **Job shadowing:** A one-on-one experience in which a middle or high school student spends a day at a business or work environment with an employee seeing typical job duties.
- **Virtual job site visit:** Virtual job site visit includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means. Virtual job visits must be facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff and include the same elements as a physical job visit.

Educational field trips are services during which students leave their school or travel to another location, and include an academic component that is linked to classroom activities. Examples would include a science demonstration on a college campus (the purpose of the event was the science demonstration not a college visit), a class trip to attend a science or history museum linked to curriculum, academic competitions, cultural experiences such as performing arts, museums, or similar activity, and field trips that complement and enhance existing curriculum in key content areas. Select by content area:

- **Mathematics Educational Field Trip**
- **ELA Educational Field Trip**
- **Science Educational Field Trip**
- **Other Educational Field Trip** (content other than Mathematics, ELA or science)

Student Workshops are services that include interactive informational classroom-level or large- or small-group sessions that involve hands-on experience for each student in the workshop. Workshops are offered to groups of students on topics like secondary school success and college awareness, and general elements of college readiness such as study skills, self-monitoring, goal-setting, time management, and problem-solving. This includes guest speakers that motivate students and highlight careers. Workshops are informational in nature and are not intended to provide direct counseling or guidance to individual or small groups of students. Be sure to indicate detail regarding these issues in description of event and be sure the description indicates the subject area focused on in the workshop if any (e.g., Mathematics, ELA, science, other). *Workshops should be recorded by subject area.* Select from:

- **In-person Student Workshop: Mathematics**
- **In-person Student Workshop: ELA**
- **In-person Student Workshop: Science**
- **In-person Student Workshop: Other**

Virtual student workshops: Virtual student workshops include services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
		Virtual Student Workshop: Mathematics **Virtual Student Workshop: ELA** **Virtual Student Workshop: Science** **Virtual Student Workshop: Other** **Family Event:** are services in which parents or families participate. These services involve GEAR UP students and their families/guardians or just their parents/guardians. Family events include GEAR UP activities that recognize the role of families in student success, and are not defined under a previous category. **Other:** If an event does not fit into one of the categories provided, please select other and be sure description provides details to help us understand the event.
	Row 7	If the event was a college visit, indicate the name of the college visited.
	Row 8	If the event was a college visit, select if the college visited was a 2 or 4 year institution.
	Rows 9-16	If this event was open to <u>students</u> in grades other than Grade 7, indicate the number of students at each grade level who attended the event. Grade 7 student attendance will be reported on the worksheet labeled "7. Events Students Attend."

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

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
8. Parent Events NOTE: On this sheet each column will provide information about a given parent event that multiple parents may have participated in. Parent of Grade 7 student participation will be tracked on the sheet entitled "9. Events Parents Attend." This page works on the assumption that length of attendance is the same for all who attend event.	Row 2	Provide a specific <u>name for an event</u> that was held for parents. Please note that while we use the term parents it can include parents and guardians. The name will generally describe the event. Events will include (see below for details): • Workshop on college preparation/financial aid • College Visit • Family Event • Other
	Row 3	<u>Event Type:</u> Please select from the following in drop down: **Workshops of college prep/financial aid** services include a parent/guardian or adult family member's attendance with or without their child(ren) at a workshop that demonstrates how to assist their student with college preparation or financial aid information. These services include informational sessions for parents focusing on college entrance requirements and financial aid opportunities. • **In-Person Parent Family Workshop:** Parents • **Virtual parent/family workshops:** Virtual parent/family workshops include services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means. **College visit** services take place on college campuses. • **In-Person College visits:** A physical visit to a college campus by a parent/guardian, with or without a student, facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, college representatives, or other school staff. The primary objective of the event would be to conduct a college visit. Should include an official tour, presentation(s) by admissions, academic departments, athletics, student affairs, residence life, multicultural affairs, or other college departments. • **Virtual college visits:** Virtual parent/guardian college visits includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means. Virtual college visits must be facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff and include the same elements as a physical college visit. • **Family events** are services in which parents or families participate. These services involve GEAR UP students and their families/guardians or just their parents/guardians. Family events include GEAR UP activities that recognize the role of families in student success, and are not defined under a previous category. • **Other:** If an event does not fit into one of the categories provided, please select other and be sure description provides details to help us understand the event.

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

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

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

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
10. Teacher Professional Development NOTE: On this sheet each column will provide information about a given teacher professional development opportunity that multiple teachers may have participated in. Teacher participation will be tracked on the sheet entitled "11. Teacher PD Enrollment." This page works on the assumption that length of attendance is the same for all who attend.	Row 2	Provide a specific <u>name for the teacher professional development</u>. The name will generally describe the event.
	Row 3	<u>Provide a brief description of this event</u>. For example, if it is a college visit indicate who supervised the trip; if it is a workshop indicate who presented and topics, etc. If event lasted several days, please describe here (only hours can be entered below).
	Row 4	<u>Event length</u>: Enter event length in number of hours. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours).
	Row 5	<u>Event Cost</u>: Describe any costs associated with the event. This should include actual dollar amounts to the extent possible. For example, costs to charter a bus or to bring in a speaker.
	Row 6	<u>Event Delivery Type</u>: Please select from drop down if the PD was provided: • In-Person (face-to-face) • Virtual Note: If some attend in-person and some attend face-to-face please count it as two events but indicate in the description that it is the same event.
	Row 7	<u>Event Content</u>: Please select if each of the following topics/content was included in this professional development. Select all that apply by checking the appropriate box. • Differentiated instruction • Advanced instructional strategies • Project based learning • Vertical team preparation (The vertical team preparation should be conducted with teams of teachers from both middle and high school). • GEAR UP implementation.
	Row 8	<u>Number of Grade 7 Teachers Attending</u>: Please indicate the total number of Grade 7 teachers who attended this event. You will also name them on "11. Teacher PD Enrollment."

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
	Row 9	<u>Number of Grade 7 Content Area Teachers Attending</u>: Of the total number of Grade 7 teachers who attended this event, please indicate the number who were content area teachers (i.e., Mathematics, ELA, science, social studies).
	Rows 10-17	If this event was open to Teachers of students in grades other than Grade 7, indicate the number of teachers of students at each grade level attended the event. If the teacher teaches across grade levels: • If they predominately teach at a given grade level, code as that code. • Otherwise code as teaching at the highest grade level they teach (e.g., if they teach Grade 11 and 12 equally, code as a Grade 12 teacher). Please also name all teachers who attended on "11. Teacher PD Enrollment."

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
11. Teacher PD Enrollment	Column A-C	Please provide the Last four numbers of the teacher's social security number, First Name and Last Name. Providing the last four digits facilitates our match to PEIMS. If grantees prefer this can be left off, but please try to put in teacher name as input into PEIMS in order to facilitate matching.
	Column D	Grade Level Teach: Please indicate the grade level this teacher teaches by selecting from the following drop down menu (when possible, indicate an individual grade level based on primary responsibilities): • Grade K-4 • Grade 5 • Grade 6 • Grade 7 • Grade 8 • Multiple Middle School grade levels • Grade 9 • Grade 10 • Grade 11 • Grade 12 • Multiple High School grade levels
	Column E	Content Area Teacher: Please select from the following which best describes the content taught by this teacher: • Mathematics Teacher • ELA Teacher • Science Teacher • Social Studies Teacher • Not a content area teacher (Middle/High School) • Not applicable (teaches across subjects [Elementary])
	Column F	Teacher Attendance at Event 1: For the first event you described on the sheet entitled "10. Teacher Professional Dev.", please indicate teacher attendance by selecting or typing Yes next to name of each teacher who attended. Blanks indicate a teacher did not attend event (or you can select/type No to indicate did not attend).
	Columns G-K	Complete Teacher Attendance for each event you described on "10. Teacher Professional Dev." by selecting Yes/No. If you only describe three events, attendance will be indicated in Columns F-H.

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
12. Partners	Column A	Provide a <u>name for each GEAR UP partner</u> at the school.
	Column B	<u>Partner Completion Status</u>: Has this partner completed a Partner Identification Form and Cost Share Worksheet? Enter Y (or select from drop down) to indicate yes. Blanks will be considered no or select N from drop down.
	Column C	<u>Partner Type</u>: Select from the drop down list: • Community Organization • Faith-based Organization • Historically Black College and University (HBCU) • Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) • Other Postsecondary Institute • School/District • Other Type of Organization

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 2013, only students were surveyed, and in spring of 2014 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 2013 and spring 2014.

D.1   Texas GEAR UP State Grant Student Survey: Fall 2013

GEAR UP Student Survey, Fall 2013

Reminder: You may have completed a similar survey in spring 2013 for GEAR UP. We will be asking questions each fall and spring to understand how your thinking and understanding about GEAR UP changes over time.

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

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) 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

> **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.
> - 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. **Is this the only time you are completing the GEAR UP Student Survey this semester (fall 2013)?**
    a. Yes, this is my only time completing this survey this semester (fall 2013).
    b. No, I completed the survey online. ***Please STOP and do NOT complete this survey. Thank you for completing it online!***

ABOUT GEAR UP

2. **a. Did you attend [insert school name] last year (when you were in Grade 7)?**
    a. Yes *(skip 2b and go to question 3)*
    b. No *(please answer question 2b)*

    b. If no, did you attend any of the following schools last year (Grade 7)?
    > *<choices removed from this version of the survey for the report to protect confidentiality>*

ABOUT COLLEGE

3. **What is the highest level of education that you want to complete? (Please select only one)**
    a. Less than high school
    b. High school
    c. Some college
    d. 2-year college degree (Associate's degree)
    e. 4-year college degree (Bachelor's degree)
    f. More than a 4-year college degree

4. **What is the highest level of education that you expect to complete? (Please select only one)**
    a. Less than high school
    b. High school
    c. Some college
    d. 2-year college degree (Associate's degree)
    e. 4-year college degree (Bachelor's degree)
    f. More than a 4-year college degree

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")**
    a. Not applicable, I plan to continue my education after high school.
    b. Family commitments (e.g., have/will have child to support; help support parents/siblings)
    c. I need to work after high school
    d. I want to work after high school
    e. I will not need more than high school to succeed
    f. I want to join the military service
    g. It costs too much/I cannot afford it
    h. My grades are not good enough
    i. Other (please write in other reason): _____

6. **Select the sources of information that have helped you to think about your future college education. (Select ALL that apply)**
   a. Information from a class activity or assignment
   b. Doing research specifically at one of the Texas GEAR UP websites: www.texasgearup.com or www.ownyourownfuture.com
   c. Information from or discussions with friends or other people my age
   d. Information from or discussions with GEAR UP staff or GEAR UP events
   e. Information from programs other than GEAR UP (e.g., AVID, Breakthrough)
   f. Information from or discussions with parents/family members
   g. Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors
   h. Information from a college field trip or fair
   i. Information from television
   j. Information from watching sports
   k. Research that I have done on my own
   l. I have not yet thought about my future college education
   m. Other (please describe other sources): _____

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

	$1 to $1,000	$1,001 to $1,900	$1,901 to $3,000	$3,001 to $5,500	$5,501 to $8,400	$8,401 to $12,000	$12,001 to $18,000	More than $18,000
a. Your local public two-year community college? *(Please select only one)*	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. A four-year public college in Texas? *(Please select only one)*	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

8. **Do you think you will be able to afford to attend…**

	Definitely not	Probably not	Not sure	Probably	Definitely
a. Your local public community college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	○	○	○	○	○
b. A public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	○	○	○	○	○

GEAR UP SUMMER PROGRAM 2013

9. **Did you participate in the GEAR UP summer 2013 program at your school?**
   a. Yes *(continue to question 10)*
   b. No *(skip items 10-12 and go to question 13)*
   c. I don't know *(skip items 10-13 and go to question 14)*

10. **Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about the 2013 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.	○	○	○	○
b. I enjoyed the activities offered during the summer program.	○	○	○	○

c. I feel more prepared to take Algebra I or other advanced courses after attending the summer program.	○	○	○	○
d. I have a better understanding of financial aid after attending the summer program.	○	○	○	○
e. I have a better understanding of college entrance requirements after attending the summer program.	○	○	○	○
f. I have a better understanding of the benefits of college after attending the summer program.	○	○	○	○
g. I would recommend the summer program to other students at my school.	○	○	○	○
h. Based on my experiences with the summer 2013 program, I am planning on attending the summer 2014 program if possible.	○	○	○	○

11. **Select the reasons that you attended the summer 2013 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 do well in my Grade 8 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): _____

12. **What additional thoughts, if any, do you have about the summer 2013 GEAR UP program and how it benefited you? If you have any thoughts about the upcoming summer 2014 GEAR UP program, please also share those.**

13. **If you did NOT attend the summer 2013 GEAR UP program, select the reasons that you were NOT able to attend. (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): _____

ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES

14. **For the following set of questions, we would first like to know if you participated in *the academic course or activity* during this school year (2013-2014). If you 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 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 (2013-2014)?		If yes, how effective was this 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	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. Taking an advanced mathematics course other than Algebra 1 *(*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)*	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. Taking an advanced English/language arts course *(*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)*	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. Taking an advanced science course *(*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)*	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. Taking any of the following advanced courses *(*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here)*	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. Tutoring/homework assistance in math	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. Tutoring/homework assistance in English/language arts	○	○	○	○	○	○
h. Tutoring/homework assistance in science	○	○	○	○	○	○
i. Mentoring	○	○	○	○	○	○

15. **Did you know that your school has a College Preparation Advisor who is available to meet with students?**
    a. Yes
    b. No *(skip item 16 and go to question 17)*

16. Have you ever met with the College Preparation Advisor at your school?
- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know

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

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Attending college is important for my future.	○	○	○	○
b. It is too early for me to think about college.	○	○	○	○
c. I am planning to take an advanced course in mathematics next year.	○	○	○	○
d. I am planning to take an advanced course in English/language arts next year.	○	○	○	○
e. I am planning to take an advanced course in science next year.	○	○	○	○

18. 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

19. 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:
- a. More advanced classes
- b. Information about participation in GEAR UP events
- c. Tutoring
- d. Opportunities to participate in College Visits
- e. Information about college entrance requirements
- f. Information about college financial aid/scholarships
- g. Field trips
- h. Information about college student clubs and sports
- i. Information and events presented in other languages like Spanish
- j. Other information, support or activities you would be interested in participating in or learning more about? (please specify): _____

BACKGROUND

20. What is your current grade level?

○ Grade 6	○ Grade 7	○ Grade 8	○ Grade 9	○ Grade 10	○ Grade 11	○ Grade 12	○ Other (please specify): _____

21. What is your gender?

○ Female	○ Male

22. Do you participate in the free or reduced-cost lunch program at school?

○ Yes	○ No	○ Not Sure

23. What is the language you use most often at home? (Please select only one)
- a. English
- b. Spanish
- c. Another language (please specify:_____)

24. What is the language you use <u>most often</u> *with friends*? (Please select only one)
    a. English
    b. Spanish
    c. Another language (please specify:_____)

25. 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

26. 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 2014

GEAR UP Student Survey: Spring 2014

Reminder: You may have completed a similar survey in fall 2013 for GEAR UP. We will be asking questions each fall and spring to understand how your thinking and understanding about GEAR UP changes over time.

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the impact of the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) program at your school. Because you were enrolled in a GEAR UP school in 2013-2014, 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) 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

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.
- 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. **Is this the <u>only</u> time you are completing the GEAR UP Student Survey this semester (spring 2014)?**
   a. Yes, this is my only time completing this survey this semester (spring 2014).
   b. No, I completed the survey online. ***Please STOP and do <u>NOT</u> complete this survey. Thank you for completing it online!***

<u>A</u>BOUT <u>GEAR UP</u>

2. **a. Did you attend this same school last year (when you were in Grade 7)?**
   a. Yes *(skip to question 3)*
   b. No *(please answer question 2b)*
   b. If no, did you attend any of the following schools last year (Grade 7)?

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

<u>A</u>BOUT <u>C</u>OLLEGE

3. **What is the <u>highest</u> level of education that you <u>want</u> to complete? (Please select only one)**
   a. Less than high school
   b. High school
   c. Some college
   d. 2-year college degree (Associate's degree)
   e. 4-year college degree (Bachelor's degree)
   f. More than a 4-year college degree

4. **What is the <u>highest</u> level of education that you <u>expect</u> to complete? (Please select only one)**
   a. Less than high school
   b. High school
   c. Some college
   d. 2-year college degree (Associate's degree)
   e. 4-year college degree (Bachelor's degree)
   f. More than a 4-year college degree

5. **Has participating in GEAR UP activities at your school helped you to decide to go to college after high school graduation?**
    a. Yes
    b. No, I was already planning on going to college
    c. No, I still don't plan to go to college
    d. Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP at my school

6. **If you do <u>not</u> 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")**
    a. Not applicable, I plan to continue my education after high school
    b. Family commitments
    c. I need to work after high school
    d. I want to work after high school
    e. I will not need more than high school to succeed
    f. I want to join the military service after high school
    g. It costs too much/I cannot afford it
    h. My grades are not good enough
    i. Other (please write in other reason): _____

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

	Yes	No
a. college entrance requirements?	○	○
b. the availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?	○	○

8. **Select the sources of information that have helped you to think about your future college education. (Select ALL that apply)**
    a. Information from a class activity or assignment
    b. Doing research specifically at one of the Texas GEAR UP websites: www.texasgearup.com or www.ownyourownfuture.com
    c. Information from or discussions with friends or other people my age
    d. Information from or discussions with GEAR UP staff or GEAR UP events
    e. Information from programs other than GEAR UP (e.g., AVID Breakthrough)
    f. Information from or discussions with parents/family members
    g. Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors
    h. Information from a college field trip or fair
    i. Information from television
    j. Information from watching sports
    k. Research that I have done on my own
    l. None, I have not yet begun to seek outside sources of information for my child's future college education
    m. Other (please describe other sources): _____

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

	$1 to $1,000	$1,001 to $1,900	$1,901 to $3,000	$3,001 to $5,500	$5,501 to $8,400	$8,401 to $12,000	$12,001 to $18,000	More than $18,000
a. Your local public two-year community college? (Please select only one)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. A four-year public college in Texas? *(Please select only one)*	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

10. Do you think you will be able to afford to attend…

	Definitely not	Probably not	Not sure	Probably	Definitely
a. Your local public community college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	○	○	○	○	○
b. A public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	○	○	○	○	○

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

	Not Knowledgeable	Slightly Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
a. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)	○	○	○	○
b. SAT	○	○	○	○
c. ACT	○	○	○	○
d. Federal Pell Grants	○	○	○	○
e. Federal student loans	○	○	○	○
f. Federal work-study	○	○	○	○
g. Scholarships	○	○	○	○
h. Financial aid and the cost and benefits to you in pursuing postsecondary education	○	○	○	○
i. General requirements for college acceptance	○	○	○	○
j. Importance/benefit of college	○	○	○	○

ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES

12. 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 (2013-2014). If you 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 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 (2013-2014)?		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	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. Taking an advanced mathematics course other than Algebra I *(*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)*	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. Taking an advanced English/language arts course *(*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)*	○	○	○	○	○	○

d. Taking an advanced science course (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. Taking any of the following advanced courses (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. Tutoring/homework assistance in math	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. Tutoring/homework assistance in English/language arts	○	○	○	○	○	○
h. Tutoring/homework assistance in science	○	○	○	○	○	○
i. Mentoring	○	○	○	○	○	○
j. The 2013 GEAR UP Summer Program	○	○	○	○	○	○

13. **Did you know that your school has a College Preparation Advisor who is available to meet with students?**
    a. Yes
    b. No *(skip to question 16)*

14. **Have you ever met with the College Preparation Advisor at your school?**
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know

15. **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 or talked about applying to college.**

16. **For these questions, we would first like to know about the *other activities* you may have participated in during this school year (2013-2014). 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 (2013-2014)?		If yes you participated in the activity, how effective was this activity in helping you to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?			
	Yes	*No*	*Not Effective*	*Slightly Effective*	*Mostly Effective*	*Very Effective*
a. Academic or career counseling/advising	○	○	○	○	○	○

b. Financial aid counseling/advising	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. Met with the College Preparation Advisor	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. College visits/college student shadowing	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. Job site visit/job shadowing	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. Educational field trips	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	○	○	○	○	○	○
h. My participation in family/cultural events	○	○	○	○	○	○
i. My parent(s) participation in family/cultural events	○	○	○	○	○	○

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

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Attending college is important for my future.	○	○	○	○
b. It is too early for me to think about college.	○	○	○	○
c. I am planning to take an advanced course in mathematics next year.	○	○	○	○
d. I am planning to take an advanced course in English/language arts next year.	○	○	○	○
e. I am planning to take an advanced course in science next year.	○	○	○	○

18. 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

19. 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:
   a. More advanced classes
   b. Information about participation in GEAR UP events
   c. Tutoring
   d. Opportunities to participate in College Visits
   e. Information about college entrance requirements
   f. Information about college financial aid/scholarships
   g. Field trips
   h. Information about college student clubs and sports
   i. Information and events presented in other languages like Spanish
   j. Other information, support or activities you would be interested in participating in or learning more about (please specify):
   _____

BACKGROUND

20. What is your current grade level?

Grade 6	○ Grade 7	○ Grade 8	○ Grade 9	○ Grade 10	○ Grade 11	○ Grade 12	○ Other (please specify): _____

21. What is your gender?

○ Female	○ Male

22. Do you participate in the free or reduced-cost lunch program at school?

○ Yes	○ No	○ Not Sure

23. What is the language you use most often at home? (Please select only one)
   a. English
   b. Spanish
   c. Both English and Spanish
   d. Another language (please specify:_____)

24. What is the language you use <u>most often</u> *with friends*? (Please select only one)
   a. English
   b. Spanish
   c. Both English and Spanish
   d. Another language (please specify:_____)

25. 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

26. 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.3   Texas GEAR UP State Grant Parent Survey: Spring 2014

Survey of Parent/Guardian of GEAR UP Students: Spring 2014

Reminder: You may have completed a similar survey in spring 2013 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 2013-2014, 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. 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 8, participating in GEAR UP. If you do not have a Grade 8 child, but have a child in different grade who is participating in GEAR UP, please complete the survey for that child. **If you have more than one child in GEAR UP, please complete a survey for each child.**

Filling out this survey is voluntary and you may choose to skip questions or stop taking the survey at any time. Your answers to these questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law and all findings will be reported in a summary manner to preserve your identity. Your name will not be on the survey and ICF will not share your responses with your children, their teachers, their administrators, other students and other parents/legal guardians. Survey responses will be combined before they are presented in reports – individual

responses will not be reported. The study presents minimal risk to you. If you feel uncomfortable/upset during or after the survey and want to talk with someone, please let someone at your child's school know. Study participation helps build knowledge in the state and nationally about how to support students to prepare for postsecondary education. Where appropriate, GEAR UP grantees can use the information learned to adjust GEAR UP programming.

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

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.

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.
• 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 2014.**

   ○ Yes, this is my only time completing this survey in spring 2014.

   ○ 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 2014. ***Please STOP and do NOT complete this survey. Thank you for completing it online!***

2. **a. Do you currently have a child in Grade 8? If so, 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 9	○ 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:**

	Yes	No
a. Has anyone from your child's school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?	○	○
b. Do you know what your child needs to do to get accepted into college?	○	○
c. Have you talked with your child about attending college?	○	○
d. Have you spoken with your child about college entrance requirements?	○	○
e. Do you have enough information about college entrance requirements?	○	○
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?	○	○
g. Do you have enough information about financial aid to help you pay for college?	○	○

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.

    ○ Doing research specifically at one of the Texas GEAR UP websites: www.texasgearup.com or www.ownyourownfuture.com

    ○ Information from or discussions with friends or other parents

    ○ Information from or discussions with GEAR UP staff or GEAR UP events

    ○ Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors

    ○ Information from college materials or visits

    ○ Research that I have done on my own

    ○ 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…**

	$1 to $1,000	$1,001 to $1,900	$1,901 to $3,000	$3,001 to $5,500	$5,501 to $8,400	$8,401 to $12,000	$12,001 to $18,000	More than $18,000
a. Your local public two-year community college? (Please select only one)	○ j	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. A four-year public college in your state? *(Please select only one)*	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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

	Not Knowledgeable	Slightly Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
a. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)	○	○	○	○
b. SAT	○	○	○	○
c. ACT	○	○	○	○
d. Federal Pell Grants	○	○	○	○
e. Federal student loans	○	○	○	○
f. Federal work-study	○	○	○	○
g. Scholarships	○	○	○	○
h. Financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education	○	○	○	○
i. General requirements for college acceptance	○	○	○	○
j. Importance/benefit of college	○	○	○	○

9. **Do you think that your child could afford to attend…**

	Definitely not	Probably not	Probably	Definitely
a. A local public community college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	○	○	○	○
b. A public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	○	○	○	○

GEAR UP SUMMER PROGRAM 2013

10. **Thinking back to last summer (summer 2013), did your child participate in the GEAR UP summer program?**
   a. Yes *(continue to question 11)*
   b. No *(skip to question 14)*
   c. I don't know *(skip to question 15)*

11. **Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about the 2013 GEAR UP summer program.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. My child attended the summer program for the majority of days it was offered.	○	○	○	○
b. My child enjoyed the activities offered during the summer program.	○	○	○	○
c. My child was more prepared to take Algebra I or other advanced courses after attending the summer program.	○	○	○	○
d. My child has a better understanding of financial aid after attending the summer program.	○	○	○	○
e. I would recommend the summer program to other parents.	○	○	○	○
f. Based on my experiences with the summer 2013 program, I am planning on having my child attend the summer 2014 program if possible.	○	○	○	○

12. **Select the reasons that your child attended the summer 2013 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

   ○ I thought it would help my child to do well in Grade 8 classes

   ○ The summer program provided an opportunity for my child to spend time with friends

   ○ 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 2013 GEAR UP program and how it benefited (or not) your child?**

14. **If your child did NOT attend the summer 2013 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): _____

ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S AND YOUR EXPERIENCES

15. 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 (2013-2014). 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.

	Has your child participated in this activity during this school year (2013-2014)?		How effective was this activity in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?			
	Yes	*No*	*Not Effective*	*Slightly Effective*	*Mostly Effective*	*Very Effective*
a. Taking Algebra I	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. Taking an advanced mathematics course other than Algebra	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. Taking an advanced English/language arts course	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. Taking an advanced science course	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. Taking any other advanced courses	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. Tutoring/homework assistance in math	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. Tutoring/homework assistance in English/language arts	○	○	○	○	○	○
h. Tutoring/homework assistance in science	○	○	○	○	○	○
i. Mentoring	○	○	○	○	○	○
j. The 2013 GEAR UP Summer Program	○	○	○	○	○	○

16. For these questions, we would first like to know about the *other activities* your child participated in during this school year (2013-2014). 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 (2013-2014)?		How effective was this activity in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?			
	Yes	*No*	*Not Effective*	*Slightly Effective*	*Mostly Effective*	*Very Effective*
a. Academic or career counseling/advising	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. Financial aid counseling/advising	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. Met with the College Preparation Advisor	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. College visits/college student shadowing	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Has your child participated in this activity during this school year (2013-2014)?		How effective was this activity in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?			
	Yes	*No*	*Not Effective*	*Slightly Effective*	*Mostly Effective*	*Very Effective*
e. Job site visit/job shadowing	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. Educational field trips	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	○	○	○	○	○	○
h. Family/cultural events held by the school	○	○	○	○	○	○

17. **Think about the GEAR UP events/activities <u>you</u> participated in <u>this school year</u> (2013-2014). How effective was each in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college? <u>If you did not participate in the given type of activity, indicate that and skip to the next type of activity.</u>**

	Not applicable/ Did not participate or attend	*Not Effective*	*Slightly Effective*	*Mostly Effective*	*Very Effective*
a. Parent/family counseling/advising	○	○	○	○	○
b. Parent workshops on the importance/benefits of college	○	○	○	○	○
c. Parent/family workshops about college options/requirements	○	○	○	○	○
d. Parent/family workshops about financing college	○	○	○	○	○
e. Parent/family high school or college visits	○	○	○	○	○
f. Family/cultural events held by the school	○	○	○	○	○
g. Meeting(s) with GEAR UP staff	○	○	○	○	○

18. **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): _____

19. **Have any of the following contributed to your <u>not</u> 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): _____

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

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know/ Doesn't Apply
a. Attending college is important for my child's career goal and future.	○	○	○	○	○
b. It's too early to think about my child going to college.	○	○	○	○	○
c. GEAR UP has helped my child be more successful in school.	○	○	○	○	○
d. GEAR UP has helped my child better prepare for college.	○	○	○	○	○
e. I will encourage my child to take advanced courses next year.	○	○	○	○	○
f. I will encourage my child to participate in summer 2014 GEAR UP activities.	○	○	○	○	○

21. 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

22. 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:
   a. GEAR UP participation
   b. Tutoring
   c. College visits
   d. College entrance requirements
   e. College financial aid/scholarships
   f. Information and events presented in other languages like Spanish
   g. Other activities you would be interested in participating in or learning more about? (please specify):
   _____

BACKGROUND

23. Please select the school your child attends:

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

24. a. Did your child attend this same school last year (Grade 7)? (If no, please answer item 24b).

○ No	○ Yes (If yes, go to the next section.)

   b. If no, did your child attend any of the following schools last year (Grade 7)?

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

25. Does your child participate in the free or reduced-cost lunch program at school?

○ Yes	○ No	○ Not Sure

26. What is your child's gender?

○ Female	○ Male

27. What is your gender?

○ Female	○ Male

28. What is the language you use <u>most often</u> at home? (Please select only one)

○ English	○ Spanish	○ Both English and Spanish	○ Another language (please specify):

29. 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): _____

30. 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

31. 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.)*

32. 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 Spring 2014: 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.
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. *What types of compliance/monitoring, if any, do you engage in? APR?*
    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 advanced course enrollment/Algebra I 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 professional development, student and parent workshops or services? If any, how satisfied are you?*
    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 GEAR UP efforts to promote an effective transition for students from Grade 8 to high school? 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 partners? What roles do / will they play in program implementation? Are they formal partners or more informal? 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 partners in GEAR UP activities? This may include involvement with grantees and/or with the statewide initiatives? Any partners 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?*

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.5　Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2013: Coordinator Interview Protocol

Interviewer Guidelines:

➢ Briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your role as the day-to-day coordinator / contact for GEAR UP at your school. Your contribution to the evaluation effort is extremely valuable and will give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the successes, benefits, and challenges associated with implementing GEAR UP. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. We expect this interview to take approximately 45 minutes.*

➢ Convey to interview participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the interview is voluntary; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop the interview at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; and (4) interview data will be maintained in secure areas.*

➢ Ask permission to record the interview: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording. If you choose not to have the interview recorded, we will be taking notes but will not include your name in reporting. Any transcripts of the conversation shared with TEA will have all identifying information removed.*

➢ Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *Please review and sign the consent form.*

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

INTERVIEWER QUESTIONS

1) What are your roles and responsibilities in GEAR UP?
    a. *What is your job title?*
    b. *What GEAR UP activities are you involved with? (e.g., vertical team, before/after school services, teacher PD, partners, statewide). What activities/programs do you deliver yourself? What activities do you oversee or delegate to others? Probe for perceptions of this oversight/management structure.*
    c. *How do you interact with the new college prep advisor(s) at your school(s)?*
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/or pre-AP; teacher PD on differentiated instruction or rigor, etc.)*
    b. *Who was involved in the GEAR UP planning process (parents, school leaders, teachers, principal)? Who is involved now?*
    c. *How does preparing for long-term success of GEAR UP fit into this year's planning?*
3) What is the structure of GEAR UP at your school / individual schools? Who are the key players? How are decisions made?
    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)
    a. *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. *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. *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. *What challenges have you faced? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
    d. *What role if the college prep 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).
    a. *What challenges has the school faced in providing these types of services?*
    b. *How did you recruit students?*
    c. *On what student academic performance outcomes do you think the services will have the greatest effect (e.g., homework completion, Algebra readiness, grasp of materials, test scores, grades, coursework, course completion)? Any early indicators of success?*
    d. *What school factors facilitated the development/use of these student support services?*
    e. *What are your perceptions about their success? What challenges did you identify? Were you able to overcome any challenges? What would you change for the future?*
    f. *How can these services be sustained for next year's/future Grade 8 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 8 students Does your school(s) have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered in these grades and/or to increase enrollment?
    a. *If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not?*

b. *Are there additional advanced courses offered at your school that were not identified in the APR (e.g., social science)?*
c. *How is GEAR UP supporting Grade 8 students enrolled in Algebra I this year?*
d. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/districts are to take these courses? (Probe for perceptions about student success so far in Algebra I).*
e. *Does your school have a specific role to increase the number of advanced courses available to students as they move to 9th grade, or to increase enrollment in available 9th grade advanced courses?*
f. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing number of and student enrollment in advanced courses.*

8) How will GEAR UP support teacher/administrator professional development this year?
a. *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?*
b. *How pleased are you with the number and type of PD related to GEAR UP you have been able to provide so far?*
c. *Did attendance at provided PD meet expectations? Probe for any needed clarity regarding who was offered the training (e.g., grade levels, content areas, administrators and teachers) and the PD was delivered (i.e., online/face-to-face)?*
d. *To what extent did any given PD align with GEAR UP goals (e.g., improved academic rigor, student success)? What gaps in PD have you identified with regard to alignment to GEAR UP goals?*
e. *To what extent did the PD focus on vertical alignment with regard to meeting GEAR UP goals?*
f. *What are your perceptions on the success of GEAR UP's teacher PD strategies deployed to improve academic rigor and promote student achievement (e.g., pre-AP courses and training, data-driven instruction, project-based learning, differentiated instruction, etc.) To what extent were they successful? What factors contributed to their success?*
g. *What barriers do you face in implementing GEAR UP PD programs this year? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*
h. *How can these PD services be sustained for future teachers? How might the skills taught be enhanced in teachers who have already participated?*
i. *What non-GEAR UP PD are Grade 8 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?
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 community partners supported GEAR UP at the school(s) this year (e.g., through providing services, holding/participating in events)?
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) How will GEAR UP support Grade 8 students in making a successful transition to high school next year?
(Probe for use of EXPLORE, summer bridge programs, high school visits.)

12) How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?
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.6 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 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 are your roles and responsibilities in GEAR UP?
   a. *What is your job title?*
   b. *What GEAR UP activities are you involved with? (e.g., vertical team, before/after school services, teacher PD, partners, statewide). What activities/programs do you deliver yourself? What activities do you oversee or delegate to others? Probe for perceptions of this oversight/management structure.*
   c. *How do you interact with the College Preparation Advisor(s) at your school(s)?*
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/or pre-AP; teacher PD on differentiated instruction or rigor, etc.)*
   b. *Who was involved in the GEAR UP planning process (parents, school leaders, teachers, principal)? Who is involved now? What role has the College Preparation Advisor played in this process?*
   c. *How does preparing for long-term success of GEAR UP fit into this year's planning?*
3) What is the structure of GEAR UP at your school / individual schools? Who are the key players? How are decisions made?
   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 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. *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. *What challenges have you faced? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
   d. *What role has the College Preparation Advisor(s) played in these services? What are your perceptions of the advisor's work with students and parents?*
5) 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).
   a. *What challenges has the school faced in providing these types of services?*

     b. *How did you recruit students? What role, if any, was played by the College Preparation Advisor?*

     c. *On what student academic performance outcomes do you think the services will have the greatest effect (e.g., homework completion, Algebra readiness, grasp of materials, test scores, grades, coursework, course completion)? Any early indicators of success?*

     d. *What school factors facilitated the development/use of these student support services?*

     e. *What are your perceptions about their success? What challenges did you identify? Were you able to overcome any challenges? What would you change for the future?*

     f. *How can these services be sustained for next year's/future Grade 8 students? What factors do you think contribute to your ability to sustain support services over time?*

6) What advanced/honors courses have been made available to Grade 8 students Does your school(s) have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered in these grades and/or to increase enrollment?

     a. *If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not?*

     b. *Are there additional advanced courses offered at your school that were not identified in the APR (e.g., social science)?*

     c. *How is GEAR UP supporting Grade 8 students enrolled in Algebra I this year?*

     d. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/districts are to take these courses? (Probe for perceptions about student success so far in Algebra I).*

     e. *Does your school have a specific role to increase the number of advanced courses available to students as they move to 9th grade, or to increase enrollment in available 9th grade advanced courses?*

     f. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing number of and student enrollment in advanced courses.*

7) How will GEAR UP support teacher/administrator professional development this year?

     a. *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?*

     b. *How pleased are you with the number and type of PD related to GEAR UP you have been able to provide so far?*

     c. *Did attendance at provided PD meet expectations? Probe for any needed clarity regarding who was offered the training (e.g., grade levels, content areas, administrators and teachers) and the PD was delivered (i.e., online/face-to-face)?*

     d. *To what extent did any given PD align with GEAR UP goals (e.g., improved academic rigor, student success)? What gaps in PD have you identified with regard to alignment to GEAR UP goals?*

     e. *To what extent did the PD focus on vertical alignment with regard to meeting GEAR UP goals?*

     f. *What are your perceptions on the success of GEAR UP's teacher PD strategies deployed to improve academic rigor and promote student achievement (e.g., pre-AP courses and training, data-driven instruction, project-based learning, differentiated instruction, etc.) To what extent were they successful? What factors contributed to their success?*

     g. *What barriers do you face in implementing GEAR UP PD programs this year? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*

     h. *How can these PD services be sustained for future teachers? How might the skills taught be enhanced in teachers who have already participated?*

     i. *What non-GEAR UP PD are Grade 8 teachers receiving this year? How might this PD support GEAR UP goals?*

8) Outside of PD, how are teachers / school staff involved with GEAR UP?

     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?*

9) Have community partners supported GEAR UP at the school(s) this year (e.g., through providing services, holding/participating in events)?

     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? Who is the partner's primary contact at the school (such as College Preparation Advisor, district GEAR UP coordinator, other)?*

     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?*

10) How is GEAR UP supporting Grade 8 students in making a successful transition to high school next year? How have you and the College Prep Advisor been involved in this transition?
(Probe for use of EXPLORE, summer bridge programs, high school visits.)

11) How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?

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 Fall 2013: 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. *What GEAR UP activities are you involved with? (e.g., 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?*

2) How do you interact with the GEAR UP coordinator for this school? How do you interact with guidance counselors / teachers / parents?

a. *Who do you report to? (Probe for level/frequency of interaction with coordinator and supervisor as well as teachers/parents.)*

b. *What training have you received? How useful has this training been so far?*

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/or pre-AP; preparing students for effective transition to high school; familiarizing students/families with college terminology.)*

b. *Have you been involved in the GEAR UP planning process this year? If so, how? If not, why not? [Probe for who else is involved in the GEAR UP planning process (parents, school leaders, teachers, principal)?]*

c. *How does preparing for long-term success of GEAR UP students fit into this year's planning?*

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. *What challenges did you face? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*

d. *What was your role in these events? What role, if any, did other GEAR UP/school staff or partners play?*

e. *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 developing educational plans; mentoring; developing career plans; assessing education interests.)

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?*

b. *What are your perceptions of these services so far?*

6) Have community partners supported college preparation and awareness activities this year (e.g., through providing services, hosting college visits)?

a. *If no, what challenges have you faced in engaging partners?*

b. *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 are underway / planned for this year?
(Probe for use of EXPLORE, summer bridge programs, high school visits, academic early warning systems)

8) How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?

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.8 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 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 this semester?
   a. *How have your responsibilities changed since last semester?*
   b. *What GEAR UP activities are you involved with? (e.g., 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?*
   e. *What professional development, if any, have you received this semester? (If PD received, probe for focus of PD and delivery mechanism)*
   f. *How satisfied are you in this position? What aspects would make it more (or less) satisfying to you?*
2) How do you interact with the GEAR UP coordinator for this school? How do you interact with guidance counselors / teachers / parents?
   a. *Who do you report to? (Probe for level/frequency of interaction with coordinator and supervisor as well as teachers/parents.)*
   b. *Have you received any training during the school year? If so, what training have you received? How useful has this training been so far?*
   c. *Who do you go to for support regarding your position, your experiences, or questions that you have?*
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/or pre-AP; preparing students for effective transition to high school; familiarizing students/families with college terminology.)*
   b. *Do you have personal goals for GEAR UP that differ from the goals listed by the school?*
   c. *Have you been involved in the GEAR UP planning process this year? If so, how? If not, why not? [Probe for who else is involved in the GEAR UP planning process (parents, school leaders, teachers, principal)?]*
   d. *How does preparing for long-term success of GEAR UP students fit into this year's planning?*
4) What services have you provided directly to students so far this year? (Probe for developing educational plans; mentoring; developing career plans; assessing education interests.)
   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?*
   b. *What are your perceptions of these services so far?*
5) 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. *What challenges did you face? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
   d. *What was your role in these events? What role, if any, did other GEAR UP/school staff or partners play?*
   e. *Are there activities/events that support student academic achievement (such as tutoring)? If so, what is your perception of these activities?*

f.   *Are there activities or events that you wanted to offer but were unable to? Why were you not able to provide these activities?*

6)   Effective transition to high school is another important element in promoting student preparation for college. What activities in this area are underway / planned for this year?

a.   *How have you been involved in planning for the high school transition?*
b.   *What transition activities are planned for the summer?*
c.   *What will you be doing next year (i.e., where will you be located, structure of assignment, etc.)? (Probe for use of EXPLORE, summer bridge programs, high school visits, academic early warning systems)*

7)   How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?

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 web site, involvement with TG)*
c.   *Discuss facilitators and barriers to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*

Thank you for your time.

D.9   Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2013: Administrator Interview Protocol

Interviewer Guidelines:

➢   Note to briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP 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)   How and to what extent are you involved in GEAR UP?
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.   *What are your perceptions about GEAR UP's management structure at this school?*
b.   *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?*
c.   *What 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?*

    d. *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?

    a. *How many youth from the district have been going to college? (NOTE: Ask if district administrator being interviewed.)*

    b. *What are the characteristics of households from which students come? (Family structure, employment status, education, attitudes toward postsecondary education)*

    c. *How involved are parents in their children's education?*

    d. *What programs and student support services (other than GEAR UP) are available to students? (e.g., other programs that encourage/support attending college; summer school programs; student support services that assist with on-time promotion and school success (e.g., mentoring, counseling, tutoring))*

    e. *What programs and services (other than GEAR UP) are available to families? (e.g., other programs that inform about college; family nights; support services (e.g., counseling))*

4) Is GEAR UP helping to promote the goals of student success this year? If so, how? If not, why not? (NOTE: Major goals for this year include taking/preparing to take advanced courses and taking Algebra I in Grade 8.)

    a. *For tutoring / mentoring/ academic support services, how were students recruited?*

    b. *How were students and parents recruited for college readiness/awareness events, if any held so far this year?*

    c. *What are your perceptions about the success of these efforts? What factors facilitated the success of any given event/activity or service?*

    d. *How is GEAR UP supporting the goal of more students taking Algebra I in Grade 8? How would you characterize the success of students in Algebra I so far?*

    e. *Is GEAR UP supporting any early warning system for students at your school? If so, how? (Probe for details of the warning system). If not, why not?*

    f. *What barriers did you encounter in promoting goals of GEAR UP? Where you able to overcome any barriers?*

    g. *How/to what extent was the school keeping in mind long-term GEAR UP goals in conducting events/activities and providing services?*

    h. *Has your school been able to sustain any services to current Grade 7 students that began with the GEAR UP cohort last year?*

5) What advanced courses are available to Grade 8 students? *(Cite list of advanced/honors math, English, science courses from Grade 7 based on APR and/or prior site visit knowledge).* Does your school have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered in these grades and/or to increase enrollment in advanced courses?

    a. *If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not?*

    b. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/district are to take these courses?*

    c. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing number of, and student enrollment in, advanced courses.*

6) Your school planned to conduct GEAR UP-sponsored professional development for teachers this past summer. What professional development occurred, and what were your impressions of it?
(*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 and/or Algebra I-related professional development.*)

7) What are the school's/district's major goals for teacher and administrator professional development 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) 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?
   a. *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?*
   b. *What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them?*
   c. *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?*
9) How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/ resources/events?
   a. *What statewide activities/events do/did you/your school/district participate in?*
   b. *Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this year? If yes, how did you use them? If not, why not?*
   c. *What facilitators and barriers are there to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*
10) Looking ahead, what roles would you like GEAR UP to play at your school?
   a. *How might GEAR UP activities be sustained for next year's Grade 8 students and their families? For Grade 8 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 Spring 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) How and to what extent are you involved in GEAR UP?
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. *What are your perceptions about GEAR UP's management structure at this school?*
     b. *How have you interacted with the GEAR UP College Preparation Advisor? What are your perceptions about his/her work at the 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 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?*
     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?
     a. *How many youth from the district have been going to college? (NOTE: Ask if district administrator being interviewed.)*
     b. *What are the characteristics of households from which students come? (Family structure, employment status, education, attitudes toward postsecondary education)*
     c. *How involved are parents in their children's education?*
     d. *What programs and student support services (other than GEAR UP) are available to students? (e.g., other programs that encourage/support attending college; summer school programs; student support services that assist with on-time promotion and school success (e.g., mentoring, counseling, tutoring))*
     e. *What programs and services (other than GEAR UP) are available to families? (e.g., other programs that inform about college; family nights; support services (e.g., counseling))*

4) Is GEAR UP helping to promote the goals of student success this year? If so, how? If not, why not? (NOTE: Major goals for this year include taking advanced courses and taking Algebra I in Grade 8)
     a. *For tutoring / mentoring/ academic support services, how were students recruited? Who was responsible for recruitment (such as College Preparation Advisor)?*
     b. *How were students and parents recruited for college readiness/awareness events, if any held so far this year?*
     c. *What are your perceptions about the success of these efforts? What factors facilitated the success of any given event/activity or service?*
     d. *How is GEAR UP supporting the goal of more students taking Algebra I in Grade 8? How would you characterize the success of students in Algebra I so far? (Probe for any changes in delivery or support services to Algebra I students over the course of the year).*
     e. *Is GEAR UP supporting any early warning system for students at your school? If so, how? (Probe for details of the warning system). If not, why not?*
     f. *What barriers did you encounter in promoting goals of GEAR UP? Where you able to overcome any barriers?*
     g. *How/to what extent was the school keeping in mind long-term GEAR UP goals in conducting events/activities and providing services?*
     h. *Has your school been able to sustain any services to current Grade 7 students that began with the GEAR UP cohort last year?*

5) What advanced courses are available to Grade 8 students? *(Cite list of advanced/honors math, English, science courses from Grade 7 based on APR and/or prior site visit knowledge).* Does your school have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered in these grades and/or to increase enrollment in advanced courses?
     a. *If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not?*
     b. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/district are to take these courses?*
     c. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing number of, and student enrollment in, advanced courses.*

6) The GEAR UP cohort of students will be moving to high school next year. Have you been involved in any transition planning for these students? Has GEAR UP been involved in preparing them for the move to high school?
     a. *How have the College Preparation Advisors been involved in this transition? How will the College Prep Advisors be utilized to ease the transition for students? Do students know that the CPAs will be moving up to high school with them?*

7) What are the school's/district's major goals for teacher and administrator professional development for the current school year? What professional development occurred, and what were your impressions of it? What role has GEAR UP played in professional development efforts?

    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) Has this school provided any vertical alignment activities for teachers so far this year (in particular alignment with high school)? 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?

    a. *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?*

    b. *What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them?*

    c. *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?*

9) How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/ resources/events?

    a. *What statewide activities/events do/did you/your school/district participate in?*

    b. *Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this year? If yes, how did you use them? If not, why not?*

    c. *What facilitators and barriers are there to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*

10) What GEAR UP activities implemented during the past two years would you like to sustain in your school once the GEAR UP cohort moves on? How might these activities be sustained for students and their families?

    a. *How important was the College Prep Advisor to your campus? Since the CPA will move on to the high school, how might you fill this gap going forward?*

    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.11 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2013: Student Focus Group Protocol

Facilitator Guidelines:

➢ Introduce yourself and/or leaders of the focus group as representatives of ICF International and describe your roles in supporting the meeting (i.e., facilitator, note taker). Students selected for the focus group should have experience with one or more GEAR UP activities/workshops.

➢ Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group: *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 8th grade GEAR UP student in the 2012–13 school year. Ideally at least some will have participated in GEAR UP activities/events/services but this is not required for participation in the focus group.

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

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
2min	**INTRODUCTION** Please introduce yourself, your name.		
3 min	**WHAT IS GEAR UP?** When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What activities, events, or programs do you think of? *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.*	o Basic knowledge if available	List student ideas on chart paper. *Provide background if students lack basic knowledge.*
5 min	**EXPERIENCE WITH GEAR UP** We would like to know the range of any activities/events you attended or participated in to help you succeed in school and be prepared to go to college. What did you do? When did you do it? Who wants to go first? *(Review list of site-specific activities from APR to provide examples of activities if needed to get started. Prompt for summer 2013 activities and any activities/events from early fall 2013.)*	o When o Nature of activity o 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 activities in the past month.

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
5-8 min	**LEARNING / ATTITUDE CHANGE** 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.) (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.	o Change in attitude o Change in knowledge	List ideas shared on chart paper. Discuss how different ideas may be related. Separate ideas based on attendance vs. not at activities.
5-8 min	**MORE GENERAL: ACADEMIC RIGOR AND ADVANCED COURSES** 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? *Probe: Are students in Algebra I in 8th 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?*	o Perceptions and participation o Barriers and challenges	List what students are participating in Focus in on subject area Why/why not taking list
7-10 min	**EFFECTIVENESS** 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? *(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.)*	o Implementation issues (facilitators and barriers) o Student learning o Outcome (change in attitude, views, and knowledge) o Factors that shape specific implementation, learning, and outcomes	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.
5-8 min	**SOURCES OF INFORMATION** We would like to create a map of where information and knowledge about college	o Formal (school, GEAR UP) o Informal (friends, family, media)	Use the chart paper to list and group student responses.

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	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? *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.*		
3-5 min	**STUDENT SUGGESTIONS** 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?"*	o Implementation issues o Content o Delivery o Resource o Where students are in their learning about college	If no suggestions offered, focus on information needs
2 min	**CLOSING** 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?		

Thank you very much for your time.

D.12 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 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 Grade 8 GEAR UP student in the 2013–14 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
2min	**INTRODUCTION** Please introduce yourself, your name.		
5 min	**EXPERIENCE WITH GEAR UP** We would like to know the range of any activities/events you attended or participated in during this school year to help you succeed in school and be prepared to go to college. What did you do? When did you do it? *(Review list of site-specific activities from APR to provide examples of activities if needed to get started. Prompt for activities during fall 2013 and spring 2014.*	o When o Nature of activity o Content covered/goal of activity o Met with CPA? o Probe specifically if attended any events with parents.	Determine how many of the students participated in each activity that is listed. Get perceptions from a variety of students Probe for recent activities in the past month (e.g., activities that may not be listed on an APR)

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
5-8 min	**LEARNING / ATTITUDE CHANGE** 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.) (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.*	o Change in attitude o Change in knowledge	Have students present what they have written. Discuss how different ideas may be related. Separate ideas based on attendance vs. not at activities.
3-5 min	**FUTURE PLANS** What is your plan for the future after you graduate high school? What do you see yourself doing after high school? *For those not planning on attending college: Some of you are not planning on continuing your education, can you tell us about that decision? About w*hy you think that you will not continue your education after high school? *If yes attending college:* Why do you want to go to college? Do you know where you want to go to college?	o If they respond no for post-school education, probe to find out why. Possible reasons include needing to work, wanting to work, joining the military, being unable to get into a college, no need for college.	Determine how many from group plan to attend college.
3-5 min.	**SUPPORT FOR COLLEGE** Who encourages you to attend college or provides support to you regarding education after high school? *How do your parents feel about you continuing your education? What do they say about it? How about other family members, what are their thoughts on continuing your education?* *Who at school talks with you about your future/college?* *Where else do you hear about college? (Probe for media/TV, state GEAR UP web site)* *Where do you think you get the most accurate information about college?*	o Perceptions and impact on their own goals for the future. o CPA if not already clear	Note any facilitators or barriers cited by students.
5-8 min	**MORE GENERAL: ACADEMIC RIGOR AND ADVANCED COURSES** 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	o Perceptions and participation o Barriers and challenges	List what students are participating in Focus in on subject area Why/why not taking list

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	challenging/advanced courses? *Probe: Are students in Algebra I in 8th 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?*		
7-10 min	**EFFECTIVENESS** 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? *(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.)*	○ Implementation issues (facilitators and barriers) ○ Student learning ○ Outcome (change in attitude, views, and knowledge) ○ Factors that shape specific implementation, learning, and outcomes	Have students write on index card/paper and present what they have written. Prompt for tutoring, mentoring, college visits if needed. Note that students may have different views about whether a service or program is working well.
3-5 min	**STUDENT SUGGESTIONS** 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?"*	○ Implementation issues ○ Content ○ Delivery ○ Resource ○ Where students are in their learning about college	If no suggestions offered, focus on information needs
2 min	**CLOSING** 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?		

Thank you very much for your time.

D.13 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2013: Parent Focus Group Protocol

Facilitator Guidelines:

➢ Introduce yourself and/or leaders of the focus group as representatives of ICF International and describe your roles in supporting the meeting (i.e., facilitator, note taker). This session is expected to include a translator.

➢ Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The 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 2013-2014 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 8 students, do you have students in any other grades? Was your grade 8 student at this school last year (in grade 7) or is this your first year at the school?
2) When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What do you know about it? (If needed, facilitator provides a short overview of the program including specific examples from APR where appropriate. Note to ask about participation in events more specifically in a separate question.) (Note, in the future ask about awareness from prior year if student was in GEAR UP school, this year may be less relevant given the low parent knowledge from last year.)
   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 school? For students? Parents? Teachers? The school/district? Statewide?
3) What activities, events, or programs do you think of? (e.g., College workshops/visits for students, Tutoring/mentoring/academic support services, workshops for parents, summer programs)
   Let's talk about the summer 2013 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 school this year?
   b. If your child did not attend the summer program, why not? What factors kept your child from participating in the summer program?

     c. If your child did attend, to what extent were parents involved in the summer program? Were you able to be involved? Why/why not?

     d. 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?

     e. 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 information resources / educational planning (e.g., encourage/prepared to take advanced courses)?*

     b. *What, if anything, do you think about the events/activities your student has participated in? Any ideas about events/*activities *you would like you child to participate in/have made available to your child based on what you know about GEAR UP?*

     c. *Are there any GEAR UP activities that you are aware of that you wish your child could participate in but was not/ will not be* able *to? What factors facilitate or hinder your child's ability to participate in GEAR UP?*

5) Knowing what GEAR UP can provide to your children, do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services 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?

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

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? What did you most like about what you participated in? Least like? What did you learn from them? What factors facilitated your participation/encouraged you to participate?*

     b. *If no, why not? What barriers prevented you from attending (e.g., schedule, child care/family issues, work schedule, other)? What services or supports might help you attend future GEAR UP activities or events?*

     c. *Probe whether few/some/all parents were aware of activities and events*

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. *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. *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.14 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 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 2013-2014 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 8 students, do you have students in any other grades? Was your grade 8 student at this school last year (in grade 7) or is this your first year at the school?
2) When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What do you know about it? (If needed, facilitator provides a short overview of the program including specific examples from APR where appropriate. Note to ask about participation in events more specifically in a separate question.)
     a. *When did you learn about the GEAR UP program (e.g., this school year, last school year)?*
     b. *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)?*
     c. *What is your understanding of the goals of GEAR UP at your school? For students? Parents? Teachers? The school/district? Statewide?*

3) 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 information resources / educational planning (e.g., encourage/prepared to take advanced courses)?*

        b. *What, if anything, do you think about the events/activities your student has participated in? Any ideas about events/activities you would like you child to participate in/have made available to your child based on what you know about GEAR UP?*

        c. *Are there any GEAR UP activities that you are aware of that you wish your child could participate in but was not/ will not be able to? What factors facilitate or hinder your child's ability to participate in GEAR UP?*

4) Knowing what GEAR UP can provide to your children, do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services 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; support students to take higher-level classes; help in transitioning to Grade 9 and high school; promoting early college awareness; usefulness in planning for college academically/financially

        a. *(NOTE: There is a specific interest in transitioning to Grade 9 and high school, be sure to address these items)* What do you need from a program like GEAR UP as your child prepares to enter 9th grade?
        What would you like to see during the 9th grade year as far as services/activities?
        If so, will your child attend? Why/why not?

5) Let's talk about summer 2014. Is your school offering a summer 2014GEAR UP program? Will your child attend the program? Why/why not?

        a. As far as you know, what is the purpose of the summer 2014 program?

        b. Ask specifically --Is part of the purpose of the summer program to help with transitioning to Grade 9? What types of activities do you think might be helpful to you and your child in transitioning to Grade 9?

        c. For all parents who indicate there will be a summer program, how and when did the school inform you about the summer program? Were there features of the summer program that will make it easier for your child to attend or for you/your child to want to attend? Any challenges to participating in the summer program?

6) Have you or another adult in your household attended a GEAR UP activity or event this during the current school year?

        a. *If yes, what activities or events did you attend? What did you most like about what you participated in? Least like? What did you learn from them? What factors facilitated your participation/encouraged you to participate?*

        b. *If no, why not? What barriers prevented you from attending (e.g., schedule, child care/family issues, work schedule, other)? What services or supports might help you attend future GEAR UP activities or events?*

7) *Probe whether few/some/all parents were aware of activities and events*
    Do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services are / would be helpful for you as a parent? If yes, in what ways? How do they build on what you already know?

        a. *What do you think has been/would be most helpful for your child's school to do to help your child succeed in school / be prepared to go to college?*

        b. *Probe for: 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) This year GEAR UP provided a College Preparation Advisor at your child's school. What do you know about the College Preparation Advisor and his/her role at your school?

        a. *Have you spoken with or met the* College Preparation Advisor*? If yes, what have you talked about? If no, why not?*

        b. *Do you know whether your child has spoken with the* College Preparation Advisor*?*

        c. *Has the* College Preparation Advisor *been accessible to parents? What parent activities has the* College Preparation Advisor *conducted?*

  d. *What benefits, if any, have you seen from your child having a College Preparation Advisor? Is there anything else you think the* College Preparation Advisor *could be doing?*

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 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?*

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. *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.15 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2013: Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Facilitator Guidelines:

➢ Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group: *GEAR UP is a federally funded strategy to promote college awareness and academic achievement in high-need middle and high schools across the country. In support of that goal, GEAR UP also supports school-wide improvements and professional development that can help current and future students. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals and the impact of the program. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. Note that there are no right and wrong answers to the questions in this session, and that the goal is for all participants to contribute to the discussion. We expect this focus group will take approximately 50-55 minutes.*

➢ Convey to each participant our confidentiality policy: (1) participation is voluntary; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop participating in the focus group at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; and (4) data will be maintained in secure areas.

➢ Ask permission to record the focus group: In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Evaluation team members 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)
2) Have you heard of GEAR UP before today? What do you know about it? (5-8 min.)
   a. *How ready do teachers in the group feel that students and families are for reaching the goals of GEAR UP (to succeed in schools and be college ready)? What do they perceive to be the major challenges with regard to the students and families they serve in reaching goals of the program? Probe for student support services, and student/family activities/events,*
   b. *What do you know about GEAR UP goals of teacher professional development (PD)?*
   If little or no knowledge at all, provide brief description of program (2 min.)
   If little or no knowledge of professional development goals, provide brief description of PD and vertical alignment goals (from local action plans/APR data) (3 min.)
3) To your knowledge, have you participated in any GEAR UP-sponsored professional development during summer 2013 or so far during this school year? (10 min.)
   a. *For those answering Yes, ask teachers what programs/workshops/events they recall. Probe for participation in pre-AP training, differentiation strategies, project-based learning, professional learning communities, and data-driven instruction offered by GEAR UP and financial literacy curriculum PD provided by TG. Ask them to recall details on the sessions.*
   b. *For those answering No, ask teachers if they were invited to participate and, if invited, why they did not participate.*
      Probe for scheduling conflicts, inability for others to cover classes, status as non-core content teacher, other factors. Also probe for recent non-GEAR UP funded PD to better understand PD goals for the school.
   For teachers who participated in GEAR UP-sponsored professional development, what did you think of the PD? Was it pertinent to your work? (8-10 min.)
   c. *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.
   d. *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?*
   e. *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?*
   f. *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.
4) Looking to the future, what other professional development subjects or workshops would be most helpful to you in supporting student achievement and/or supporting students/families to be ready for college? (5 min.) *(Facilitator list and group responses on Chart Paper if available.)*
   a. *Do you see a need to have any PD that builds on PD you participated in so far?*
   b. *If not already clear, what PD might new teachers to the school need to participate in to be ready to support GEAR UP goals?*
5) GEAR UP seeks to improve the readiness of students to succeed in rigorous high school courses and, later, attend college. What more do you think your school or GEAR UP could be doing to prepare more students for such a future? (5 min.)
   a. *How/to what extent have PD opportunities supported you as a teacher in improving rigor? (NOTE: this may have already been addressed in earlier responses.)*
   b. *Overall, how challenging would you say courses are for students at your school? To what extent do they/don't they challenge students at a level that will prepare them for college? Are there some students who consistently receive content in a manner that is not challenging enough (e.g., ELL students)?*
      Probe for honors classes and ask whether participants teach any honors/advanced classes and future plans for such classes.

      c. *Discuss any facilitators or barriers to improving academic rigor at your school (e.g., teacher enthusiasm/resistance, student skill levels).*

      d. *To what extent do you believe that any increases in academic rigor will be able to be sustained over time? What factors might influence sustainability?*

      e. *For math teachers, how would you assess the school's effort to prepare more Grade 8 students to enroll and succeed in Algebra I? What successes or challenges have you found with Grade 8 Algebra I students so far this school year?*

6) 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 high school teachers/curriculum. What can you tell us about vertical alignment activities at your school? (7 min.) (NOTE: If a vertical alignment team is identified for their own focus group, this group will focus on a deeper discussion related to this item.)

      a. *To your knowledge have activities begun at your school focused on facilitating vertical alignment? If not, why do you think this is? Are there plans to begin working on vertical alignment?*

      b. *Have you participated in vertical alignment activities? If Yes, probe for extent of involvement and topics covered, frequency of meetings, composition of the vertical team. Ask teachers their perceptions of vertical alignment 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?*

      d. *How successful has your school been at integrating strategies across grade levels to improve academic rigor (i.e., how challenging the course is to students)? To increase the number of advanced courses offered by the schools? Discuss any facilitators and barriers to vertical alignment with regard to each issue.*

7) 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 college visits and parent/family events.*

8) 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.16 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 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 professional development that can help current and future students. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals and the impact of the program. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. Note that there are no right and wrong answers to the questions in this session, and that the goal is for all participants to contribute to the discussion. We expect this focus group will take approximately 50-55 minutes.*

➢ Convey to each participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) participation is voluntary; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop participating in the focus group at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; and (4) data will be maintained in secure areas.*

➢ Ask permission to record the focus group: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Evaluation team members 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 2013-2014 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)
- 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.
   What grade(s)/subjects do you primarily teach? (Facilitator: Note # of core content teachers)
2) Have you heard of GEAR UP before today? What do you know about it?
   a. *How ready do teachers in the group feel that students and families are for reaching the goals of GEAR UP (to succeed in schools and be college ready)? What do they perceive to be the major challenges with regard to the students and families they serve in reaching goals of the program? Probe for student support services, and student/family activities/events,*
   b. *What do you know about GEAR UP goals of teacher professional development (PD)? If little or no knowledge at all, provide brief description of program (2 min.) If little or no knowledge of professional development goals, provide brief description of PD and vertical alignment goals (from local action plans/APR data) (3 min.)*
3) To your knowledge, have you participated in any GEAR UP-sponsored professional development during summer 2013 or so far during this school year?
   a. *For those answering Yes, ask teachers what programs/workshops/events they recall. Probe for participation in pre-AP training, differentiation strategies, project-based learning, professional learning communities, and data-driven instruction offered by GEAR UP and financial literacy curriculum PD provided by TG. Ask them to recall details on the sessions.*
   b. *For those answering No, ask teachers if they were invited to participate and, if invited, why they did not participate. Probe for scheduling conflicts, inability for others to cover classes, status as non-core content teacher, other factors. 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 professional development, what did you think of the PD? Was it pertinent to your work?
   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? Did you incorporate them into your instruction? If Yes, how? If No, why not?*
   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? If not, do you plan to utilize them before the end of this school year?*
   d. *Are there factors at school that have helped you implement strategies/content learned at PD? Were there barriers that prevented you from using the PD? How did you overcome these barriers? Will you be able to sustain implementation in the future or might additional training be needed? Probe for areas of agreement/disagreement and differences based on subjects taught.*
5) Looking to the future, what other professional development subjects or workshops would be most helpful to you in supporting student achievement and/or supporting students/families to be ready for college?

    a. *Do you see a need to have any PD that builds on PD you participated in so far?*
    b. *If not already clear, what PD might new teachers to the school need to participate in to be ready to support GEAR UP goals?*

6) (For Algebra I Teachers) Tell us about your Algebra I classes this year. How prepared were your students for this course? How would you describe the level of student success in the course?
    a. *How has GEAR UP helped to support students to be successful in Algebra I (e.g., summer camp, tutoring, etc.)?*
    b. *What math course(s) will these students take in Grade 9? How will those decisions be made?*
    c. *What more could GEAR UP do help these students be successful in advanced courses? Are there resources that you think teachers of advanced students would benefit from?*

7) GEAR UP seeks to improve the readiness of students to succeed in rigorous high school courses and, later, attend college. What more do you think your school or GEAR UP could be doing to prepare more students for such a future?
    a. *How/to what extent have PD opportunities supported you as a teacher in improving rigor? (NOTE: this may have already been addressed in earlier responses.)*
    b. *Overall, how challenging would you say courses are for students at your school? To what extent do they/don't they challenge students at a level that will prepare them for college? Are there some students who consistently receive content in a manner that is not challenging enough (e.g., ELL students)?*
    Probe for honors classes and ask whether participants teach any honors/advanced classes and future plans for such classes.
    c. *Discuss any facilitators or barriers to improving academic rigor at your school (e.g., teacher enthusiasm/resistance, student skill levels).*
    d. *To what extent do you believe that any increases in academic rigor will be able to be sustained over time? What factors might influence sustainability?*
    e. *For math teachers, how would you assess the school's effort to prepare more Grade 8 students to enroll and succeed in Algebra I? What successes or challenges have you found with Grade 8 Algebra I students so far this school year?*

8) 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 high school teachers/curriculum. What can you tell us about vertical alignment activities at your school? (NOTE: If a vertical alignment team is identified for their own focus group, this group will focus on a deeper discussion related to this item.)
    a. *To your knowledge have activities begun at your school focused on facilitating vertical alignment? If not, why do you think this is? Are there plans to begin working on vertical alignment?*
    b. *Have you participated in vertical alignment activities? If Yes, probe for extent of involvement and topics covered, frequency of meetings, composition of the vertical team, and extent of direct involvement with high school teachers. Ask teachers their perceptions of vertical alignment activities and future plans for group. Probe for whether activities are confined only to the middle school (i.e., department meetings within the school) or if they include high school teachers. 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 number of vertical alignment meetings, specifically whether it has been a one-time or ongoing event.*
    d. *How successful has your school been at integrating strategies across grade levels to improve academic rigor (i.e., how challenging the course is to students)? To increase the number of advanced courses offered by the schools? Discuss any facilitators and barriers to vertical alignment with regard to each issue.*

9) 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 college visits and parent/family events.*

10) What is your perception about the college-going culture at this school? What might GEAR UP do to 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.17 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2013: Community Stakeholder 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). Ask if any of the community partner representatives have previously participated in a focus group or interview. 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 partners' roles 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, but summary reports may indicate particular organizations or individuals by the roles you have in the program; (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. Ask if any of the community partner representatives have previously participated in a focus group or interview. Tell us (or remind 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 (if new partner) and evolved (if continuing partner) and to what extent you work collaboratively as partners? What school officials or other partners have you met with this summer and fall regarding GEAR UP? How did you collaborate with these individuals?

   a. *What is the frequency/format of contact / meetings?* If a continuing partner, *Has this changed much since Year 1 (2012–13 school year)?*
   b. *Discuss current status of or any changes to 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)*
   c. If a continuing partner, *Has this changed much since Year 1 (2012–13 school year)?*
   Also probe for: Career exploration; College visits – where and when; College workshops – format and content; Parent outreach activities; summer 2013 activities; New activities (for district where a community partner focus group was held in spring 2013)
   d. *If you have not yet been involved in any activities/events/resource implementation – what is your plan to do so?*
   e. *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. *What are your perceptions about the impact (e.g., be clear impact on what and to what extent felt impact; if appropriate probe for impact relative to cost) of the activity/event/resource?*
   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 have learned so far, what would you change in the future in order to help the program be more successful (at helping students to succeed in school and prepare for college)?

   a. *What future workshops / courses do you think would be most useful?*
   b. *What ideas for scheduling / outreach do you think would be most useful?*
   c. *What gaps in services might GEAR UP and partners want to address?*

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 2014: Community Stakeholder 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). Ask if any of the community partner

representatives have previously participated in a focus group or interview. 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 partners' roles 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, but summary reports may indicate particular organizations or individuals by the roles you have in the program; (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. Ask if any of the community partner representatives have previously participated in a focus group or interview. Tell us (or remind 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 (if new partner) and evolved (if continuing partner) and to what extent you work collaboratively as partners? What school officials or other partners have you met with this summer and fall regarding GEAR UP? How did you collaborate with these individuals?
   a. *What is the frequency/format of contact / meetings?* If a continuing partner, *Has this changed much since Year 1 (2012–13 school year)?*
   b. *Discuss current status of or any changes to 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)*

    c. *Have you provided support in helping students make the transition from Grade 8 to high school?*

    d. If a continuing partner, *Has your role changed much since Year 1 (2012–13 school year)?*

    Also probe for: Career exploration; College visits – where and when; College workshops – format and content; Parent outreach activities; Summer 2013 or planned summer 2014 activities;

    e. *If you have not yet been involved in any activities/events/resource implementation – what is your plan to do so?*

    f. *In general, any plans/next steps for involvement in activities/events/resources? Probe specifically for summer activities and activities for Grade 9 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. *What are your perceptions about the impact (e.g., be clear impact on what and to what extent felt impact; if appropriate probe for impact relative to cost) of the activity/event/resource?*

    b. *Attendance at 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 have learned so far, what would you change in the future in order to help the program be more successful (at helping students to succeed in school and prepare for college)?

    a. *What future workshops / courses do you think would be most useful?*

    b. *What ideas for scheduling / outreach do you think would be most useful?*

7) *What gaps in services might GEAR UP and partners want to address?*

    What other final thoughts do you have about GEAR UP that you would like to share?

Thank you for your time.

D.19 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2014: Support Center Interview Protocol

Interviewer Guidelines:

➢ <u>Briefly discuss the purpose of the interview:</u> *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.*

➢ <u>Convey to interview participant our confidentiality policy:</u> *(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.
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? 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. *What types of compliance/monitoring, if any, do you engage in? APR?*
   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 do you assess progress by grantees on goals? Is APR the only format or are you assessing/tracking progress in other ways? If so, how satisfied are you with grantee progress toward long term goals to date? Anything specific to progress towards advanced course enrollment/Algebra I 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, do you have in the design of professional development, student and parent workshops or services? If any, how satisfied are you?*
   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 IPSI?*
   f. *How would you describe GEAR UP efforts to promote an effective transition for students from Grade 8 to high school? 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 *partners? What roles do / will they play in program implementation? Are they formal partners or more informal? 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 partners in GEAR UP activities? This may include involvement with grantees and/or with the statewide initiatives? Any partners 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?*
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.20 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2014: State Collaborator Interview Protocol

Interviewer Guidelines:

➢ <u>Briefly discuss the purpose of the interview:</u> *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.*

➢ <u>Convey to interview participant our confidentiality policy:</u> *(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.*

➢ <u>Ask permission to record the interview:</u> *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.*

➢ <u>Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin.</u> *You will indicate your consent to participate by answering the questions.*

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

Interview Questions

1) In 2-3 sentences, please briefly describe your organization and your role in the organization.

2) Please describe your organization's role in supporting TEA and specifically Texas GEAR UP.
   a. *Are there other individuals at your organization that I should interview to offer additional insight regarding your partnership with Texas GEAR UP?*
   b. *What, if any, work has your organization been involved in with Texas Education Agency other than GEAR UP?*
   c. *If you have engaged with previous versions of statewide GEAR UP initiatives, how, if at all, has this relationship changed over time?*
   d. *What types of supports/services does your organization provide to Texas GEAR UP?*
   e. *What is the current status of the work? What is your organization's current level of involvement? How actively engaged is your organization? How do you see this changing over time?*
   f. *Does your organization serve similar roles in other state or local GEAR UP initiatives?*
3) What, if any, is the extent of your organization's involvement relative to statewide GEAR UP initiatives and at each GEAR UP school (in the 4 districts, 7 target schools and their feeder high schools)?
   Statewide Initiative
   a. *Are you involved in GEAR UP statewide efforts? If so, how?*
   b. *What portion of your organization's work is devoted to supporting the state? districts? schools? students? Parents?*
   c. *How frequently are these services provided? Who initiates/requests these services?*
   School Programs *[Note: Only ask if direct services to schools have begun. Some TEA partners may not work as directly with schools.]*
   d. *How is the support your organization provides similar/ different across sites? Are there specific GEAR UP districts or schools that your organization primarily focuses on? If so, which ones and how was that decided?*
   e. *How frequently are these services provided? Who initiates/requests these services?*
   f. *Do you see your organization's role changing as GEAR UP students move from middle school to high school? If so, how?*
4) What, if any, are benefits you see in your organization's role as a GEAR UP partner?
   a. *What prompted your organization's interest in becoming a GEAR UP partner? What are the perceived benefits to TEA? districts? schools? students? Parents? State?*
   b. *What factors (facilitators) have helped the partnership to succeed? Have you faced any barriers to a successful partnership? If yes, have you been able to overcome the barriers and how?*
5) In what ways, if any, does your organization collaborate with other Texas GEAR UP partners?
   a. *What, if any, formal/informal opportunities are there to interact with other partners?*
   b. *Are there particular partners you work closely with? Who? How?*
   c. *What supports or resources does the Texas Education Agency provide to GEAR UP partners with regard to collaborating with one another? Clarify any facilitators or barriers to collaboration.*
6) Do you have a partnership agreement in place (MOU)? To what extent is your organization's current role aligned with the partner agreements initially established?
   a. *If different, why is it different than intended?*
   b. *What factors have facilitated being able to fulfill this plan? What factors have hindered being able to fulfill this plan? Have you been able to overcome any barriers? To what extent do you anticipate being able to overcome these barriers?*
7) Is there anything else that you would like to share about your work with Texas GEAR UP, TEA and/or partners?

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

Appendix E: Case Studies

The following are case studies on the programs operating in each of the four district districts as part of the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grant (SG) during the 2013–14 year. Findings are based on site visits to all seven schools within four districts during fall 2013 and spring 2014. The purpose of presenting these case studies is to provide an overview of the implementation of grant activities during the 2013–14 school year, through the date of the spring 2014 site visits.

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 District Coordinator; school staff including principals, assistant principals, or other similar positions will be referred to as school administrators.

Unlike case studies presented last year, these studies include insights from the interviews with College Preparation Advisors hired to work in each school by the Texas GEAR UP SG in the 2013–14 school year. Beginning in fall 2013, these College Preparation Advisors were assigned to each school to help promote academic and college awareness goals. These case studies also examine activities within each district to prepare Texas GEAR UP SG students to make the transition from middle school to high school. The case studies include both a description of what actually occurred during summer 2013 and a discussion of planned summer 2014 activities, including summer programs for students as well as teacher professional development (PD) opportunities. It should be noted that final site visits for the year occurred in May 2014 and therefore these case studies do not include the finalization or actual implementation of the summer 2014 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. New Statewide Collaborations

During the 2013–14 school year, the Texas GEAR UP SG implementation office worked to develop new collaborations to provide opportunities to students and to work toward meeting project goals. The first new collaborator is with the Jackson School for Geosciences at UT-Austin. This collaborator offers a summer program to students, called GeoFORCE, which is a residential, geology-focused program in which students will learn from college professors and then take a geologic field trip to Florida and will participate in hands-on activities that will help them learn about geophysics. GeoFORCE is a selective program designed to encourage students in minority-serving high schools to pursue a rigorous mathematics and science curriculum. Because of its selectivity, students who wanted to participate in this opportunity were required to submit an application, including an essay, as well as teacher references. In each of the districts, College Preparation Advisors were responsible for supporting students in this application process. The College Preparation Advisors indicated that helping students with the applications was a good way to get to know the students and provided beneficial opportunities for one-on-one interaction. The GeoFORCE program provided space for 32 students from the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort to participate in the program. Students in all four districts applied to this program, with multiple students from each district selected to participate.

Another new collaboration introduced to each of the four districts during the 2013–14 school year was the Abriendo Puertas program.[127] This parent initiative includes a curriculum to help parents understand their impact on and the importance of their child's education and teaches them about parent engagement and actions that parents should take. The Abriendo Puertas organization specializes in training parents to conduct parent-to-parent activities in their own communities or homes. The Texas GEAR UP SG implementation office introduced this program to help districts meet Project Objective 7.3 regarding parental involvement. For this collaboration, the Texas GEAR UP SG implementation office has charged Abriendo Puertas with training 100 parent advocates across the four districts included in the grants. These parents will be given 15 hours of instruction on college access and then at least one parent in each district will be asked to host an event in their home before the end of summer 2014 where they share the information that they learned with other parents. At the time of the site visits, districts were at different phases of implementing Abriendo Puertas, but representatives in all districts were aware of the program and the benefits that it can provide to their parents.

E.1.2. Specified GEAR UP Space in Districts

With the introduction of the College Preparation Advisors into each of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools, there was additional visibility brought to the GEAR UP program. In Year 1, it was noted that there was often times a lack of knowledge of the Texas GEAR UP SG within the schools as parents, students, and sometimes teachers were unaware of the program and its objectives and presence in the schools. During the 2013–14 school year, College Preparation Advisors in each school were provided with office space. These offices were decorated with college posters and information relevant to college and careers, and were a place that students and sometimes their parents felt that they could go to ask questions about high school or college; many students called these offices "the GEAR UP room." Additionally, each of the schools had college posters or pennants in the hallways as a means to keep up a conversation about college. Individual schools also had other forms of college awareness materials hung in the hallways or in the College Preparation Advisor's office. For example, one school had college and career aspirations expressed by students in the hallway while another school had posters about House Bill (HB) 5 and available endorsements, including careers associated with each endorsement, to help students understand the impact of high school decisions on their future.

E.1.3. Delay in District Notification of Grant Award

During fall 2013, each of the four districts included in the Texas GEAR UP SG were required to reapply for funding through the grant. Due to the timing of a proposed grant extension, the Year 1 grants ended before an extension could be processed. Therefore, school districts were asked to complete a new application. Funding was structured so that there was no lapse in available funds and program operations were allowed to continue while the new applications were processed. During site visits, Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinators and district administrators indicated that they chose not to expend funds during that time for planned activities because of the lack of notification of grant award (NOGA). Once funding was received, all districts conducted activities for the Texas GEAR UP SG. Yet in some cases, they were not able to conduct all activities that were originally planned. For example, districts were unable to take students on college visits in fall 2013 because of the perceived lack of funds, which meant that they needed to attempt to incorporate more field trips in spring 2014; however, it can be

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[127] Abriendo Puertas, or Opening Doors, is an evidence-based program designed by and for Latino parents so that they can built leadership and become effective advocates for their children. More information is online at http://ap-od.org/.

difficult to conduct college visits in the spring due to state mandated testing that occurs during this time.

E.2. Case Study: District #1

E.2.1. Overview

In both fall 2013 and spring 2014, the ICF evaluators visited District #1 to learn about the implementation and functioning of the Texas GEAR UP SG within this district. During each of these visits, the evaluation team conducted interviews with the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator, the College Preparation Advisor, and school administrators. Additionally, during each visit focus groups were conducted with Grade 8 students, teachers, and parents of Grade 8 students. In this district, Grade 8 students are able to take advanced classes in Algebra I, pre-advanced placement (pre-AP) science, pre-AP social studies, and pre-AP English. This section of the report provides information about the Texas GEAR UP SG activities occurring in District #1 during summer 2013 and during the 2013–14 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 2013 focus groups included:
  - 5 students
  - 2 parents
  - 6 teachers
- Fall 2013 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor
  - Principal
  - Two Assistant Principals

- Spring 2014 focus groups included:
  - 13 students
  - 2 parents
  - 5 teachers
- Spring 2014 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor
  - Assistant Principal

E.2.2. Changes since Year 1

In year 2 of the grant, there was greater visibility of the Texas GEAR UP SG and across the board perceptions that the Texas GEAR UP SG is beneficial to the district and the Grade 8 students. One aspect of the grant that has helped in year 2 is the addition of the College Preparation Advisor. One school administrator said, "It is different because the advisor is here this year; there are more people to help and support students." She continued, "GEAR UP has done a good job of providing resources for students and support to the 8th graders." Students and parents agreed about the positive impact of the program. Parents appreciated the information and materials received, and were appreciative that a positive college message was coming from the school as well as from parents at home. A parent said, "I like the program because it provides important materials that she needs to get to college. It sounds better when information about college and what kids need to do comes from multiple people, not just from mom or dad."

Teachers who participated in the focus groups described positive changes for the district and its students that they thought could be attributed to the Texas GEAR UP SG in the district. One teacher said, "GEAR UP has helped students want to go to college." "I have seen more participation from students and more of an eagerness to participate from the students," said another teacher.

Another positive change since year 1 was the introduction of iPads purchased through the Texas GEAR UP SG into the classrooms. Perceptions of the iPads that were gathered during focus groups were positive. One teacher described that benefit of the iPads to her students and

said, "It has been awesome. They have really helped with doing research." A student expressed a similar thought, saying that an effective part of the Texas GEAR UP SG was "Letting us use the iPad to get answers and find information we need. The iPads came from the GEAR UP grant. They are working well." A school administrator indicated that these iPads would move with the students to high school.

E.2.3. Description of Year 2 GEAR UP Activities (2013–14)

Through interviews with the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and College Preparation Advisor, the following project objectives were identified as high priorities in the 2013–14 school year:

- Increased academic achievement in mathematics and science (related to overall Project Goal 1): This project objective was supported through the hiring of tutors from local colleges to support students in the classroom and after school, by having a science-focused afterschool program, and by holding a Saturday school for students struggling in math, which was a Texas GEAR UP SG match.
- Preparing students for high school: This project objective was supported by the mathematics and science activities as well as through career interest activities and building relationships with students so they are comfortable reaching out to GEAR UP district staff if they are struggling academically. Texas GEAR UP SG staff said they believed that preparing students for high school would impact their future readiness for college.

ALGEBRA I EXPANSION / ACADEMIC SUPPORT

School administrators, teachers, and the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator all described that the expansion of Algebra I was successful in this district despite not planning or implementing summer 2013 Algebra I activities. At the beginning of the 2013–14 school year, 35% of the Grade 8 students were enrolled in Algebra I, which places the district on track to meet Project Objective 1.1 of at least 30% of grade 8 students completing Algebra I. This is a greater percentage of students than have been in Algebra I in previous years. According to the Algebra teacher, this cohort of students is better prepared for success in Algebra than previous cohorts of students have been and indicated that students told her they were confident of their successful performance on the STAAR Algebra I EOC assessment. This is different from previous years; the Algebra teacher said, "This confidence isn't something that I have seen in the past…They are going to high school more well-prepared than last year."

A focus of the Texas GEAR UP SG in this district was to support the students in Algebra I. "If the students are struggling in Algebra, GEAR UP is here to help those students," said a school administrator. To help support students in Algebra I, the Algebra teacher indicated that she tutors the students as needed before or after school. Additionally, tutors hired from local colleges are available to help the students with concepts with which the students are struggling. During the spring semester, these tutors were focused specifically on supporting Algebra and science to help prepare students for testing. Students who participated in the focus groups indicated that they are doing well in Algebra. Most students said that it is has been easier for them than other mathematics classes because the teacher presents information and teaches in a way that they can understand. One student said that it is more challenging than other mathematics classes but that they enjoy that there are more things to do in the class.

TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

A school administrator indicated that one way to help the cohort students' transition to high school is the familiar faces to be provided by the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and College Preparation Advisor. She said that the students know these individuals will be making

the transition to high school with them, which has been made known to the students throughout the year. With regard to student transition to high school and the impact of the new endorsements created through HB 5, at the time of the site visit there was still some ambiguity on the part of school administrators regarding the effects of HB 5 for the students being analyzed. Specifically, the high school that cohort students are slated to attend is a high school that does not offer all endorsements, and specifically does not offer the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) endorsement. If students choose this STEM endorsement, they will be required to attend a different high school. The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator said, "If [students select a different high school], we do not plan to follow them closely." School counselors met with students to discuss high school options, so Texas GEAR UP SG district personnel were not involved in this activity.

To help students prepare for high school, the College Preparation Advisor will be hosting a high school transition camp in August 2014 for all students. This transition camp will be coordinated with an orientation camp held by the high school in order to maximize the number of students who attend.

COMMUNITY ALLIANCES

Alliances at this site to help Grade 8 students were not prevalent as evidenced by the lack of discussion about district relationships with community stakeholders.

COLLEGE VISITS

Students attended college visits that were planned by the College Preparation Advisor and the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator. One college trip was for the Explore UT program where students were able to visit UT-Austin and Huston-Tillotson University. Fifteen cohort students attended this event. Texas GEAR UP SG staff felt that the experience was beneficial in exposing students to college and that the students who attended the trip enjoyed it. In focus groups, students described that at this event they learned a great deal and they "got to see a lot of activities and events with science and the law," "participated in science things and learned about reactions," and that they "learned about grants and scholarships that you can earn." Regarding this trip, one student said, "Our Austin trip changed my career choices. It opened my eyes to colleges outside of our area. I learned that it is not too early to think about college." Another college trip was planned to see a university arts program. Students were able to learn about arts, theatre, and music at the college level and were able to see a play and then go backstage to see the stage and costume design. Students were selected for this field trip based on participation in the district's afterschool arts program. At the time of the site visit, another college trip was planned to take 24 students on an overnight visit to four universities outside of the local area. One teacher commented on the value of these college visits to the cohort students. She said, "The kids are taking a field trip out of town and will get to look at a couple colleges. That is a great thing for them to see." One teacher did indicate concern that the Texas GEAR UP SG was not reaching all students, as few are able to attend these college trips. There are limitations to being able to sign most students out of school during the school day to attend college visits.

OTHER FIELD TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

This district was not able to provide activities to the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students during summer 2013. When asked about not offering summer programs to students through the Texas GEAR UP SG, the principal said, "It is a goal for us to improve in this. The district provides remedial programs for students, but we want to provide enrichment opportunities."

During the 2013–14 school year, Grade 8 students in District #1 were able to go on a variety of educational field trips through the Texas GEAR UP SG. Many of these field trips were focused

on providing information about different career opportunities to students. For example, 35 Grade 8 students attended a Career Expo at the local civic center where they were able to do hands-on activities to learn about careers and were able to interact with different career professionals. On another field trip, a group of Grade 8 students visited a local Health Science Center to learn about different health careers such as nursing, medicine, and trauma/crime scene response. In focus groups, students said that they liked attending these events and learning about what professionals in different fields actually do on their jobs.

Other Texas GEAR UP SG activities in District #1 included a College Week and a science mini-camp for the Grade 8 students. As a part of college week, students participated in a Dream Walk where they created signs to show their college or career aspirations and marched together from a nearby park to the school. The College Preparation Advisor noted that she had talked to students about realistic careers and being serious when considering their future. The science mini-camp for the Grade 8 students was developed to help prepare students for the Grade 8 science STAAR exam. This program involved science teachers and the college student tutors, who set up different stations around the room that focused on science topics such as atoms, cells, force, and motion that students were struggling on in their science classes. The students moved from station to station to learn and participate in various science activities. The program was held afterschool and transportation home was provided to the students after the event. While this program was perceived to be successful for those who attended in that they participated and learned, it was not a well-attended event; approximately 35 students participated which is approximately 19% of the cohort students.

PARENT OUTREACH

In this district, the College Preparation Advisor and the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator have conducted monthly meetings for parents during which they provide parents with information about college and tips for how they can help their students prepare for college. However, the College Preparation Advisor indicated that attendance at these meetings was typically very low, with five or less parents attending each meeting. One parent event that was more successful in terms of parent attendance was an event called "Pancakes for Parents," which invited parents into school for breakfast to learn about the Texas GEAR UP SG program and college preparation for their students; approximately 35 parents attended this event. While this was an increase in attendance from other parent events, the event did not reach 50% of parents; this event reached close to 19% of parents. Parents that attended the focus group remembered attending the "Pancakes for Parents" event, but did not realize that it was part of the Texas GEAR UP SG program.

A school administrator indicated that parents typically have not been involved in the school, however with new programs coming to the school she indicated that she believes parents want to be involved and want to know what is going on. The school administrator indicated that within this district, parent outreach has included visiting parents at home, sending fliers home, conducting robo-calls for events, and holding events for parents to come to the school in the morning for breakfast to hear about what is going on in the school.[128] In their focus group, parents indicated that they were satisfied with the information received during Texas GEAR UP SG parent events. A teacher also acknowledged the struggle for parental involvement but could see that parents who attended meetings saw the benefit of the Texas GEAR UP SG: "I think we are lacking in the parent involvement part, which is something we have been lacking in for a long time. Parents like what we have done [through GEAR UP] though," she said.

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[128] Robo-calls are automated phone messages used as an efficient system to send information out to a large audience.

The College Preparation Advisor indicated that at the time of the site visit, the district was just starting to implement the Abriendo Puertas program, which is a program that teaches parents information and then has those parents share information with other parents. However, the program was not fully implemented yet.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A focus for teacher PD during year 2 of the grant was to bring project-based learning (PBL) into classrooms within the district. During summer 2013, 18 teachers in Grades 6-8 and six administrators in this district attended an in-depth, multi-day PBL training program. During this PBL PD, attendees learned how to use PBL in the classroom, including how to create PBL lessons and units for students. Teachers who attended this training felt that it was a good experience and saw the implementation of PBL in their classrooms as a benefit to students. One teacher stated, ""I loved the [PBL] training. They talked about relating things to real life and giving the kids more responsibility rather than just 'sit and get.'" Another teacher described the benefit of this training and the subsequent implementation of PBL in the classroom: "I really think that the PBL is helping students prepare for careers. They may have to work with people that they might not want to work with."

After teachers and administrators returned from the PBL training program, they led sessions within the district to teach other teachers who did not attend the training about using PBL in the classroom. In the focus groups, teachers indicated that when using PBL in the classrooms, students are engaged in their classroom work and focused on the lessons. One area of concern for the teachers with regard to using PBL in the classroom was transferring learning to tests. The teachers indicated, however, that the PBL instructors suggested assessments not be given at the beginning of PBL implementation but that the district required testing early in the semester.

With regard to additional PD for teachers during the school year, a school administrator indicated that training during the year was focused on district requirements rather than Texas GEAR UP SG sponsored training.

COLLEGE PREPARATION ADVISORS

The College Preparation Advisor in this district indicated that she was highly satisfied with her job, but did note that her satisfaction could increase if there was an opportunity for greater individual interaction with the students in the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort. The College Preparation Advisor described that there was a lot of red tape at the school level in planning activities and that initially getting approval for Texas GEAR UP SG sponsored events and student interactions was difficult, but that eventually she was able to plan and execute events. She also noted that the amount of data entry that was required of her for the Texas GEAR UP SG affected the ability to do work with students. In this district, the College Preparation Advisor indicated that she was responsible for a great deal of the reporting required for the Texas GEAR UP SG. During the spring 2014 semester, the College Preparation Advisor was able to interact with students individually and in small groups during lunch sessions in which the students came to meet with her in the school's Texas GEAR UP SG office.

Others in the district, including teachers, parents, students, school administrators, and the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator saw the benefit of having the College Preparation Advisor available for the Grade 8 students. One parent said that because of interactions with the College Preparation Advisor, her child "is more enthused about going to college" and has already thought about colleges that she might want to attend. According to a teacher, "[The College Preparation Advisor] has done a good job. She has groups of kids that are always in her office. Just to have kids that are interested in college awareness activities is great." The

College Preparation Advisor indicated that she had positive, high quality relationships with school counselors, teachers, and the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator.

E.2.4. Emerging Promising Practices

One activity that was beneficial for Texas GEAR UP SG students in this district was a Reality Check program offered by the College Preparation Advisor with a goal of making the students aware of real life and what their future could look like. This activity provided information to students about the cost of living and the types of expenses that are a part of daily life. Based on a specified job and salary, students had to create a budget and see how much their chosen lifestyle would cost compared to what their education level and job type would typically pay. The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator indicated that students enjoyed this activity and that it opened their eyes to the real world and what to expect.

When asked about what they learned through the Texas GEAR UP SG, students also focused on the awareness that they gained. "They have helped me get prepared for life and how it is going to be. It isn't going to be easy. They helped me understand budgets and the amount of money you get from jobs," said one student. Another student said, "It showed us the type of job that you can get with a high school diploma and we learned that gives you a low budget. We saw how much money a college degree can get you." During a discussion about the positive aspects of the Texas GEAR UP SG, one teacher described the aspect of making students aware of what adult life will be like. "There was one activity that was done in the gym where they looked at the costs of everything they would do in college, how much money different careers would make, and the amount of money necessary to finance their lifestyle and their family," she explained.

E.2.5. District Challenges

One challenge in this district that was noted by the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and the College Preparation Advisor was a perceived lack of support and buy-in from school administration. A lack of buy-in and troubles navigating red tape led to a lack of individual interaction between the College Preparation Advisor and students until February 2014. Additionally, this lack of support meant that other Texas GEAR UP SG activities could not be implemented fully, including the TG Financial Modules. Changes to administration have led to the eventual ability to implement the modules, but their delivery was delayed. The administration change reduced difficulties in gaining approval for many activities, including interactions with students.

Another barrier was a lack of time available to meet with the middle school students. While there is an advisory period during the school day, this time is less than 15-20 minutes, which is not sufficient to have a meaningful conversation and to meet one-on-one with all students. "Getting access to students is difficult. The only time is really at lunch or else informally before/after school or between classes when students stop by to ask a question," said the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator, highlighting the lack of time that is available for personal interactions with the students. This challenge of a lack of access as well as an inability to reach all students was also noted by a teacher, who said, "I love that GEAR UP is introducing the idea of college, but it doesn't seem like the majority of the 8th graders are having access to many of the GEAR UP events. There are some things that we do school-wide, but the field trips and things have been more selective. It seems like it is the same, top tier students who are going on the trips."

E.2.6. Future Plans

During summer 2014, cohort students in this district will be attending various summer programs though the Texas GEAR UP SG. Specifically, five students from this district will be attending the GeoFORCE summer program previously described. Additionally, up to 48 students will have the

opportunity to attend a 2-week STEM academy, which will be held on a college campus where students will stay for the duration of the camp. Finally, there will be a summer academic camp within the district for cohort students. This program will also be STEM-focused and will include field trips for the students, as well as visits from individuals in science-related careers who will come in to talk to the students about their experiences. At the time of the spring 2014 site visit, the numbers of students participating in these final two programs was not known. There was also a high school transition program planned for all students at the end of summer 2014.

The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator indicated that there is interest in expanding mentoring programs for the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort in this district in the future and that high school administrators are open to this idea and willing to discuss ways to make an expanded mentoring program possible.

E.3. Case Study: District #2

E.3.1. Overview

The evaluation team visited District #2 in November 2013 and May 2014 to observe the Texas GEAR UP SG implementation and conduct focus groups and interviews with Grade 8 students and teachers, parents of Grade 8 students, Texas GEAR UP SG district staff, and school and district administrators. District administrators described that, historically, most students in these schools have not attended college; however, the college-going rate for high school graduates has increased in recent years. Advanced course offerings in this district differ by school; all schools offered Algebra I and AP Spanish in Grade 8 but only one school offered pre-AP courses for Grade 8 students, with pre-AP courses in English, science, and social studies. Another school does not offer pre-AP classes to students, but instead focuses on improving rigor in classrooms using PBL. This section of the case study appendix provides information and analysis compiled from the site visit findings in District #2.

Figure E.2: District #2 Focus Group and Interview Participants

- Fall 2013 focus groups included:
    - 11 students
    - 7 parents
    - 17 teachers
- Fall 2013 interviews were conducted with:
    - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
    - College Preparation Advisors
    - Assistant Principal
    - 4 District Administrators

- Spring 2014 focus groups included:
    - 11 students
    - 2 parents
    - 9 teachers
- Spring 2014 interviews were conducted with:
    - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
    - College Preparation Advisors
    - District Administrator
    - 2 Additional Staff who participated in GEAR UP activities (e.g., school librarian)

E.3.2. Changes since Year 1

District administrators and teachers both described positive changes that they feel the district has experienced. One district administrator said, "We have really seen a major change. The Texas GEAR UP SG has helped as the district builds more of a college going culture. There are college t-shirt/sweatshirt Wednesdays. If you go down the hallways of schools, there are college posters on the wall getting kids to think about it early." Teachers also noticed this increase in college going culture and the observation that more students realize college is something that they could do. One teacher said, "I think that kids talk about college more. They are talking about where they want to go. Since this program, they have started asking what they need to do to get to college or what their GPA needs to be for college."

A benefit of the Texas GEAR UP SG in this district in year 2 of the grant is that it was able to provide support and finances to help students achieve, such as materials needed for hands-on activities in the afterschool mini-camps. "We will really miss GEAR UP next year," said one teacher. "It is nice having the ability to ask for things that we need to make our students successful."

E.3.3. Description of Year 2 GEAR UP Activities (2013–14)

Through interviews with district administrators and Texas GEAR UP SG staff in District #2, the following project objectives were identified as important for guiding GEAR UP activities in the 2013–14 school year:

- Increased enrollment in Algebra I: The district had a project objective of enrolling 30% of Grade 8 students in Algebra I, with a project objective that 100% of these students would be successful in the course and on the end of course exam (related to overall Project Objective 1.1).
- Involve students in campus beyond academics: A district administrator noted that a project objective for the Texas GEAR UP SG was to make students feel like they belong at school and to develop students beyond academics. This was accomplished through afterschool and summer programming as well as interactions with the College Preparation Advisors.
- Growth for teachers: Administrators in this district wanted to ensure that a focus was placed on teacher growth through the Texas GEAR UP SG as a means to bring sustainability to Texas GEAR UP SG progress and provide benefit to the district as the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort in this district moves up from Grade 8 through high school.
- One-on-one interactions with students: A goal of the College Preparation Advisors was to have personal interactions with students, to build trust and familiarity with the students.
- Increased parental involvement: Parent attendance at meetings has typically been low in this district, and one project objective for the Texas GEAR UP SG this year was to work to reach parents of all cohort students (related to overall Project Objective 7.3).

All of the activities and events that were supported through the Texas GEAR UP SG in this district were planned to help meet these project objectives. The various activities are described in the following sections.

ALGEBRA I EXPANSION / ACADEMIC SUPPORT

District #2 has been able to increase the number of students enrolled in Algebra I in Grade 8. Much of the ability to do so came from the implementation of an afterschool mathematics program in year 1 of the grant that helped to prepare students for success in Algebra. This was supplemented by a summer 2013 camp that included a focus on Algebra for the participants. Through this camp, students were exposed to higher-level math, mostly using PBL techniques. Approximately 175 students, or just over 30% of the cohort, attended the summer camp. At this camp, students participated in classes that focused on academics, art, and athletics. During the camp, students rotated through different classes during the day. Most of the classes offered, even art and athletics, had a mathematics focus. For example, art projects featured geometry. For this camp, the district employed Grade 8 teachers as a means to begin familiarizing these teachers with the Texas GEAR UP SG as well as the cohort students. One teacher described her experience teaching at this camp: "I taught both sessions of the summer program and it was a good experience. It was similar to an average school day, but with college readiness activities and electives and athletics that supported academics." At the conclusion of the camp, all participating students attended a camping event where they camped, went bowling, and went to the movie theater. Students and parents also appreciated the camp and its experiences. One student said, "The summer program was fun. They made us take math for 2 periods so that we could get ready for Algebra next year and they made us take science so that we could get ready for what we would be exposed to." Said a parent of the summer program, "We were only going to do the first two weeks of the summer camp, but my daughter wanted to go to all four weeks of the program. She actually wanted to go to summer school. They had it project-based, and she

was coming home talking about what she was learning more than she has in any year of school."

Regarding the Texas GEAR UP SG's focus on increasing Grade 8 student enrollment in Algebra I, a district administrator said, "I think it is fantastic. GEAR UP has been a nice thing because it increased enrollment. There were less than 100 students in Algebra in past years, and there are about 172 this year." Based on this information, more than 30% of the cohort enrolled in Algebra I as Grade 8 students.

To support students in Algebra I, the district hired tutors to be present in the classrooms and support the teachers. Tutors spend time in all Grade 8 mathematics classes, but additional focus is placed on supporting the students taking Algebra I. Depending on teacher needs and the classroom or lesson for the day, tutors typically answer general questions from students in the class or pull out students who are struggling and need additional help. Teachers noted the effectiveness of these tutors in supporting student achievement in math, and specifically in Algebra I. One Algebra teacher said, "GEAR UP was instrumental in enabling our school to have three Algebra classes this year instead of one last year. Students have the extra support in the classroom to help them. The tutors come in, and do whatever the kids need to achieve." In focus groups, students said that the tutoring was going well and helping them in their mathematics classes. "In Algebra, we have tutors on Tuesday and Thursday. It is good because if we need help, there are three people in the classroom who can help us," said a student.

TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

As a first step in helping students prepare for high school, the College Preparation Advisors assisted the district in spreading information about HB 5 to students and parents and helping these individuals understand the impact of the new legislation on the students. The College Preparation Advisors did classroom presentations about HB 5 and the available endorsements. Students also completed an online career interest program to help identify how their interests could align with different careers and subsequently were asked to select the endorsement that they want in high school. The College Preparation Advisors worked to plan and execute parent nights, which included an in-depth presentation on the legislation and provided extensive counseling to parents and students regarding high school decisions. As a follow-up to this parent meeting, one College Preparation Advisor noted that several parents came into school for individual or small group meetings to ask questions and better understand HB 5 and its impact on their students.

College Preparation Advisors and school counselors helped all Grade 8 students create district-required personal graduation plans that laid out the path to high school graduation for students. For this activity, the College Preparation Advisors held one-on-one meetings with a subset of students in the cohort (the school counselors met with the other students) to discuss high school opportunities and recommended classes. One College Preparation Advisor indicated a focus on encouraging students to take classes that will prepare them for college, such as Algebra II, and helping them pick an academic program of study and then explore the careers that can result from that path.

In the middle schools in this district, the College Preparation Advisors convened a panel of students from the district high school to speak to the students about their experiences in high school. The College Preparation Advisors also went into English and science classrooms to talk about the high school experience and the transition that students will be making after Grade 8 and allow the students to ask any questions that they wanted about high school or what they could expect in making the transition from middle school to high school.

COMMUNITY ALLIANCES

Alliances at this site to help Grade 8 students were not prevalent, as evidenced by the lack of discussion about district relationships with community stakeholders.

COLLEGE VISITS

For college visits, students in this district, along with their parents, were able to attend the Explore UT program. Teachers indicated during focus groups that students in this district often do not leave their smaller community or experience locations such as the local universities. Two additional college visits to four-year universities out of the local area were conducted in one school in the district, and parents were able to attend this trip as well. One parent described her experiences on and thoughts regarding the field trip: "It was a neat experience because I went to a community college. It was an exciting trip and neat to be on a campus with young people who are working towards their goals. On the trip, we got a tour of the facilities and the kids got to do a scavenger hunt around the campus to find the answers to questions. The kids were able to find their way around, and it was really cool." One teacher explained that she thought these trips were beneficial for the students. "I think that the visits were awesome. Many of these kids haven't even been out of [our town]. It was a good opportunity to get to see and experience new things. It was good for them to see what a university looks like," she said.

OTHER FIELD TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

A field trip was planned for female students to attend a conference geared toward women that focused on female empowerment and diversity. Teachers were asked to chaperone this event, for which female Grade 8 students who may need an additional push in the direction of going to college were selected to attend. One College Preparation Advisor said that she was hoping to plan a similar trip for males in the cohort. One College Preparation Advisor in this district also provided an arts-related field trip for students involved in an afterschool arts program. For this field trip, students traveled to see a local professional play and learned about puppets and how a play is produced. This was directly related to their lessons and work in the afterschool arts program in which they were participating.

Another major Texas GEAR UP SG activity in this district was afterschool mini-camps that students attended. These camps were open to all students, and were geared toward offering students hands-on education experiences that teachers were not able to provide in the classroom. To receive funding for an afterschool camp, teachers could submit a proposal to the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinators that explained why the mini-camp was needed and the benefits that it would offer to students. Teachers then created a curriculum for the camps that were selected. One school in the district offered mini-camps for science, math, and art while another school offered mini-camps on science, social studies, English language arts, and theatre. The mini-camps meet after school 2-3 days per week from 3:30-5:00pm. Students attending the afterschool mini-camps are provided with a snack and bus transportation home following the camp.

Teachers thought that the afterschool camps were good for the students and used the afterschool opportunity to try to support struggling students. They also saw a benefit from these afterschool programs in that materials purchased to teach the students could be used again and are therefore a way to help sustain the benefits of the Texas GEAR UP SG after the cohort moves to high school. One teacher said, "I think that the afterschool program really helped them. We taught about 30-40 kids in the math camp who attended regularly. Through GEAR UP, the district bought a lot of manipulatives to use with the kids, and we will be able to use those next year. The students seemed to really enjoy the afterschool program." Another teacher

said, "Students seemed to like the program. We encouraged struggling students to participate and tried to push the ones that needed the most help."

PARENT OUTREACH

The main form of parent outreach regarding the Texas GEAR UP SG in this district occurs at parent nights; each school in the district held at least five evening parent events during year 2 of the grant. Different topics are presented at each of the parent nights. For example, one night focused on HB 5 and included high school staff that came to talk to parents about high school plans, class credit, and why the change is happening. Parent events have also focused on preparing students for high school and college, with specific strategies suggested such as creating an educational zone in the home where students can talk to their parents about school and have a place to do homework uninterrupted. Parents in focus groups indicated that they learned about parent events through emails or text messages from the College Preparation Advisor and calls through the phone system, but the College Preparation Advisors said that mail-outs are also sent home for each of the parent events. Parents participating in the focus groups indicated that the information provided during these events is good.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff in the district also helped to plan and participated in school-wide literacy nights at each of the middle schools in the district. These events were attended by hundreds of parents at each of the schools, with 600 parents of Grade 6-8 students attending the event at one school. These parent events focused on literacy, the importance of learning, and incorporating literacy into different content areas such as math. Hands on activities, such as making bookmarks and getting a passport stamped at different stations, were provided to increase engagement in the event. Food was also provided, as the district perceived that this often brings in more parents to events than if there is not food available.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A great deal of focus in terms of PD focused on the College Board Springboard curriculum training.[129] The Springboard curriculum is designed to be a framework that incorporates the College Board's college and career readiness program and includes vertical alignment across grades through demonstration of skills that are taught each year and showing how this aligns with standards. This training was offered in August, September, and January for all Grade 8 mathematics and English language arts teachers. A district administrator felt that this was a positive training program, and said that the Springboard curriculum "can really help to increase the rigor in classrooms. Springboard is a great resource that provides electronic copies of the curriculum for the teachers and the district has purchased books for the students." While the teachers that attended the Springboard training enjoyed the training and thought that it provided valuable information and that the Springboard curriculum had good material, most indicated that they were not using the Springboard curriculum in their classrooms. They provided multiple reasons for this. First, three teachers indicated that they did not receive the Springboard books in time to utilize them in lesson planning. Another teacher focused on the difficulty of implementing the Springboard lessons in the classroom. She said, "The activities are good. The only problem with Springboard is that a lot of the activities take 28 days. Since we have to follow a scope and sequence and there are tests from the district that we have to use, it is hard to do those lessons in class." Other teachers said that they were not able to use the Springboard curriculum in their classes because it did not align with their Texas Essential Knowledge and

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[129] Springboard is the College Board's print and online program for customizable pathway integrating rigorous instruction, performance-based assessment, and professional learning. More about this program can be found at the following website: http://springboardprogram.collegeboard.org/.

Skills (TEKS) or the topics students would see on the STAAR tests. They suggested that a different level of Springboard book might be more appropriate.

There were additional training programs that a small number of teachers attended. For example, one teacher attended a science training program. Other teachers were able to attend PD to train them on the use of robots that will be used in the Texas GEAR UP SG summer 2014 academy occurring in this district. This robot training included training for high school teachers as these teachers will be working with the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort next year.

COLLEGE PREPARATION ADVISORS

In this district, the College Preparation Advisors indicated that they were satisfied in this position. One did note that expectations for the job had to change, as the actual work required was different from what was expected from his original perception of the job. Specifically, he indicated that event planning was a large part of the job but was not included in the job description, which focused more on student interaction. Working to improve organizational and planning abilities helped to increase satisfaction and ensure that work as the College Preparation Advisor was successful.

College Preparation Advisors were able to work directly with students in multiple ways in this district. First, the College Preparation Advisors worked with students on the district-required personal graduation plans, which allowed for one-on-one interaction with the students. College Preparation Advisors also spent time in small groups or one-on-one. One College Preparation Advisor offered one-on-one mentoring to students during their lunch period; this included a check of the students' grades to learn if they were struggling in any areas and allowed for personal relationship building. Another College Preparation Advisor interacted with students in small groups through a Texas GEAR UP SG club. The purpose of this club was to focus on involving a small core of Grade 8 students who would then share information with their peers to continue to grow the club. The College Preparation Advisors also delivered the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TG) Financial Modules to students in the classroom.

In focus groups, students described positive interactions with the College Preparation Advisors and felt that these individuals provided them with helpful information. Parents also saw the benefit of having a College Preparation Advisor in the schools, both for their students as well as for increasing their own knowledge. Of the College Preparation Advisor, one parent said, "He is good. Anytime we have questions, he is always available to answer them. I use him more than I use the school counselors because he is more responsive."

E.3.4. Emerging Promising Practices

One promising practice exhibited in this district was the implementation of career days at one of the middle schools. During this year, two career days were conducted in different ways. For the first career day, 18 professionals from the local community were identified and volunteered to come to the school to talk to students about their jobs. These professionals were asked to wear the attire that they would actually wear to work and to bring any props to describe their career. They then went into classrooms and gave presentations to students about their career. The second career day included approximately 30 professionals and was staged in the school gym. Each professional had a table in the gym that was set up to show what they do at work. This provided visuals for the students to see. Students from the entire school came to the gym and were able to walk around and talk to all of the career professionals. These career days included a wide variety of professionals, from fire fighters to a video game creator to a DJ.

Teachers had high praise for the career days and thought that they were well executed. One teacher said, "I took my students to the second career day in the gym, and the students really enjoyed it. I was really impressed with both career days. It was amazing to have actual

professionals come here. [The College Preparation Advisor] did an amazing job in organizing it, and the kids really enjoyed it. I think that the kids learned things and took away valuable information."

Another innovative and effective practice in this district was the afterschool mini-camp, and specifically a theatre mini-camp for students. During this camp, students had to write a script for a play, make puppets that would be used in the play, and do mathematics calculations to determine things such as stage size. The teacher who designed this class explained that they wrote the curriculum to focus on objectives in different areas that students typically struggle on such as surface area in mathematics and plot lines in language arts. A goal of the mini-camp was to reach students who had not been reached by the Texas GEAR UP SG in other ways, such as students who had not been able to attend college visits. During the 12-week camp, students had to create the script and learned about English Language Arts concepts with which they were not familiar. They then had to create their puppets, which involved using mathematics skills such as surface area and budgeting to determine the amount of money that they would need for supplies. The students then had to build the puppets based on their previous work, and finally they performed the play that they wrote at elementary schools in the district. The teacher for this mini-camp had high praise for the camp, saying "Greatest enrichment activity that I have ever done."

E.3.5. District Challenges

The main challenge identified in this district was a lack of time available to meet with students, however, the College Preparation Advisors were able to overcome this challenge and work individually with students in their schools. A College Preparation Advisor explained that there are barriers in meeting with students but that he learned he could sometimes access students during elective classes or through a sport that he coaches, as it is not possible to take kids out of core classes to meet with them. A student also commented on this challenge, saying, "GEAR UP could improve by having us come here [to the GEAR UP room] more often. Maybe they could have a scheduling time for us to come to the GEAR UP room and talk about things."

E.3.6. Future Plans

The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinators have plans to continue and increase teacher PD during summer 2014. Specifically, they plan to expand Springboard training to a wider group of teachers, including Grade 9 teachers that will have the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort as students next year. Based on comments from Grade 8 teachers who have already received the Springboard training and materials, this will be most effective if teachers have the training and materials with enough advance time to plan for the school year. In addition, some teachers indicated that they thought the incorrect level of Springboard books were purchased for their classes so it may be beneficial for district administrators to consult with teachers before materials are purchased. With funding that was received, there are also plans to provide College Board AP training to Grade 9 AP teachers. Finally, there will be Agile Mind training for teachers in summer 2014 before the start of the 2014–15 school year.

In summer 2014, twelve students from this district will participate in the GeoFORCE summer program. There will also be a district summer 2014 program available to current Grade 8 students. While the content for this camp was not set at the time of the site visit, it will be similar to the summer camp that occurred at the end of year 1 of the grant and will include activities in academics, athletics, and art for the students and will likely be taught by teachers that the students had this year or teachers that they will have in Grade 9.

The College Preparation Advisors indicated that in the next year, they plan to continue activities that were started this year such as one-on-one counseling and mentoring with the students and

the GEAR UP club, and would like to expand on and grow these activities in addition to involving students in new activities to help prepare them for college and a career.

One final plan for the future focuses on parent outreach through the previously described Abriendo Puertas program. The district has talked with representatives from this program and the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator indicated that parent training for this program would start in the near future. The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and College Preparation Advisors hope that a program such as this will help to bring information to more parents of the Texas GEAR UP SG students.

E.4. Case Study: District #3

E.4.1. Overview

The ICF evaluation team conducted site visits to this district in October 2013 and May 2014 that included focus groups with students, teachers, and parents plus interviews with the Texas Gear UP SG District Coordinator, a school administrator, a community stakeholder, and two central office administrators. The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator is funded 100% by the grant. For Grade 8 students, the district offers advanced courses in mathematics, English language arts, Spanish, social studies, and science. This case study is a presentation of the analysis of the site visit data collected in District #3.

E.4.2. Changes since Year 1

Despite the truncated startup to Year 1, parents, teachers, and students participating in focus groups reported a high level of knowledge of Texas GEAR UP SG in the 2012–13 year. This high level of knowledge was again apparent in Year 2 based on the fall 2013 and spring 2014 focus groups. In

> **Figure E.3: District #3 Focus Group and Interview Participants**
>
> - Fall 2013 focus groups included:
>   - 12 students
>   - 7 parents
>   - 8 teachers
> - Fall 2013 interviews were conducted with:
>   - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
>   - College Preparation Advisor
>   - 3 District Administrators
>   - Additional GEAR UP Employee (tutor)
>
> - Spring 2014 focus groups included:
>   - 6 students
>   - 8 parents
>   - 6 teachers
> - Spring 2014 interviews were conducted with:
>   - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
>   - College Preparation Advisor
>   - 2 School Administrators (Principal, Assistant Principal)
>   - District Administrator
>   - Additional GEAR UP Employee (tutor)
>   - Community Stakeholder

some cases, parents in particular cited greater knowledge of how Texas GEAR UP SG may help their child in high school. Teachers in focus groups indicated that the culture at the school appeared to be changing, with greater student and parent interest in college. "This year I have had more questions about what students can do with a degree and how long it will take to graduate college," one said. This attitude was prevalent not only among high-achieving students but also among students not in honors or advanced classes. "Kids in my regular classes know about GPAs [grade point averages] and what they mean. This group has a different attitude about school," said another.

A significant change since Year 1 was completed when the district used Texas GEAR UP SG funds to purchase a STEM lab. This lab has more than a dozen workstations covering topics such as computer graphics, animation, and other hands-on STEM activities. Texas GEAR UP SG students were able to enroll in a semester class that allowed them to use this technology on a regular basis. In spring 2014 focus groups, students, and parents said they were impressed with the lab and its many activities.

Employee turnover was one change in this district during Year 2. Multiple program staff members left their posts in Year 2. At the time of the site visit, one GEAR UP staff member was already replaced and efforts were underway to hire a new individual for the other vacancy.

E.4.3. Description of Year 2 GEAR UP Activities (2013–14)

The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and GEAR UP College Preparation Advisor identified three core project objectives for the 2013–14 school year:

- Comprehensive counseling: This site had a project objective that 75% of Grade 8 students receive counseling for high school, college, and career (related to overall Project Objective 4.1). The program sought to accomplish this through direct outreach with students and by leveraging the work of a community stakeholder, Communities in Schools (CIS), for the 308 Grade 8 students. A related goal of the College Preparation Advisor was to get to know students and earn their trust.
- Summer program participation: The district had a project objective that 35% of Texas GEAR UP SG students participate in a summer activity in 2014 (related to overall Project Objective 4.2). As of the late spring site visit, students were offered a variety of options including an Algebra I prep camp, a Geometry prep camp; a forensic lab at the school, a pre-engineering camp at a local university, a summer economics camp, the GeoFORCE program outlined earlier in the Case Studies, and a camp for rising Grade 9 students planning to take an AP Human Geography class.
- Algebra I success: The school was given a project objective that at least 30% of Grade 8 students enroll and succeed in Algebra I in the 2013–14 school year (related to overall Project Objective 1.1). This project objective was reflected in summer 2013 activities such as PD for teachers and mathematics programs for students likely to succeed in Algebra I in Grade 8 as well as through academic assistance/tutoring services available during the school year.

ALGEBRA I EXPANSION / ACADEMIC SUPPORT

This site emphasized in-school academic support for students via an in-class tutor. This tutor began work in spring 2013 and continued in this position through the end of the 2013–14 school year. While the tutor was available to help all students, a particular emphasis was placed on students with limited English proficiency since the tutor was bilingual. During site visit focus groups, teachers said this bilingual tutor was doing important work in the classroom, particularly by helping students with significant learning challenges. Students in a focus group also indicated that the tutor was available to provide subject matter assistance in math, including Algebra, and other subjects.

Approximately 60% of Texas GEAR UP SG students in this district participated in Pre-AP Algebra I or regular Algebra I during Grade 8, meaning the district was well positioned to achieve Project Objective 1.1 that at least 30% of students complete this course before Grade 9. Of the enrolled group, many had received invitations to summer 2013 Algebra prep camps, one at the high school and another at a local college. According to the District Coordinator and College Preparation Advisor, the majority of those invited did attend the summer 2013 activities. The high school program also served as a way for teachers to employ PBL skills they were provided through PD supported by the Texas GEAR UP SG. In focus groups, teachers, students, and parents viewed the summer 2013 activities as helpful in preparing Grade 8 students to succeed in Algebra I. At their focus group, mathematics teachers indicated that students were not allowed to drop the course without first receiving assistance from the Texas GEAR UP SG supported tutor or from the Algebra I teachers themselves. In particular, the bilingual tutor "helped to increase their confidence, which helped to increase their scores," one teacher said. Another teacher at the focus group cited examples in which individuals who were not among the top students in the cohort worked hard in Algebra "because they felt like they were singled out for something good academically." Mathematics teachers in the focus group noted that nearly all students remained with the course for the entire year and they were hopeful that most would pass the end-of-course assessment administered in late spring 2014.

With Texas GEAR UP SG funds, the school also purchased extensive STEM-related equipment for use in a new laboratory elective class. Students could rotate among different stations where

they could participate in forensic analysis, digital design, rocketry, and other activities. In focus groups, both students and parents were enthusiastic about this opportunity and said it provided high-quality, hands-on learning. The district, using its own funds, purchased a second set of this equipment in order to offer a similar course at the high school. As a result, both middle and high school students in the district will have access to these facilities in the future. Additionally, about 75 students participated in an after-school program that lasted until 5:45 on most school days. Students received help with homework and counseling for high school and college. The program also includes an art component for students to draw, paint, and express their creativity.

TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

As Texas HB 5 outlined new graduation requirements, such as having students select certain endorsements during their high school years, the Texas GEAR UP SG staff worked with other district personnel to educate students and parents about these changes. At this school, students attended a session in the cafeteria where counselors and the College Preparation Advisor explained the options and worked with them to select endorsements. As part of this work, the advisor sought to outline the importance of selecting an endorsement and related courses that can help prepare students for college. In a focus group, students said they were asked to select a "major" and a "minor" area of study for high school, much like they would do in a traditional college setting. Parents also attended this cafeteria meeting, held in the evening, to learn more about the changes. In addition, Grade 8 students visited the local high school where each department made a presentation about its programs.

The College Preparation Advisor and Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator met with high school staff at least once a month from January to May to discuss transition issues for moving GEAR UP to the high school next year. This work was designed to introduce Texas GEAR UP SG to the high school and discuss issues from access to students to office space for the College Preparation Advisor. Based on interviews with the College Preparation Advisor and the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator, these efforts produced general agreement that the College Preparation Advisor will have regular access to students for counseling and other activities. Additionally, the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and the College Preparation Advisor planned a transition camp in August 2014, with each day devoted to a specific year of high school such as freshman year (Day 1) and sophomore year (Day 2). Students will visit colleges on Day 3 as they discuss issues facing high school juniors. The last day will include a discussion of post-high school life, including college, jobs and resumes.

COMMUNITY ALLIANCES

Texas GEAR UP SG at this site is unique concerning the extensive alliances evident on site to help Grade 8 students. Through this work, program leaders at this site have leveraged community alliances to expand services for students. One significant stakeholder is CIS, which also has a dedicated person on site to work with at-risk students. Texas GEAR UP SG and CIS, with school district support, have created a memorandum of understanding outlining areas of alliance and coordination. One area is mentoring, as CIS provides mentoring to its students who are also in the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort. CIS also works with Texas GEAR UP SG to publicize parent events.

Another area of Texas GEAR UP SG/CIS alliance is job shadowing, through which cohort students visit employers and work sites to learn about careers. Seven job shadowing trips occurred during the 2013–14 school year, including visits to a bank, a port, an energy company, medical manufacturer, and a telecommunications company. Typically, CIS plans the trips and Texas GEAR UP SG staff identifies some students to attend, handles all permission slips, and identifies chaperones. In addition, the Texas GEAR UP SG in this district collaborates with a

two-year college that provides space and instruction for summer camps as well as college resources. An advisory committee with business and community representation provides guidance as well.

COLLEGE VISITS

Texas GEAR UP SG in this district sponsored trips to six postsecondary institutions during 2013–14, including visits to two- and four-year colleges as well as specialty and professional schools. For each trip, students were given notebooks with questions they were to answer at the end of the trip. As related by the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator, the questions asked about the school's academic programs and mascot, among other topics. The College Preparation Advisor also delivered a College Jeopardy game to check on students' growing knowledge about college requirements and financial aid. Students in focus groups said they learned about college life, scholarships, different types of colleges, and the importance of the GPA in preparing for college. These students believed the many activities helped build a college-going culture at the school. "There were a lot of kids who didn't want to go to college last year, but now they do," one student said. The College Preparation Advisor also said a key objective was to change the conversation from *possibly* going to college to *definitely* wanting to go. "I am working hard to make sure that the students are not asking 'Can I go to college?' but rather 'Where will I go to college?'" the advisor said.

OTHER FIELD TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

In addition to college visits, field trips for the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort consisted primarily of job shadowing organized with assistance from employers and CIS. As described in the subsection Community Alliances, this activity was well received by students participating in spring 2014 focus groups. Each job shadowing activity involved 16 to 26 Grade 8 students.

Within the school, the district used Texas GEAR UP SG grant funds to purchase a STEM lab with a variety of hands-on activities. This lab was located in a classroom and became the focus of a school-day elective class. In their focus groups, both students and parents said this lab provided an opportunity to learn about STEM careers. Another activity was a leadership club, a group of students interested in taking a leadership role at the school. Students who participated in the focus groups said that through this club, they work on projects that help to get other students excited about going to college.

PARENT OUTREACH

Parents attending English-language and Spanish-language focus groups had strong knowledge of GEAR UP. One parent noted that her Grade 8 student has a plan for the future, which is something the parent's Grade 12 student lacks as graduation nears. "It's sad the difference between them. GEAR UP has provided the 8th graders with confidence," the parent said. Parents in the Spanish-language focus group said most parent meetings have translation services available. They noted that the bilingual tutor supported by the Texas GEAR UP SG is available to meet with and translate for parents with limited English skills. The new College Preparation Advisor also is bilingual, which Spanish-speaking parents indicated was a significant factor in helping them learn about Grade 8 activities. English-speaking and Spanish-speaking parents both had a positive view of the new STEM classroom/laboratory where equipment was purchased with Texas GEAR UP SG funds. The school held an orientation night for parents; participants said the classroom provides many hands-on activities to interest students in mathematics and science careers.

The school also was taking steps to implement the Abriendo Puertas parent outreach curriculum to help develop a network of parent advocates. Work begins when adults attend sessions at a parent's home to learn more about how to advocate for their children and to encourage greater

parent involvement in the school. The project objective is to grow and sustain parent involvement over time (related to overall Project Goal 7.3). Two meetings were held in spring 2014, with more sessions planned. The College Preparation Advisor believes this initiative holds promise to raise parent involvement.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers participated in PBL during summer 2013 and had a project objective to do PBL activities with students during the 2013–14 school year (related to overall Project Objective 3.1). Among teachers in focus groups, that project objective appeared to have been met. Mathematics teachers said they used PBL extensively with activities such as having groups of Algebra I students build a catapult. Teachers in focus groups said they enjoyed delivering the activities and that students appeared to enjoy them. Additionally, one teacher interviewed in a focus group attended Pre-AP training and said the PD was helpful in developing new curriculum. Future teachers of GEAR UP students were scheduled to attend PD in summer 2014 on Agile Mind, a way to address non-cognitive factors in learning including student motivation and engagement. This activity for Grade 9 teachers was set to begin during summer and fall 2014.

This site also has started to offer vertical alignment activities across Grades 5-8, beginning in mathematics due to Project Objective 1.1 of Algebra readiness. Several meetings also were held between junior high and high school teachers, typically on an early release day, across all core subject areas, teachers in focus groups said. Mathematics teachers in particular have looked at how the state TEKS vary across the years. One teacher participating in a focus group noted that the district employs master teachers and that master teachers at the junior high and high school levels do communicate regularly with each other.

COLLEGE PREPARATION ADVISORS

Parents in a focus group said the College Preparation Advisor hired in late fall 2014 has been helpful in answering their questions about college and the new high school endorsements. They also praised the advisor for his spring 2014 efforts to help students complete the lengthy application process for the competitive GeoFORCE summer program. In focus groups, both parents and students noted that the advisor is available to interact informally with students. "He is always around in the hallways and at lunch," one student said. The College Preparation Advisor also provided financial literacy education that students in a focus group found effective. This education focused on needs and wants and helping to determine the difference. A school administrator also noted that that the College Preparation Advisor has played a critical role in publicizing Texas GEAR UP SG activities and events and helping students prepare for high school.

E.4.4. Emerging Promising Practices

Job Shadowing: Grade 8 students had seven opportunities to visit employers and work sites through an alliance with Communities in Schools. Students visited a bank, port, telecommunications company, medical company, and energy company to learn more about careers. As related by the College Preparation Advisor and Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator, CIS helps set up the visits, while Texas GEAR UP SG staff helps with recruitment, parent permission slips, and chaperones. With up to 26 students per trip, efforts are made to break students into smaller groups once on site so they can explore specific jobs in greater depth. A CIS representative noted that the trips are well received by students and consistent with Texas GEAR UP SG's goals. "All of the trips have had a focus on STEM careers and jobs that are in high demand. On each of the trips, they emphasize college." Attempts are made to

recruit students who have expressed an interest in the career sector of the company that is offering the shadow activity.

Collaboration: Collaboration with CIS is also indicative of the alliance approach that the District Coordinator and College Preparation Advisor have taken with its Texas GEAR UP SG grant. An alliance with a local two-year college has led to the sharing of college resources with Grade 8 students and parents, and the college is a location of many summer activities. The district also has established an advisory council for Texas GEAR UP SG that meets 3-4 times a year to review progress and plan future activities. Along with Texas GEAR UP SG and district staff, the council includes representatives from colleges, industry, and local government (including the town mayor). The council shares information as well as guidance. "They have given us a clear charge of setting goals high," said the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator.

Leadership Club: As noted earlier, Texas GEAR UP SG at this site established a leadership club for Grade 8 students. The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and College Preparation Advisor said this activity promoted volunteer service and that club members began to serve as peer mentors to other students. During a student focus group, those who participated in the club said it was a constructive activity and that they learned more about leadership.

Summer Programming: Texas GEAR UP SG at this site offered an array of activities during summer 2013 that helped prepare students for rigorous classes, particularly Algebra I, in Grade 8. While addressing short-term needs of students, these summer 2013 activities also supported other long-term project objectives. For example, the mathematics program held within the district was based heavily on PBL activities, with teachers using information they had received at recent GEAR UP-supported PD activities. The mathematics program conducted at a local college featured opportunities for students to learn more about college as well.

E.4.5. District Challenges

One key challenge for 2013–14 was employee turnover. A new Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator began work less than three weeks before the start of the 2013–14 school year. This individual also left the district in spring 2014, meaning the site will get its third District Coordinator in as many years for the 2014–15 school year. The original College Preparation Advisor also left after three months, moving to another job in the district. While the program has continued, "It has been a struggle this year," one administrator said. Yet school and district administrators cited several factors in their favor, including a Texas GEAR UP SG advisory council that met regularly to review activities and set goals. Also, the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator during 2012–13 is now the principal at the high school, so this individual has continued to be a resource for program staff and will do so again in the future. The current College Preparation Advisor is committed to remaining with the program in the next school year.

Another challenge for this district is geographic isolation. Parents as well as school volunteers also must travel substantial distances to attend programs and provide assistance. During focus groups, some parents noted that the district seeks to address this challenge by offering parent programs at various times of the day to try to meet parents' diverse needs and situations.

E.4.6. Future Plans

The mathematics emphasis was expected to continue in summer 2014 as the district, with Texas GEAR UP SG support, planned to offer another Algebra I prep camp for students who will be taking the class starting in fall 2014. Those who completed Algebra I in Grade 8 were offered an opportunity to attend a summer Geometry prep camp to prepare for the next course in the district mathematics sequence. Grade 9 teachers were expected in summer 2014 to

receive PD in Agile Mind, a program designed to promote student motivation, confidence, and engagement to succeed in rigorous mathematics and science courses. School and district administrators said college readiness activities would be embedded into this program.

With its own funds, the district has purchased similar Pitsco STEM lab materials for the high school as it did through Texas GEAR UP SG for use in the junior high school. As a result, this site is promoting sustainability. While the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort will continue to have access to these cutting-edge materials, they also will be available to future cohorts of non-Texas GEAR UP SG students.

E.5. Case Study: District #4

E.5.1. Overview

ICF evaluators conducted site visits in District #4 in November 2013 and May 2014. The chief aim of the fall site visit was to capture information from summer 2013 activities. As this visit did not occur until November due to scheduling challenges, this may have impacted what the site visit team learned during this visit. However, during these site visits, the site visit team interviewed College Preparation Advisors, the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator, school administrators, and district central office administrators. In addition, ICF evaluators conducted focus groups with teachers, Grade 8 students, and parents of Grade 8 students. School administrators noted that the district is focusing on college access but it remains a challenge in a high-poverty area. Said one school administrator, "This is an impoverished community where there are a few students who talk to their parents about college…but we need to target those on the boundary. They see people around them working and not succeeding. We want to show them that they can be successful." In this district, Grade 8 students were able to take advanced courses in mathematics, English language arts, social studies, and science. This section of the report is a presentation of the analysis of the site visit data collected in District #4.

> **Figure E.4: District #4 Focus Group and Interview Participants**
>
> - Fall 2013 focus groups included:
>   - 29 students
>   - 24 parents
>   - 28 teachers
> - Fall 2013 interviews were conducted with:
>   - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
>   - College Preparation Advisors
>   - 7 School Administrators (Principal, Assistant Principal)
>   - 3 Additional Staff who participated in GEAR UP activities (e.g., Counselors)
>
> - Spring 2014 focus groups included:
>   - 31 students
>   - 18 parents
>   - 27 teachers
> - Spring 2014 interviews were conducted with:
>   - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
>   - College Preparation Advisors
>   - 5 School Administrators (Principal, Assistant Principal)
>   - 5 District Administrators
>   - 1 Additional Staff who participated in GEAR UP activities (Counselor)

E.5.2. Changes since Year 1

During Year 1 of the Texas GEAR UP SG, the truncated start-up to the program resulted in some students and parents having minimal knowledge of the program and its services. In this district, however, students, parents, and teachers participating in focus groups cited greater awareness in 2013–14. All of these groups, plus school administrators, had praise for the program. One school administrator described Texas GEAR UP SG as "truly a great program that can open doors for these students." He believed that it is building trust among students and parents. "The GEAR UP [College Preparation] Advisor provides a familiar face to help build that trust," the administrator said. Teachers in a focus group at one school also said they have seen some positive changes among Grade 8 students. "We now talk about college every day and we have a room dedicated to it, so college is on their minds," one teacher said. Said another, "Students think there is a possibility that they can go to college."

Students and parents in focus groups largely agreed on the value of the Texas GEAR UP SG. "GEAR UP is really helping them and guiding them. They aren't lost when thinking about high school and college," said one parent. One major reason for this is the College Preparation Advisor who helped students with summer camp applications and was available to answer

questions. Students in their focus groups gave the program generally high marks. "GEAR UP makes us want to succeed," one student said.

E.5.3. Description of Year 2 GEAR UP Activities (2013–14)

During interviews with the evaluation team, the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and College Preparation Advisors identified these core project objectives for the 2013–14 school year:

- Algebra I success: The district had a project objective that at least 30% of cohort students enroll and pass Algebra I in Grade 8 (related to overall Project Objective 1.1). This project objective was reflected in summer 2013 mathematics preparation programs for students and PD for teachers as well as through school-year academic assistance.
- Tutoring/mentoring/counseling: This district utilized grant and matching funds to support a project objective that 75% of students participate in tutoring, mentoring, or counseling activities (related to overall Project Objective 4.1). These activities included some funded by the Texas GEAR UP SG, such as online tutoring in Algebra I, as well as tutoring and mentoring already provided by the school and by stakeholders such as Communities in Schools. For College Preparation Advisors, a related project objective was to get to know students and earn their trust.
- Summer program participation: The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and College Preparation Advisors took several actions to promote a project objective that 30% of students participate in summer programs for 2014 (related to overall Project Objective 4.2). The district offered students an array of camp options both within and outside the district. Those outside the district included a camp at an aquarium, a writing camp at a four-year university, and the GeoFORCE program in which students travel to Florida to participate in science activities.

These project objectives also were reflected through various activities during the 2013–14 school year, which are detailed below.

ALGEBRA I EXPANSION / ACADEMIC SUPPORT

In interviews and focus groups, school administrators and teachers noted that the district enrolled nearly three times as many Grade 8 students in Algebra I during 2013–14 compared with the previous year. Many of these students had access to a summer 2013 Algebra prep camp, and both teachers and students said the camp helped them make a strong transition to the mathematics course. "Without that program, many of the students would not have been in Algebra," said a teacher at one focus group. Mathematics teachers did not all agree that enrolling more students in Algebra I was universally successful, partly because it resulted in Algebra courses that had students of varied ability levels. However, some said that it did open their eyes about students' potential. Said one teacher: "I was conflicted about this at first, but it seems like the environment with the mixed levels has created an environment of motivated and focused kids. It brought the lower-level kids up in terms of both behavior and grades." However, student scores on the end-of-course exam were not available for this report.

When students struggled in Algebra I and other advanced courses, there was access to after-school tutoring (not supported by Texas GEAR UP SG) delivered primarily by teachers. Late in the year, students had access to an online tutoring program but this service was just beginning at the time of the site visits. One teacher noted that it was difficult to find mutually convenient times for the tutor and students to meet. At the time of spring 2014 student focus groups, students said they had just learned about the availability of the service and had not yet utilized it.

TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

School counselors and College Preparation Advisors helped students develop four-year plans for high school. The district offered HB 5 nights for parents to learn about state endorsements under the newly enacted legislation. According to some parents attending focus groups, these HB 5 meetings were mandatory to attend for parents. Students in this district can select the high school they want to attend, although only one has the HB 5 STEM endorsements. Middle school administrators said they welcomed the chance to leverage the Texas GEAR UP SG in developing strategies to educate parents about the new endorsements. Similar to other districts, a theme in the HB 5 outreach was that Grade 8 students should select one or more areas of concentration for their studies, much like they would be expected to do in college. Students were encouraged to focus on areas of concentration that lead to postsecondary study. "They told us that we need two endorsements in high school, a major and a minor," said a student at one focus group. One College Preparation Advisor noted that while outreach to parents was available via large group presentations, a few parents sought help from one-on-one sessions with a school counselor or through the College Preparation Advisor.

Another transition activity was a series of meetings between College Preparation Advisors and administrators at the high school level. At these meetings, College Preparation Advisors said they received assurances from high school administrators that they would have many opportunities to interact one-on-one with students beginning next year. Such outreach was not possible this year, the College Preparation Advisors said, because of several factors, including the students' schedules and the need to prepare for standardized tests in all core subject areas. This district also sent high school staff to the Texas GEAR UP SG statewide conference in fall 2013 in anticipation of the staff's expected involvement in the program during the next school year.

Grade 8 students took field trips to area high schools during the 2013–14 school year, and they were encouraged to attend a high school transition camp in August 2014. This camp will focus on what to expect in high school and the challenges of moving to a larger school. One central district administrator said the camp also would include emotional intelligence testing for students with goals that students would better understand their emotions and behaviors in a way that may improve academic success.

COMMUNITY ALLIANCES

Alliances at this site to help Grade 8 students were not prevalent as evidenced by the lack of discussion about district relationships with community stakeholders.

COLLEGE VISITS

College Preparation Advisors, school administrators, and district central office administrators said that college visits and other field trips supported by the Texas GEAR UP SG all first took place in spring 2014 due to a delay in receiving the NOGA for 2013–14.[130] Yet these visits included a trip to UT-Austin for Explore UT, an interactive event that was also attended by some parents. Parents enjoyed attending the UT trip; in a focus group, two mentioned that they would have liked to have visited a college class to get a sense of what students encounter academically. Nonetheless, parents found the trip informative. Elsewhere, the number of field trips varied greatly by school, from a low of two trips at one school to a high of five trips at another school. In addition to budget issues, participating schools in the district faced scheduling challenges due to spring state testing, weather, and other factors. Approximately

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[130] All districts during fall 2013 had to reapply to the Texas Education Agency for funding from the Texas GEAR UP SG.

100 students visited another university, while other trips brought Grade 8 students to a technical college, and a historically black college. Students in focus groups said they liked the college visits. One College Preparation Advisor said he sought to ensure that all students, not only high achievers, were able to participate in these trips.

At one school, Texas GEAR UP SG staff developed an alliance with a small four-year university in which approximately 20 female students received a mentor. As part of this activity, the mentors visited the Grade 8 students at school each month to form relationships and participate in activities, such as goal-setting activities. These students also received a tour of the university. During a focus group, students selected for this activity said it was helpful in learning about college and the experiences of a college student.

OTHER FIELD TRIPS AND ACTIVITIES

Texas GEAR UP SG provided additional field trips in the spring 2014 semester, including excursions to a theater production, a natural science museum, and to an outdoor site for team-building activities. Students in focus groups said they liked the trips. One student noted that he "learned about facing life challenges" through a local field trip that emphasized team building skills. For another activity in this district, Texas GEAR UP SG students heard from a motivational speaker who was able to change his life after facing early challenges. Students and College Preparation Advisors said this activity was important in learning the importance of education in improving one's life. Teachers also saw the benefit to this speaker. "The kids loved this and hearing the story of how this guy was at the bottom and changed his life. We need to keep this motivation going," said one teacher.

PARENT OUTREACH

The main Texas GEAR UP SG parent activity in this district was a series of evening events on college awareness sponsored by Princeton Review. College Preparation Advisors believed these sessions were initially successful, with attendance of up to 50 parents. However, as the year went on the workshops were often repetitive, which the advisors believed resulted in declining parent attendance. By late in the school year, five or fewer parents attended these activities. Two school administrators also noted that the sessions were not as effective as they could be due to the repetitive information, which often included the same handouts. "We have told them [the external organization] to get more in-depth about the requirements for college next year," one school administrator said. College Preparation Advisors also said they tried to rebrand the presentations, in some cases adding additional speakers on other topics.

The district approved the launch of Abriendo Puertas, a parent advocacy program described earlier in this chapter. However, approval occurred late in the year and it was not clear when the program would begin. The College Preparation Advisors also delivered TG financial literacy training to parents on topics such as needs versus wants and how to manage a budget. Similar modules were presented to Grade 8 students.

Parents attending focus groups praised the Texas GEAR UP SG activities and the staff, including the College Preparation Advisors. However, one noted that "there's not much communication right now" and that an automated message or flyer is the main way they learn about a Texas GEAR UP SG activity. During English and Spanish language focus groups, parents in the Spanish-language focus groups had less knowledge of the College Preparation Advisor than those in English-language groups. Some parents in the Spanish-language groups also were not aware that Texas GEAR UP SG would continue beyond middle school and provide services during high school. These parents noted that not all Texas GEAR UP SG parent events had translation services and, as a result, they did not always believe that the activities were designed for them.

One school administrator noted that Texas GEAR UP SG must work with parents to help them overcome their hesitancy to allow children to leave the local neighborhood to attend college. Too often, the administrator said, students graduate high school and remain in the local community to work or help with family responsibilities. Despite such challenges, another school administrator noted that change was evident among parents of Grade 8 students. "It has gone from parents wanting their kids to graduate high school to parents wanting their kids to go to college," the administrator said. At one school, the most active parents tend to be those who are Spanish speakers and have children with limited English proficiency. "They come to the U.S. for a better life, so they see the long-term effects of a good education for their children," one administrator said.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

According to teachers attending focus groups, a small contingent of math, English, social studies, and science teachers attended pre-AP PD in summer 2013. Science teachers indicated that this work mainly involved discussions of TEKS readiness and ways to incorporate labs into Grade 8 courses. Social studies and English/Language Arts teachers attending focus groups said they used summer 2013 training to write curriculum for pre-AP classes and discussed what topics to cover with high school teachers. However, in most cases teachers said these pre-AP and vertical alignment activities did not continue into the regular school year. One mathematics teacher noted that there was continuing contact with high school Algebra I teachers but mainly because the newer high school teachers sought advice from the middle school teacher on Algebra teaching strategies.

On Saturdays early in the 2013–14 year, through the Texas GEAR UP SG Grade 8 teachers also received PD for the AYD program, focusing on youth development, student motivation, and helping students understand their own emotions. This training produced a variety of opinions in spring 2014 focus groups. Most teachers attending focus groups said the AYD material had merit. However, they were critical of its implementation, which occurred during the school day's longest period that also included lunch. Teachers at focus groups said they were expected to stop teaching academic subject matter for approximately 20 minutes to focus on AYD curriculum. Said one teacher, "We are trying to squeeze in AYD now, but it isn't working well." Teachers at focus groups also said they had to switch gears from content-heavy instruction in core subjects to an AYD module with hands-on activities. "The students enjoyed the materials, but it needs to be implemented in a purposeful way," one teacher said. "You don't want to put it into a core class because our focus is on the curriculum. But it would be very beneficial in another setting."

Looking ahead to summer 2014, the district hoped to increase participation in pre-AP and AP training by bringing this PD into the district rather than encouraging teachers to travel out of town for training. District administrators said they would use blended funding, including Texas GEAR UP SG funds, to explore potential new AP courses as well as provide teacher training for existing AP offerings. In addition to Grade 9 teachers, district content specialists and academic deans also may attend these summer 2014 trainings. According to the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and district administrators, the project objectives for Grade 9 pre-AP classes are to provide rigorous courses with syllabi and to build overall district capacity. For example, the District Coordinator noted, the district wants to strengthen existing AP courses in biology, English composition, Calculus, and US History through GEAR UP and then use district funds to expand into new courses that may include AP Government or AP French.

In addition, teachers in this district are expected to attend PBL PD in summer 2014 that will be partly funded by the Texas GEAR UP SG. Teachers noted that pre-AP classes at one school

have begun to incorporate PBL, with some success. During summer 2014, Grade 9 teachers also will attend AYD training designed to promote youth development and motivation.

COLLEGE PREPARATION ADVISORS

Most College Preparation Advisors in this district expressed satisfaction with their jobs. One expressed considerable frustration due to lack of access to students and difficulty in scheduling activities. One concern expressed by the group was the length of time it takes to gain approval for Texas GEAR UP SG activities and projects. Yet all said they have had strong relationships with school counselors and administrators. In this district, the College Preparation Advisors delivered TG financial literacy modules to parents. One advisor also provided TG modules to students.

None of the College Preparation Advisors had regular one-on-one interactions with students during the 2013–14 school year. Given this obstacle, all used other means to get to know students. All volunteered for lunch duty so they could have informal interactions with Grade 8 students. Another volunteered for hall duty to have similar contact. Said one advisor, "I'm not allowed to pull students out or go into the classroom so this is the only time I have to talk to the students." School administrators noted that one-to-one contact is not usually possible in Grade 8 due to the students' tight schedules and the focus on preparation for exams. Students at focus groups indicated that they did know the College Preparation Advisor largely because of discussions at lunch or during field trips. Students indicated they had a positive view of the advisors.

Despite these limitations, College Preparation Advisors at two schools had contact with large groups of Texas GEAR UP SG students when they occasionally delivered several lessons from a college preparation curriculum during the school day. However, at one school this activity did not continue in the spring as students prepared for state testing. Although they had less direct contact with students than they expected originally, the College Preparation Advisors said they maintained regular communication with one or more school administrators. Often this contact was both formal and informal, consisting of a regular meeting with the administrator and informal contact almost every day.

E.5.4. Emerging Promising Practices

This district shows evidence of leveraging Texas GEAR UP SG funding to broaden its goals, as it uses braided funding (using both Texas GEAR UP SG and non-Texas GEAR UP SG funds) to support both district goals and goals of the grant. This was most evident in the area of pre-AP and AP training. The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator said the district planned to use grant funding to support training for teachers of existing pre-AP and AP classes to enhance instruction and curriculum, while using non-GEAR UP funds to explore the possibility of introducing new AP classes during the high school years.

E.5.5. District Challenges

The time required to gain approval for grant activities was an obstacle cited by several individuals interviewed by the evaluation team. This was most evident in two examples. One was the rollout of an online mathematics tutoring service, which was not made available to students until nearly the end of the academic year; another was in outreach to students about summer 2014 camps. Several individuals interviewed said delayed approvals gave students little time to apply for the competitive GeoFORCE summer program as well as other summer camp opportunities outside the district, resulting in fewer students being able to take advantage of these opportunities.

E.5.6. Future Plans

In interviews with the evaluation team, district central office administrators described their plans to enroll more than 100 Texas GEAR UP SG students in a new *I Am a Scholar* academy that will begin during summer 2014. Following a summer 2014 camp, the students will enroll in a school-day *I Am a Scholar* course that will focus on helping students prepare for high-level courses and college entrance exams. This course will be available due to a change in the school schedule that will add an extra academic period to the school day. The course will target high achieving students; one central office administrator noted that a secondary goal is to help students qualify as national merit finalists or semifinalists. Additional plans for the 2014–15 school year include developing a mentoring program with Big Brothers Big Sisters.[131] Students were interviewed to participate in the program although it is not expected to start until next year.

Through Texas GEAR UP SG funding, the district planned a large array of summer 2014 camp opportunities for students in summer 2014. These included internal district camps on STEM, robotics, and preparation for Algebra I. Camp options in the community included an adventure camp, digital media academy, art camp, young writer's camp, and nature camps available in the community. A small number of students are attending the GeoFORCE science camp that includes a trip to Florida. Texas GEAR UP SG will pay for students to attend the non-district camps but parents must provide their own transportation.

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[131] Big Brothers Big Sisters is a volunteer supported mentoring network. More about the program can be found at the following website: http://www.bbbs.org/.

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, 2013–14

As of March 2014, 1,924 Grade 8 students attended one of the seven participating Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) state grant (SG) schools. Demographic information about the students is presented in Table F.1. At six of the seven middle schools, the majority of students were Hispanic/Latino (ranging from 58% to nearly 100%). The percentage of students identified as limited English proficient (LEP), which averaged 12% across all schools, varied by campus, with School D and School G having lower percentages of LEP students (2% and 7%, respectively) as compared to other campuses (12% to 21%). Future analyses will examine outcomes with regard to both current and former LEP status students. Additional demographic and prior performance information on students will be available in future reports.

Table F.1. Primary Cohort Student Demographic Characteristics by School, 2013–14 (Grade 8)

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Number of Students	Hispanic/Latino Students	Limited English Proficient
School A	274	99.6%	12.8%
School B	313	98.4%	12.8%
School C	230	98.3%	18.7%
School D	196	42.3%	1.5%
School E	273	64.5%	21.2%
School F	323	58.2%	12.1%
School G	315	86.3%	6.7%
Total	**1,924**	**79.3%**	**12.4%**

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report, Spring 2014.

F.2 Advanced Course Taking, 2012–13 and 2013–14

Table F.2. Enrollment of Primary Cohort Students in Advanced Courses, by Grade Level and Number of Advanced Courses, 2012–13 (Grade 7) and 2013–14 (Grade 8)

Advanced Course Enrollment Status	Grade 7, 2012–13		Grade 8, 2013–14	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Not enrolled in any advanced course	1370	68.2%	885	46.0%
Enrolled in 1 advanced course	234	11.6%	583	30.3%
Enrolled in 2 advanced courses	190	9.5%	131	6.8%
Enrolled in 3 advanced courses	216	10.7%	141	7.3%
Enrolled in 4 advanced courses	n/a	n/a	184	9.6%
Total	**2010**	**100.0%**	**1924**	**100.0%**

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, Spring 2013 and Spring 2014.
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	Middle School A	Middle School B	Middle School C	Middle School D	Middle School E	Middle School F	Middle School G	Total
N (Grade 7, 2012–13)	314	319	257	201	278	319	322	2010
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%
N (Grade 8, 2013–14)	274	313	230	196	273	333	315	1924
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.

NOTE: 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: $\chi^2(6) = 268.5$, $p < 0.001$

* 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 Algebra I.

F.3   Student Support Services: Tutoring (Implementation Year 2)

Table F.4. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Mathematics Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in Mathematics by School, 2012–13, Summer 2013, and 2013–14

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Grade 7 (April 1, 2013 to End of School Year, 2012–13)			Grade 7 (Summer 2013)			Grade 8 (Start of School Year to March 31, 2014, 2013–14)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring	n	% of Students received Tutoring*	Average hours of Tutoring**
School A	314	0.3%	6.3	314	-	-	274	39.1%	5.0
School B	319	0.6%	1.3	319	-	-	313	6.7%	1.2
School C	257	0.8%	2.5	257	0.8	1.5	230	32.2%	2.4
School D	201	98.5%	11.3	201	-	-	200	96.0%	12.2
School E	278	73.7%	46.0	278	-	-	274	52.9%	2.6
School F	319	87.1%	36.4	319	-	-	323	54.8%	3.9
School G	322	89.8%	0.9	322	-	-	315	39.7%	3.2
Total	2010	48.5%	22.6	2010	0.1	1.5	1929	43.6%	5.4

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, Spring 2014.

* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $\chi^2(6) = 439.2$, $p < 0.001$

** Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $F(6, 834) = 70.6$, $p < 0.001$

NOTE: N counts for two schools (School D and School E) increased as additional data were provided at a more recent time.

Table F.5. Primary Cohort Students Receiving English Language Arts Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in English Language Arts by School, 2012–13, Summer 2013, and 2013–14

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Grade 7 (April 1, 2013 to End of School Year, 2012–13)			Grade 7 (Summer 2013)			Grade 8 (Start of School Year to March 31, 2014, 2013–14)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring	n	% of Students Received Tutoring*	Average Hours of Tutoring**
School A	314	-	-	314	-	-	274	15.0%	3.2
School B	319	0.3%	1.5	319	0.3%	9.0	313	6.7%	1.7
School C	257	-	-	257	-	-	230	22.2%	2.9
School D	201	98.5%	11.3	201	-	-	200	91.0%	6.2
School E	278	-	-	278	-	-	274	20.8%	3.7
School F	319	-	-	319	-	-	323	.6%	0.8
School G	322	27.6%	3.9	322	-	-	315	7.9%	8.5
Total	**2010**	14.3%	**8.9**	**2010**	**<0.1%**	9.0	1929	19.6%	**4.9**

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, Spring 2014.
* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $\chi^2(6) = 784.6$, $p < 0.001$
** Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $F (6, 372) = 16.0$, $p < 0.001$

Table F.6. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Science Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in Science by School, 2012–13, Summer 2013, and 2013–14

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Grade 7 (April 1, 2013 to End of School Year, 2012–13)			Grade 7 (Summer 2013)			Grade 8 (Start of School Year to March 31, 2014, 2013–14)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring	n	% of Students Received Tutoring*	Average Hours of Tutoring**
School A	314	-	-	314	-	-	274	31.8%	2.9
School B	319	-	-	319	-	-	313	28.4%	2.4
School C	257	-	-	257	-	-	230	32.6%	2.8
School D	201	98.5%	11.5	201	-	-	200	93.5%	6.7
School E	278	-	-	278	-	-	274	16.4%	3.2
School F	319	-	-	319	-	-	323	27.6%	7.9
School G	322	-	-	322	-	-	315	18.4%	1.8
Total	**2010**	**9.9%**	**11.5**	**2010**	**-**	**-**	1929	32.7%	**4.6**

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, Spring 2014.
* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $\chi^2 (6) = 405.0$, $p < 0.001$
** Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $F (6, 623) = 50.6$, $p < 0.001$

Table F.7. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Social Studies Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in Social Studies by School, 2012–13, Summer 2013, and 2013–14

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Grade 7 (April 1, 2013 to End of School Year, 2012–13)			Grade 7 (Summer 2013)			Grade 8 (Start of School Year to March 31, 2014, 2013–14)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring	n	% of Students Received Tutoring*	Average Hours of Tutoring**
School A	314	-	-	314	-	-	274	20.8%	3.1
School B	319	-	-	319	-	-	313	16.6%	2.0
School C	257	-	-	257	-	-	230	.4%	3.0
School D	201	-	-	201	-	-	200	62.0%	1.7
School E	278	-	-	278	-	-	274	10.6%	6.3
School F	319	-	-	319	-	-	323	.9%	0.3
School G	322	-	-	322	-	-	315	-	-
Total	**2010**	**-**	**-**	**2010**	**-**	**-**	**1929**	**13.8%**	**2.5**

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, Spring 2014.

* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $\chi^2(6) = 536.7$, $p < 0.001$

** Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $F(5, 260) = 27.2$, $p < 0.001$

Table F.8. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Tutoring in Other Subjects and Average Number of Hours Tutored in Other Subjects by School, 2012–13, Summer 2013, and 2013–14

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Grade 7 (April 1, 2013 to End of School Year, 2012–13)			Grade 7 (Summer 2013)			Grade 8 (Start of School Year to March 31, 2014, 2013–14)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring	n	% of Students Received Tutoring*	Average Hours of Tutoring**
School A	314	6.7%	5.5	314	1.0%	8.0	274	5.1%	1.7
School B	319	3.8%	5.7	319	4.4%	9.6	313	34.2%	5.0
School C	257	5.1%	3.7	257	5.8%	12.1	230	0.9%	1.0
School D	201	-	-	201	-	-	200	61.0%	1.0
School E	278	-	-	278	-	-	274	-	-
School F	319	-	-	319	-	-	323	4.0%	0.9
School G	322	-	-	322	-	-	315	19.4%	9.4
Total	**2010**	**2.3%**	**5.1**	**2010**	**1.6%**	**10.6**	**1929**	**16.5%**	**3.9**

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, Spring 2014.

* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $\chi^2(6) = 516.7$, $p < 0.001$

** Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $F(5, 313) = 34.5$, $p < 0.001$

F.4   Student Support Services: Mentoring (Implementation Year 2)

Table F.9. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Mentoring and Average Number of Hours Mentored, by School, 2012–13 and 2013–14

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Grade 7 (April 1, 2013 to End of School, 2012–13)			Grade 8 (Start of School to March 31, 2014, 2013–14)		
	n	% of Students Received Mentoring	Average Hours of Mentoring	n	% of Students Received Mentoring*	Average Hours of Mentoring**
School A	314	5.4%	16.0	274	14.2%	8.7
School B	319	6.3%	10.3	313	8.0%	10.9
School C	257	3.5%	16.8	230	11.7%	11.3
School D	201	4.0%	2.0	196	14.8%	0.5
School E	278	0.0%	-	273	5.5%	0.7
School F	319	0.0%	-	323	4.3%	4.5
School G	322	13.7%	3.1	315	37.5%	5.0
Total	**2010**	4.9%	**7.7**	**1924**	13.9%	**6.0**

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, Spring 2014.

* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $\chi^2 (6) = 197.4$, $p < 0.001$

** Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $F (6) = 15.6$, $p < 0.001$

NOTE: Data in the Annual Performance Report about comprehensive mentoring reflects both Grade 7 and Grade 8. Data presented here include only Grade 8 as that is the primary cohort for this evaluation.

F.5   Student Support Services: Counseling (Implementation Year 2)

Table F.10. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Counseling and Average Number of Hours Counseled, by School, 2012–13 and 2013–14

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Grade 7 (April 1, 2013 to End of School, 2012–13)			Grade 8 (Start of School to March 31, 2014, 2013–14)		
	n	% of Students Received Counseling	Average Hours of Counseling	n	% of Students Received Counseling*	Average Hours of Counseling**
School A	314	0%	-	274	31.4%	1.9
School B	319	0%	-	313	38.0%	0.9
School C	257	0%	-	230	0.4%	1.0
School D	201	98.5%	2.0	196	16.3%	0.6
School E	278	0%	-	273	31.1%	0.5
School F	319	0%	-	323	96.3%	1.2
School G	322	21.4%	1.4	315	19.0%	1.7
Total	**2010**	**13.3%**	**1.8**	**1924**	**36.1%**	**1.2**

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, Spring 2014.

* Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $\chi^2 (5) = 643.1$, $p < 0.001$

** Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 8: $F (5) = 3.0$, $p < 0.05$

F.6   Parent Events

Table F.11. Number of Parent Events/Workshops, Average Number of Participants, and Average Event Length, by School, 2013–14

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Number of GEAR UP Students	Number of Events	Average Number of Participants (range)	Average Event Length (in hours)
School A	274	14	8 (1-20)	3.8
School B	313	10	16 (1-41)	2.2
School C	230	8	55 (5-219)*	2.6
School D	196	3	11 (2-16)	1.8
School E	273	6	16 (1-50)	3.8
School F	323	8	20 (3-65)	4.2
School G	315	16	21 (1-166)	2.3

Source: Texas Education Agency, Annual Performance Report for Partnership and State Projects, 2013–14.

* School Annual Performance Report data included a mailing to all parents as a parent event, so the average and range are skewed higher compared to other schools.

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, 2013–14

G.1.1   Survey Administration

In May 2014, ICF conducted surveys with students in Grade 8 and their parents in the seven 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. For the parent surveys, methods for administration included having students take copies home and bring completed surveys back to school and requesting completion at parent events. All seven schools were provided Spanish-language translated surveys, both online and paper-based; 81 parents and 12 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 2013 informed ways to improve construct measurement and response options for fall 2013 and spring 2014 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.

G.1.2   Data Cleaning

A total of 1,490 students and 499 parents submitted the Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2014 survey. The majority of students (806 respondents) and parents (404 respondents) completed the survey on paper during the school day; 684 students and 95 parents completed the online 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 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 10% 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, 1,295 student surveys (87% of surveys received) and 471 parent surveys (94% of surveys received) remained for analysis. All of the following analyses in this report are based on these revised survey samples.

In an effort to analyze responses for 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 Parent and Student Surveys, Spring 2014

Reason for Exclusion	Number of Parent Surveys Excluded	Number of Student Surveys Excluded
Dissented to take the survey	0	8
Declared that they already took surveys in the other format (online or paper)	-	92
Indicated Grade other than Grade 8/ Indicate they don't have any child in Grade 8	2	18
Completed less than 50% of survey (50% of survey items missing)	26	77
Total Excluded	**28**	**195**
Total Received	**499**	**1490**

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).

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 parent and student responses to items about ethnicity/race, gender, free- or reduced-price lunch participation, language spoken, and parent education level.

A majority of both parents (86% of respondents) and students (81% of respondents) identify as Hispanic or Latino. Of parents completing the survey, 85% were female. Students reported participation in free- or reduced-price lunch in smaller percentages than did parents (67% and 85% of respondents, respectively); however 16% of students reported being unsure if they received free- or reduced-price lunch. A similar percentage of parents and students reported speaking English at home (56% and 56% of respondents, respectively). Half of parents surveyed (50% of respondents) reported that their highest level of education obtained was high school or less; 12% of respondents indicated that they completed a four-year college degree or higher. Although this reflects actual attainment of parents, additional data about aspirations and expectations are included in Table G.3, Table G.4, and Table G.5.

Table G.2. Parent and Student Survey Respondent Demographic Characteristics, Spring 2014

	Number of Parents	Percentage of Parents	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Ethnicity/Race				
Asian	-	<1%	-	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	-	<1%	23	2%
Black or African American	21	5%	93	7%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	406	86%	1,045	81%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander		< 1%	-	<1%
White	25	5%	43	3%
Two or more races	-	<1%	27	2%
Race unknown	15	3%	48	4%
Parent Gender				
Female	368	85%	N/A*	N/A
Male	67	15%	N/A	N/A
Child Gender				
Female	241	56%	594	48%
Male	191	44%	647	52%
Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation				
Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation	375	85%	828	67%
Language Spoken at Home				
English	256	56%	701	56%
Spanish	96	21%	165	13%
Both English and Spanish	104	23%	378	30%
Other or Multiple	0	-	9	1%
Language Spoken with Friends				
English	N/A	N/A	967	78%
Spanish	N/A	N/A	33	3%
Both English and Spanish	N/A	N/A	240	19%
Other	N/A	N/A	7	1%
Parent's Highest Level of Education				
Less than high school	65	**14%**	N/A	N/A
High school	165	**36%**	N/A	N/A
Some college but less than a two-year/four-year college degree	130	29%	N/A	N/A
Two-year college degree	42	9%	N/A	N/A
Four-year college degree	37	8%	N/A	N/A
Higher than four-year college degree	16	4%	N/A	N/A

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. In the case of small n's, at least, two numbers within the category were masked as indicated by "-".
*N/A: Not Applicable

G.3 Educational Expectations and Aspirations Postsecondary Plans

Table G.3. Parent and Student Comparisons on Educational Aspirations* and Expectations,** Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014

	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree	More than a Four-Year College Degree
Parent Aspirations (Spring 2013)	373	2.4%	9.4%	8.8%	79.4%	
Parent Expectations (Spring 2013)	363	2.5%	9.9%	19.6%	68.0%	
Parent Aspirations (Spring 2014)	467	3.8%	6.4%	8.4%	36.8%	44.5%
Parent Expectations (Spring 2014)	466	4.7%	7.1%	14.2%	37.1%	36.9%
Student Aspirations (Spring 2013)	1,269	5.9%	14.6%	17.0%	62.5%	
Student Expectations (Spring 2013)	1,156	6.7%	17.8%	30.0%	45.4%	
Student Aspirations (Fall 2013)	1,280	8.6%	5.8%	14.5%	34.5%	36.6%
Student Expectations (Fall 2013)	1,250	11.7%	10.0%	20.2%	34.7%	23.3%
Student Aspirations (Spring 2014)	1,251	10.6%	7.5%	13.5%	31.5%	36.9%
Student Expectations (Spring 2014)	1,238	14.2%	10.2%	18.1%	34.5%	23.0%

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

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.

* Parent aspirations differed significantly from student aspirations in Spring 2014: $\chi^2(1) = 28.2$, $p < .001$.

** Parent expectations differed significantly from student expectations in Spring 2014: $\chi^2(1) = 39.2$, $p < .001$.

Table G.4. Parent Educational Aspirations by Expectations,* Spring 2014

	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	2	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Aspire for High School or Less	15	13.3%	26.7%	6.7%	13.3%	20.0%	20.0%
Aspire for Some College	30	0.0%	16.7%	46.7%	13.3%	16.7%	6.7%
Aspire for Two-Year College Degree	39	0.0%	7.7%	15.4%	46.2%	20.5%	10.3%
Aspire for Four-Year College Degree	171	0.0%	2.9%	4.7%	17.5%	63.7%	11.1%
Aspire for More than Four-Year College Degree	208	0.0%	.5%	1.9%	5.8%	22.6%	69.2%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014).
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.
*Parent aspirations differed significantly from parent expectations: $\chi^2(25) = 418.2$, $p < .001$.

Table G.5. Student Educational Aspirations by Expectations,* Spring 2014

	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	21	23.8%	19.0%	4.8%	4.8%	23.8%	23.8%
Aspire for High School or Less	104	8.7%	66.3%	12.5%	2.9%	4.8%	4.8%
Aspire for Some College	85	1.2%	31.8%	45.9%	12.9%	7.1%	1.2%
Aspire for Two-Year College Degree	164	2.4%	12.8%	21.3%	48.2%	13.4%	1.8%
Aspire for Four-Year College Degree	390	0.0%	5.6%	6.2%	25.4%	57.7%	5.1%
Aspire for More than Four-Year College Degree	456	.7%	1.8%	3.3%	6.6%	34.2%	53.5%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.
*Student aspirations significantly differ from student expectations: $\chi^2(25) = 1149.6$, $p < .001$.

G.3.1 Comparisons by School: Aspirations, Expectations, and College Plans

Student perceptions differed significantly across schools in terms of aspirations as well as expectations (See Table G.6 and G.7). For aspirations, the percentage of students who would like to obtain a four-year college degree or higher ranged from 61% to 76% across schools with School G at the highest and School A at the lowest. The percentage of students who aspire to some college or less was highest at School A (23%) and School B (26%) while at School G only 12% have aspirations at this level. The percentages of students who expect to earn a four-year college degree or higher ranged from a low of 50% (School A) to a high of 67% (School E). Parent expectations, but not aspirations, differed significantly across schools (see Table G.8). The percentage of parents who expect their child to obtain at least a four-year degree ranged from 66% to 79% with School G at the highest end. During site visits, there was disagreement among teachers at School A in regards to changes in the college-going culture; with only some teachers indicating believing that students who need the most direction have improved their attitudes towards college. Survey data indicate how student expectations for some college or higher went from 87% in Year 1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013) to 80% in Year 2 at School A. As such, School A may need more intensive intervention in this area and perhaps School G, where educational aspirations and expectations are higher might offer insights about how to influence aspirations/expectations. The tables that follow also include data disaggregated by school about the importance of attending college (student and parent) as well as the perceived impact of Texas GEAR UP SG on college plans.

Table G.6. Students Educational Aspirations by School,* Spring 2014

School	n	Less than High School	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree or Higher	More than Four-Year College Degree
School A	209	2.9%	12.0%	8.1%	15.8%	22.5%	38.8%
School B	222	3.2%	11.7%	10.8%	11.3%	26.6%	36.5%
School C	204	1.0%	5.4%	9.8%	15.2%	36.3%	32.4%
School E	195	1.0%	6.7%	5.1%	14.4%	37.9%	34.9%
School F	149	0.0%	11.4%	6.0%	10.1%	34.9%	37.6%
School G	232	2.2%	6.0%	3.4%	12.9%	34.1%	41.4%
Overall (all 7 schools)	**1,262**	**2.1%**	**8.6%**	**7.5%**	**13.5%**	**31.5%**	**36.9%**

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
* Students' educational aspirations differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(30) = 62.7$, $p < .001$
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on student surveys.

Table G.7. Students' Educational Expectations by School,* Spring 2014

School	n	Less than High School	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree or Higher	More than Four-Year College Degree
School A	220	4.1%	16.4%	10.5%	19.1%	24.1%	25.9%
School B	202	1.5%	14.4%	14.4%	16.8%	28.2%	24.8%
School C	203	0.0%	13.8%	17.7%	17.2%	33.0%	18.2%
School E	206	1.9%	9.7%	5.3%	16.5%	44.2%	22.3%
School F	149	2.7%	11.4%	8.7%	18.1%	38.9%	20.1%
School G	219	1.8%	7.3%	4.6%	21.9%	39.3%	25.1%
Overall (all 7 schools)	**1,248**	**2.0%**	**12.3%**	**10.2%**	**18.1%**	**34.5%**	**22.9%**

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
* Students' educational expectations differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(30) = 71.0$, $p < .001$.
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on student surveys.

Table G.8. Parents' Educational Expectations by School, Spring 2014

School	n	Less than High School	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree or Higher	More than Four-Year College Degree
School B	107	0.0%	4.7%	7.5%	15.0%	30.8%	42.1%
School C	119	1.7%	5.9%	11.8%	14.3%	40.3%	26.1%
School D	48	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	20.8%	50.0%	22.9%
School G	108	0.0%	2.8%	2.8%	15.7%	34.3%	44.4%
Overall (all 7 schools)	**466**	**0.4%**	**4.3%**	**7.1%**	**14.2%**	**37.1%**	**36.9%**

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014).
* Parents' educational expectations differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(15) = 28.0$, $p < .05$.
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on parent surveys.

Table G.9. Student Differences by School: Attending College is Important for My Career Goal and Future,* Spring 2014

School	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
School A	209	5.3%	6.7%	33.5%	54.5%
School B	224	3.6%	5.8%	31.3%	59.4%
School C	201	3.0%	3.5%	33.3%	60.2%
School E	198	3.0%	4.0%	23.7%	69.2%
School F	142	4.9%	7.7%	31.0%	56.3%
School G	224	2.7%	1.8%	20.1%	75.4%
Overall (all 7 schools)	**1,244**	**3.8%**	**4.6%**	**28.5%**	**63.1%**

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
*Student perceptions differed significantly across schools: χ^2 (18) = 39.0, *p* < .01.
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on student surveys.

Table G.10. Parent Differences by School: Attending College is Important for My Child's Career Goal and Future,* Spring 2014

School	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
School B	107	2.8%	0.0%	13.1%	84.1%
School C	115	12.2%	1.7%	15.7%	70.4%
School D	48	2.1%	0.0%	27.1%	70.8%
School G	107	1.9%	0.0%	9.3%	88.8%
Overall (all 7 schools)	**453**	**5.7%**	**.4%**	**15.0%**	**78.8%**

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
*Parent perceptions differed significantly across schools: χ^2 (9) = 29.9, *p* < .001.
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on parent surveys.

Table G.11. Percentage of Students Who Perceived Impact of Texas GEAR UP SG Participation on College Plans by School,* Spring 2014

School	n	Yes	No, I was already planning on going to college	No, I still don't plan to go to college
School A	207	52.7%	40.6%	6.8%
School B	220	59.5%	28.2%	12.3%
School C	196	48.5%	46.4%	5.1%
School E	186	35.5%	57.5%	7.0%
School F	128	33.6%	63.3%	3.1%
School G	223	64.6%	31.4%	4.0%
Overall (all 7 schools)	1207	51.1%	42.3%	6.5%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
*Student-perceived impact differed significantly across schools: χ^2 (12) = 87.3, *p* < .001.
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on student surveys.

G.4   Discussions and Knowledge about College

In addition to the narrative included in chapter 3, figures and tables that follow offer additional data about parents and students engaging in discussions about college in addition to reported levels of knowledge about college terms/concepts.

Figure G.1.
Percentage of Students Reporting "Yes" to GEAR UP Discussions about College Entrance Requirements by School,* Spring 2014
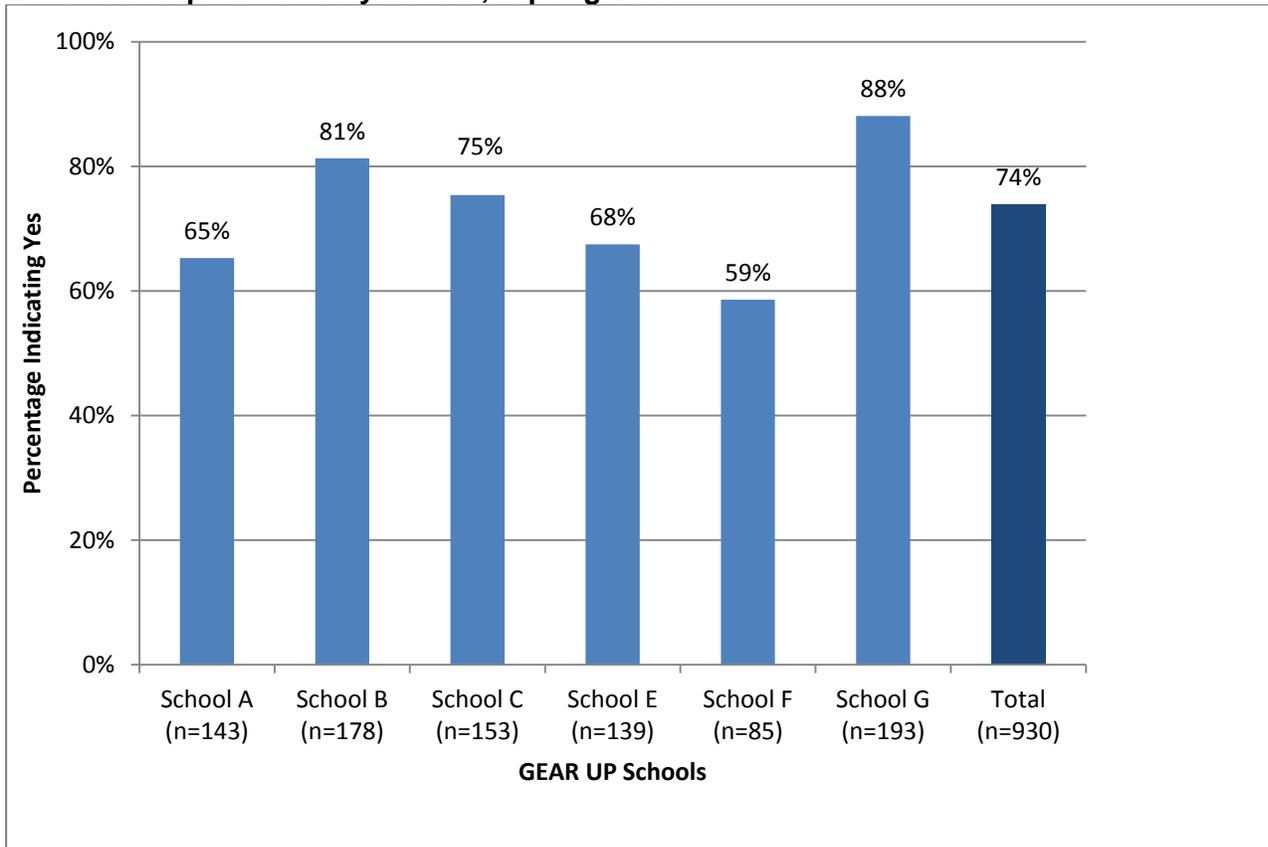
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
*Student-reported engagement in discussions about college entrance requirements differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(6) = 61.8$, $p < .001$.
NOTE: These data include responses to the following item: "Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?" Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on student surveys.

Table G.12. Students' Reported College Information Sources:
Percentages by Source, Spring 2014

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)
Research on GEAR UP website	15.0%	13.6%	14.7%
Information from GEAR UP staff/events	28.8%	37.6%	46.2%*
Information from or discussions with parents/family members	60.8%	50.2%	48.7%*
Information from or discussions with friends or other people my age	33.2%	32.0%	38.3%*
Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors	50.3%	31.5%	37.4%*
Research that I have done on my own	34.0%	29.1%	29.2%*
College field trip or fair[a]	.09%	42.7%	47.1%
Program other than GEAR UP (e.g., AVID, Breakthrough) [a]	1.3%	19.2%	21.6%
Watching sports[a]	.5%	23.0%	21.1%
Television[a]		19.9%	21.0%
Information from a class activity or assignment[b]	0.4%	41.3%	45.1%
Other (please specify other sources)	5.2%	3.3%	1.8%*

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Fall 2013, and Spring 2014).
*Information from GEAR UP staff/events $\chi^2(1) = 80.5$, $p < .01$; Information from or discussions with parents/family members $\chi^2(1) = 366$, $p < .01$; Information from or discussions with friends or other people my age $\chi^2(1) = 6.9$, $p < .01$; Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors $\chi^2(1) = 41.6$, $p < .01$; Research that I have done on my own $\chi^2(1) = 6.4$, $p < .05$; Other (please specify other sources) $\chi^2(1) = 19.5$, $p < .01$
NOTE: Response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.
[a] AVID: Advancement Via Individual Determination
[b] Items offered in open-ended responses in spring 2013 and recoded. Included as response option in fall 2013 and spring 2014 surveys. These items were not compared for statistical significance given the change.

Table G.13. Parents' Reported College Information Sources:
Percentages by Source, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014

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=362)	Spring 2014 (n=390)
Information from or discussions with GEAR UP staff or GEAR UP events	37.6%	44.4%
Doing research specifically at one of the Texas GEAR UP websites: www.texasgearup.com or www.ownyourownfuture.com	8.6%	10.3%
Information from or discussions with friends or other parents	48.3%	33.3%
College materials or visits	0%	24.4%
Research that I have done on my own	44.8%	24.1%
Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors	24.6%	23.8%
Parent's current or past personal experience in college[a]	3.3%	31.5
Other family member enrolled in college[a]	2.8%	30.8%
Based on the previous experience with other child(ren) [a]	1.4%	21.5%
Other family member graduated from college[a]	0.6%	24.4%
Other (please specify other sources)	10.8%	0.8%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014).
NOTE: Response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.
a. Items offered in open-ended responses in spring 2013 and recoded. Included as response option in fall 2013 and spring 2014 surveys.

Table G.14. Students' Reported College Information Sources of Information by School, Spring 2014

School	n	GEAR UP Website*	Discussions with GEAR staff/ Information at GEAR UP events**
School A	190	5.3%	38.4%
School B	193	22.3%	51.8%
School C	187	8.6%	48.7%
School E	189	10.6%	39.7%
School F	128	9.4%	26.6%
School G	214	36.4%	75.2%
Overall (all 7 schools)	1146	16.9%	48.9%

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

* Student perceptions differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(6) = 94.3$, p < .001.

**Student perceptions differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(6) = 79.2$, p < .001.

NOTE: Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on student surveys.

Figure G.2.
Students' Perceived Knowledge about College: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Spring 2014
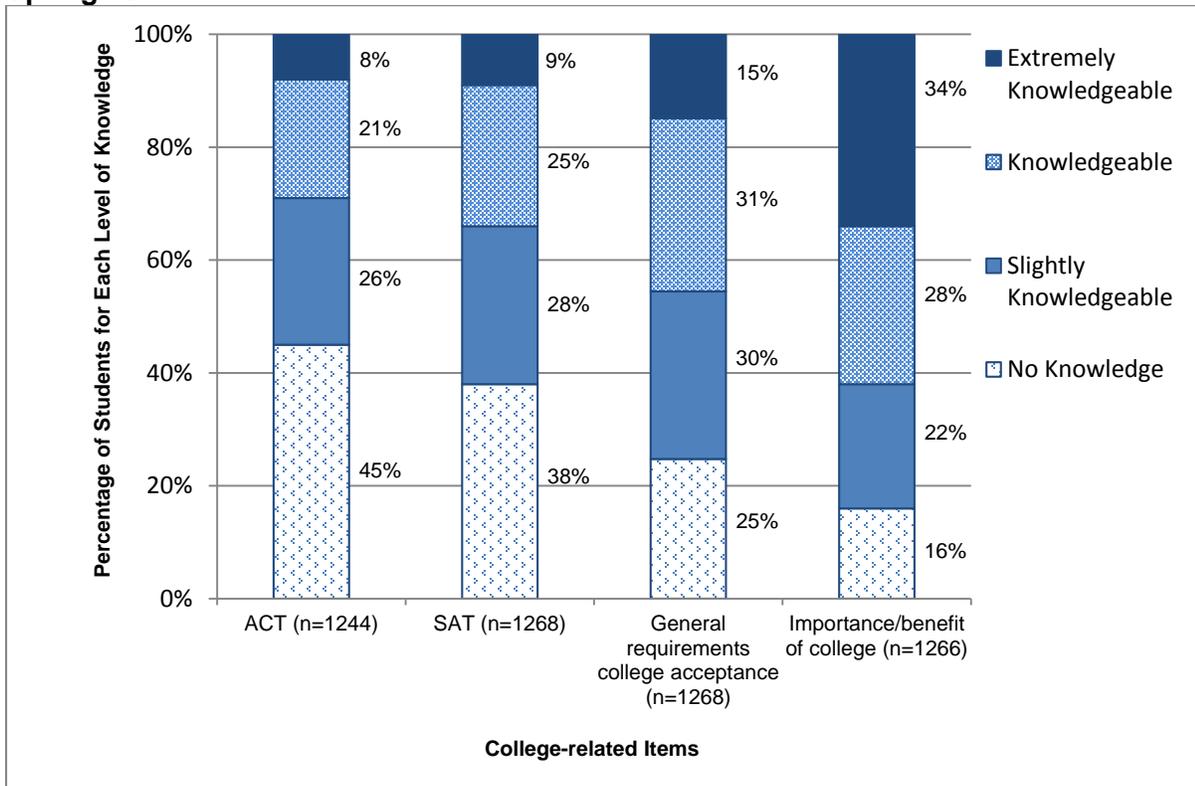
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. STAAR: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness®.

Figure G.3.
Parents' Perceived Knowledge about College-Related Terms/Concepts: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Spring 2014
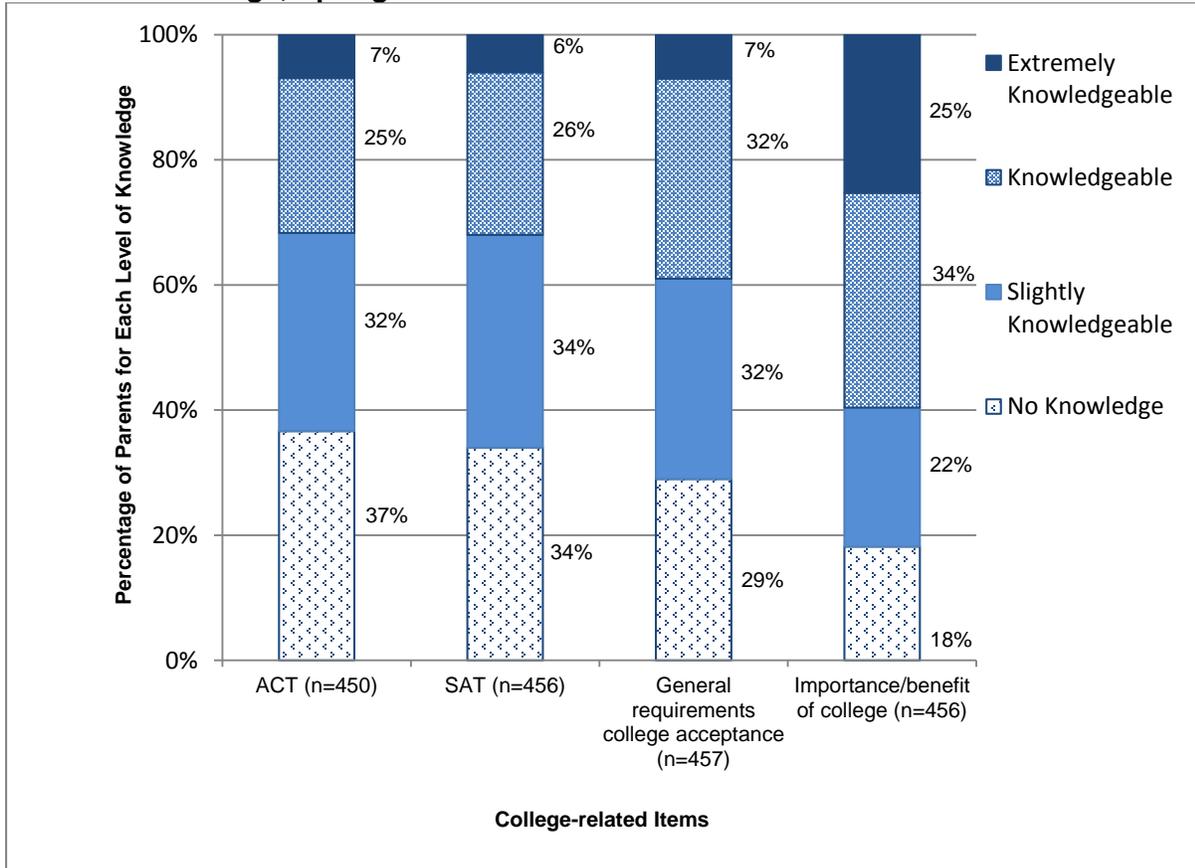
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014).
NOTE*:* Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. STAAR: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness®.

Table G.15. Average Student Knowledge of College Terms, By School, Spring 2014

School	n	SAT*	n	ACT*	n	General Requirements for College Entrance*	n	Importance/ Benefit of College*
School A	215	1.8	211	1.6	215	2.2	210	2.6
School B	224	2.0	219	2.0	225	2.3	226	2.6
School C	202	1.9	196	1.8	203	2.0	203	2.5
School E	206	2.1	201	2.0	204	2.5	205	3.1
School F	144	2.1	142	1.8	148	2.4	146	2.9
School G	229	2.5	228	2.2	227	2.7	229	3.1
Overall (all 7 schools)	1,268	2.1	1,244	1.9	1,268	2.4	1,266	2.8

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
*Average student knowledge different significantly across schools for the following items: SAT: $F_{(6, 1261)} = 11.34$, $p < .001$; ACT: $F_{(6, 1237)} = 7.80$, $p < .001$; college requirements: $F_{(6, 1261)} = 8.58$, $p < .001$; college importance/benefits: $F_{(6, 1259)} = 11.27$, $p < .001$.
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*. Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on student surveys.

Table G.16. Students' Plans to Take Advanced Courses:
Percentages by Level of Agreement and Content Area, Comparisons Across Spring 2013, Fall 2013 and Spring 2014

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%
I am planning to take an advanced course in mathematics next year. (Fall 2013)	1,237	8.1%	23.0%	42.4%	26.5%
I am planning to take an advanced course in mathematics next year. (Spring 2014)	1,235	10.1%	20.4%	39.8%	29.7%
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%
I am planning to take an advanced course in English/writing next year. (Fall 2013)	1,247	7.1%	25.1%	42.5%	25.3%
I am planning to take an advanced course in English/writing next year. (Spring 2014)	1,240	8.1%	20.8%	39.7%	31.4%
I am planning to take an advanced course in science next year. (Spring 2013)	1,210	11.4%	21.0%	36.3%	31.3%
I am planning to take an advanced course in science next year. (Fall 2013)	1,248	7.0%	25.0%	38.9%	29.1%
I am planning to take an advanced course in science next year. (Spring 2014)	1,243	8.8%	22.3%	38.2%	30.7%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Fall 2013; Spring 2014).
NOTE: Percentages of those who responded with some level of agreement may not total exactly 100% due to rounding.

Table G.17. Student Differences by School: Student Plans for Taking Advanced Mathematics,* Spring 2014

School	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Mathematics*					
School A	205	16.6%	20.5%	43.9%	19.0%
School B	221	10.0%	21.7%	41.6%	26.7%
School C	201	7.0%	23.4%	39.8%	29.9%
School E	197	8.6%	22.3%	36.0%	33.0%
School F	141	14.9%	22.7%	38.3%	24.1%
School G	223	6.7%	13.0%	37.2%	43.0%
Overall	1,235	10.1%	20.4%	39.8%	29.7%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
*Student perceptions differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(18) = 52.6$, *p* < .001.
NOTE: Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on student surveys. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

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.18. Percentage of Students Who Reported Engaging in Discussions with GEAR UP Staff about Financial Aid, By School,* Spring 2014

School	n	Yes
School A	210	47.6%
School B	212	65.1%
School C	200	67.0%
School E	202	53.5%
School F	142	40.8%
School G	218	77.5%
Overall (all 7 schools)	**1227**	**60.5%**

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
*Student-reported discussions differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(6) = 81.4$, *p* <.001.
NOTE: Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on student surveys.

Figure G.4.
Parents' and Students' Knowledge Regarding Financial Aid and the Costs/Benefits of Pursuing Postsecondary Education: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Spring 2014
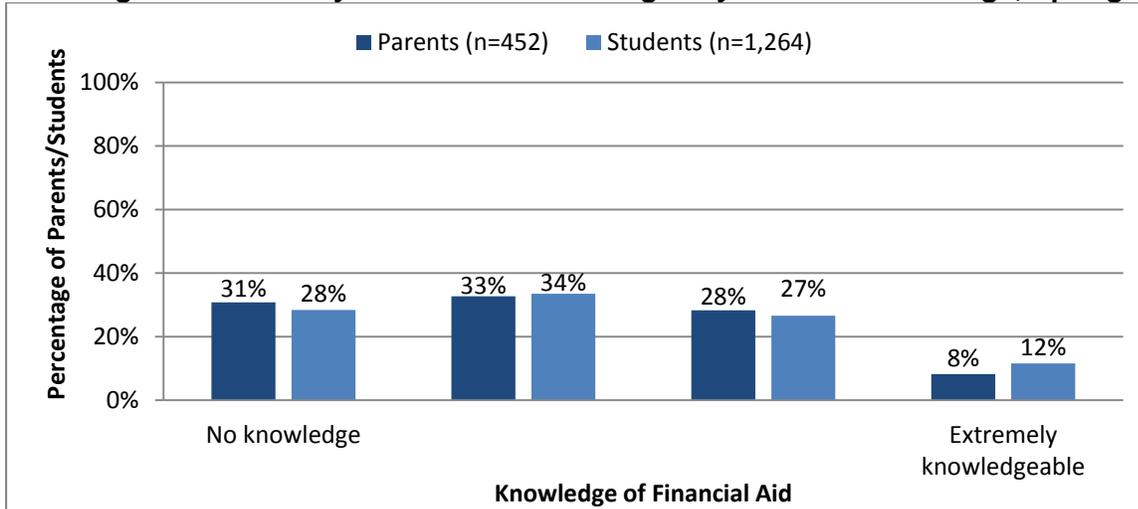
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
NOTE: Data are responses to the following questions: "On a scale of 1–4, to what extent are you knowledgeable about financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education (1 = no knowledge; 4 = extremely knowledgeable)." Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Table G.19. Student and Parent Knowledge about Financial Aid Terms, Spring 2014

How much do you know about each of the following?	n	No Knowledge	Slightly Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
Student					
FAFSA[a]	1,269	56.3%	27.0%	13.4%	3.3%
Federal Pell Grants	1,246	60.4%	22.8%	12.5%	4.3%
Federal student loans	1,259	30.8%	30.5%	29.3%	4.3%
Federal work-study	1,232	49.4%	26.7%	17.4%	6.6%
Scholarships	1,250	8.8%	19.1%	34.7%	37.4%
Parent					
FAFSA[a]	461	35.6%	31.2%	24.1%	9.1%
Federal Pell Grants	457	39.8%	28.4%	22.5%	9.2%
Federal student loans	456	30.0%	32.9%	27.2%	9.9%
Federal work-study	453	45.5%	28.0%	18.5%	7.9%
Scholarships	450	17.3%	34.2%	33.1%	15.3%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.
[a] FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid. However, the survey items used only the acronym.

Table G.20. Student and Parent Perceptions of Affordability, Fall 2013 and Spring 2014

Type of Postsecondary School	n	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Not Sure	Probably	Definitely
Student Fall 2013						
Local public community college	1,256	3.0%	4.8%	25.4%	44.7%	22.1%
Public 4-year college	1,257	3.7%	7.6%	33.8%	38.6%	16.4%
Student Spring 2014						
Local public community college	1,264	3.3%	6.5%	27.2%	38.3%	24.7%
Public 4-year college	1,240	4.4%	7.7%	35.8%	34.3%	17.8%
Parent Spring 2014						
Local public community college	463	4.8%	9.3%	N/A	50.5%	35.4%
Public 4-year college	463	8.0%	12.5%	N/A	50.3%	29.2%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Fall 2013; Spring 2014).
NOTE: *"Not Sure"* was not a response option offered to parents. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Table G.21. Student Differences by School: Perceived Affordability of College,* Spring 2014

School	n	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Not Sure	Probably	Definitely
Community College*						
School A	213	5.2%	8.0%	38.0%	31.5%	17.4%
School B	220	4.1%	7.3%	29.5%	39.5%	19.5%
School C	204	2.5%	7.4%	24.0%	40.2%	26.0%
School E	203	.5%	5.9%	23.2%	43.8%	26.6%
School F	147	3.4%	6.8%	27.9%	39.5%	22.4%
School G	230	3.9%	3.9%	20.0%	38.3%	33.9%
Overall	1264	3.3%	6.5%	27.2%	38.3%	24.7%
Four-Year College*						
School A	210	4.3%	11.4%	42.4%	28.1%	13.8%
School B	218	4.1%	8.3%	38.1%	34.4%	15.1%
School C	200	5.0%	9.5%	34.0%	33.5%	18.0%
School E	203	.5%	6.9%	34.5%	36.9%	21.2%
School F	144	5.6%	6.9%	37.5%	34.0%	16.0%
School G	221	5.4%	3.6%	30.8%	38.5%	21.7%
Overall	1240	4.4%	7.7%	35.8%	34.3%	17.8%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
* Student perceptions differed significantly across schools: Community college-χ^2 (24) =50.4, $p < .001$; Four-Year College- χ^2 (24) = 39.0 $p < .05$.
NOTE: Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on student surveys. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

G.6   Perceptions of Texas GEAR UP State Grant

In addition to the narrative included in chapter 3 about parent and student perceptions about the Texas GEAR UP SG, figures and tables that follow offer additional data about their perceptions.

Figure G.5.
Average Perceived Effectiveness of Student Activities, Spring 2014
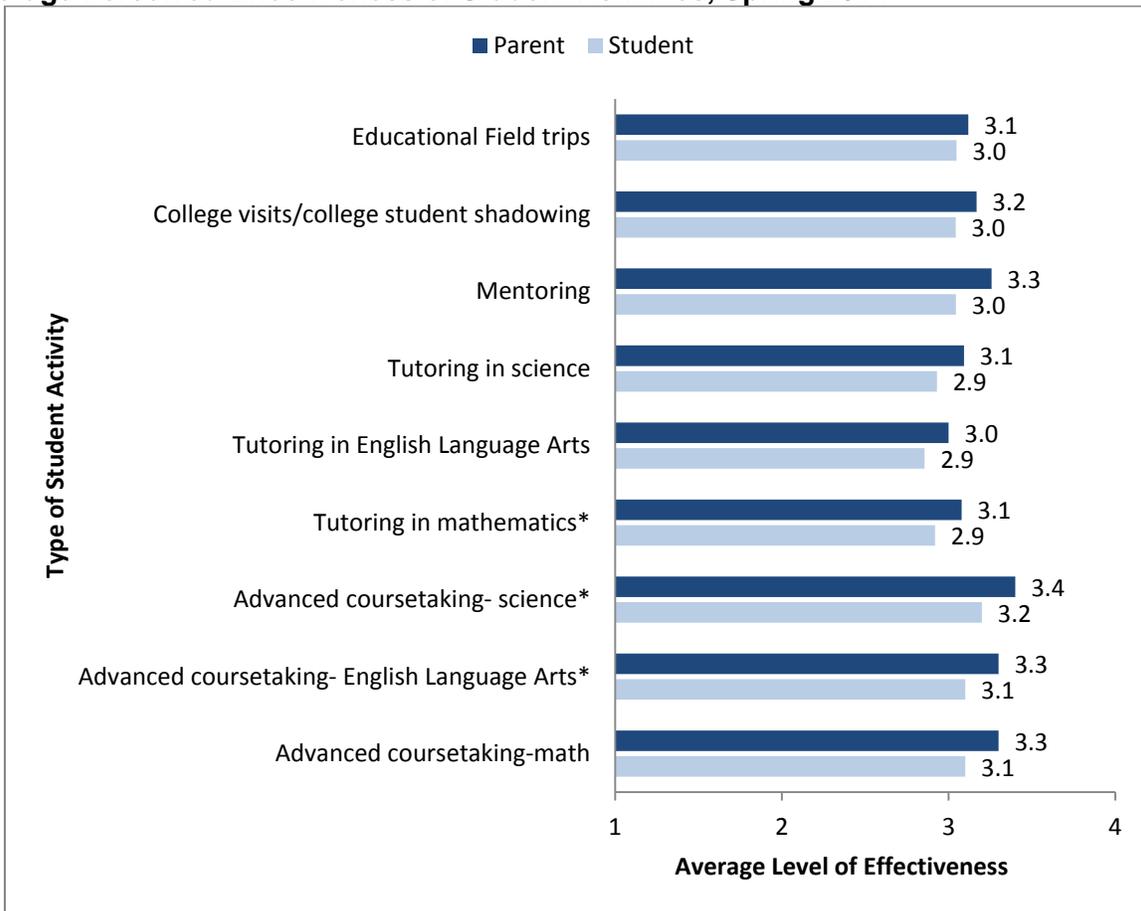
Source: *Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014)*
NOTE: Scale is as follows: 1 – *Not Effective*; 2 – *Slightly Effective*; 3 – *Mostly Effective*; 4 – *Very Effective.*
** Average parents' perceived effectiveness about the following activities significantly differed from average student perceptions – Advanced course-taking- English Language Arts: $F(1, 584) = 5.8$, $p < .05$; Advanced course-taking- science: $F(1, 575) = 4.6$, $p < .05$; Tutoring- mathematics: $F(1, 695) = 4.1$, $p < .05$.

Table G.22. Student and Parent Perceptions of Effectiveness, Spring 2014

Activity	n	Not Effective	Slightly Effective	Mostly Effective	Very Effective
Student					
Taking Algebra I	522 (1,265)	4.4%	10.2%	35.8%	49.6%
Taking an advanced mathematics course other than Algebra I	183 (1,237)	9.3%	13.7%	35.5%	41.5%
Taking an advanced English/writing course	432 (1,256)	5.6%	16.2%	40.3%	38.0%
Taking an advanced science course	412 (1,255)	4.6%	14.3%	38.6%	42.5%
Taking other advanced courses (history, Spanish)	555 (1,264)	7.6%	18.6%	38.0%	35.9%
Tutoring/homework assistance in math	519 (1,253)	10.0%	18.1%	41.8%	30.1%
Tutoring/homework assistance in English	341 (1,249)	7.9%	25.8%	39.0%	27.3%
Tutoring/homework assistance in science	331 (1,247)	9.4%	20.5%	37.8%	32.3%
Mentoring	205 (1,236)	8.8%	19.0%	31.2%	41.0%
2013 GEAR UP summer program	271 (1,237)	7.7%	14.0%	36.2%	42.1%
Academic or career counseling/advising	274 (1,225)	7.7%	23.7%	43.1%	25.5%
Financial aid counseling/advising	169 (1,223)	8.3%	20.1%	45.0%	26.6%
College visits/college student shadowing	538 (1,226)	6.5%	18.6%	39.0%	35.9%
Job site visit/job shadowing	322 (1,215)	10.6%	20.8%	41.9%	26.7%
Educational field trips	710 (1,231)	6.5%	18.2%	39.4%	35.9%
Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	353 (1,210)	9.6%	19.5%	39.1%	31.7%
Family/cultural events	318 (1,209)	9.7%	26.4%	37.7%	26.1%
Parent attendance at family/cultural events	307 (1,215)	10.4%	21.2%	41.0%	27.4%
Met with College Preparation Advisor	456 (1,228)	6.4%	24.8%	40.6%	28.3%
Parent					
Taking Algebra I	203 (407)	3.0%	9.4%	40.4%	47.3%
Taking an advanced mathematics course other than Algebra I	44 (405)	0.0%	13.6%	40.9%	45.5%
Taking an advanced English/writing course	154 (404)	3.9%	8.4%	41.6%	46.1%
Taking an advanced science course	165 (403)	1.8%	10.3%	38.8%	49.1%
Taking other advanced courses (history, Spanish)	149 (398)	1.3%	7.4%	40.3%	51.0%
Tutoring/homework assistance in math	178 (406)	3.9%	18.0%	44.4%	33.7%
Tutoring/homework assistance in English	106 (401)	3.8%	18.9%	50.9%	26.4%
Tutoring/homework assistance in science	108 (398)	3.7%	14.8%	50.0%	31.5%
Mentoring	93 (399)	1.1%	14.0%	43.0%	41.9%
2013 GEAR UP summer program	115 (399)	5.2%	11.3%	27.8%	55.7%
Academic or career counseling/advising	155 (434)	3.9%	16.1%	48.4%	31.6%
Financial aid counseling/advising	118 (423)	5.1%	13.6%	46.6%	34.7%
College visits/college student shadowing	250 (428)	4.0%	16.0%	39.2%	40.8%
Job site visit/job shadowing	73 (421)	6.8%	9.6%	45.2%	38.4%
Educational field trips	262 (429)	4.6%	14.5%	45.4%	35.5%
Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	174 (421)	3.4%	13.8%	46.0%	36.8%
Family/cultural events	143 (421)	6.3%	16.1%	40.6%	37.1%
Met with College Preparation Advisor	152 (416)	5.9%	15.8%	41.4%	36.8%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
NOTE: Percentages exclude "No" responses to the initial question of "Have you/your child participated in this activity during this school year?" Number of total responses, including those who indicated they had not participated in the activities, is in parenthesis; percentages are based on the first number presented. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Table G.23. Student Differences by School: Participation in Select GEAR UP Activities, Spring 2014

School	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G	Overall
Tutoring, Any subject	n=219	n=226	n=203	n=49	n=202	n=148	n=218	**n=1,265**
	65.3%	57.5%	63.1%	55.1%	49.0%	41.2%	36.2%	**52.7%**
Mentoring	n=217	n=217	n=193	n=47	n=202	n=146	n=214	**n=1,236**
	19.8%	23.0%	13.0%	27.7%	22.8%	11.0%	19.6%	**19.0%**
College Preparation Advisor	n=210	n=219	n=202	n=46	n=193	n=137	n=221	**n=1,228**
	43.8%	42.5%	43.6%	54.3%	26.4%	25.5%	56.6%	**41.4%**
GEAR UP Summer Program	n=215	n=217	n=200	n=46	n=196	n=147	n=216	**n=1,237**
	18.1%	22.1%	19.0%	17.4%	23.0%	24.5%	40.3%	**24.3%**
Academic Advising	n=211	n=220	n=201	n=45	n=194	n=139	n=215	**n=1,225**
	16.6%	31.4%	19.4%	44.4%	21.6%	18.7%	30.2%	**24.2%**
Financial Aid Counseling	n=210	n=219	n=202	n=45	n=194	n=139	n=214	**n=1,223**
	10.0%	21.0%	8.4%	37.8%	9.3%	12.2%	24.3%	**15.4%**
Job Site Visiting/ Shadowing	n=206	n=218	n=201	n=44	n=192	n=138	n=216	**n=1,215**
	27.2%	33.9%	14.4%	36.4%	30.2%	21.0%	44.4%	**29.5%**
College Visits	n=208	n=220	n=201	n=44	n=194	n=138	n=221	**n=1,226**
	41.8%	49.5%	45.8%	45.5%	38.7%	33.3%	72.9%	**48.1%**

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
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.24. Parent- and Student-Reported Reasons for Attending Summer Programs, Fall 2013 and Spring 2014

Select the reasons that you attended the GEAR UP summer program.	Parent Spring 2014 (n=108)	Student Fall 2013 (n=289)
Student/child desire to participate	72.2%	57.8%
Parent desire for child to participate	63.9%	51.6%
Interest in the academic content	60.2%	47.1%
Opportunity for me to spend time with friends	35.3%	41.9%
Help with Grade 8 classes	66.7%	66.4%
Availability on scheduled days	36.1%	26.6%
Availability during scheduled time	43.5%	29.4%
Encouragement from the school	50.9%	45.7%
Other	1.4%	8.0%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Fall 2013)
NOTE: Response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Table G.25. Parent- and Student-Reported Reasons for NOT Attending Summer Programs, Fall 2013 and Spring 2014

If you did NOT attend the GEAR UP summer program, select the reasons that you were NOT able to attend.	Parent Spring 20 14 (n=64)	Student Fall 2013 (n=716)
Child refusal	15.6%	39.1%
Parent lack of desire for child to participate	3.1%	4.3%
Lack of interest in the academic content	3.1%	8.5%
Lack of opportunity for me to spend time with friends	3.1%	8.1%
Family not in the area during that time	25.0%	20.9%
Inconvenient time of day	12.5%	11.9%
Students' job obligations	3.1%	5.6%
Students' family responsibilities	15.6%	17.2%
Lack of awareness about the program	23.4%	21.8%
Lack of encouragement from the school	14.1%	6.8%
Other	14.1%	16.2%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Fall 2013)
NOTE: Response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Table G.26. Parent Perceptions of Effectiveness, Comparisons Between Spring 2013 and Spring 2014

Activity	n	Not Effective	Slightly Effective	Mostly Effective	Very Effective
Spring 2013					
Parent/family counseling/advising	213	14.1%	19.7%	27.2%	39.0%
Parent workshops on the importance/ benefits of college	229	14.8%	17.0%	25.3%	42.8%
Parent/family workshops about college options/requirements	221	15.4%	18.6%	26.2%	39.8%
Parent/family workshops about financing college	212	16.5%	14.2%	30.2%	39.2%
Parent/family high school or college visits	188	21.3%	17.6%	28.2%	33.0%
Family/cultural events	189	17.5%	17.5%	32.3%	32.8%
Meeting(s) with GEAR UP staff	231	15.6%	14.7%	25.1%	44.6%
Spring 2014					
Parent/family counseling/advising	191	11.5%	26.2%	34.0%	28.3%
Parent workshops on the importance/ benefits of college	217	10.6%	24.0%	35.0%	30.4%
Parent/family workshops about college options/requirements	214	11.2%	22.9%	38.3%	27.6%
Parent/family workshops about financing college	199	13.1%	27.6%	32.7%	26.6%
Parent/family high school or college visits	212	12.3%	21.7%	40.6%	25.5%
Family/cultural events	198	13.1%	22.2%	39.9%	24.7%
Meeting(s) with GEAR UP staff	269	10.8%	17.8%	38.3%	33.1%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014)
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

G.7 Overall Perceptions of and Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP State Grant

Table G.27. Student Satisfaction with GEAR UP Overall, Fall 2013

	n	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Student Perception	1,057	4.0%	8.4%	63.7%	23.9%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Fall 2013).
NOTE: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Table G.28. Students' Overall Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG: Percentages by Level of Satisfaction By School, Spring 2014

School	n	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Student*					
School A	188	5.3%	11.7%	56.4%	26.6%
School B	185	9.2%	10.3%	60.5%	20.0%
School C	182	4.9%	9.3%	60.4%	25.3%
School E	154	1.9%	6.5%	64.9%	26.6%
School F	110	7.3%	21.8%	52.7%	18.2%
School G	215	7.0%	7.9%	50.7%	34.4%
Overall	1,071	6.0%	10.5%	57.2%	26.3%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014).
*Student perceptions differed significantly across schools: $\chi^2(18) = 44.1$, $p < .01$.
NOTE: Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on student surveys.

Table G.29. Parent Differences by School: Percentages of Parents Identifying Given Practice as Facilitating Engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG Activities, 2013–14

Practice	School B	School C	School D	School G	Overall
	n=85	n=99	n=45	n=95	n=391
Encouragement from your child	68.2%	59.6%	44.4%	75.8%	65.2%*
Incentives (food, raffle, etc.)	29.4%	27.3%	57.8%	20.0%	29.9%*
Interest/relevance of topics	48.2%	39.4%	22.2%	52.6%	43.5%*
Outreach from school/GEAR UP staff	41.2%	40.4%	44.4%	51.6%	45.5%
Translated services/material available	24.7%	23.2%	4.4%	23.2%	21.2%*
Other	10.6%	6.1%	2.2%	9.5%	8.7%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014).
*Parent perceptions differed significantly by School for: Encouragement from your child $\chi^2(3)=14.8$, p<.01; Incentives $\chi^2(3)=21.4$, p<.01; Interest/relevance of topics $\chi^2(3)=13.0$, p<.01; and, Translated services/material available $\chi^2(3)=8.7$, p<.05
NOTE: Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on parent surveys.

Table G.30. Parent Differences by School: Percentages of Parents Identifying Given Practice as a Barrier to Engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG Activities, 2013–14

Practice	School B	School C	School D	School G	Overall
	n=85	n=99	n=45	n=95	n=391
Child care	23.4%	19.0%	11.1%	16.1%	16.9%
Work schedule	55.8%	60.0%	68.9%	60.2%	58.1%
Interest/relevance of topics	9.1%	5.0%	6.7%	10.8%	7.8%
Language barriers	15.6%	17.0%	8.9%	14.0%	14.5%
Time/schedule	50.6%	48.0%	40.0%	58.1%	50.5%
Transportation	15.6%	12.0%	17.8%	14.0%	15.1%
Other	9.1%	7.0%	2.2%	9.7%	8.3%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2014).
NOTE: No significant differences by school. Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on parent surveys.

Table G.31. Student Input on Needed Information/Support/Activities, Fall 2013

Information/Support/Activity	n=1,281
Field trips	74.1%
College tours	53.7%
More information on financial aid/scholarships	48.1%
Sports, activities, and clubs	42.9%
More information on college entrance requirements	42.4%
More advanced classes	41.8%
Tutoring/individualized care	36.5%
More information on GEAR UP events	30.5%
Bilingual	23.3%
More information on GEAR UP program/how to participate	N/A

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