



# Year 4 Annual Implementation Report

Texas GEAR UP State Grant  
Evaluation

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

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

TELPAS	Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System
TG	Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation
THECB	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
TSIA	Texas Success Initiative Assessment
T-STEM Centers	Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Centers
UT	The University of Texas
UT-Austin	The University of Texas at Austin
UT-IPSI	The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives
UT-Tyler	The University of Texas at Tyler

## Highlights

Year 4 of the evaluation focused on evaluating the implementation of the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grant (SG) program when participating students were in Grade 10. The evaluation also compared Year 4 implementation to that of Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3. The Texas GEAR UP SG was designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education through state and local partnership grants.

## Implementation

- As a group, Texas GEAR UP schools met Project Objective 4.1 (75% of students involved in student support services) with 91% of Grade 10 students participating. Level of student participation in support services (i.e., tutoring, mentoring, counseling/advising) continued to increase in Year 4 from previous years (91% in Year 4, 81% in Year 3, 78% in Year 2, 39% in Year 1). Level of student participation in any Texas GEAR UP SG activity remained high in Year 4 and increased slightly from Year 3 (98% in Year 4, 95% in Year 3, 99% in Year 2, and 81% in Year 1). In each year, there were differences across participating schools in these levels of implementation.
- The percentage of students enrolled in four or more advanced courses in Year 4 also increased slightly from Year 3, which was much higher than in Years 2 and 1 (27%, 24%, 10%, and 0%, respectively).
- Overall, parent engagement in at least one event decreased in Year 4 with 28% of parents attending at least one event versus 49% in Year 3. Schools remained unable to meet Project Objective 7.3 (50% of parents attend at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events) with only 9% of parents having this level of participation in Year 4. This was up from Year 3 when 3% of parents attended at least three events.
- In Year 4, 63% of students participated in Texas GEAR UP SG activities in summer 2015, exceeding the Project Objective 4.2 goal of having 30% of students participate in summer programs. Types of activities included workshops, college tours, job shadowing, job/site visits, parent/family workshops, family events, and science/educational trips. These activities were described on site visits as beneficial to students as they keep them engaged while out of school.
- Overall, only 74% of students completed the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) in Year 4, which does not meet Project Objective 5.1 (by the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the PSAT).<sup>1</sup> The mean PSAT score among cohort students was 785.
- Texas GEAR UP SG schools reported that of the students who remained at the same school through the end of the school year, 88% of Grade 9 students were eligible for on-time promotion to Grade 10.<sup>2</sup> Grade 9 retention statewide data during the 2014–15 school year was 8.6%, implying a promotion rate of 91.4%.<sup>3</sup> As such, Texas GEAR UP SG schools overall were not on track to meet the project objective (exceed the state average for on-time

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<sup>1</sup> PSAT/NMSQT is offered in October and is used to determine if students will qualify for a National Merit Scholarship. See <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10> for additional information on the PSAT tests.

<sup>2</sup> Schools indicated they were unable to provide promotion indicator data for students withdrawing from the school. This was the case for 18% of enrolled Grade 9 students. If these students are included in the final cohort based on participation in Texas GEAR UP SG implementation and length of time at the school, future reports will include their promotion data if available.

<sup>3</sup> See [http://tea.texas.gov/acctres/retention\\_student\\_performance\\_2014-15.pdf](http://tea.texas.gov/acctres/retention_student_performance_2014-15.pdf).

promotion rate) by the end of the project's third year, though there was some variance across schools.

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

- Students continued to have higher educational aspirations than educational expectations. Although the gap between aspirations and expectations widened from Year 2 to Year 3 (10 to 13 percentage points, respectively), survey results from Year 4 found a similar, but slightly narrower gap between aspirations and expectations (12 percentage point difference) compared to Year 3.
- About the same percentage of students in Year 4 (61%) as Year 3 (57%) reported that participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities in Year 4 helped them make the decision to go to college.
- In Year 4, the percentage of students' knowledge about the SAT (56%) and ACT (46%) increased from Year 3 by eight and ten percentage points, respectively. This is trending towards the goal of Project Objective 4.4 (by Year 5, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of and demonstrate the necessary academic preparation for college).
- Overall, 95% of students reported in spring 2016 that they plan to go to college. The most commonly reported reason in Year 4 for not expecting to pursue postsecondary education was "I want to work after high school," which is a change from Years 1, 2, and 3 when affordability was reported most often. More specifically, over half of the 5% of students indicating they do not plan to go to college (56%) reported "I want to work after high school," an increase of 26 percentage points from Year 3, as their reason for not pursuing postsecondary education.
- In Year 4, 88% of students reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with Texas GEAR UP SG overall. On average, students perceived their experiences with Texas GEAR UP SG activities (e.g., staff, events) to be mostly effective on an effectiveness scale, with continued positive feedback about interaction with College Preparation Advisors. Students who attended summer programs also perceived them as effective.
- Fewer students ended up enrolling in advanced courses in Year 4 than those who indicated that they expected to enroll in advanced courses the following year in Year 3. Among the three subjects that students were asked about (Mathematics, English Language Arts [ELA], and Science), the largest difference between those who indicated they expected to enroll and those who reported that they did enroll was Mathematics (13 percentage points) and the smallest difference was Science (6 percentage points).

## Key Facilitators and Barriers

- School and district administrator engagement at a school was described as a facilitator to grant implementation and the creation of campus-level college-going culture. Strong engagement, in-depth knowledge of the grant, and awareness of progress towards grant goals helped a school to successfully implement the grant.
- Overall, more professional development activities were offered during Year 4, likely due to the Support Center's hire of the Educator Outreach Coach. The coach administered new professional development activities and provided new resources for teachers. Feedback from teachers and administrators regarding the coach's efforts was very positive during site visits.
- Survey data also indicated that participation in Texas GEAR UP SG activities may have increased student academic readiness as well as parent and student knowledge of financial aid and the benefits of college. In addition, 71% of students found their College Preparation Advisor(s) to be mostly or very effective.



- Due to increased enrollment in advanced courses, teachers from two districts reported that they felt they needed to decrease the rigor of the curricula in advanced courses to accommodate all students, including those who were not prepared for the rigor and higher expectations. Teachers in some schools reported that curriculum was “watered down” and that unprepared students were often unable to handle the increased expectations and workload.
- Lack of communication among grant staff continued to be a barrier to grant implementation in Year 4. Communication barriers between grant and school staff were also discussed during site visits.
- The lack of knowledge regarding financial aid among students may have contributed to the perceived lack of affordability of attending a 4-year public university.
- Additionally, the increased desire or need to work may have contributed to the decrease in students who reported on the spring 2016 survey that college is important to their future career.

## Potential Promising Practices

- Parent events—such as the Parent Symposia continually offered by one school—that provided a wide selection of sessions to attend and the availability of translation services were given high praise from parents.
- Administrator engagement and comprehensive knowledge of the grant was noted by grant staff as imperative for successful grant implementation. Grant staff at one school described how the administration provided them with the freedom to suggest or try new strategies to improve progress towards grant goals—which made their jobs easier and work more successful.
- The extended PD provided by the Support Center’s Educator Outreach Coach provided schools the opportunity to tailor the trainings and resources for teacher PD based on the needs of the teachers and school.

# Executive Summary

## Overview

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) awarded the Texas Education Agency (TEA) a \$33 million federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant in federal fiscal year (FY) 2012. The broad purpose of the federal GEAR UP program is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education through state and local partnership grants. Through the Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG), four participating districts are providing services to a cohort of students and their parents from Grade 7 (the 2012–13 school year) through their first year of postsecondary education (the 2018–19 school year). This report focuses on implementation in Year 4 of the Texas GEAR UP SG (the 2015–16 school year), the cohort's second year in high school (Grade 10).

In order to meet the federal purpose of the grant, the Texas GEAR UP SG program includes nine project goals and 26 corresponding objectives, provided in Appendix A of the report. Three goals are related to advanced coursework, student support services, and summer programs. Other goals intend to increase data-driven instruction (through teacher professional development [PD]), community collaboration, and access to postsecondary information. Outcome goals include on-time promotion, improved high school completion at a college-ready level, college attendance, and college retention. In addition to meeting goals at campuses selected to participate in the program, there are objectives to provide statewide information and professional learning for educators in order to promote college readiness across the state.

Participating schools and their districts are listed in Table ES.1; throughout this report, schools are identified by letter (e.g., School H, School I) in order to protect confidentiality.<sup>4</sup> In these districts, program staff, including Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators and College Preparation Advisors, facilitate and provide Texas GEAR UP SG services, with support from TEA, statewide collaborators (including the Support Center, which serves as the technical assistance provider), and local stakeholders.<sup>5</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG services are intended to impact teachers through the provision of PD and schools/districts through changes in academic rigor (paired with student support services). Finally, the Texas GEAR UP SG program is intended to make a statewide impact, primarily through the provision of the website (i.e., <http://www.texasgearup.com>), where coordinated information and resources regarding postsecondary opportunities for students and their parents throughout Texas are made available.

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<sup>4</sup> Texas GEAR UP High Schools are labeled High Schools H through M. The seven Texas GEAR UP Middle Schools were identified as Schools A through G.

<sup>5</sup> The term Texas GEAR UP SG staff is used throughout this report and includes the coordinators, College Preparation Advisors, facilitators, tutors, parent liaisons, and data clerks. These are staff located in the districts or at the schools who have key responsibilities to the project either for the district or at the school.

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

District	Middle School (2012–13; 2013–14)	High School (2014–15; 2015–16)
Edgewood Independent School District	Brentwood, Garcia, Wrenn	Memorial, Kennedy
Lubbock Independent School District	Dunbar	Estacado
Manor Independent School District	Decker, Manor	Manor, Manor New Tech
Somerset Independent School District	Somerset	Somerset

## Evaluation of Texas GEAR UP State Grant

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

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

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

**Table ES.2. Evaluation Timeline**

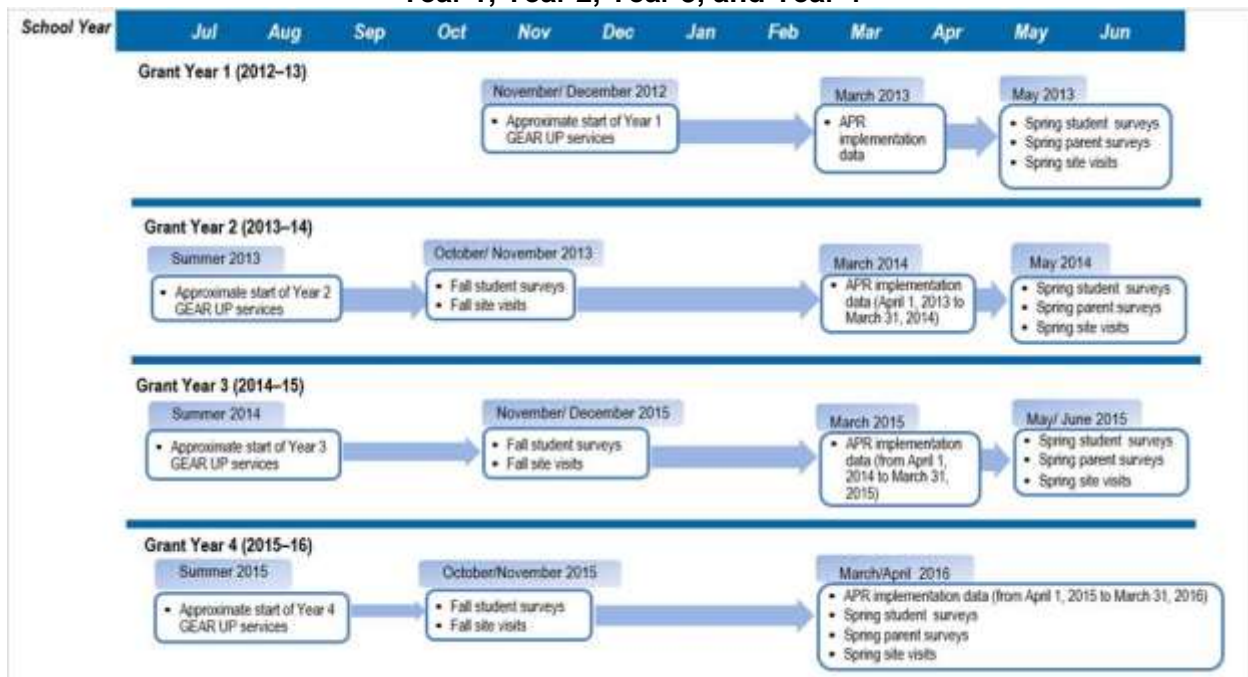
	Grade in School by Grant Year						
	Grant Year 1 2012–13	Grant Year 2 2013–14	Grant Year 3 2014–15	Grant Year 4 2015–16	Grant Year 5 2016–17	Grant Year 6 2017–18	Grant Year 7 2018–19
Primary Cohort	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	First Year of College

This fourth implementation report focuses on formative feedback regarding Year 4 implementation, and also provides relevant comparisons to implementation in prior years (primarily Year 3 but also Year 1 and Year 2 as relevant). Each of these annual implementation reports was informed by analysis of student- and campus-level data from statewide databases, interviews with TEA and its collaborators, review of grantee annual strategic planning reports, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System data, student and parent surveys, and qualitative site visit data.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> TEA's collaborators on the Texas GEAR UP SG during Year 3 include the Support Center staffed by personnel from the University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI), AMS Pictures, Community TechKnowledge (CTK), UT-Tyler T-STEM Center, Texas Guaranteed (TG), GeoFORCE (all of which were collaborators in Year 2) as well as Raise Achievement, which was added in Year 3. Districts can work with these former collaborators directly.

Districts submitted implementation data in line with federal APR reporting requirements in GUIDES. Therefore, GUIDES data reflected implementation from the date of each district's notification of grant award (NOGA) through March 31, 2013 in Year 1, from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014 in Year 2, from April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015 in Year 3, and from April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016 in Year 4.<sup>7</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG Year 4 implementation activities that occurred through summer 2016 are not discussed in this report in order to keep the time periods comparable. Participation in summer 2015 programs as reported on during Year 4 are discussed in this report. While forming ideas about the program, readers should keep in mind when data were collected because this report does not capture the entire school year of activities. Additionally, the length of time for program implementation for Years 2, 3 and 4 were similar; however, Year 1 length of implementation was shorter therefore comparisons to Year 1 should be made with caution. Finally, readers need to be aware that comparisons of differences from Year 1 and Year 2 which reflect implementation at the seven participating middle schools relative to implementation in Year 3 and Year 4 which reflect implementation in the six participating high schools may in part be interpreted as due to middle school versus high school differences.<sup>8</sup> Figure ES.1 provides an overview of the timing of implementation data collection in each grant year.

**Figure ES.1. Implementation Timeline and Evaluation Implementation Data Collections: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4**



## Key Findings

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

<sup>7</sup> APR data used in the Year 4 report are from summer 2015 and the 2015–16 school year, but only through March 31, 2016, 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 2016.

<sup>8</sup> See prior implementation reports for Year 1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013), Year 2 (Briggs et al., 2015), and Year 3 (Briggs et al., 2016) for additional information.

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 1.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Plan plus Endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 2.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all participating high schools will make opportunities available for each student to complete 18 hours of college credit (through AP, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment) by the time he or she graduates from high school.<sup>9</sup>
- Projective Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including limited English proficient (LEP) students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course.
- Project Objective 2.3: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will be eligible to earn college credit by AP exam or through dual credit.
- Project Objective 3.1: All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and project-based learning (PBL).
- Project Objective 3.2: Teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical team preparation and implementation each year.
- Project Objective 4.1: By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on results of teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data.<sup>10</sup>
- Project Objective 4.3: By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college.
- Project Objective 5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT.<sup>11</sup> By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT.
- Project Objective 5.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of students meeting criterion on the ACT/SAT will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 7.1: By the end of the first year, the state office will make information regarding college options, preparation, and financing available to students, parents, and educators throughout the state.
- Project Objective 7.2: By the end of the first year, information and workshops aimed at linking college attendance to career success will be available to 100% of cohort students and their parents.
- Project Objective 7.3: Each year, at least 50% of cohort parents, including parents of current and former limited English proficient (LEP) students, will attend at least three college awareness activities.
- Project Objective 8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.

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<sup>9</sup> AP refers to advanced placement courses.

<sup>10</sup> While Project Objective 4.1 emphasizes student support services in Grade 8, the evaluation will continue to examine the level of implementation during each high school year. Similarly, data associated with Project Objectives 7.1 and 7.2 are examined each year, not only in the first year. Vertical teaming (also referred to as vertical alignment) refers to teachers from a given subject area participating in collaborative meetings in which they coordinate instruction and learning objectives across grade levels.

<sup>11</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG initially indicated a goal aligned with students taking ACT PLAN by the end of project's fourth year. However, ACT has replaced PLAN with ACT Aspire. Similarly, the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) has been replaced by the PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT) and PSAT 10.

- 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 Objective 9.1: Annually increase the number of educators participating in GEAR UP professional learning, including through Texas Gateway and face-to-face trainings.<sup>12</sup>
- Project Objective 9.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 40% of Texas school districts will have used at least one Texas GEAR UP statewide resource, such as materials or PD.

Interested readers should view the full report for additional information on all key findings. Select evaluation questions relevant to Year 4 implementation—addressed in the report—include the following:

- How was Texas GEAR UP SG implemented overall and at each of the six participating schools?
- What are student, parent, teacher, and school staff perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG student support service implementation strategies?
- What facilitators and barriers were associated with implementation of the strategies?
- What practices implemented by districts are perceived by grantees (students, parents, and staff) to be effective, and therefore a potential best practice?
- What were students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding postsecondary focus and readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, financing college)?
- What were student perceptions of student support services implementation strategies?
- What information or opportunities did students perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding postsecondary education and career readiness?
- What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by students to be effective, and therefore potential best practices?
- What types of information did grantees make available to students?
- What facilitators and barriers were reported regarding participation in postsecondary education readiness activities?
- To what extent were demographics, time spent in Texas GEAR UP SG, and perceptions of services and activities associated with educational aspirations and expectations of attaining a college degree?
- For what services and activities do grantees use grant funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
- To what extent were grantees able to secure matching funds?
- For what services and activities do grantees use matching funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
- In what ways were trained teachers implementing data-driven strategies? Differentiated instruction? PBL?
- How many collaborations have schools formed with business alliances, government entities, and community groups? What were perceptions of those collaborations?
- In what ways and how often did collaborating organizations offer opportunities for career exploration to students or information about scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness and readiness?
- What types of information regarding college readiness were made available through the state? What steps, if any, did the state office take to communicate to schools and families about the information available?

In prior years, implementation varied across schools, although Year 3 findings reflected overall higher implementation than in previous years. This includes higher levels of overall student

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<sup>12</sup> Texas Gateway (formerly Project Share) provides an online, interactive learning environment for Texas teachers. See <https://www.texasgateway.org/> for additional information.

participation in Texas GEAR UP SG student support services (95%). Districts also reported substantially higher levels of student enrollment in four or more advanced courses (24%), mixed progress in parental attendance (3% attended at least three events but 49% attended at least one event), and more vertical teaming events were held. Year 4 implementation continued to have a high implementation, but not much change from Year 3. Participation in advanced courses (27%), participation in student support services (91%), and parent participation in three or more events (9%) all varied less than ten percentage points from Year 3 to Year 4.

## Implementation

### Level and Mix of Implementation

#### Key Takeaway:

Overall, the Year 4 level of implementation was similar across all schools. Two Texas GEAR UP SG high schools implemented all 19 strategies and the other four high schools implemented 17 each.

The federal GEAR UP program encourages grantees, including the Texas GEAR UP SG, to engage in a wide range of implementation practices (referred to here as the “mix of implementation”) in order to support project objectives. Table ES.3 provides a high-level overview of the range of implementation strategies engaged in to any extent by the six high schools in Year 4. All six high schools implemented the core Texas GEAR UP SG strategy types in Year 4: advanced course enrollment, student support services (e.g., tutoring, comprehensive mentoring, counseling/advising), college visits, parent events, teacher PD, and community alliances. Only High Schools H and I implemented fewer strategies in Year 4 than in Year 3, while High Schools J, K, L, and M implemented more strategies in Year 4 than in Year 3.

**Table ES.3. Overview of Texas GEAR UP SG Implementation Strategies by School, 2015–16**

	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
<b>Implementation Strategies</b>						
Advanced Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pre-AP/AP Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dual Credit Enrollment <sup>a</sup>			X			X
Summer Programs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Tutoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Mentoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Counseling/Advising	X	X	X	X	X	X
College Visits	X	X	X	X	X	X
Job Site Visits/Job Shadowing	X	X	X	X	X	X
Educational Field Trips	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Workshops/Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Counseling/ Advising	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Event on College Preparation/Financial Aid	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent College Visit			X			X
Teacher Professional Development	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vertical Teaming Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Alliances	X	X	X	X	X	X
Use of Statewide Services	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Total Number of Strategies Implemented (Out of 19)</b>						
	17	17	19	17	17	19

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016; fall 2015 and spring 2016 site visit data.

Note: An "X" indicates that a school reported implementing the strategy, although it does not capture the level of implementation (such as the number of students served) for each strategy. AP = advanced placement.

<sup>a</sup> Schools were marked if site visit data indicated that students were currently enrolled in dual credit courses (only Schools J and M). There were no data on dual credit enrollment reported in the data sources used to measure implementation of this strategy (i.e., GUIDES).

In addition, Table ES.4 includes indicators regarding whether each school has met or is on track to meet relevant project objectives. That is, based on available data is it likely that the school will meet the given project objective within the expected timeframe given their current progress. Overall, all schools were on track to meet most objectives. Specifically, all schools were on track to meet project objectives regarding college credit opportunities (2.1), completion of a pre-AP or AP course (2.2), participation in teacher trainings (3.1), involvement in student support services (4.1), involvement in summer programs (4.2), academic preparedness (4.4), availability of information regarding college (7.1), information workshops (7.2), business alliances (8.1), and governmental and community alliances (8.2). Some schools struggled to meet project objectives regarding graduating with college credit (2.3), vertical teaming (3.2), on-time promotion (4.3), and training for teachers and counselors on the college admissions and financial aid process



(7.4). No schools were able meet project objectives related to parental involvement (7.3) or participation in the PSAT (5.1).<sup>13</sup>

**Table ES.4. School Progress Toward Meeting Project Objectives, 2015–16**

Project Objectives	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
2.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all participating high schools will make opportunities available for each student to complete 18 hours of college credit (through AP, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment) by the time he or she graduates from high school. <sup>a</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including limited English proficient (LEP) students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course.	X	X			X	X
2.3: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will be eligible to earn college credit earned by AP exam or through dual credit.	X	X	X	X	X	X
3.1: All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training with regard to differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL.	X	X	X	X	X	X
3.2: Teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.				X	X	X
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.	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.2: Beginning in the second year, at least 30% of the students will be involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level, ease transitions, and increase college awareness.	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.3: By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average.					X	X
4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college. <sup>b</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT. By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT. <sup>c</sup>						
7.3: 50% of parents will participate in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events each year.						
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.		X	X			X
8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.	X	X	X	X	X	X
8.2: Participating campuses will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016; fall 2015 and spring 2016 site visit data.

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

<sup>a</sup> AP = advanced placement. Near-term objectives also related to Project Objective 2.1 include the following: Projective Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including LEP students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course; Project Objective 2.3: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will be eligible to earn college credit by AP exam or through dual credit. Schools rated as being in progress toward Project Objective 2.1 are assumed to also be making progress toward these objectives in the later years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation.

<sup>b</sup> High schools were marked as making progress toward Project Objective 4.4 if the school reached 70% on any of the following indicators: Participation in college visits, participation in financial aid counseling, participation in GEAR UP workshops/events, or enrollment in advanced courses. This was a preliminary calculation. The final calculation will be discussed in the Annual Implementation Report #5.

<sup>13</sup> PSAT/NMSQT is offered in October and is used to determine if students will qualify for a National Merit Scholarship. PSAT/NMSQT is considered the same test as the PSAT 10 which is offered in the spring of each school year, although the PSAT 10 is not used to qualify for a National Merit Scholarship. Participating students all took the exam in October. The exam will simply be referred to as the PSAT for the remainder of the report. See <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10> for additional information on the PSAT tests.

## ADVANCED COURSE, AP AND DUAL CREDIT ENROLLMENT

### Key Takeaway:

Texas GEAR UP SG schools are helping students to be academically prepared for college. In Year 4, 27% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses, an increase of three percentage points from Year 3 in which only 24% of students were enrolled in that many advanced courses. In Year 2, only 10% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses.

Cohort student enrollment in and completion of advanced courses (including AP and dual credit courses) is an important benchmark toward accomplishing Project Objectives 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. The goal of these project objectives is to increase academic preparedness as well as the number of opportunities to earn college credit while in high school. School L had the highest AP or pre-AP course completion rate in Year 4 (100%) while School K had the lowest completion rate (51%). Schools have demonstrated progress towards achieving these objectives, but will need to increase the enrollment percentage of students in advanced courses in forthcoming years by targeting the 45% of Texas GEAR UP SG students not enrolled in advanced courses in Grade 10.

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

### Key Takeaway:

In Year 4, 91% of students participated in tutoring, mentoring, and/or counseling (95% in Year 3). The average amount of time spent in tutoring decreased in Year 4 (9.4 hours, compared to 12.6 hours in Year 3), and 51% of students participated in tutoring (compared to 51% in Year 3). The majority of the students participated in counseling (87%), an increase of nearly twenty percentage points from Year 3 (69%). Almost one-third (32%) of Grade 10 students received comprehensive mentoring in Year 4 (compared to 10% in Year 3).

Each of the schools met or exceeded Project Objective 4.1, to have at least 75% of students participating in tutoring, mentoring, or counseling. More cohort students participated in counseling and mentoring services during Year 4. The percentage of students who participated in tutoring remained the same, while the average number of hours of tutoring received decreased. Mentoring continued to be the least utilized student support service.

## STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COLLEGE VISITS AND JOB SITE VISITS

### Key Takeaway:

Overall, 38% of Texas GEAR UP SG students participated in a college visit in Year 4. This activity occurred at all six of the Texas GEAR UP SG high schools. Across schools, there were 31 college visits in Year 4 (compared to 34 in Year 3). Additionally, all six high schools also participated in job site visits, which included 21% of students overall and a total of 12 job site visits/job shadowing events (compared to 9 in Year 3).

In addition to student support services, college visits and job site visits represent other successful activities offered to the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students in Year 4. All six high schools engaged in college visits in Year 4 and site visit data revealed that college visits

are a high priority for school administrators. A 14 percentage point increase in job site visits may also demonstrate an increased prioritization for school administrators to facilitate college and career readiness. Year 4 survey data indicated that students found these activities to be, on average, *mostly effective*, a perception consistent with students' views on other Texas GEAR UP SG activities.

## PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT WITH TEXAS GEAR UP SG

### Key Takeaway:

Only 9% of parents were involved in three or more events in Year 4, compared to 3% in Year 3. However, all six high schools had at least some parents attending three or more events. Additionally, 28% of parents attended at least one event, a decrease of 21 percentage points since Year 3.

As was the case in prior years, no school met Project Objective 7.3 of having 50% of parents attend at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events annually, though schools made more progress on this goal in Year 4 (9%) than they did in Year 3 (3%). In Year 4, Texas GEAR UP SG high schools implemented 90 parent activities, compared to 159 in Year 3. In addition to offering more activities, the Texas GEAR UP SG will need to continue to work on overcoming the challenges in engaging parents, including challenges consistent with prior years and those that have emerged in the high school setting, in order to meet the project objective by the end of Year 4 and in each of the future program years. There is some indication that Texas GEAR UP SG high schools have begun making plans to boost parent engagement; two schools hired a parent liaison in Year 4 and four schools discussed plans to conduct home visits with parents that had not yet participated in a Texas GEAR UP SG event. The full impact of such initiatives may not be seen until Year 5 data is available, however.

## TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND VERTICAL TEAMING

### Key Takeaway:

All districts offered GEAR UP-supported PD in Year 4. A total of 517 teachers received PD in at least one of the 207 PD sessions offered. All schools held vertical teaming events, but only three high schools held at least five events.

Overall, Texas GEAR UP SG improved the amount of teacher PD offered in Year 4, reflecting progress towards Project Objectives 3.1 and 3.2. Texas GEAR UP SG schools are required to offer teacher PD each program year on the topics of advanced instructional strategies, vertical teaming, PBL, differentiated instruction, and college access/preparation. All Texas GEAR UP SG schools provided some GEAR UP-supported PD in Year 4, ranging from 9 offerings at High School L to 80 at High School M. In Year 4, all six schools also held vertical teaming PD.

## SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION: YEAR 1 THROUGH YEAR 4

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

**Table ES.5. Summary Comparison of Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4 Implementation Data**

Implementation Area	Year 1 and Year 2 (Middle School)	Year 3	Year 4
<b>Level and Mix of Implementation</b>	<b>Year 1:</b> Varied across districts. One middle school (from District 3) implemented the widest range of activities. <b>Year 2:</b> Variability remained; however, overall, implementation was higher. Two middle schools (Districts 1 and 3) implemented a wide range of activities.	District 3 continued to implement a broad range (and have high percentages of student participation) but other districts also demonstrated successful mix of implementation.	District 3 continued to implement and engage students in the broadest range of services, but the overall level and mix of services across districts was successful.
<b>Student Participation in Texas GEAR UP SG Student Support Services</b>	<b>Year 1:</b> 39% of students participated. <b>Year 2:</b> 78% of students participated.	81% of students participated.	91% of students participated.
<b>Student Participation in Any Texas GEAR UP SG Activities</b>	<b>Year 1:</b> 81% of students participated. <b>Year 2:</b> 99% of students participated.	95% of students participated.	98% of students participated.
<b>Number of Advanced Courses</b>	<b>Year 1:</b> 0% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses. <b>Year 2:</b> 10% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses.	24% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses.	27% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses.
<b>Enrollment in an Advanced Mathematics Course</b>	<b>Year 1:</b> 22% of students were enrolled in advanced mathematics. <b>Year 2:</b> 43% of students were enrolled in advanced mathematics, including Algebra I.	45% of students were enrolled in advanced mathematics, including Pre-AP Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry.	43% of students were enrolled in advanced mathematics, including courses that were taken at the honors, pre-AP or AP level (e.g., pre-AP Algebra II) or courses that were taken ahead of schedule (e.g., pre-Calculus),
<b>Enrollment in Other Advanced Courses</b>	<b>Year 1:</b> 20% of students were enrolled in advanced ELA/writing; 21% of students were enrolled in advanced science. <sup>a</sup> One middle school had no students in advanced ELA/writing or science courses. <b>Year 2:</b> 21% of students were enrolled in advanced ELA/writing; 21% of students were enrolled in advanced science; 20% of students were enrolled in advanced social studies. Two middle schools had 0-1% of students in advanced ELA, science, or social studies courses.	39% of students were enrolled in advanced ELA/writing; 38% of students were enrolled in advanced science; 35% of students were enrolled in advanced social studies. All high schools had at least 19% enrollment in each content area.	45% of students were enrolled in advanced ELA/writing; 41% of students were enrolled in advanced science; 36% of students were enrolled in advanced social studies. All high schools had at least 16% enrollment in each content area.
<b>Student Knowledge of and Academic Preparation for College</b>	<b>Year 1:</b> N/A <b>Year 2:</b> N/A	85% of surveyed students plan to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement.	86% of surveyed students plan to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement.

Implementation Area	Year 1 and Year 2 (Middle School)	Year 3	Year 4
<b>Endorsement Selection</b>	<b>Year 1:</b> N/A <b>Year 2:</b> N/A	Most students (82%) selected one endorsement while 8% selected two or more endorsements. 71% of surveyed students understand how their endorsement will help them prepare for college.	93% of students had chosen an endorsement and 83% of surveyed students understand how their endorsement will help them prepare for college.
<b>Parental Attendance at Three or More Texas GEAR UP SG Events<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Year 1:</b> No parent at any middle school attended three or more events; 5% of parents participated in at least one event. <b>Year 2:</b> 7% of parents attended three or more events; 38% of parents attended at least one event.	3% of parents attended three or more events; 49% of parents attended at least one event.	9% of parents attended three or more events; 28% of parents attended at least one event.
<b>Teacher Professional Development and Vertical Teaming</b>	<b>Year 1:</b> Most middle schools had already designed and scheduled PD for the school year. <b>Year 2:</b> Two middle schools held five days of vertical teaming events.	Two high schools held five days of vertical teaming events.	Three high schools held five days of vertical teaming events.

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016; Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in Year 1 and Year 2 occurred in seven middle schools. In Year 3 and Year 4, implementation occurred in six high schools within the same four districts. N/A reflects areas that the evaluation did not specifically focus on, but are topics of interest for Year 3 or Year 4 implementation.

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

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

## Student and Parent Surveys

### Key Takeaway:

Students' aspirations remained at the same level in Year 4 as in Year 3, and the gap between aspirations and expectations narrowed slightly. Students still do not expect to achieve as high of an educational outcome as indicated by their aspirations. However, students' reported knowledge of college-related terms/concepts, especially the SAT and ACT, increased from Year 3 to Year 4.

Consistent with prior years, there continued to be multiple indicators in Year 4 that students continue to need and want financial information as it relates to postsecondary education. With continued implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG activities, students may gain knowledge and information about the financial aspects of college and may view affordability as less of a barrier to educational aspirations.

Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students completed surveys in fall 2015 and spring 2016. Although parent surveys were administered in spring 2015, low response rates prohibited the use of these data in the Year 3 Annual Implementation Report. Parent surveys were administered again in fall 2015 and findings are included in this report. 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

Students' aspirations remained at the same level in Year 4 as in Year 3 (72% aspire to obtain a 4-year degree or higher) (compared to a four percentage point increase between spring 2014 and spring 2015). Students' educational aspirations were significantly higher than educational expectations, but the gap between them narrowed from Year 3 to Year 4 by one percentage point. Of students who do not plan to go to college, the greatest percentage selected *I want to work* as a main reason for not continuing onto postsecondary education (56% across schools); this is a change from Year 2 and Year 3 when students selected *concerns about cost*.

## KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COLLEGE

Evaluation survey data indicated that Texas GEAR UP SG served schools where the students generally understood the importance/benefit of college (64% of students rated themselves as *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable*) more than the requirements to get accepted (53% of students rated themselves as *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable*). Students also reported that they continued to need information on specific aspects of college requirements, as only 56% indicated they were *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about the SAT (46% for the ACT). Students' average perceived knowledge of each of the relevant items differed significantly across schools. Only 38% of students selected GEAR UP staff or events as a source for college information (compared to 34% in spring 2015 and 46% in spring 2014). This implies that Texas GEAR UP SG may need to provide more information to a higher portion of students (and perhaps with greater frequency) in order to get students the information they need about college requirements.

## FINANCIAL UNDERSTANDING OF COLLEGE

Only 11% of students reported feeling *extremely knowledgeable* about financial aid and the costs and benefits of pursuing postsecondary education. The percentage of students who reported that they had conversations with someone from GEAR UP or their school increased in Year 4 (69%, compared to 67% in Year 3). On average, students reported that they were *slightly knowledgeable* or *not knowledgeable* about specific financial aid terms. Continuing efforts to increase students' knowledge of the financial aspects of college (through conversations with students, events, and other activities) remain an important area of focus, especially as students become closer to postsecondary education enrollment; this should include information about specific types of financial aid available to them, how to obtain financial aid, and the actual costs of attending.

## PERCEPTION OF TEXAS GEAR UP SG ACTIVITIES

On average, students found each type of activity that they participated in to be *mostly effective*. Year 4 was the third year that College Preparation Advisors worked with Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students, and 71% of students found them to be either *very effective* or *mostly effective*. A small percentage of students reported using the GEAR UP website in Year 4 (22%), although this was a slight increase from Year 3 (19%). Summer programs continued to be perceived by students as valuable; 74% of students who participated in a summer 2015 GEAR UP program indicated that they had a better understanding of the benefits of college after attending the program.

## Key Facilitators and Barriers: Implementation

### Strong Stakeholder Engagement

#### Key Takeaway:

In Year 4, it was often reported that strong engagement from all stakeholders facilitated successful implementation, particularly school administrators and students.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff and Texas GEAR UP SG collaborators indicated that strong administrator engagement fostered investment in a college-going culture among program and school staff. In addition, it was noted in Year 4 that long-term student participation in the grant fostered a stronger interest in postsecondary education. Teacher engagement with the grant is also important, as recognized by the PD requirements. The increased PD opportunities in Year 4 was facilitated by the new Educator Outreach Coach hired by the Support Center. Survey data also indicated that participation in Texas GEAR UP SG activities may have increased student academic readiness as well as parent and student knowledge of financial aid and the benefits of college. In addition, 71% of students found their College Preparation Advisor(s) to be mostly or very effective, which may have also contributed to increased student academic readiness.

### Barriers of Poor Communication, Decreased Levels of Rigor, and Limited Financial Aid Information

#### Key Takeaway:

Difficulties communicating effectively within Texas GEAR UP SG teams and between Texas GEAR UP SG teams and school staff challenged successful implementation. A decrease in rigor in advanced classes to meet the needs of all students in the courses and a perceived lack of motivation was also a barrier preventing progress towards college readiness. Students continued to lack knowledge about financial aid which may have contributed to students' perceived lack of affordability of college as well as a decrease in students who felt that college is important to their future career.

Lack of appropriate Texas GEAR UP SG staff, poor communication among Texas GEAR UP SG staff, and poor communication between Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school staff were among the barriers to implementation in Year 4. In addition, pre-AP and AP teachers of cohort students reported that they felt that they needed to decrease the rigor of their curricula to meet the needs of all students in the courses, including those who were not prepared for the rigor and higher expectations. In addition, 66% of students reported that they were only slightly knowledgeable or knowledgeable of financial aid, over half (54%) reported no knowledge of Federal Pell grants, and almost half reported no knowledge of FAFSA and Federal work-study options (43% and 45%, respectively). This lack of knowledge may speak to the perceived lack of college affordability some students reported (only 43% of students reported they will probably or definitely be able to afford to attend a public 4-year college). Additionally, the increased desire or need to work may have contributed to the decrease in students who reported on the spring 2016 survey that college is important to their future career.

### Potential Promising Practices

Four Texas GEAR UP SG activities/initiatives implemented during Year 4 were identified as potential promising practices worthy of continued follow-up in the future. School M held their

third annual parent symposium during Year 4 and again received positive feedback from school staff and parents. The symposium provided parents with a wide selection of sessions to attend that catered to their interests and allowed parents to select sessions to attend based on those interests. The extended professional development provided by the Support Center's Educator Outreach Coach provided schools the opportunity to tailor the trainings and resources for teacher PD based on the needs of the teachers and school. School administrator investment in the college readiness of students and engagement in the Texas GEAR UP SG was reported by program staff as necessary for implementation and sustainment of grant initiatives. Finally, an administrator from a previous Texas GEAR UP SG middle school reported that school staff continued conversations with students in Grade 8 regarding endorsement selection and have incorporated strategies into the conversations to help identify students at-risk of not finishing high school as early as possible.

## Recommendations

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

- **Offer a Variety of Academic and Emotional Support Platforms to Ensure College Readiness.** Academic support, such as tutoring, and emotional supports, such as mentoring, for students may improve their perceived lack of motivation in advanced classes and aid students who were academically unprepared and enrolled in advanced classes. While the percentage of students who aspire to obtain a 4-year degree or higher has steadily increased over time, these supports may better prepare students for success and increase persistence in postsecondary education and increase the number of students who expect to obtain a 4-year degree or higher.
- **Provide Additional and Varied Opportunities for Parent Engagement.** As all six Texas GEAR UP SG schools continue to struggle with parent engagement, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider hosting parent and family events that allow parents to discuss their child's postsecondary plans and readiness in groups and space that are more intimate. College Preparation Advisors reported in site visits that parents seem to be more engaged and ask more questions when they are able to receive information in smaller groups or in one-on-one counseling sessions. Parents also suggested on site visits that some cohort parents have negative associations with the school staff and campus based on personal experiences. Events and counseling sessions in locations within the communities, neighborhoods, or even homes of the parents may make parents feel more comfortable to ask more questions and participate in more events.
- **Broaden Participation in Student Events Held on College Campuses.** Students rated their experiences with Texas GEAR UP SG activities as mostly effective and correlational data suggests that participation in college visits and summer programs was positively related to the educational expectations and knowledge of college related terms. It was reported by students and program staff that endorsements and pathways are used to organize events, including college visits and recommendations for summer programs by Texas GEAR UP SG staff. Several students across all six schools reported that they do not plan to study their endorsement during postsecondary education or are not interested in the subject; additionally, 30% of students reported they plan to drop their endorsement as soon as they are able to after grade 10. By allowing students to participate based on self-identified interests instead of their endorsement, the number of students interested in participating in these activities may increase as well as improve their perception of Texas GEAR UP SG and appeal of postsecondary education.
- **Continue to Expand Sustainability Efforts.** Some districts were able to speak to sustainability efforts that have been planned for or already implemented. TEA, the Support



Center, and Texas GEAR UP SG staff on the high school campuses should work with school and district staff to identify strategies and initiatives that demonstrated measurable success in increasing postsecondary education readiness and awareness. Stakeholders should consider facilitating discussions to determine how the strategies and initiatives may be funded via other sources, replicated through innovative and less costly means, and prioritized among other school and district goals. The entire range of Texas GEAR UP SG initiatives, including student supports, parent supports, teacher professional development, and community alliance relationships, should be considered in these discussions to foster a college-going culture throughout their school.



# 1. Introduction and Overview of Texas GEAR UP

In April 2012, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) was awarded a federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The broad purpose of the federal GEAR UP program is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Through the Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG), participating schools provide services to a primary cohort of students from Grade 7 (the 2012–13 school year) through their first year of postsecondary education (the 2018–19 school year).<sup>14</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG services are intended to serve individual students and their parents, as well as to support teachers through the provision of professional development (PD) and schools/districts through changes in academic rigor. In addition, the Texas GEAR UP SG is intended to make a statewide impact through the widespread provision of coordinated information and resources for students and their parents regarding postsecondary opportunities. TEA contracted with ICF to provide an external, third-party evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, including the annual implementation reports.

The Year 1 Annual Implementation Report (O'Donnell et al., 2013) focused on implementation that occurred in the 2012–13 school year, the Year 2 Annual Implementation Report (Briggs et al., 2015) focused on implementation that occurred in the 2013–14 school year, and the Year 3 Annual Implementation Report (Briggs et al., 2016) focused on implementation that occurred in the 2014–15 school year. This fourth annual implementation report focuses on implementation events that occurred in summer 2015 and during the 2015–16 school year. These annual reports provide a snapshot of how the six Texas GEAR UP SG participating high schools located in four districts, TEA, and TEA's Texas GEAR UP SG collaborators are implementing the program. In order to maintain confidentiality, as in prior implementation reports, the report references districts by number (District 1 through District 4), and high schools by letter (High Schools H through M). In the first two implementation reports, middle schools were also referenced by letter designations (Schools A through G). A separate, forthcoming comprehensive report examines outcomes and the relationship between implementation and outcomes in the first two years. In addition, a short brief focused on the transition from middle school to high school at the Texas GEAR UP SG schools is also forthcoming.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the relevant research literature on student success and college readiness, along with an understanding of these issues in the context of the state of Texas. The GEAR UP program, in general, and the Texas GEAR UP SG are described. Next, a summary of key findings from previous implementation reports is provided as a point of comparison for the Year 4 implementation data presented in this report. Specific prior year findings will be presented throughout the report where comparisons are appropriate. Finally, this chapter provides an overview of the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation. Appendix B provides more detailed information regarding the evaluation methodology.

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<sup>14</sup> Additional information about the cohort evaluation design of Texas GEAR UP SG is included in Appendix B.

## 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 low income students and students who may not otherwise pursue postsecondary educational opportunities. While it is estimated that by 2020, 62% of Texas jobs will require postsecondary education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2014), only 40% of Texans between ages 25 and 34 had a postsecondary degree or certificate in 2014 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2016). In addition, college completion rates in Texas continue to reflect wide gaps based on students' family income. In 2014, the educational attainment rate for a bachelor's degree or higher for individuals living above the poverty level in Texas was 31%, which was more than three times higher than the 9.7% of individuals living below the poverty level who attained a bachelor's degree or higher (THECB, 2016). This trend aligns with college enrollment and completion trends found at the national level, as well. Specifically, the immediate college enrollment rate of high school completers from high-income families in 2014 was 81%, compared to 52% of students from low-income families (Kena et al., 2016). Additionally, in 2013, only 9% of youth from the lowest family income quartile attained a college degree by age 24, compared with 77% of youth from the highest income quartile (Pell Institute, 2015).

College enrollment and completion rates in Texas also reflect gaps according to race and ethnicity. In Texas, 37.2% of Whites, 34.7% of Hispanics, and 13.6% of African-Americans were enrolled in higher education in 2015 (THECB, 2016). In addition, of the total Hispanic population 25 and over in 2014, 13% earned a bachelor's degree or higher within six years, compared to 21.8% of African-American and 36.3% of White populations (THECB, 2016). These trends somewhat align with trends found at the national level regarding the existence of college enrollment gaps according to race and ethnicity. Specifically, the immediate college enrollment rate for White high school graduates throughout the U.S. was 68% in 2014, higher than the rates for African-American (63%) and Hispanic (62%) high school completers (Kena et al., 2016). According to the Pew Hispanic Center (2013), while Hispanics now represent one quarter of all public school students nationwide, they only make up 19% of college students ages 18 through 24.

While 54% of Texas eighth graders in 2004 had enrolled in a postsecondary institution following their high school graduation, many of these students did not enter college ready, decreasing the likelihood that they earned a credential (THECB, 2016).<sup>15</sup> Although improving enrollment is a critical first step in increasing college attainment, students must also be prepared at a level that will move them from enrollment to graduation. Despite the improvements made in recent years regarding college and career readiness in Texas high schools, a large portion of students continue to rely on developmental education to prepare them for college-level material.<sup>16</sup> In fall 2014, 10.4% of Texas students who attended a four-year public institution required developmental education, which is a slight decrease from 2013 (THECB, 2016).<sup>17</sup> Community and technical colleges are particularly likely to encounter students with a need for developmental education courses. Of all public community and technical college students, 48% required developmental education, a one percentage point decrease from 2013 (THECB, 2016). The impact on students in terms of time, money, and outcomes is significant when students

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<sup>15</sup> Conley (2007) defines college readiness as “the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program” (p. 5).

<sup>16</sup> Developmental education refers to remedial classes/interventions that college students need to be eligible for credit-bearing courses.

<sup>17</sup> Fall 2013 cohort reported 10.5%, Fall 2014 cohort reported 10.4%.

have not achieved college readiness standards and require developmental education. Specifically, only 35% of two-year college students who are below the state readiness standard when they enter college have graduated or are still enrolled in higher education after three years, compared to 55% of students who enter college ready (THECB, 2016).

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—including motivation. According to a study based on students' motivation to attend postsecondary education, the needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the form of interacting with others, once achieved, nurture motivation for an individual (Abel, Guiffrida, Lynch, & Wall, 2013). ED suggests that GEAR UP programs, including the Texas GEAR UP SG, engage in a range of implementation activities that encourage and build on students' motivations to set postsecondary education as a goal, provide academic and social support to students, educate students about postsecondary enrollment, and prepare them for the financial costs associated with postsecondary attendance.

Understanding high school graduation in Texas is important because it is a necessary milestone toward college enrollment. The Texas high school Grade 9 four-year longitudinal graduation rate slightly increased from 88.3% for the Class of 2014 to 89.0% for the Class of 2015 (TEA, 2016a). The graduation rate for students in the Class of 2015 identified as being economically disadvantaged (85.6%) increased from the graduation rates of students in the Class of 2014 identified as being economically disadvantaged (85.2%) (TEA, 2016a). This smaller increase in on-time graduation rates for students classified as economically disadvantaged, reinforces the need for Texas GEAR UP SG to support schools with high percentages of students identified as being economically disadvantaged. English language learners (ELL), Hispanic, and African-American youth are also targeted by the Texas GEAR UP SG. TEA data indicate concerns with the graduation rates for these student populations; rates are improving over time, but are still below state rates. In other words, progress for various groups continues to lag amidst overall progress. For example, students identified as ELL at any point between Grades 9 and 12 in the Class of 2015 had a much lower high school graduation rate (73.3%) than the state (89.0%) for the Class of 2015, despite the increase of two percentage points from the Class of 2014 (71.5%). Both Hispanic and African-American groups continued to lag behind White, non-Hispanic youth in the state as well, with a Class of 2015 graduation rate of 86.5% and 85.2%, respectively (compared to 93.4% for White, non-Hispanic students).<sup>18</sup>

In addition to high school graduation, another way for students to prepare for enrollment in higher education is to enroll in dual-credit courses in order to be eligible to earn college credit while in high school and gain exposure to the rigorous content in advanced placement (AP) classes. Ideally, academic rigor in AP courses exposes students to the typical demands of a college course. Participation in AP courses is another area where various student groups continue to lag in Texas, although progress has also been made. Specifically, 40.5% of the Texas graduating Class of 2015 took at least one AP exam during high school, an increase of 1.4 percentage points from the previous school year (39.1% in Class of 2014); the Texas average for the Class of 2015 was 3.2 percentage points higher than the national average (37.3%; TEA, 2016b). As in previous years, Texas continued to reach close to equitable participation in AP exams for low income students in the class of 2015; 58.7% of all students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch while half (50.5%) of the AP examinees in the Class of 2015 were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (TEA, 2016c; TEA, 2016b). Although

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<sup>18</sup> Hispanic (Class of 2015: 86.5%, Class of 2011: 81.8%) and African-American (Class of 2015: 85.2%, Class of 2011: 80.9%) youth in the Class of 2015 had improved graduation rates compared to the Class of 2011. Both Hispanic and African-American groups continued to lag behind Asian-American (Class of 2015: 95.4%, Class of 2011: 95.0%) youth in the state as well.

participation is close to equitable, performance for some student groups is low. According to a 2015 College Board data release, the student groups with the lowest mean AP scores in Texas were African-Americans, Other Hispanics, and Mexican Americans, with the average scores on a five-point scale at 1.90, 1.98, and 2.19, respectively; this is compared to 2.79 for White students and 2.48 overall in Texas (College Board, 2015).<sup>19</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG, which stresses academic rigor and student engagement in AP courses, has the potential to be part of the effort to help reduce achievement gaps between student groups on AP exams.

### 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 House Bill (HB) 5, 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, in June 2013 (LegiScan, 2013). The passage of HB 5 initiated substantial changes to the assessment and graduation requirements in the state, including the establishment of a new high school program—the Foundation High School Program—to create a rigorous, but flexible, educational program for students that promotes both college access and career readiness.<sup>20</sup> The Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort, students who began high school in 2014–15, were the first cohort of Grade 9 students who were required to graduate under the requirements of the Foundation High School Program. Both TEA and districts statewide worked to address the practicalities associated with the purpose and goal of the HB 5 legislation from June 2013 to the start of the 2014–15 school year. One challenge faced by TEA and the districts related to the Foundation High School Program was ensuring that students received clear information about graduation requirements, including understanding new program components such as endorsement requirements and how to earn Algebra II credit which is required for admission at most Texas public universities and colleges but was no longer a requirement under the new high school graduation program.

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

Additionally, under the Foundation High School Program, students are required to select an endorsement upon entering high school. An endorsement is a series of courses that gives students the flexibility to focus on their interests. Essentially, the endorsements provide the basis for entering a career pathway, similar to a major in college. Completing an endorsement requires students to earn 26 credits to graduate. Students are also permitted to choose, at any time, to earn an endorsement other than the one the student previously selected at the beginning of Grade 9. After a student's sophomore year, a student may choose to graduate without earning an endorsement. Students are generally discouraged from graduating with the

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<sup>19</sup> Scores reflect the following scale: 5 = extremely well qualified, 4 = well qualified, 3 = qualified, 2 = possibly qualified, and 1 = no recommendation. Each college decides what scores it will accept. Reported means are averages across exams.

<sup>20</sup> For additional information on Texas high school graduation requirements, please see <http://tea.texas.gov/graduation-requirements/hb5.aspx>.

minimum Foundation High School Program without the addition of an endorsement, and cannot do so without consent from a parent or guardian.<sup>21</sup> Although five endorsements have been identified under the Foundation High School Program, districts are not required to offer all five endorsements. The five endorsement areas include business and industry; arts and humanities; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); public services; and multidisciplinary studies. Students may select more than one endorsement.

Given the focus of Texas GEAR UP SG on postsecondary education, it is worth examining minimum Foundation High School Program requirements relative to college entrance requirements. In particular, the minimum Foundation High School Program and some of the endorsements do not require students to complete Algebra II in order to graduate, but many colleges require Algebra II completion in their entrance requirements. However graduating with a distinguished level of achievement does require completion of Algebra II.

In order to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement under the Foundation High School Program, students must exceed the minimum Foundation High School Program requirements. Students must complete at least one endorsement and must complete Algebra II as one of the four mathematics credits. In addition to better meeting college entrance requirements, another benefit of graduating with a distinguished level of achievement is that it is one of the requirements to be admitted to a Texas public university under the state's Automatic Admission Policy.<sup>22</sup> In August 2014, TEA published a Graduation Toolkit to support students, parents, and schools in understanding the new graduation requirements.<sup>23</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG participating schools/districts engaged in their own activities to introduce Grade 9 students to the new graduation requirement and endorsements, as described in the Year 3 Annual Implementation Report (Briggs et al., 2016). Efforts to support cohort students in the graduation requirement and endorsements in Grade 10 are detailed in Chapter 2 and in the Case Study Reports (Appendix E).

In addition to changing high school graduation requirements, it is worth noting that HB 5 reduced the number of State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) end-of-course (EOC) exams from 15 to 5. Under HB 5, a student must pass Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History EOC exams in order to be eligible for graduation. 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 English I and II exams are not typically used as part of college entrance requirements.

In the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, SB 149, which further revised the state's assessment graduation requirements for students enrolled in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade for the 2014–15, 2015–16, or 2016–17 school years was passed. SB 149 states that any student who fails STAAR EOC in up to two courses may receive a high school diploma if the student has qualified to graduate by means of an individual graduation committee (IGC). The decision is at the

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<sup>21</sup> This permission cannot be provided until after the student completes Grade 10.

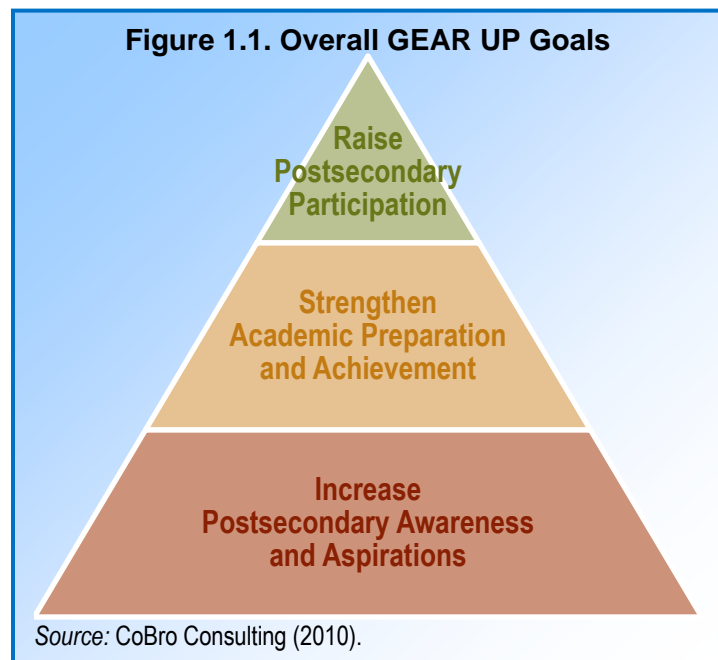
<sup>22</sup> In 1997, during the 75th Legislative Session, Texas introduced the Automatic Admission policy (Texas Education Code [TEC] § 51.803) for students applying for admission to college. Students graduating in the top 10% of their high school class were eligible for automatic admission into Texas public colleges and universities. HB 5 added an additional requirement for automatic admission—that students must graduate with a distinguished level of achievement along with being in the top 10% of their high school class. For more information, visit <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.51.htm#51.803>

<sup>23</sup> The TEA Graduation Toolkit is available online at <http://tea.texas.gov/communications/brochures.aspx>.

discretion of the IGC.<sup>24</sup> While the primary cohort was not initially expected to be impacted by SB 149, new legislation from the 85<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session, SB 463, which was signed into law on June 9, 2017, has extended the expiration of the statute to 2021, which will impact the primary cohort as well as comparison cohorts.

### 1.1.3 About the Federal GEAR UP Program

TEA's application for and receipt of a federal GEAR UP SG is in line with the general state focus on promoting college readiness and access discussed in the prior section. The federal GEAR UP program seeks to improve postsecondary enrollment and completion for low-income students. The GEAR UP program addresses the challenges faced by low-income students in attaining postsecondary success in an early and ongoing manner, providing services, activities, and resources to students from Grade 7 through the first year of college. These goals are presented as a pyramid, with each goal building on previously attained goals (CoBro Consulting, 2010; see Figure 1.1). Although the goals build on each other, the strategies associated with each goal can occur throughout the implementation of GEAR UP (e.g., implementation activities to increase college awareness and postsecondary aspirations occur across grades). The goals include the following:



- 1. Increasing postsecondary awareness and aspirations.** This goal is focused on increasing GEAR UP students' and parents' knowledge of postsecondary educational options, the preparation needed to succeed at the postsecondary level, and parents' financial literacy regarding postsecondary education. Ideally, aspirations and expectations for postsecondary education are aligned and influence decisions (e.g., to complete Algebra I in Grade 9, to apply for postsecondary enrollment in Grade 12). Texas GEAR UP project objectives, such as offering college awareness workshops to all students and parents by the end of the project's first year, support this effort.
- 2. Strengthening academic preparation and achievement.** This goal focuses on providing academically rigorous opportunities for students (e.g., achieving college readiness benchmarks on state/national tests, completion of college credit in high school). GEAR UP PD opportunities for teachers are made available to increase academic rigor in the classroom. Grantees monitor, and students can self-monitor, progress on achieving early

<sup>24</sup> For additional information about how SB 149 amended the assessment graduation requirements, see [http://tea.texas.gov/About\\_TEA/News\\_and\\_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA\\_Letters/Assessment\\_Graduation\\_Requirements\\_as\\_Amended\\_by\\_Senate\\_Bill\\_\(SB\)\\_149/](http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/Assessment_Graduation_Requirements_as_Amended_by_Senate_Bill_(SB)_149/). For more information about the IGC review, see TEA's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document at <http://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769821193&libID=25769821294>. The Class of 2015 is the first graduating class in which students graduated by IGC determination; data on those graduates may be found at <http://tea.texas.gov/acctres/dropcomp/years.html#igc>.



and intermediate outcomes that indicate postsecondary readiness (e.g., timely progress toward meeting a plan for graduation at the distinguished level of achievement). Texas GEAR UP project objectives, such as 85% of students completing Algebra I by the end of Grade 9 (Project Objective 1.1) and 60% of students completing an AP/pre-AP course by the fifth year (Project Objective 2.2), reflect this overarching goal.

- 3. Raising postsecondary participation.** Finally, GEAR UP seeks to improve high school graduation rates and enrollment in postsecondary education. This goal is at the top of the pyramid, in part, because it is the intended long-term outcome. However, implementation activities intended to aid grantees in meeting this goal also occur throughout the life cycle of the grant, including providing student support services such as tutoring and mentoring. The program anticipates that successful grantees will develop systems to identify students for such services early and at an appropriate level. Among the various implementation activities, TEA has indicated that participation in summer programs is of particular interest to 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 ELA, support this goal.

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

TEA was awarded a federal GEAR UP grant in April 2012 with a start date of July 2012. As described in prior implementation reports (Briggs et al, 2016; Briggs et al, 2015; 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 (six high schools at the time of this report) with a high population of low-income youth. In addition to district Texas GEAR UP SG services, GEAR UP-specific statewide supports are provided through existing and newly developed TEA college and career information resources, which provide a rich array of information and tools for educators, students and their parents to help provide guidance regarding postsecondary education.<sup>25</sup>

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

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<sup>25</sup> This includes the statewide website at <http://www.texasgearup.com>.

<sup>26</sup> TEA first applied for the GEAR UP grant in July 2011 with plans for implementation to begin in the 2011–12 school year. Funding was awarded based on this application in a deferred award cycle (April 2012).

factors), compared to the state.<sup>27</sup> The seven middle schools also had higher-than-state-average enrollments of Hispanic/Latino students and three of the schools also had large African-American student populations.<sup>28</sup> 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 each school year. Appendix F, related to implementation findings, presents demographic data for students. As previously mentioned, schools will be identified by a letter and districts by a number in order to mask the school and maintain the confidentiality that was promised for the site visits.

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

District	Middle Schools (2012–13; 2013–14)	High Schools (2014–15; 2015–16)
Edgewood Independent School District	Brentwood, Garcia, Wrenn	Memorial, Kennedy
Lubbock Independent School District	Dunbar	Estacado
Manor Independent School District	Decker, Manor	Manor, Manor New Tech
Somerset Independent School District	Somerset	Somerset

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

In Year 4, all Texas GEAR UP SG districts offered high school options with a particular focus on college readiness or were planning to in the near future. In some cases, these students will no longer be included in the primary cohort if they attend the alternative high school option. Specifically, some students in Grade 10 who are focused on postsecondary education may select one of these alternatives as a substitute that will facilitate this goal. This means that the

<sup>27</sup> TEC § 29.081 criteria for at-risk status include each student who is under 26 years of age and who (1) was not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more school years; (2) is in Grades 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 and did not maintain an average equivalent of 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year or is not maintaining such an average in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum in the current semester; (3) did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered to the student, and who has not in the previous or current school year subsequently performed on that instrument or another appropriate instrument at a level equal to at least 110% of the level of satisfactory performance on that instrument; (4) is in prekindergarten, kindergarten, or Grades 1, 2, or 3 and did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument administered during the current school year; (5) is pregnant or is a parent; (6) has been placed in an alternative education program during the preceding or current school year; (7) has been expelled during the preceding or current school year; (8) is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution, or other conditional release; (9) was previously reported through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) to have dropped out of school; (10) is a student of limited English proficiency; (11) is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official; (12) is homeless; or (13) resided in the preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential placement facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home (See <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/2016/glossary.pdf>; <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.29.htm#29.081>).

<sup>28</sup> See Annual Implementation Report #1 (O'Donnel et al., 2013) for additional details regarding the demographic characteristics of the schools during the 2009–10 school year.

Texas GEAR UP SG cohort will lose some students who might otherwise have counted towards achieving the postsecondary enrollment goal.<sup>29</sup> Following is a description of the postsecondary education alternatives available to students in the Texas GEAR UP SG participating districts:

- In Manor Independent School District, Manor New Tech High School (opened in the 2007–08 school year) offers project-based learning (PBL) focused on college and career readiness in STEM with students selected for enrollment by lottery. All Grade 10 students at this school are considered part of the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort. Additionally, Manor Independent School District started an early college high school program (available to students starting in the 2014–15 school year) in association with a local community college. Through the program, students will take dual-credit courses during each year of high school to earn their associate’s degree (60 college credit hours) by the time they graduate from high school. In Grade 9, the main goal of the program was to have the enrolled students pass the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) test.<sup>30</sup> Grade 9 students were also offered dual-credit classes at Manor High School. In Grade 10, students began traveling to community college for classes and will continue to do so in subsequent years. Manor students in Grade 10 who are enrolled in the early college high school program attend school at the Manor High School campus, and are still included in the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort.
- Somerset Independent School District (in collaboration with two other districts) established a selective enrollment Early College Leadership Academy (ECLA) that offers opportunities for students to earn an associate’s degree in liberal arts along with their high school diploma. Year 4 of the Texas GEAR UP SG was the second year of operation for this program. Some Texas GEAR UP SG students in this district (who attended Somerset Middle School in 2013–14) may have attended this school (instead of the Texas GEAR UP SG high school) in 2014–15 and are no longer part of the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort. These students are not reflected in the data in this report and will be excluded from future reports unless the students return to the participating high school.
- Lubbock Independent School District has initiated an early college high school which began in summer 2016, in collaboration with a local university, for the 2016–17 school year. However, this program is foreseen by staff to not have a direct impact on GEAR UP implementation as the program would not be available to the cohort. Forthcoming evaluation activities will follow progress on the establishment of the early college high school in this district.
- Edgewood Independent School District has a Touch of Life Technology (TOLTech) Texas STEM academy, housed at one of the district’s middle schools (which is not one of the former Texas GEAR UP SG middle schools in this district).<sup>31</sup> Both middle school and high school students attend the TOLTech Academy. Twenty-one percent of the cohort students at Memorial High School participated in the academy.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> While some students may still attend a participating Texas GEAR UP SG high school, if they are receiving extra services through participation in an alternative college readiness program, they will no longer be included in the cohort for the purposes of analyzing the impact of the Texas GEAR UP SG.

<sup>30</sup> The TSIA is used to determine readiness for college coursework and identifies needs for any developmental coursework. Students must pass TSIA before taking community college courses unless such requirement was waived. For more information see <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=C92F1DAA-D49E-03F0-0750060AA756E807> and <http://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769823287&libID=25769823385>.

<sup>31</sup> Touch of Life Technologies, or TOLTech, creates career-long education solutions for health care students and professionals. More information about the organization is available at <http://www.toltech.net>.

<sup>32</sup> Kennedy High School did not report participation in the TOLTech Academy during the 2015–16 school year. It is unclear whether there were actually no participants from Kennedy or if there were participants, but staff did not report participation data.

## TRANSITION FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL

In Year 3 of Texas GEAR UP SG, students transitioned from middle school to high school. This transition expanded the opportunities for students to prepare for college, such as being exposed to juniors and seniors who were applying for college and interacting with school staff who may be more familiar with college requirements. College Preparation Advisors, first introduced when the primary cohort was in Grade 8, also transitioned to continue serving students in the high school. While College Preparation Advisors may have had some contact with administrators and teachers from the high schools for vertical alignment activities and/or summer transition programs, Year 3 reflected a transition for the program to establish relationships with and support from teachers, administrators, and staff at the high school. Overall 79% of Grade 8 students remained in the primary cohort in Grade 9. In addition, 72% of Grade 9 cohort students attended a Texas GEAR UP SG school in Grade 8. While most of the Grade 8 cohort continued into Grade 9 and most of the Grade 9 cohort had been in the Grade 8, the transition from middle school to high school introduced new students into the cohort. The Year 3 Annual Implementation Report (Briggs et al., 2016) provides a detailed review of implementation activities, the barriers and facilitators faced, and potential promising practices in the context of this transition.

## TEXAS GEAR UP STATE GRANT COLLABORATORS

In Year 1, TEA collaborated with five organizations: Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center (a technical assistance provider, herein referred to as the Support Center); AMS Pictures; Texas STEM (T-STEM) Centers; Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TG); and the College Board. In Year 2, TEA retained each of these collaborators, the Support Center, AMS Pictures, TG, T-STEM Centers, and College Board, and added three new collaborators: Abriendo Puertas, Community TechKnowledge (CTK), and GeoFORCE.<sup>33</sup> Beginning in Year 2, the Support Center managed the contracts with all collaborators with the exception of AMS Pictures who report directly to TEA. In Year 3, Abriendo Puertas was no longer a collaborator; TEA continued to collaborate with the Support Center and AMS Pictures; the Support Center continued to manage contracts with four organizations (the TG, T-STEM Centers, CTK and GeoFORCE), and began working with one new collaborator: Raise Achievement. Beginning in Year 3, districts were permitted to work directly with College Board on any desired services. Data collected in Year 3 clarified the role of existing collaborators (primarily telephone interviews with each organization as supplemented by site visit data) and offered information about new collaborators. In Year 4, six of the seven collaborators from Year 3 returned (RA, AMS Pictures, TG, CTK, GeoFORCE, and T-STEM Center) with the TX GEAR UP SG Support Center no longer playing a role in the Texas GEAR UP SG collaborator implementation.

**Support Center:** The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI) Office for College Access manages and staffs the Support Center. The Support Center includes seven full-time staff in addition to the seven College Preparation Advisors; the Support Center supervises the College Preparation Advisors and provides them with a week-long training. TEA program staff described the Support Center as being an extension of the state education agency by providing technical assistance related to grant administration/compliance and encouraging school and district buy-in. TEA and Support Center staff collaborate frequently (weekly by phone, monthly in person, and as needed); the Support Center communicates with schools at a similar frequency. In Year 4, two new positions were created within the Support Center, one of which is a special outreach position focused on organizing summer camps for students. The other position supports data collection. The Support Center also started a new

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<sup>33</sup> The College Board no longer had a formalized relationship with the Texas GEAR UP SG during Year 2, Year 3, or Year 4. However, TEA provided grant funds directly to districts to purchase services directly from the College Board.

podcast in Year 4, *To College and Beyond*. As in prior years, the Support Center provided monthly and quarterly reports to TEA that are formatted similar to the ED required Annual Performance Report (APR). The Support Center also managed the contract for the GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System (GUIDES); these data support TEA in aligning reports to project objectives, providing student- and teacher-level implementation data for the evaluation, and serving as formative information for TEA and the districts.<sup>34</sup> In Year 3 and in Year 4, improved use of these data to drive decisions about implementation included the ability to examine trends in data at a deeper level (such as using past attendance data to strategically target parents for future event attendance). Another source of data to support implementation in Year 4 was the use of a student questionnaire to help Texas GEAR UP SG staff know more about individual student needs.<sup>35</sup> The Support Center continued to ensure that the districts complied with grant requirements by providing guidance and feedback on each district's Annual Strategic Planning Report (ASPR). Support Center staff visited each school monthly and engaged in calls/email, as needed, in between; these interactions were similar in frequency across districts.

The Support Center also managed the communication with other collaborators (except for AMS Pictures who interacts with TEA directly). Similar to Year 2 and 3 of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, in Year 4, the Support Center was responsible for supervising, supporting, and training the College Preparation Advisors, as well as the planning and execution of the Texas GEAR UP conference. In addition, the Support Center reported meeting with College Preparation Advisors and GEAR UP staff every month in Year 4. The Support Center offered more intensive support to gain parental involvement in Year 3 which they continued in Year 4; for example, they supported a parent in applying for, and winning, the national GEAR UP parent-of-the-year award. Another example of the support was the Support Center's facilitation of a student-parent athlete symposium in an effort to help parents understand how athletics relate to college.

**AMS Pictures:** At the end of Year 1, AMS Pictures launched the revised and publicly available Texas GEAR UP website at <http://www.texasgearup.com>. In Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4, AMS Pictures continued to create resources for the website and market it to Texas GEAR UP SG grantees, as well as school districts throughout the state. In Year 4, it was reported that AMS Public Interest, an extension of AMS Pictures, assisted in marketing and conducting outreach to better help GEAR UP and TEA achieve their GPRA (Government Performance Results Act of 1993) goal of increasing educational expectations and family knowledge. Similar to Year 2 and Year 3, AMS Pictures supported Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 4 by gathering and disseminating resources for implementing GEAR UP, identifying challenges, and creating an outlet for sharing ideas to address issues. One example of their work is the "Get a Life" game, a card game for students which demonstrates the relationship between various postsecondary education outcomes and financial scenarios—which students could face in the future. Year 4 also included the expanded use of online tools to schedule activities with educators and GEAR UP schools. One tool included the AMS Pictures website, which allows the GEAR UP districts to use the interactive calendar and schedule different activities at their convenience. The use of social media and direct emailing with GEAR UP staff or school administrators also played a role in scheduling activities and maintaining the district-collaborator relationship. AMS Pictures also continued the GEAR UP Lounge at the statewide conference in Year 4, which offered participants the opportunity to review statewide resources. The GEAR UP Lounge also provided opportunities for networking as reported by parents and educators participating in site visits who

<sup>34</sup> See <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/performance.html> for additional information on the information required to be submitted annually by grant award recipients.

<sup>35</sup> The term Texas GEAR UP SG staff is used throughout this report and includes the coordinator, College Preparation Advisors, and the data clerk. These are staff located in the district or at the school who have key responsibilities to the project at either the school or for the district.

had attended the conference. Throughout the life of the grant, AMS Pictures will visit schools to highlight practices identified by their research as being successful, as well as interact regularly with the Support Center regarding both the website and the conference (e.g., selecting a theme, visuals, promotion). AMS Pictures also continued to work on the development of statewide teacher resources to be introduced on Texas Gateway and through the Texas GEAR UP SG website.<sup>36</sup>

**T-STEM Centers:** The University of Texas at Tyler (UT-Tyler) continued to support Texas GEAR UP SG through PD and mobile labs for students in Year 4. Examples of PD that the T-STEM Centers offered Texas GEAR UP SG schools in Year 4 included sessions focused on enhanced rigor in math classes and training on PBL. The STEM mobile labs offered students the opportunity to use various science tools and resources not otherwise available to them.

**GeoFORCE:** Similar to Year 2 and Year 3, GeoFORCE continued to support Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 4 by providing an experiential outreach program housed at the University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin) and supported, in part, through TG Public Benefit.<sup>37</sup> It is a long-term college access initiative based on geosciences in which 40 students from the six Texas GEAR UP SG high schools participate in summer residential geological programs. In summer 2015, students went to the Grand Canyon. In summer 2016, the plan was for students to go to the Cascades to analyze volcanic rock and other mountain building sites as well as to the US Geological Survey Research building and meet some of the researchers there. The program is intentionally designed to increase in rigor each year with the goal of encouraging students to seek out a college major in a STEM field by focusing on social skills and independence in the first year (summer 2014 for Texas GEAR UP SG students), science skills in the second year (summer 2015 for Texas GEAR UP SG students), and college considerations in the third year (summer 2016 for Texas GEAR UP SG students). Through a related project that GeoFORCE is working on, dual-credit science courses may be available to Texas GEAR UP SG students, as well as other students in Texas, in the near future, with the intention that they will be available by the time Texas GEAR UP SG students are in their junior or senior year. In addition, a new program funded by the National Science Foundation called Texas Revolution teaches educators how to teach earth science. GeoFORCE is also exploring grant opportunities with the Support Center to identify ways to sustain similar services with the cohorts of students that follow the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort of Grade 10 students.

**Raise Achievement:** Raise Achievement, an independent consulting company, conducted a Year 3 formative needs assessment for the Support Center at each site to inform strategic planning. These site visit interviews with Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators and College Preparation Advisors included discussions about barriers and successes, including looking at the root cause of why particular students did or did not participate. These findings were shared with Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators. As of August 2015, Raise Achievement's contract with the Support Center ended, along with their collaboration with TEA. Raise Achievement reported a more than satisfactory experience working with the Support Center, specifically in regards to the level of communication with the Support Center leadership team.

## 1.2 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Year 1 to Year 3 Key Findings

Previous implementation reports provided an overview of implementation for each year of the grant: for Grade 7 students during the 2012–13 school year (O'Donnel et al., 2013); Grade 8 students during the 2013–14 school year (Briggs et al., 2015); and Grade 9 students during the

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<sup>36</sup> Texas Gateway (formerly Project Share) provides an online, interactive learning environment for Texas teachers. See <https://www.texasgateway.org/> for additional information.

<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.jsq.utexas.edu/geoforce> for additional information about this program.

2014–15 school year (Briggs et al., 2016). 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. A primary source of data for each report is data on student participation in Texas GEAR UP SG services and events through March 31<sup>st</sup> of each year, which are collected for the APR and reported through the Texas GEAR UP SG GUIDES. Interviews with TEA and its collaborators on the grant, student and parent surveys, and qualitative site visit data also informed all of the implementation reports. Previous implementation reports (O'Donnel et al., 2013; Briggs et al., 2015; Briggs et al., 2016) provide additional details about the Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 findings summarized here.

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

The national GEAR UP program encourages grantees to engage in a wide range of implementation practices in order to support project objectives. The level and mix of implementation varied across schools in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 (see Table 1.2 for an overview of Year 3 implementation strategies by high school and Annual Implementation Reports 1 and 2 for Year 1 and 2 implementation strategies, respectively); however, the level of implementation was higher across all schools in Year 3 than in previous years. In Year 3, Schools H, I, and M equally implemented the widest range of GEAR UP practices as intended, with a total of 18 strategies implemented. Schools J, K, and L followed closely, with each implementing 17, 16, and 15 strategies, respectively. The strategies that were least often implemented, across all schools, were parent counseling/advising, educational field trips, and job site visit/job shadowing. Vertical teaming events, a new strategy implemented in Year 3, was implemented across all six high schools.

**Table 1.2. Overview of Implementation Strategies by School, 2014–15 (Year 3)**

	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
<b>Implementation Strategies</b> X indicates strategies implemented in Year 3						
Advanced Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
AP Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Summer Programs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Tutoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Mentoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Counseling/Advising	X	X	X	X	X	X
College Visit	X	X	X	X	X	X
Job Site Visit/Job Shadowing	X	X	X			X
Educational Field Trips	X	X		X		X
Student Workshops/Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Counseling/Advising	X	X	X			X
Parent Event on College Preparation/Financial Aid	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent College Visit	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher Professional Development	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vertical Teaming Events*	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Alliances	X	X	X	X	X	X
Use of Statewide Services	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Total Number of Strategies Implemented (Out of 18)</b>						
	18	18	17	16	15	18

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016; fall 2014 and spring 2015 site visit data.

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

\* Indicates a new implementation category captured in Year 3.

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

Successful completion of Algebra I is a key early outcome measure that sets a grant project objective of having 30% of students completing Algebra I by the end of Grade 8 and 85% of students completing the course by the end of Grade 9 (Project Objective 1.1).<sup>38</sup> Grade 7 students’ enrollment in an advanced mathematics course averaged 22% and ranged from 18% (School G) to 29% (School D) in Year 1. In Year 2, Grade 8 students’ enrollment in an advanced mathematics course (including Algebra I) averaged 43% and ranged from 27% (Schools B and D) to 98% (School E). By the end of Year 2, 31% of students had successfully completed Algebra 1, fulfilling 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). In Year 3, 45% of Grade 9 students were enrolled in advanced mathematics and ranged from 19% (School J) to 97% (School L). This reflects an overall increase in advanced mathematics course enrollment from Year 1 to Year 3. This increase was not noted at all schools, however; enrollment in an advanced mathematics course was less than 40% at four of the six schools.

In Year 1 and 2, schools offered student support services such as enrichment programs, summer programs, and tutoring to help students succeed in Algebra I and other advanced

<sup>38</sup> For a list of all Texas GEAR UP SG Project Objectives set by TEA, please see Appendix A.



courses. In Year 1, 39% of students were involved in student support services. In Year 2, however, there was a large increase of students receiving student support services; 78% of Grade 8 students received student support services in fulfillment of Project Objective 4.1 (requiring 75% of students in Grade 8 to receive such services). In Year 3, cohort schools continued to meet this goal, with 81% of students receiving student support services. Specifically, in Year 3, cohort students were involved in various tutoring activities in subjects such as math, ELA, science, and social studies, and according to a student survey administered in spring 2015, nearly two thirds (62%) indicated that they met with their College Preparation Advisor.<sup>39</sup> However, some schools continued to deliver a higher percentage of student support services than other schools.

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

One of the Texas GEAR UP SG project objectives is that, each year, at least 50% of parents participate in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events (Project Objective 7.3). No parent at any school attended three or more events in Year 1; in Year 2, there was some progress as 7% of parents from all schools had participated in at least three events. In Year 3, only one school (School M) had 7% of parents attend three or more events, however, all six high schools had at least some parents attend three or more events.<sup>40</sup> Overall, 49% of parents attended at least one event in Year 3, an increase of 11 percentage points since Year 2; High School M again led on this measure (69%).<sup>41</sup> Schools offered more parent events in Year 3 than they did in the limited Year 1 implementation period as well as Year 2. Parents reported minimal knowledge of the program during site visits in Year 1; however, Year 2 and more so in Year 3 reflected progress in communication and outreach to encourage parents to get involved in Texas GEAR UP SG events.

Successful parent activities in prior years included a three-part series of parental engagement workshops and parental participation on college visits. In both Year 1 and Year 2, schools used flyers, personal calls or text messages, direct mail, and robocalls to build parental awareness and interest in Texas GEAR UP SG events.<sup>42</sup> In Year 3, additional means included free admission to athletic events, transportation, food, prizes, and follow-up phone calls. Schools provided free childcare to parents and Spanish translation for parents with limited English language skills. In spite of some progress with parental involvement, Texas GEAR UP SG schools continue to struggle with identifying strategies to engage parents and continue to work toward the project objective.

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

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

- In each grant year, all core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL (Project Objective 3.1).

<sup>39</sup> Participation in various tutoring subjects in Year 3 are 33% in math, 8% in English, 20% in science, and 5% in social studies.

<sup>40</sup> High School H, I, J, and L: 3% and High School K: 1%.

<sup>41</sup> Data on parental participation in at least one parent event for the remaining schools is as follows: High School H: 56%; High School I: 49%; High School J: 59%; High School K: 31%; and High School L: 32%.

<sup>42</sup> Robocalls are automated phone messages that are used as an efficient system to send information out to a large audience.

- In each grant year, teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation (Project Objective 3.2).<sup>43</sup>

In Year 1, most Texas GEAR UP SG schools had scheduled their teacher PD activities for the 2012–13 school year prior to TEA awarding the Texas GEARUP SG in November/December 2012, and thus were not easily able to change plans to provide GEAR UP-specific teacher PD. School G was the primary exception, engaging in a broad range of teacher PD (including PBL and a vertical team meeting). Schools E and F also reported engaging in a single vertical alignment meeting in Year 1; both of these schools met the vertical alignment objective in Year 2. In Year 2, schools offered PD focused on PBL and enhancing academic rigor (such as pre-AP training); these were topics that teachers expressed an interest in during the Year 1 site visits. Other PD offered by two Texas GEAR UP SG schools in Year 2 included financial literacy modules, but there were various challenges in using the material, including available time and the age-appropriateness of the content, according to site visit data. In Year 3, all Texas GEAR UP SG schools provided some GEAR UP-supported PD, with 114 PD sessions overall with topics ranging from: use of technology, needs assessments, differentiated instruction, PBL, AP and pre-AP, financial literacy, and SpringBoard®.<sup>44</sup> Only High Schools K and M had held at least five vertical team events (12 and 13, respectively), although other schools came close to meeting this objective (4 events at High School H, I, and L; 3 events at High School J).

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

In Year 1, both primary cohort parents and students were surveyed in spring 2013; in Year 2, primary cohort students were surveyed in fall 2013 and spring 2014, and parents were surveyed in spring 2014. In Year 3, primary cohort students were surveyed in fall 2014 and spring 2015, and parents were surveyed in spring 2015, and later surveyed again in fall 2015 due to low response rates. The survey results reflect the perceptions of those students and parents who completed the survey.

#### EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

The gaps between educational aspirations and expectations narrowed from Year 1 to Year 2, but both students and parents continued to have aspirations that exceeded their educational expectations, expecting the student to achieve a level of education lower than what they hoped the student would achieve. In both Year 1 and Year 2, School G, where the implementation mix was the broadest, had the highest percentage of students who indicated that participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities had positively influenced their decision to go to college (58% in Year 1 and 67% in Year 2). Across schools, the percentage of students selecting the same response was 38% in Year 1 and 51% in Year 2. That is, these students suggested that before Texas GEAR UP SG participation, they were not committed to attending college, but after participating in Texas GEAR UP SG they expected to do so. In Year 3, following the transition to high school, the gap between student aspirations and expectations was wider than in spring 2014 (13 and 10 percentage points, respectively). Of the 526 students who said they want to get at least a bachelor's degree, only 338 of them thought that they would achieve that level of education.

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<sup>43</sup> Vertical teams (also referred to as vertical alignment) refers to teachers from a given subject area participating in collaborative meetings in which they coordinate instruction and learning objectives across grade levels.

<sup>44</sup> SpringBoard® is the College Board's print and online program for a customizable pathway integrating rigorous instruction, performance-based assessment, and professional learning. More details about this program are available at <http://springboardprogram.collegeboard.org>.

## KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COLLEGE

Evaluation survey data have indicated that Texas GEAR UP SG is serving schools where students generally reported that they do not perceive themselves to be extremely knowledgeable about postsecondary education.<sup>45</sup> On various college-related terms, students were asked to rate their knowledge by selecting *no knowledge*, *slightly knowledgeable*, *knowledgeable*, and *extremely knowledgeable*. On average, there has been an increase in knowledge of the ACT, SAT, general requirements of college acceptance, and the importance/benefit of college since Year 1 among students. In Year 3, specifically, 63% of students rated themselves as *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* on the importance/benefit of college, 50% on the general requirements of college acceptance, 46% on the SAT, and only 38% on the ACT.

Although parent data was not reported in Year 3, the transition from Year 1 to Year 2 generally showed little to no increases in various topic areas. For example, 55% and 41% of parents reported themselves as either *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about the importance and benefit of college and scholarships, respectively. In Year 2, these percentages increased to 60% and 48%, respectively. Regarding knowledge about the FAFSA, SAT, and ACT, parents' knowledge did not improve or regress.

## FINANCIAL UNDERSTANDING OF COLLEGE

Across schools and in all three prior years, the students who do not plan to go to college selected *concerns about cost* as a main reason for not continuing on to postsecondary education, although the percentage of students selecting that reason was lowest in Year 2 (48% in Year 1, 39% in Year 2, and 46% in Year 3). In Year 1, 25% of parents and 12% of students indicated that they have *no knowledge* regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of their child pursuing postsecondary education. This was higher in Year 2, when 31% of parents and 28% of students reported having *no knowledge* regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of pursuing postsecondary education. In Year 3, 23% of students reported having no knowledge regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of pursuing postsecondary education.<sup>46</sup> In general, there is still a low knowledge and high interest regarding strategies for paying for college. Efforts to increase parents' and students' knowledge of the financial aspects of college, such as specific financial aid terms and the actual costs of attending, remains a potential area of focus for Texas GEAR UP SG schools.

### 1.2.6 Prior Years: Key Facilitators and Barriers

Facilitators and barriers to implementation were identified from the full range of data sources. Those associated with key successes or challenges in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 are identified here.

## TEXAS GEAR UP SG STAFF

In Year 1, the presence of a Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator with a high level of time commitment facilitated implementation in three schools (Schools E, F, and G). At the remaining four schools, all with lower levels of implementation, the District Coordinator was responsible for a range of other programs or for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation at more than one school. In Year 2, a primary facilitator to Texas GEAR UP SG implementation was the addition of College Preparation Advisors (one assigned to each school). In Year 3, most positions

<sup>45</sup> Due to the low response rate of parent surveys in spring 2015, Year 3 does not include parent survey data.

<sup>46</sup> As previously stated, due to the low response rate of parent surveys in spring 2015, Year 3 does not include parent survey data.

remained intact, with the gradual hiring of other positions such as a parent liaison and data clerk (High School J), each considered part time for the individual hired.

### **SUPPORT FROM DISTRICT AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS**

In all three prior years, the success of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation hinged on the extent to which school and district administrators supported the program. In Year 2, Texas GEAR UP SG staff at one school reported that services and implementation activities were delayed and, in some cases, eliminated due to the local approval processes that staff needed to navigate prior to implementing the activities. Another school experienced initial resistance from school administrators regarding the TG financial literacy modules, but a new school administrator allowed Texas GEAR UP SG staff to plan an assembly to present the TG curriculum to students.<sup>47</sup> In Year 3, despite challenges to some of the schools (e.g., staff turnover, low parent engagement), many of the grant staff reported having more support from school administrators than in the previous years.

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

In Year 1 and Year 2, the most common practice that encouraged parental participation in Texas GEAR UP SG was encouragement from their child, according to those parents who completed the survey. In addition, the most common barrier reported by parents was time/schedule conflicts; this was the case in both prior years. In Year 3, College Preparation Advisors and parent liaisons (in schools that included the position), made a more concentrated effort than in Year 2 to encourage parental participation in Texas GEAR UP SG. These new efforts included home visits, phone calls, texts, incorporating GEAR UP events in community activities, and others. Because parent survey data were not reported in Year 3, it is not known how these efforts were perceived by parents or what barriers remained that impeded participation.

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

### **1.3.1 Year 4 Evaluation Objectives and Research Questions**

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

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

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

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<sup>47</sup> See <http://www.tgslc.org/financial-education/> for additional information about TG's efforts to educate students about financial aspects associated with postsecondary education attendance.

- Understanding the impact of participation in Texas GEAR UP SG on relevant student outcomes, including early, intermediate, and long-term indicators of meeting program goals.
- Understanding the impact of participation in Texas GEAR UP SG on relevant family, school, and community alliance outcomes.<sup>48</sup>

As in prior years, the Year 4 implementation report focuses primarily on feedback regarding implementation and any indication of promising practices. In the context of these objectives, this report, as well as future reports, addresses a broad range of evaluation questions (see Appendix A). These questions are aligned with understanding the extent to which the overarching goals and project objectives of Texas GEAR UP SG are being met (see Appendix A). Overarching evaluation questions addressed in this report include the following:

- When and to what extent did grantees implement PD strategies? When and how did grantees provide PD regarding vertical team preparation and implementation to MS and HS teachers? Were appropriate teachers from all schools on the vertical team able to attend the PD?
- What types of information were utilized to identify students for participation in Student Support Services implementation activities? What are perceptions of students, parents, and staff of Student Support Services implementation strategies?
- What facilitators and barriers can be identified to implementing Student Support Services implementation strategies?
- During each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students? By the end of the year, how many students (percentage) participate in each type of college readiness activity conducted by grantees? How many activities does each student attend?
- What are students' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)?
- What practices implemented by the grantees might be identified as potential best practices based on short-term outcomes? What outcomes, if any, exist that support any long-term impact of early implementation of potential best practices?
- For 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?
- What information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness?
- 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?
- What steps if any have the state office taken to communicate to schools and families about information available?
- For what services and activities do grantees use grant funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant? To what extent were grantees able to secure matching funds? For what services and activities do grantees use matching funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
- To what extent are grantees able to sustain activities initiated with the GEAR UP cohort with following cohorts of students?
- What facilitators and barriers can be identified to sustaining GEAR UP activities? Do perceptions of these change over the course of the grant funding?

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<sup>48</sup> Community alliances refer to the business alliances, governmental entities, and community groups that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.

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

- How are implementation and outcomes related to one another? Are certain dosages of implementation associated with more successful outcomes? Are there certain patterns of participation in implementation strategies?
- What outcomes are associated with participation in Texas GEAR UP SG?
- How do trends in outcomes for the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students differ from the retrospective and follow-on cohorts?
- How do trends in outcomes at the Texas GEAR UP SG schools differ in comparison to the state average and/or the comparison group schools?<sup>49</sup>
- How do trajectories of outcomes differ based on exposure to implementation? For example, do students who participate in Texas GEAR UP SG activities in all grades (Grade 7 through the first year of college) differ compared to students who enter Texas GEAR UP SG schools at a later grade level?
- Do students who achieve certain early markers of postsecondary readiness have different trajectories of outcomes than students who do not achieve the early marker (e.g., successful completion of Algebra I in Grade 8 or in Grade 9)?
- What is the impact of Texas GEAR UP SG on families, schools, and community alliances? What is the impact on statewide access to information and strategies?
- What is the cost of providing Texas GEAR UP SG at the school and state levels? To what extent are grantees able to sustain implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG with follow-on cohorts of students beyond the primary cohort? What facilitators/barriers do grantees face in sustaining implementation?<sup>50</sup>

### 1.3.2 Year 4 Project Objectives

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

- Project Objective 2.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all participating high schools will make opportunities available for each student to complete 18 hours of college credit (through AP, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment) by the time he or she graduates from high school.
- Project Objective 3.1: All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and project-based learning.
- Project Objective 3.2: Teams of teachers at the middle and high school will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.
- Project Objective 4.1: By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on results of teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data.
- Project Objective 4.2: Beginning in the second year, at least 30% of the students will be involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level, ease transitions, and increase college awareness.

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<sup>49</sup> Comparison groups will be selected through propensity score matching (PSM) for the upcoming comprehensive report.

<sup>50</sup> The sustainability of successful implementation activities is one goal/requirement of the federal GEAR UP program. Some efforts may be easier to sustain than others. For example, increased academic rigor may be relatively easy to sustain with ongoing teacher PD. On the other hand, the cost of continuing to provide a broad range of student supports may be prohibitive.

- Project Objective 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 Objective 5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT (PSAT).<sup>51</sup> By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT.
- Project Objective 7.1: By the end of the first year, the state office will make information regarding college options, preparation, and financing will be made available to students, parents, and educators throughout the state.
- Project Objective 7.2: By the end of the first year, information and workshops aimed at linking college attendance to career success will be available to 100% of cohort students and their parents.
- Project Objective 7.3: Each year, at least 50% of cohort parents, including parents of current and former limited English proficient (LEP) students, will attend at least three college awareness activities.
- Project Objective 8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.
- Project Objective 8.2: Participating campuses will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.
- Project Objective 9.1: Annually increase the number of educators participating in GEAR UP professional learning, including through Texas Gateway and face-to-face trainings.

In addition, there are several near-term objectives relevant to Year 4 Texas GEAR UP SG implementation to some extent. These objectives are referenced as appropriate and will take on a more prominent focus in forthcoming implementation reports. Near-term objectives are as follows:

- Project Objective 1.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Plan plus endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement will meet or exceed the state average.
- Projective Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including 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 be eligible to earn college credit by AP exam or through dual credit.
- Project Objective 5.2: The percentage of students meeting criterion on the ACT/SAT will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.5: More than 50% of cohort of students will enroll in postsecondary education in the fall after high school graduation.
- Project 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 Objective 9.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 40% of Texas school districts will have utilized at least one Texas GEAR UP statewide resource, including materials and PD.

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<sup>51</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG initially indicated a goal aligned with students taking ACT PLAN by the end of project's fourth year. However, ACT has replaced PLAN with ACT Aspire. Similarly, the PSAT has been replaced by the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) and Preliminary SAT for Grade 10 students (PSAT 10). While it is possible to take the PSAT/NMSQT in Grade 10, it is typically taken in fall of Grade 11 year.

## 1.4 Evaluation Design and Methods

The Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation utilizes a longitudinal design to evaluate the Texas GEAR UP SG over the seven years of the program and examine change over time in the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort of students.<sup>52</sup> In addition, a quasi-experimental design (QED) is being used to compare outcomes for students in Texas GEAR UP SG schools to outcomes for students in comparable schools. Throughout the evaluation, there is a mixed-methods approach; that is, both quantitative and qualitative data were and will be collected and examined. Data collected by TEA will be used whenever possible (e.g., STAAR results). APR and GUIDES 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 provides additional information regarding the evaluation design, methods, and analyses. Appendix C provides an overview of the data submitted to the APR, and Appendix D contains copies of all surveys and site visit protocols. Appendix E provides detailed summaries of the site visits conducted in fall 2015 and spring 2016.

### 1.4.1 Logic Model

The evaluation design depicts how change is conceptualized to occur via the Texas GEAR UP SG (see Figure 1.2). The logic model maps the inputs, program implementation activities, and intended outcomes of the program to be delivered. The logic model will be evaluated and modified, as appropriate, over the course of the evaluation.

In the logic model, the first column on the left identifies important inputs for the program. These inputs are the existing conditions that the students, parents, and schools bring with them as they begin participation in the Texas GEAR UP SG. Many of these inputs are not subject to change by the program (e.g., economic status, education level). Texas GEAR UP SG implements school-based activities with students, teachers, and parents; also included is the development of materials for statewide distribution. Outputs related to levels of participation are the extent to which individual students, parents, and teachers actually participate in such activities and the patterns of participation. Understanding what activities are implemented and the trends in participation are critical to understanding the potential effect of such participation on outcomes.

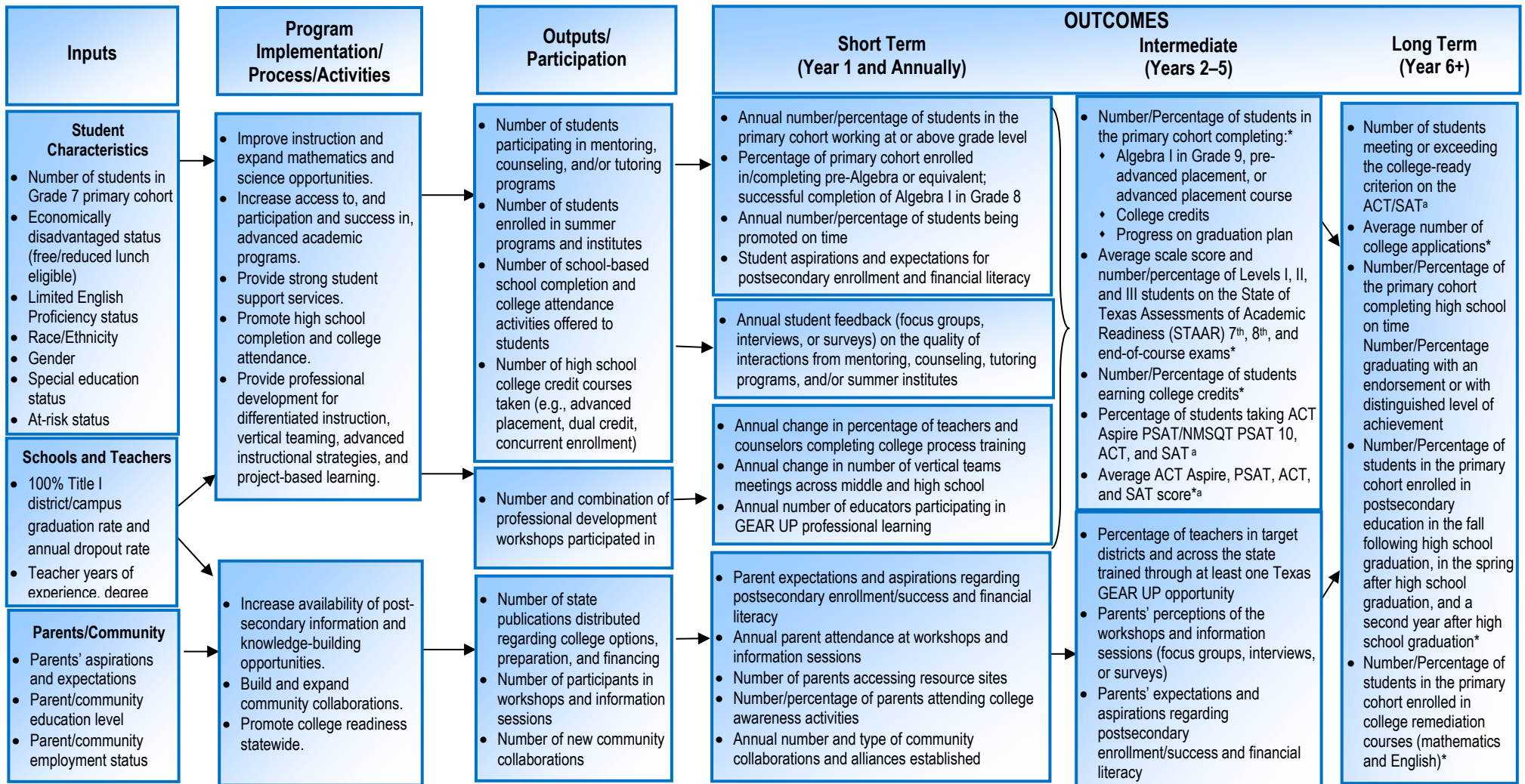
Several outcomes of the project will be measured annually to establish changes in trends related to Texas GEAR UP SG activities. For example, students' educational aspirations and expectations will be measured each year to understand changes over the course of the grant period. These and other annual measures will inform the evaluation's longitudinal analyses. Teacher preparation and PD to support providing rigorous academic instruction in advanced courses will also be evaluated. While visually the model appears to be linear, new implementation activities are anticipated to occur throughout the life of the Texas GEAR UP SG. Similarly, early and intermediate outcomes, such as successful completion of Algebra I in Grade 9, are anticipated to affect eventual long-term outcomes (e.g., enrollment in courses earning college credit during high school).

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<sup>52</sup> The primary cohort of students in Grade 7 in the 2012–13 school year was targeted for implementation activities. A longitudinal design means that this same group of students will be followed over time (in this case, through their anticipated first year at a postsecondary institution).



Figure 1.2. Texas GEAR UP Evaluation Logic Model



**Assumptions**

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

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

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

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

## 1.5 Overview of Report

This annual implementation report addresses the evaluation objectives with respect to Year 4 implementation activities. Information regarding the fourth year of implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, including summer 2015 and the 2015–16 school year, is found in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides findings from Year 4 (fall 2015 and spring 2016 with relevant references to prior year data) surveys of Texas GEAR UP SG students and parents on issues regarding educational expectations and knowledge regarding postsecondary enrollment and costs. Chapter 4 provides descriptive information regarding Year 3 budgets and expenditures as well as Year 4 budgets. A summary of findings, along with actionable recommendations, including potential promising practices for TEA, are provided in Chapter 5. Appendix E provides detailed case studies for each of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools/districts. In reporting findings, school and district names have been masked using the letters and numbers, respectively.

### 1.5.1 Next Steps in the Evaluation

As noted, a key limitation of the annual implementation reports is that they are based on incomplete data for the year—data reported through March 31 of each year instead of through the end of the school year. The evaluation team made the decision to report on data from this time period in order to align the findings from the implementation reports to the APR.<sup>53</sup> Given this limitation, caution is urged in interpreting the findings. Additional information related to implementation and outcomes will be included in future reports, following the receipt and analysis of additional data.

#### Next Steps

TEA will publish annual implementation reports each year. In addition, ICF will prepare comprehensive reports that include an examination of all activities conducted to date, key impact findings to date, interpretations of these findings, and cost and sustainability analyses. There is a time lag between the end of the school year and the availability of outcome data (e.g., successful course completion, promotion, STAAR results). The forthcoming comprehensive report provides detailed analyses on Grade 8 outcomes and connects Grade 7 and Grade 8 implementation to Grade 8 outcomes. The first comprehensive report will also include spotlight analyses about students' transition from middle school to high school. Future comprehensive reports will provide high school outcomes and examine the relationship between implementation and these outcomes. Additional comprehensive reports will be submitted in 2018 (through the 2016–17 school year) and 2019 (through the 2018–19 school year). While this report focuses primarily on implementation it includes some early outcomes, such as course completion.

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

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<sup>53</sup> In subsequent years, the APR will report on a full year of data, but future implementation reports will focus on a partial year to ensure consistency in data reporting across years for longitudinal comparisons.

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

This chapter focuses on implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, overall and comparatively, across the six participating high schools in four districts. It is based on analysis of program documents, data reported through GUIDES (April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016, including summer 2015), and data from site visits (conducted in fall 2015 and again in spring 2016).

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:

- When and to what extent did grantees implement PD strategies? When and how did grantees provide PD regarding vertical team preparation and implementation to MS and HS teachers? Were appropriate teachers from all schools on the vertical team able to attend the PD?
- What types of information were utilized to identify students for participation in Student Support Services implementation activities? What are perceptions of students, parents, and staff of Student Support Services implementation strategies?
- What facilitators and barriers can be identified to implementing Student Support Services implementation strategies?
- During each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students? By the end of the year, how many students (percentage) participate in each type of college readiness activity conducted by grantees? How many activities does each student attend?
- What practices implemented by the grantees might be identified as potential best practices based on short-term outcomes? What outcomes, if any, exist that support any long-term impact of early implementation of potential best practices?
- For 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?
- What information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness?
- 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?
- What steps if any have the state office taken to communicate to schools and families about information available?
- To what extent are grantees able to sustain activities initiated with the GEAR UP cohort with following cohorts of students?
- What facilitators and barriers can be identified to sustaining GEAR UP activities? Do perceptions of these change over the course of the grant funding?

Year 4 findings are compared to prior findings (reported in the Year 1 Annual Implementation Report, O'Donnel et al., 2013, Year 2 Annual Implementation Report, Briggs et al., 2015, and Year 3 Annual Implementation Report, Briggs et al., 2016) only descriptively. Tables with additional details on the findings reported here, including the levels of statistical significance, can be found in Appendix F.<sup>54</sup> The forthcoming comprehensive evaluation reports include

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<sup>54</sup> In using the term *significant* to discuss differences in this chapter,  $p < .05$  was the minimum cut point for both types of significance testing (chi-square and F-test). This significance level means that, statistically, there is only a 5% chance that the amount of difference occurred due to chance alone.

additional findings on the level of implementation across the first four years, along with analyses of the relationships between implementation and outcomes.

At this point in the evaluation, signs of progress on the following Texas GEAR UP SG goals and project objectives are of particular interest in relation to the implementation to date:<sup>55</sup>

- **Progress Toward High School Graduation and College Readiness.** By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average. By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the PSAT.<sup>56</sup> By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college. By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT. By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Plan with an endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average.<sup>57</sup>
- **Opportunities for Dual Credit Participation and Advanced Course and Pre-AP/AP Course Taking.**<sup>58</sup> By the end of the project's fourth year, all participating high schools will make opportunities available for each student to complete 18 hours of college credit (through AP, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment) by the time he or she graduates from high school. By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort, including LEP students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course. By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will be eligible to earn college credit by AP exam or through dual credit.
- **Strong Student Support Services.** By the end of the second year, at least 75% of students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on the results of teacher/counselor input and/or diagnostic data.
- **Student and Parent Information/Workshops.** By the end of the first year, information and workshops aimed at linking college attendance to career success will be available to 100% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students and their parents. Each year, at least 50% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort parents, including parents of current and former LEP students, will attend at least three college awareness activities.
- **Summer Programs.** Beginning in the second year, at least 30% of the students will be involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level, ease transitions, and increase college awareness.
- **Teacher Professional Development.** In each grant year, all core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training with regard to differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL.
- **Vertical Teaming.** In each grant year, teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation.

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<sup>55</sup> A list of all project goals and objectives is provided in Appendix A.

<sup>56</sup> ACT Aspire is the preliminary ACT. PSAT may be either the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10, each of which are preliminary to the SAT. PSAT/NMSQT is offered in October and is used to determine if students will qualify for a National Merit Scholarship. The PSAT 10 is the same test as the PSAT/NMSQT but is offered in February/March and is not used to qualify for a National Merit Scholarship. See

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10> for additional information on the PSAT tests. See <http://www.discoveractaspire.org/> for additional information on the ACT Aspire. All Texas GEAR UP SG schools reported using the October PSAT/NMSQT, referred to in this report as the PSAT.

<sup>57</sup> TEA revised this project objective based on changes in the state graduation plan associated with HB 5.

<sup>58</sup> Schools self-determined whether a course was considered to be advanced based on the following definition: Advanced courses are classes that are identified as above grade level by the student's school. Most honors and pre-AP courses are considered to be advanced. Algebra I, by definition, is considered to be above grade level when completed in Grade 8.

- **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 Program Leadership at Schools

In Year 4, program leadership at the six Texas GEAR UP SG high schools remained relatively consistent—in terms of leaders, roles, and responsibilities—to Year 3, with some exceptions. Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinators' roles and responsibilities aligned with those of previous years and included coordinating student and parent events with other Texas GEAR UP SG staff, building and maintaining relationships with community alliances, liaising with district and school staff to deliver programming, and overseeing data collection and input into GUIDES. College Preparation Advisors continued to directly serve students by reviewing grades and transcripts, discussing postsecondary education options and financial literacy, and mentoring students. A total of eight advisors served the six Texas GEAR UP SG high schools during Year 4, two of whom started in Year 4. Texas GEAR UP SG teams in each district were also made up of staff that may include a parent liaison, data clerk, facilitator, college counselor, and/or tutor(s). These staff helped support Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinators and College Preparation Advisors implement the grant and meet program goals.

Site visit data illuminated more specific details about the role College Preparation Advisors played in implementing Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 4. With addition of new staff and roles as part of the Texas GEAR UP SG teams at schools H, I, and J, College Preparation Advisors reported they have been able to focus more time on advising more students because they were relieved of non-advising duties. When meeting with students one-on-one, advisors reviewed specific elements of students' transcripts, including grade point average and class rank. College Preparation Advisors and students also said that college acceptance requirements were discussed during one-on-one advising sessions. Expanding on this discussion, Texas GEAR UP SG staff at Schools H, I, J, and M also said that they were able to go into Grade 10 classes to provide students with their PSAT scores and present information on how to interpret the scores and what the results indicate about college readiness. School counselors delivered similar presentations at Schools K and L, but Texas GEAR UP SG staff expressed that they felt that they would have been able to provide more in-depth presentations on PSAT scores had counselors involved Texas GEAR UP SG staff in their presentations. Other topics discussed during advising sessions with College Preparation Advisors included college and career plans, progress and success in advanced courses, preparation for the PSAT and SAT, and preparing for the TSIA. Some College Preparation Advisors reported that they spoke with and provided support to students regarding endorsements and course selections that were too challenging or not challenging enough, but noted the limitations of their guidance as school counselors made the final decisions regarding course and endorsement selections.

Schools H, I, K, and L experienced administrator turnover during Year 4 and Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinators, College Preparation Advisors and other Texas GEAR UP SG staff reported they found it difficult to successfully implement the grant without engagement from the appropriate school leadership. These site visit participants said the new and interim administrators were supportive of the grant objectives, but were not always available to be fully engaged with implementation. As new administrators started work at these schools, grant staff, in most cases, found it necessary to take time to cultivate relationships with these administrators

in order to make them aware of the goals, activities, and requirements of the grant. While time-consuming, building relationships with new administrators was necessary to gain support for the grant. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at School M, which did not experience the same amount of turnover as other schools, described the administration support at their school as a major facilitator to the grant's success.

## 2.2 Student Progress Toward High School Graduation and College

Given that the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort entered Grade 10 in Year 4, progress toward graduation became a more pressing priority. This section discusses available implementation data related to the following project objectives:

- Project Objective 1.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Plan plus endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 2.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all participating high schools will make opportunities available for each student to complete 18 hours of college credit (through AP, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment) by the time he or she graduates from high school.
- Project Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including LEP students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course.
- Project Objective 2.3: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will be eligible to earn college credit by AP exam or through dual credit.
- Project Objective 4.3: By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college.
- Project Objective 5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the PSAT. By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT.
- Project Objective 5.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of students meeting criterion on the ACT/SAT will meet or exceed the state average.

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

Enrollment in advanced courses is a benchmark toward accomplishing the aforementioned project objectives, assuming that the Grade 10 students stayed enrolled in for the remainder of the school year and successfully completed their advanced course. Just over half of the Texas GEAR UP SG Grade 10 primary cohort students (55%) were enrolled in at least one advanced course during the 2015–16 school year (as shown in the dot plot in Figure 2.1 and in Table F.2, Appendix F). This was a decrease of one percentage point from the enrollment of Grade 9 primary cohort students in advanced courses during the 2014–15 school year (56%).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG districts 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 courses taken above grade level (e.g., Pre-Calculus in Grade 10), as well as Pre-AP or AP courses taken at grade level (e.g., Pre-AP Algebra II in Grade 10). For the purpose of this report, advanced course taking within a given content area is collapsed across course names. Totals may appear to differ from the numbers presented in the figure due to rounding.

Most notable, however, is that in Year 4, 27% of all students (n=1,874) were enrolled in four or more advanced courses, an increase of 3 percentage points from 2014–15 (24%). A greater percentage of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses as compared to those enrolled in one, two, or three advanced courses. Comparatively, in 2013–14, among all students (n=1,924), the greatest percentage of students (30%) enrolled in advanced courses were enrolled in a single advanced course (Figure 2.1; Table F.2, Appendix F). Pre-AP and AP course enrollment mirrored general advanced course enrollment trends. In Grade 10, 52% of students were enrolled in a pre-AP or AP course (range of 32% to 100% across schools), a 20 percentage point increase over Grade 9 (32%) (Table F.5, Appendix F). This percentage is expected to continue to increase as students progress through high school and have more AP courses available to them.<sup>60</sup>

Although advanced course enrollment increased in Grade 10, several site visit participants noted that some students were inappropriately placed in advanced courses and others were not enrolled in advanced courses that should have been. Teachers in District 4 said that while their AP and Pre-AP course enrollment has increased, they felt they had to “water down,” or decrease the rigor of their curricula to meet the needs of all students in the courses, including those who were not prepared for the rigor and higher expectations. Teachers at School L explained that all courses at their school were considered honors-level, which explains the high enrollment rates in advanced and pre-AP courses (Tables F.4 and F.5, Appendix F).<sup>61</sup> An administrator at School L further explained that the school plans to add AP courses to their catalogue so students’ transcripts will appropriately reflect the advanced-level courses students complete that indicate college readiness.<sup>62</sup>

Efforts from Texas GEAR UP SG staff to encourage enrollment in advanced courses, tutoring, summer programs to support academic preparation for those courses, and increased course availability in high schools may have all contributed to the relatively high rates of advanced course enrollment. These percentages appear to demonstrate progress toward achieving 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) and Project Objective 2.2 (60% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students successfully completing a pre-AP or AP course by the end of Year 5 of the grant).<sup>63</sup> However, schools may need to enroll a higher percentage of students in advanced courses in forthcoming years in order to reach that goal by targeting efforts toward the 46% of students who were not enrolled in an advanced course in Grade 10. Collaboration between Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school guidance counselors is a recommended step toward this end.

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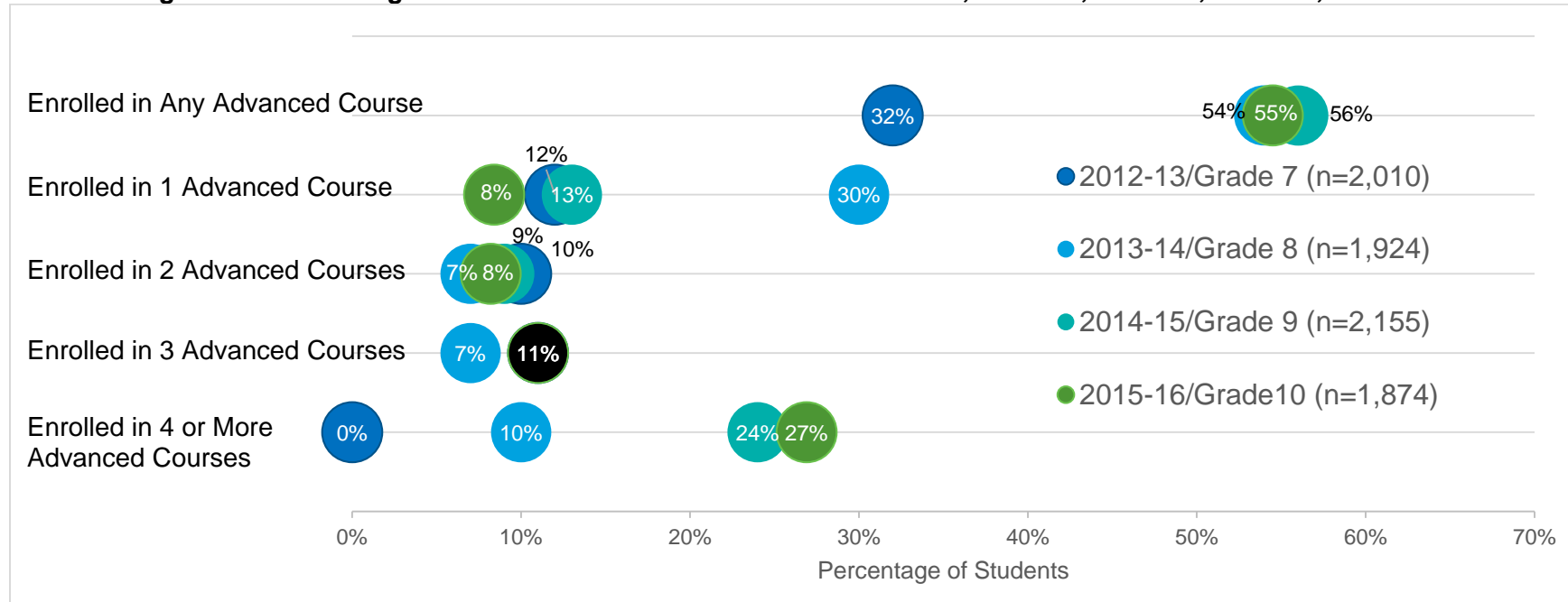
<sup>60</sup> Schools H and L indicated 72% and 100% of Grade 10 students were enrolled in a pre-AP or AP course, respectively, and were therefore the only schools that may be on track to meet Project Objective 2.2 of 60% of students completing an AP course.

<sup>61</sup> Honors-level courses at School L are considered equivalent to pre-AP courses.

<sup>62</sup> Table F.5, Appendix F notes that 100% of students at School L were enrolled in a pre-AP or AP course. Since at the time of the site visits, School L was working to add AP course options to the course catalogue, students at School L were only enrolled in pre-AP courses in Year 4, not AP courses.

<sup>63</sup> Determining progress towards Project Objective 2.3 (By the end of the project’s sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will be eligible to earn college credit by AP exam or through dual credit) will be based on completion data, which was not available at the time of this report. Taking a Pre-AP or AP course is a marker towards this goal, but some students may take AP exams without completing the course. Final determination of Project Objective 2.3 achievement will be based on AP exam scores and dual credit completion.

**Figure 2.1. Percentage of Students Enrolled in Advanced Courses, 2012–13, 2013–14, 2014–15, and 2015–16**



Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

Note: Black marker indicates the same values for 2012–13, 2014–15, and 2015–16.



## ADVANCED COURSE ENROLLMENT BY CONTENT AREA

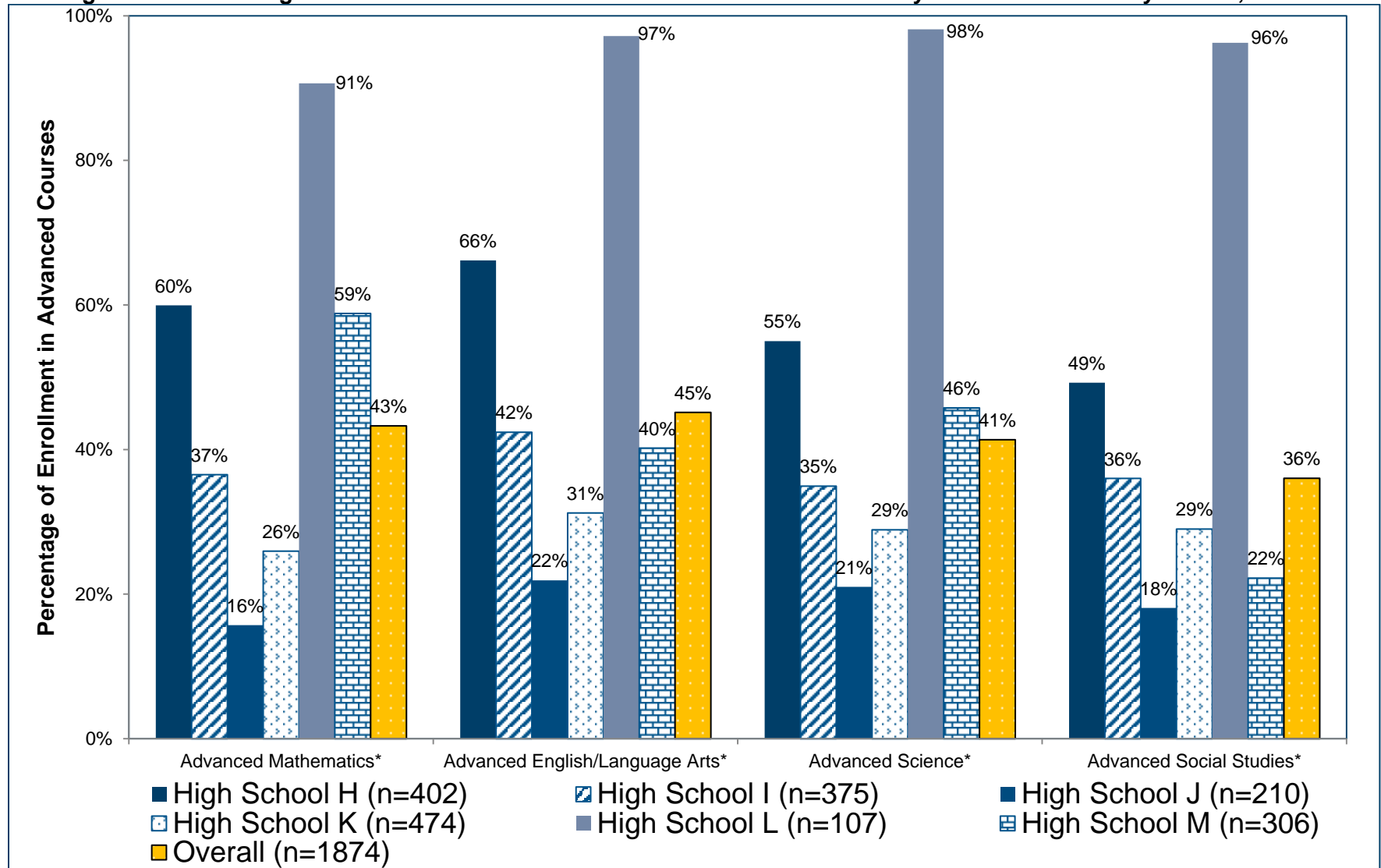
Exploring Grade 10 student enrollment in advanced courses by content area is another way to gauge progress toward student completion of pre-AP/AP (advanced) courses (Project Objective 2.2). In Grade 10, more students were enrolled in advanced ELA than in other content areas, which represents a departure from previous years in which most students were enrolled in advanced mathematics (Tables F.3 and F.4, Appendix F). In Year 4, across all schools, 45% of Grade 10 students were enrolled in an advanced ELA course, 43% were enrolled in an advanced mathematics course, 41% were enrolled in an advanced science course, and 36% were enrolled in an advanced social studies course.

Figure 2.2 provides details about enrollment in advanced coursework by content area and by school. Findings regarding Grade 10 student enrollment in each content area are discussed after Figure 2.2. Enrollment in advanced mathematics, advanced ELA, advanced science, and advanced social studies each varied significantly by school.<sup>64</sup> High School J had the lowest enrollment in advanced courses in all content areas while High School L had the highest enrollment in advanced courses with almost all students enrolled in advanced courses across subjects. As previously noted, teachers at School L explained during site visits that all courses at their school were considered honors-level, which accounts for the school's high enrollment rates.

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<sup>64</sup> Mathematics:  $\chi^2(5) = 303.4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(5) = 275.9$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(5) = 247.6$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Social Studies  $\chi^2(5) = 265.3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

**Figure 2.2. Percentages of Grade 10 Students Enrolled in Advanced Courses by Content Area and by School, 2015–16**



Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

\* Percentage of enrollment was significantly different across schools for each subject area. Math:  $\chi^2(5) = 303.4, p < 0.001$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(5) = 275.9, p < 0.001$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(5) = 247.6, p < 0.001$ ; Social Studies  $\chi^2(5) = 265.3, p < 0.001$ .

## Advanced Mathematics

On average, across all schools, 43% of Grade 10 students were enrolled in advanced mathematics—courses that were taken at the honors, pre-AP or AP level (e.g., pre-AP Algebra II) or courses that were taken ahead of schedule (e.g., pre-Calculus), a slight decrease from Year 3 when 45% of Grade 9 students were enrolled in what was considered advanced mathematics for Grade 9 students. Student enrollment in advanced mathematics in Grade 10 ranged from a low of 16% at High School J to a high of 91% at High School L, as shown in Figure 2.2. As an indicator of students who are on the path to meet or exceed the state average regarding obtaining a distinguished level of achievement (Project Objective 1.2), 34% of Grade 10 students were enrolled in Algebra II (details about the distinguished level of achievement are included in Section 1.1.2).<sup>65</sup> As a result, the Grade 10 students in the cohort may be on track to meet or exceed the state average for obtaining the distinguished level of achievement.

Some teachers and collaborators who participated in focus groups and interviews raised concerns about student preparedness in mathematics and how that may impact postsecondary education readiness. Mathematics teachers from School M expressed frustration that many of the lower performing Texas GEAR UP SG students who enrolled in Algebra I in Grade 8 did not receive the additional year of basic-level mathematics instruction—typically reserved for Grade 8—before enrolling in Algebra I, which has had subsequent repercussions in later mathematics courses. They mentioned that many Grade 8 students were not able to pass the Algebra I end-of-course assessment, and as a result, were put into Algebraic Reasoning in Grade 9. When some of these students eventually progressed to Geometry in Grade 10, they were unprepared for this subject as well and lacked a basic foundation in geometrical concepts, like shapes, which would have been provided in Grade 8 mathematics, had the students not been enrolled in Algebra I instead. Collaborators were worried about the possibility of decreased enrollment rates among Texas GEAR UP SG students in Algebra II and the effect it may have on postsecondary education readiness, pointing to the fact that the adoption of HB 5 decreased the minimum graduation requirements for mathematics courses under the Foundation High School Program.<sup>66</sup> This decrease may also affect schools' progress towards Project Objective 1.2, since completion of Algebra II is required to graduate at the distinguished level of achievement.

School administrators from District 4 and School M as well as a district administrator from District 2 all discussed Algebra I in middle school sustainability efforts within their respective districts. The district administrator from District 2 said that as a result of the high completion rate of Algebra I in middle school among the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort, the district would continue to provide funding to support future classes of Grade 8 students in Algebra I, including funding to support in-class tutors. In-class tutors were considered to be a key factor in the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort's success in Algebra I. Since the time that Texas GEAR UP SG students were in Grade 8, according to an administrator from School M, the district decided to accelerate the mathematics course sequence and require Algebra I for all Grade 8 students. A middle school administrator from District 4 said they have been able to maintain almost the same percentage of enrollment in Algebra I as was encouraged by Texas GEAR UP SG goals. The administrator added that the pass rate among those in Algebra I remains high as well, due to the academic supports such as tutoring that are also still in place.

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<sup>65</sup> Although Algebra II enrollment is most relevant to the context of obtaining the distinguished level of achievement, some students were enrolled in Geometry instead.

<sup>66</sup> Prior to House Bill 5, to graduate under the RHSP or the Distinguished Achievement Program, students were required to complete four courses in each of the four foundation subject areas, including mathematics. The Foundation High School Program, however, only requires three credits in mathematics (i.e., Algebra, Geometry, and one advanced mathematics course) for graduation. For more information on House Bill 5, please see Chapter 1.

### Advanced English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies

On average, across all schools, 45% of Grade 10 students were enrolled in advanced ELA, an increase of six percentage points from Year 3 (39%); 41% of Grade 10 students were enrolled in advanced science, an increase of three percentage points from Year 3 (38%); and 36% of Grade 10 students were enrolled in advanced social studies, an increase of one percentage point from Year 3 (35%).

Schools differed significantly in the percentages of students enrolled in advanced level courses in ELA, science, and social studies (Figure 2.2). In Year 4, High School L—which had the highest percentage of enrolled students compared to other schools, for all subjects—had a minimum of 96% of students enrolled in advanced ELA, science, and/or social studies. By contrast, High School J—which had the lowest percentage of enrolled students compared to other schools, for all subjects—had a maximum of 22% of students enrolled in advanced ELA, science, and/or social studies. The variation across subjects was highest at High School M, in which 59% of students were enrolled in advanced ELA but only 22% were enrolled in advanced social studies. Each school makes decisions about defining advanced courses and this may have contributed to the between school difference.

### PRE-AP/AP COURSE TAKING

Calculating Grade 10 student enrollment and completion rates of pre-AP and AP courses, a subset of advanced course enrollment overall, is another way to gauge progress toward completion of Project Objective 2.2.<sup>67</sup> Fifty-two percent of students were enrolled in at least one pre-AP or AP course in Grade 10 (Table F.5, Appendix F). High schools varied significantly in their pre-AP and AP course enrollment rates. High School L had the highest enrollment rate with 100% of students enrolled in a pre-AP or AP course in Grade 10. High School H had the second highest enrollment rate with 72% of students enrolled in a pre-AP or AP course in Grade 10. High Schools J and K had the lowest enrollment rates with 32% and 37% of students enrolled in a pre-AP or AP course in Grade 10, respectively.

It is not only important to measure the overall rate of enrollment in pre-AP/AP courses in Grade 10, but to also measure the number of cohort students taking their first ever pre-AP/AP courses; this latter number may better reflect the advanced-course recruitment efforts of school-based program staff (Project Objective 2.2). Overall, 7% of the cohort was currently enrolled in their first pre-AP/AP course (see table F.5, Appendix F). High School M had the highest percentage of students (14%) who were currently enrolled in their first pre-AP or AP course in Grade 10, which indicates progress toward Project Objective 2.2. High School L had the lowest percentage of students currently enrolled in their first pre-AP or AP course (0%), which, as discussed previously, is because all courses at the school are considered honors-level. High School J had the second lowest percentage of students currently enrolled in their first pre-AP or AP course (2%), which suggests that High School J should increase efforts to enroll more students in their first pre-AP or AP course in the next year in order to meet Objective 2.2.

In terms of pre-AP and AP course completion, in Grade 10, 60% of students across high schools had completed at least one pre-AP/AP course prior to Grade 10 (see Table F.5, Appendix F). High schools varied significantly in their completion rates of pre-AP and AP courses.<sup>68</sup> High School L had the highest completion rate, with 100% of students having completed at least one pre-AP or AP course. By contrast, High School K had the lowest

<sup>67</sup> Pre-AP and AP course enrollment is a subset of advanced course enrollment. Specifically, while advanced courses include pre-AP and AP courses, advanced courses may also include general-level courses taken by students ahead of grade level (e.g., taking Pre-Calculus in Grade 10).

<sup>68</sup>  $\chi^2(10) = 153.8, p < .001$

completion rate, with 51% of students having completed at least one pre-AP or AP course. Overall, the cohort is on track to meet Project Objective 2.2 in Year 5.

### **OPPORTUNITIES TO EARN COLLEGE CREDIT**

Project Objective 2.1 states that by the end of Year 4, all participating high schools are to make opportunities for each student to be eligible to complete 18 hours of college credit (through AP, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment) by the time he or she graduates from high school.

According to course lists provided by the Support Center for the 2015–16 school year, all participating high schools offered opportunities for students to be eligible to earn more than 18 hours of college credit—through AP or dual enrollment courses—and so were on track to meet this objective.

Regarding dual credit courses, specifically, while no quantitative data were available in Year 4 from the data sources used for this report on student enrollment and completion of dual credit courses, site visits provided qualitative data regarding progress toward Project Objective 2.3—regarding student progress toward being eligible to earn college credit through dual credit courses and other means. Students participating in focus groups at Schools J and M reported that they were enrolled in dual credit courses as Grade 10 students. School staff at School J said that an average of 10 students in Grade 10 were enrolled in dual credit courses for U.S. History, Psychology, and Government. According to Texas GEAR UP SG staff at School M, some students took a dual credit Spanish course while in Grade 10. Texas GEAR UP SG and school staff at all six Texas GEAR UP SG schools indicated that there was interest among Texas GEAR UP SG students to enroll in dual credit courses once they become upperclassmen. School administrators at School I reported during a site visit that the school expects an increase in dual credit course enrollment during the 2016–17 school year, when the cohort moves into Grade 11, while school administrators at School H did not anticipate any change in dual credit course enrollment trends in the school during the 2016–17 school year. Texas GEAR UP SG and school staff also explained that students in Schools H, I, and M will also have the opportunity to enroll in dual credit courses offered by a program at a local community college which may go toward industry certifications instead of a degree program at another school. School staff at School I reported that more students than ever were signed up by the end of the 2015–16 school year than years past to enroll in this certification program, but Texas GEAR UP SG staff were concerned that school staff presented this program in a way that made it seem appropriate for all students, while Texas GEAR UP SG staff felt that it would be a better option for those not planning to pursue four-year degrees at a university.

### **2.2.2 Progress Related to Endorsements**

Another aspect of student progress toward high school graduation relates to Project Objective 1.2 (By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Program plus endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average). Site visit data illustrate that Texas GEAR UP SG staff, teachers, and school faculty have informed students and their parents about the various endorsement options and encouraged them to develop four-year plans that will satisfy endorsement requirements. As of March 2016, 93% of Grade 10 students had chosen an endorsement as part of their graduation plans (See Table F.6, Appendix F), which is three

percentage points more than in Year 3.<sup>69</sup> Specifically, the following percentages of students selected each endorsement: 28% Arts and Humanities (compared to 17% in Year 3); 24% Business and Industry (compared to 32% in Year 3); 24% Public Service (compared to 31% in Year 3); 16% STEM (compared to 16% in Year 3); and 2% Multidisciplinary Studies (compared to 1% in Year 3).<sup>70</sup> The shifts in some endorsement areas, particularly in Arts and Humanities, Business and Industry, and Public Service, reflect the degree to which the students changed their endorsements in Year 4. Across the high schools, summer programs, college visits, and workshops were activities that included endorsement-related components that helped transition students' thinking into graduation-oriented academic planning.

Site visit data provided insights regarding how schools used endorsement selections to inform college awareness and readiness activities. During site visits, Texas GEAR UP SG staff at Schools H, I, and J reported using endorsements to determine what educational field trips to suggest to teachers and college visits to arrange for students. A Texas GEAR UP SG staff member at School M said that endorsements help their team be more strategic in the way in which college is discussed with students; based on students' interest in their high school major or minor, Texas GEAR UP SG staff advised students to research colleges that offer similar programs of study.<sup>71</sup> This more targeted strategy gives students the opportunity to see entrance requirements of a program they are interested in and set academic goals based on those requirements early on.

Although annual performance data cited previously comparing Year 3 and Year 4 endorsement selections reveals that many cohort students did change their endorsements, school staff at Schools H, I, J, and K expressed trepidation about allowing students to change endorsements. While most said students requested changes less often in Year 4 than in previous years, confusion emerged from students and Texas GEAR UP SG staff during site visits as to the policy on changing endorsements.<sup>72</sup> Several school staff members said they allowed very few changes to endorsements during Year 4 and often required a discussion with parents to implement the change. While HB 5 allows students to change their endorsement at any time, some site visit participants reported that school counselors' policies on changing endorsements were related to scheduling complications and the possibility of students not earning enough credits for graduation. School staff at School J cited anticipated scheduling challenges for students in upcoming years as the reason they often did not permit students to change their endorsement. Lack of course availability required by an endorsement was raised as a concern

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<sup>69</sup> Of all Grade 10 students, 93% of students had selected an endorsement; 7% were not on the Foundation High School Program, and <1% had not selected an endorsement. For those students who were not on the Foundation High School Program or had not selected an endorsement, it is possible that they entered Grade 9 prior to the 2014–15 school year, prior to when the Foundation High School Program went into effect with the enactment of Texas House Bill 5. For more information on the Foundation High School Program and Texas House Bill 5, please see Chapter 1.

<sup>70</sup> Endorsement selections were reported differently in Year 4 and in Year 3. In Year 4, one endorsement was reported for each student. In Year 3, however, multiple endorsements were reported for each student if that student was earning more than one endorsement. For additional details on Year 3 endorsement selections, please see the Year 3 Annual Implementation Report at [http://tea.texas.gov/Reports\\_and\\_Data/Program\\_Evaluations/Middle\\_School,\\_High\\_School,\\_and\\_College\\_Preparation/Program\\_Evaluation\\_Middle\\_School,\\_High\\_School,\\_and\\_College\\_Preparation\\_Initiatives/](http://tea.texas.gov/Reports_and_Data/Program_Evaluations/Middle_School,_High_School,_and_College_Preparation/Program_Evaluation_Middle_School,_High_School,_and_College_Preparation_Initiatives/).

<sup>71</sup> Some districts offered flexibility by allowing for primary and backup endorsements, which they referred to as majors and minors.

<sup>72</sup> According to TEA, a district must allow a student to choose, at any time, to earn an endorsement other than the endorsement the student previously indicated from among the available endorsements. More information may be found in the Endorsement FAQs at [http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum\\_and\\_Instructional\\_Programs/Graduation\\_Information/House\\_Bill\\_5\\_Foundation\\_High\\_School\\_Program/](http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum_and_Instructional_Programs/Graduation_Information/House_Bill_5_Foundation_High_School_Program/).

only at Schools I and K; school administrators explained that too few students signed up for certain courses so they were not able to be offered.

Students who participated in focus groups during site visits at Schools H, I, K, and M admitted they are not interested in their endorsement or do not plan to study in a field related to their endorsement during their postsecondary education. Students who did not plan to pursue their endorsement past high school said they did not, or do not plan to, change their endorsement because it was difficult to meet with their counselor, the counselor would not allow them, or the endorsement they would like to change to is not offered at their school.

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

### 2.2.3 Preliminary SAT Completion

Student progress toward college readiness may also be measured by completion of and performance on standardized tests (Project Objective 5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the PSAT. By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT.) In Year 4 of the program, 74% of students took the PSAT, however this percentage varied across schools.<sup>73</sup> As indicated in Table F.7, Appendix F, High School L had the highest percentage of students take the examination (89%) and High School J had the lowest percentage of students take the examination (66%). The PSAT mean score for the cohort was 785, with School L reporting the highest mean score of 864 and School M reporting the lowest mean score of 744 (Table F.8, Appendix F). For comparison, the PSAT mean score for Grade 10 students throughout the U.S. who took the exam in fall 2015 was 958.<sup>74</sup> In addition, the College Board identified a combined score of 830 as the college and career readiness benchmark for Grade 10 students who took the fall 2015 exam.<sup>75</sup>

Though Texas GEAR UP SG staff discussed PSAT test prep books that were made available for students, many students and parents reported during site visits that the books were not used. In addition, some students from Schools H, I, and J also attended summer academies before the 2015–16 school year that focused on preparing for the PSAT. Students at each of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools commented that they found the test difficult or they felt unprepared. The students at Schools H and I who enrolled in PSAT prep courses during the school day did not report feeling as unprepared as their peers. Teachers and Schools H and I who provided classroom time to prepare students to take the PSAT said they found it difficult to prepare their students for the mathematics portion of the assessment, in particular, because some students were enrolled in Geometry while the rest were enrolled in Algebra II. This difference made it difficult to provide test preparation that covered every student's knowledge of mathematics.

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<sup>73</sup>  $\chi^2(5) = 26.0, p < .001$ .

<sup>74</sup> See <http://www.coralgablescavaliers.org/ourpages/auto/2015/8/25/57072618/2015-psat-nmsqt-understanding-scores.pdf> for more details on 2015 PSAT/NMSQT student scores. Note that at the time of publication, the 2015 Score Report was no longer available on the College Board website. Only more recent score reports were being posted. The 2015 Score Report had been posted on several school district websites, however, including the one included in this footnote.

<sup>75</sup> According to the College Board, the college and career readiness benchmarks for the SAT predict a 75% likelihood of achieving at least a C in a set of first-year, credit-bearing college courses. The PSAT benchmarks are an adjusted version of the SAT benchmarks based on the grade level in which students are taking the assessment and the average rate of student progress from year to year.

During the spring semester, scores were distributed to students and discussed with some parents. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at Schools H, I, J, and M and school staff at Schools K and L delivered presentations to students during the school day on how to read and interpret their scores. Presentations to students also included instructions on how to set up College Board and Khan Academy accounts. Students from Schools H, J, K, and M said they were still unsure how to interpret their scores and did not understand if their scores were “good or bad.” Presentations on students’ PSAT scores were made for parents at Schools H and I, but done on a one-on-one basis with Texas GEAR UP SG staff at Schools J and M. Parents that participated in focus groups at Schools H and I said they were left confused by the presentation and found speaking with Texas GEAR UP SG staff one-on-one much more helpful.

#### 2.2.4 Texas Success Initiative Assessment

At the time of the spring site visits, it was reported that students at Schools H, I, J, and M had already had at least one opportunity to take the TSIA.<sup>76</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG staff at Schools H, I, L, and M said TSIA test prep books were available for students to study for the assessment. In addition to the test prep books available at these three schools, summer academies were discussed at Schools J and M, three to five days of tutoring were available for students at School H and I, lunch group workshops focusing on the TSIA were available at School J, and afterschool workshops were available for students at Schools K and L. School staff from Schools I, J, and M all said the pass rate among the Grade 10 cohort was much higher during the 2015–16 school year than previous Grade 10 students; this pass rate was attributed by some to the amount of time Texas GEAR UP SG staff spent making students aware of the TSIA, the preparations available, and the emphasis on the importance of the assessment.

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

In addition to academic preparation, research suggests the importance of a range of skills (e.g., planning, organization) on students’ postsecondary success.<sup>77</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG staff and a variety of stakeholder groups expressed, as they have in previous years, their belief that the cohort lacked many skills needed for success in high school (and later in college). Site visit participants across all schools, mostly teachers, expressed that students should possess strong skills in self-motivation, goal setting, time management, personal responsibility, and problem solving to be successful in high school and beyond. Many also went on to say that they have not noticed a difference in the level of these soft skills among the Texas GEAR UP SG students in comparison to their other students. Some schools made efforts to cultivate some of these skills, though. School M purchased software to be used by the cohort with the purpose of developing stronger soft skills; they found the software to be so successful in helping students be better prepared for their coursework, that it has been purchased for the entire district. School J worked with representatives from a local college and another grant program to build students’ notetaking and résumé building skills. Teachers from District 4 did believe that Texas GEAR UP SG is a platform that could potentially foster some of these skills and fill skill gaps, in turn further

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<sup>76</sup> The TSIA is a standardized test used to determine readiness for college coursework and identifies needs for any developmental coursework. For more information see <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=C92F1DAA-D49E-03F0-0750060AA756E807>.

<sup>77</sup> In their review of research on non-cognitive factors that affect student grades, Farrington et al. (2012) identified academic behaviors (attending class, being prepared, participating, and studying), academic perseverance (being focused and engaged despite obstacles or distractions), social skills (being cooperative, assertive, responsible, empathetic), learning strategies (having processes and tactics to aid thinking and remembering information), and academic mindsets (holding beliefs, and attitudes about oneself as a learner) as having been shown to impact student performance.



preparing students for postsecondary education success. Specifically, the teachers commented that since the Texas GEAR UP SG staff are able to relate to students differently than teachers or parents are able to, students may find the promotion of soft skill development from Texas GEAR UP SG staff more meaningful.

### 2.2.6 On-Time Promotion

Project Objective 4.3 states that by the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average. Texas GEAR UP SG schools reported in the annual performance data that, of the students who remained at the same school through the end of the school year, 88% of Grade 9 students were eligible for on-time promotion to Grade 10.<sup>78</sup> According to statewide data for Grade 9 retention from the 2014–15 school year, the retention rate was 8.6%, implying a promotion rate of 91.4%.<sup>79</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG schools overall were not on track to meet the project objective by the end of the project's third year, though there was some variance across schools. High Schools L and M both reported that over 91.4% of students would be promoted from Grade 9 to Grade 10 (with promotion rates of 99.1% and 94.3%, respectively), exceeding the state rate. High School J met the state rate at 91.4%. High Schools H, K, and I all reported promotion rates that were below the state rate (90.0%, 86.9%, and 79.2%, respectively).

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

As part of the Texas GEAR UP SG, various activities were directly targeted to students, including student support services, college visits, job site visits/job shadowing, summer programs, and workshops/events. The sections that follow summarize the status of implementation in Year 4 related to each of these activities.

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

In reporting implementation of student support services, the following project objective is relevant:

- 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.

While objective 4.1 specifies a second year outcome, it has been interpreted to mean beginning in the second year and then continuing in each year thereafter. This section includes findings about primary cohort students' participation in each type of student support service during the first seven months of the 2015–16 school year (start of Grade 10 through March 31, 2016), and

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<sup>78</sup> Schools indicated they were unable to provide promotion indicator data for students withdrawing from the school. This was the case for 18% of enrolled Grade 9 students. If these students are included in the final cohort based on participation in Texas GEAR UP SG implementation and length of time at the school, future reports will include their promotion data if available.

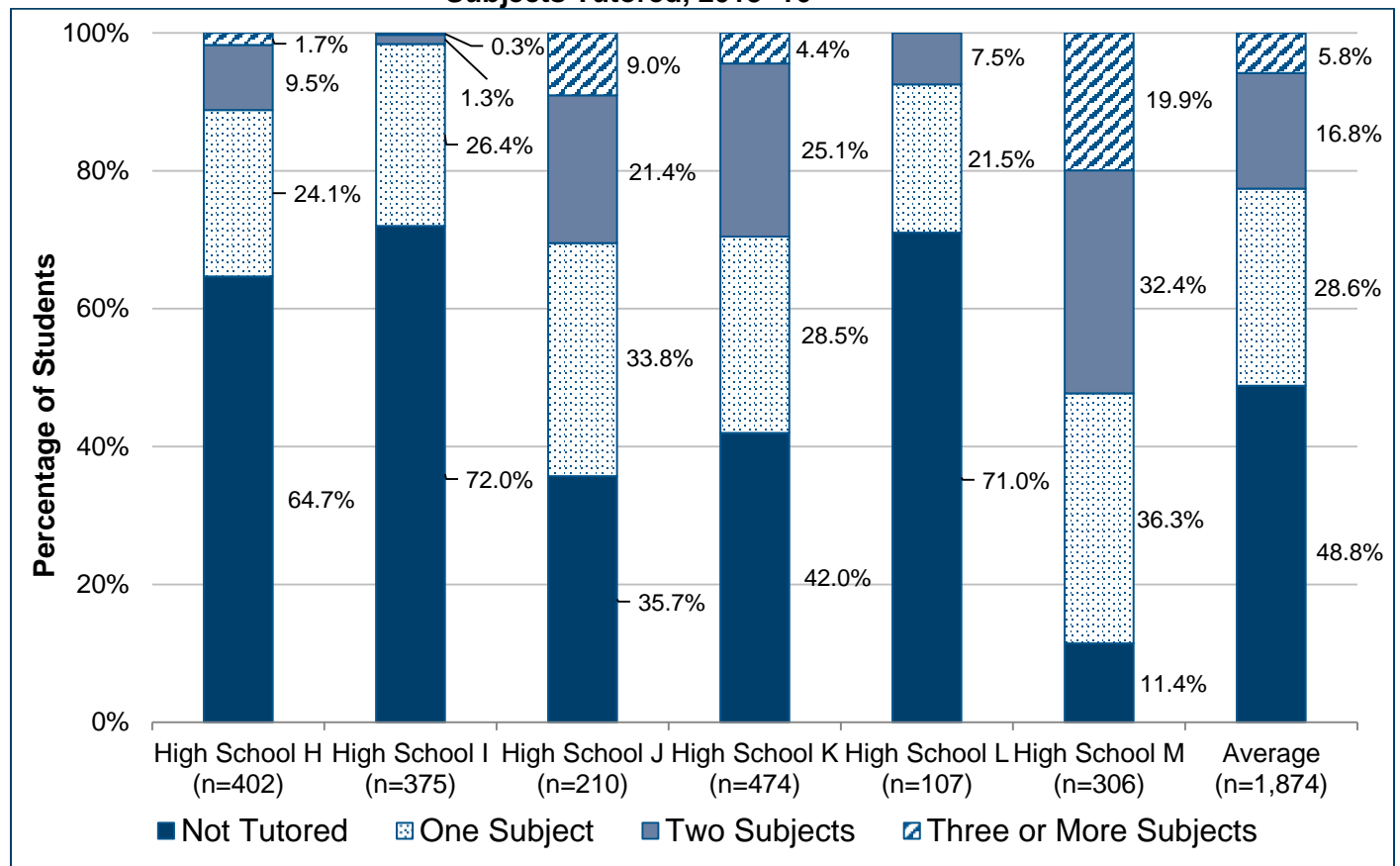
<sup>79</sup> See [http://tea.texas.gov/acctres/retention\\_student\\_performance\\_2014-15.pdf](http://tea.texas.gov/acctres/retention_student_performance_2014-15.pdf). Note that the state-level retention figure is not technically an average, but is the collective rate for all students in the grade level.

comparisons are made to their participation during the same time frame in Grade 9 (start of Grade 9 through March 31, 2015) in Year 3.<sup>80</sup>

### STUDENT ACADEMIC TUTORING

As required by their subgrants, all schools offered academic tutoring to primary cohort students.<sup>81</sup> As of March 2016 schools reported that, on average, 51% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students received tutoring in at least one subject in Grade 10, which is the same percentage as in Grade 9. The largest percentage of students received tutoring in one subject (29%), an additional 17% received tutoring in two subjects, and 6% received tutoring in three or more subjects. The number of subjects in which students received tutoring also differed significantly by school (Figure 2.3).<sup>82</sup> Tutoring was most limited at High Schools I and L, in which a large portion of students were not tutored (72% and 71%, respectively). One high school in particular was able to accomplish notable successes regarding tutoring. At High School M, 89% of students received tutoring in at least one subject and 52% of students received tutoring in two or more subjects.

**Figure 2.3. Percentages of Grade 10 Students Participating in Tutoring by the Number of Subjects Tutored, 2015–16**



Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.  
 Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Difference across schools:  $\chi^2(20) = 493.5, p < .001$ .

<sup>80</sup> Schools were provided with standard definitions of all terms, including tutoring, mentoring, and counseling, in order to submit GUIDES data. These definitions can be found in Appendix C and were developed by the College and Career Readiness Evaluation Consortium and the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (2013).

<sup>81</sup> The term *tutoring* used in this section is referring to tutoring or homework help.

<sup>82</sup> Difference across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 472.1, p < .001$

The average total hours that Grade 10 students received tutoring, across all subjects, was 9.4 hours; a decrease when compared to the average of 12.6 hours in Year 3. The average total hours tutored varied significantly by school, and was highest at High School M (19.6) and lowest at High Schools I (2.3) and H (3.8).<sup>83</sup> Within schools, the range was also wide; at High School M, for example, some students received as little as a half hour of tutoring and others received up to 20 hours from the start of the school year through March 31, 2016.

The extent of student tutoring varied significantly across schools in each course content area.<sup>84</sup> In contrast to Year 3, when the largest percentage of students (33%) received tutoring in mathematics, in Year 4, the largest percentage of students (32%) received tutoring in ELA. The percentage of students tutored in mathematics, science, and social studies declined between Year 3 and Year 4.<sup>85</sup> The percentage of students tutored in ELA, however, increased by 24 percentage points between Year 3 and Year 4. The increase between Year 3 and Year 4 in tutoring in ELA mirrors the increase in advanced course enrollment in ELA.<sup>86</sup> High School M reported the greatest percentage of Grade 10 students participating in tutoring in ELA, science, and social studies (see Tables F.9 through F.12 in Appendix F).

Site visit data offered insights regarding tutoring for cohort students. At High Schools K and M, local college students provided tutoring to students either in-class or after school. School M said a tutor is also offered in-class for LEP students. Schools H and I offered after-school tutoring through teachers; Texas GEAR UP SG staff at these schools said students would greatly benefit from outside tutors, but their district is unwilling to hire the appropriate staff. The Khan Academy was also mentioned as a tutoring tool by Schools J and M.

### STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COMPREHENSIVE MENTORING

As required by their subgrants, all Texas GEAR UP SG schools offered comprehensive mentoring to primary cohort students in Year 4. As was the case in prior years, mentoring as a student support service occurred with a much lower percentage of students than the percentage of students participating in tutoring. Similarly, the average amount of time spent on mentoring was 5.1 hours, compared to 9.4 hours on tutoring.

Across Texas GEAR UP SG schools, 32% of Grade 10 students received comprehensive mentoring as of March 31, 2016, which was an increase of 22 percentage points over Year 3 (10%). The majority of the students participating in mentoring came from High Schools L and M, where 42% and 99% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students, respectively, had a mentor. The lowest percentage of students with a mentor came from High School K, in which just 8% received mentoring. Overall, the percentage of students mentored differed significantly across schools (see Table F.13, Appendix F).<sup>87</sup>

Site visit participants reported that Texas GEAR UP SG often worked with local organizations and programs, like CIS and Big Brothers Big Sisters, or upperclassmen to provide mentoring services to Texas GEAR UP SG students. A College Preparation Advisor and other Texas GEAR UP SG staff at School M also acted as mentors for cohort students; the College Preparation Advisor expressed concern that the role of mentors was not clearly defined and the

<sup>83</sup>  $F(5, 953) = 25.4, p < 0.001$

<sup>84</sup> Tutoring in mathematics:  $\chi^2(5) = 667.7, p < .001$ ; tutoring in ELA:  $\chi^2(5) = 58.9, p < .001$ ; tutoring in science:  $\chi^2(5) = 277.2, p < .001$ ; tutoring in social studies:  $\chi^2(5) = 162.1, p < .001$ .

<sup>85</sup> For each subject area, the percentages of student participation declined as follows: Mathematics: 2 percentage points; Science: 7 percentage points; Social Studies: 0.2 percentage points.

<sup>86</sup> As previously noted, across all schools, 45% of Grade 10 students were enrolled in advanced ELA, an increase of six percentage points from Year 3 (39%). This increase aligns with an increase in tutoring in ELA.

<sup>87</sup>  $\chi^2(5) = 830.5, p < .001$

necessary services were not always administered. College Preparation Advisors at Schools L and K reported similar concerns about their roles as mentors; they said that they have completed trainings led by the Support Center and other mentoring organizations to learn about the differences between mentoring and advising or counseling. The College Preparation Advisor at School J indicated that she was tasked with coordinating the mentoring program at her school, but found it difficult to manage the schedules of the Texas GEAR UP SG students as well as the college student mentors.

### STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COUNSELING

Counseling/advising is another student support service that all Texas GEAR UP schools offered to primary cohort students beginning in Year 2. On average, across schools, 87% of Grade 10 students participated in counseling, and this varied significantly across schools (see Table F.14, Appendix F).<sup>88</sup> This represented an increase of 18 percentage points from Year 3 in which 69% of students received counseling. Nearly all Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students participated in counseling/advising at High School M (99%) and all of the six high schools had at least 64% of students participating in counseling/advising. On average, Grade 10 participating students each experienced about three hours of counseling by the end of March 2016, an increase of an hour over Year 3.

One type of counseling/advising provided to cohort students was financial aid counseling. Overall, 75% of cohort students received financial aid counseling in Grade 10, though this varied significantly by school (see Table F.15, Appendix F).<sup>89</sup> Nearly all students (98%) at High School M participated in financial aid counseling, whereas only 46% of students received financial aid counseling at School I. On average, Grade 10 participating students each experienced 1.4 hours of counseling by the end of March 2016.

At most Texas GEAR UP SG schools, it was reported by site visit participants that school counselors managed students' schedules, attendance, behavior issues, academic progress, and endorsement selection for Grade 10 students. Texas GEAR UP SG staff advised students on how to increase their college readiness, which sometimes included the topics managed by counselors. When students requested schedule and endorsement changes, Texas GEAR UP staff referred them and/or their parents to the counselors as any official change in course, academic path (e.g., AP or advanced courses), or endorsement is to be made by counselors. In addition, during Year 4 Texas GEAR UP SG staff and counselors collaborated on the recruitment, promotion, and coordination of the TSIA. Parents and/or students at Schools H, J, K, L, and M said they prefer to speak with Texas GEAR UP SG staff before speaking with school counselors because the counselors are difficult to get in touch with and they often have a more established relationship with the program staff.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff at School H said the relationship between Texas GEAR UP SG staff and the school counselors improved during Year 4 because College Preparation Advisors had more time to build stronger relationships and communicate more effectively. As the cohort approaches their final two years of high school, staff reported that they were concerned how the collaboration between Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school counselors would function. In previous years, school counselors have been the staff to help students sign up for the SAT, obtain financial aid, and apply for postsecondary education. It was unclear to these staff what role the school counselors will play in preparing Texas GEAR UP SG students for college and careers because the Texas GEAR UP SG staff have been providing college readiness services already and will continue to do so.

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<sup>88</sup>  $\chi^2(5) = 122.0, p < .001$

<sup>89</sup> Statistical significance was detected across schools in Grade 10:  $\chi^2(5) = 289.6, p < .001$ .

## STUDENT IMPLEMENTATION MIX WITHIN STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

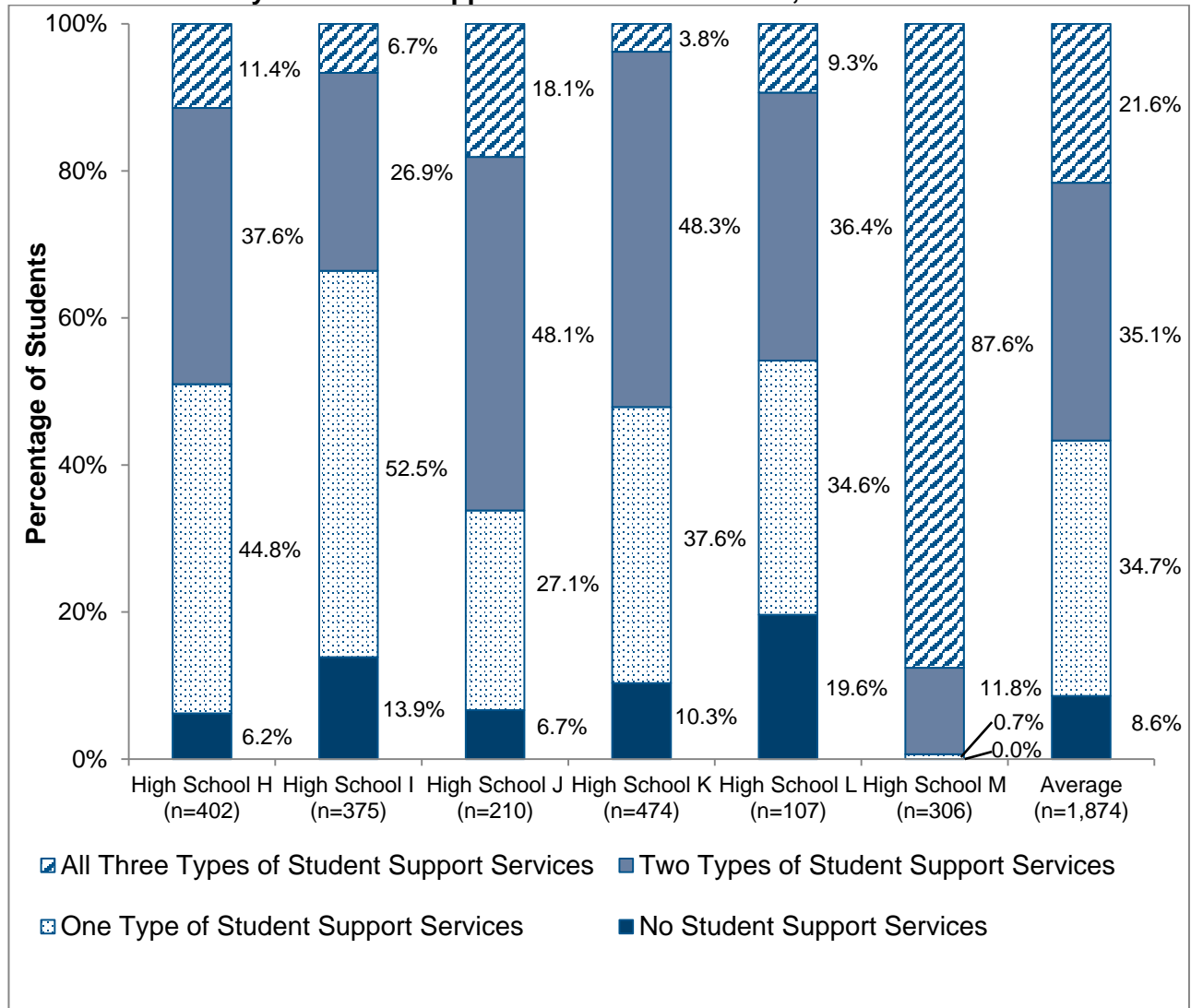
As of March 31, 2016, 91% of all Grade 10 students had participated in at least one of the three types of student support services (i.e., tutoring, mentoring, counseling; Figure 2.4), achieving Project Objective 4.1 that 75% of students would receive student support services. This accomplishment represents an increase of 10 percentage points from Year 3 (81%). Students participated in a mix of student support services to a varying degree. Similar to Year 3, of the 651 students across all schools who participated in just one student support service (35% of all Texas GEAR UP SG students as shown in Figure 2.4), the largest percentage (87%) participated in counseling/advising.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, 35% of students participated in two types of student support services and 22% of students participated in all three types of activities. This differed significantly across schools.<sup>91</sup> All high schools each individually met Project Objective 4.1 of at least 75% of students participating in student support services. Only four high schools met this goal in Year 3. High School M had the highest percentage of students that participated in all three types of student support services (88%); whereas High School K had the lowest percentage of students that participated in all three types of student support services (4%).

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<sup>90</sup> In Year 3, of the 832 students across all schools who only participated in one student support service (39% of all Texas GEAR UP SG students), the largest percentage (68%) participated in counseling/advising.

<sup>91</sup> Difference across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 1053.2, p < .001$ .

**Figure 2.4. Percentages of Grade 10 Students Participating in Student Support Services by Number of Support Services and School, 2015–16**



Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.  
 Note: Difference across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 1053.2, p < .001$ .

Project Objective 4.1 specifies that participation in student support services should be based on the results of teacher/counselor input and/or diagnostic data. The percentage of Grade 10 students who had participated in student support services based on the results of teacher/counselor input and/or diagnostic data was 87%, above the project objective goal of 75%.<sup>92</sup> More specifically, based on specific services, 76% of the students who received tutoring were provided tutoring services based on diagnostic data or teacher/counselor input, 74% of the students who received mentoring were provided with mentoring services based on diagnostic data or teacher/counselor input, and 70% of the students who received counseling were provided with counseling services based on the diagnostic data or teacher/counselor input. Other reasons for these services included student walk-in/request or parental request. Among the three student support services, student request accounted for 39% of the reasons for

<sup>92</sup> In Year 3 Annual Implementation Report (Briggs et al., 2016), this figure was 81% as of March 31, 2016. The APR submitted in April 2016 (including the full year of Grade 10 data) reflects that this percentage was 87% when accounting for data collected for the entire school year.

mentoring, 41% of the reasons for tutoring, and 43% of the reasons for counseling. Parental request only accounted for 2% of the reasons for counseling services, less than 1% of the reasons for mentoring, and none of the reasons for tutoring. Continuing to refine this process through data-driven decisions and delivery of services to students in most need of specific supports may further enhance the potential impact of Texas GEAR UP SG and inform more sustainable practices, investing resources where they are most needed.

In addition, while data on tutoring, mentoring, and counseling/advising are not broken out by types of school or GEAR UP staff who provided the support to students, it is important to note that College Preparation Advisors played a significant role in meeting with students to provide various types of support. Specifically, across all high schools, 1,357 students met with their College Preparation Advisors—or approximately 72%. This ranged from a high of 90% of students meeting with their College Preparation Advisors at School J to a low of 52% of students meeting with their College Preparation Advisors at School I.<sup>93</sup> It is recommended that College Preparation Advisors at all participating high schools make an effort to meet with 100% of cohort students in order for all students to derive the various supports offered through these meetings.

### 2.3.2 College Visits

College visits are one strategy recommended by the federal GEAR UP program to develop postsecondary education awareness and readiness. 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. Because college visits provide opportunities for cohort students to acquire knowledge about college, participation in college visits also serves as one indicator regarding the cohort's progress toward meeting Project Objective 4.4 (By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college). GUIDES data showed that from the start of the 2015–16 school year through March 31, 2016, all schools had hosted one or more college visits in which at least some students from each school participated. High School J offered Grade 10 students the most (10) college visits; High School L offered the fewest (1) and the remaining schools offered the following: High School H: 5, High School I: 7, High School K: 3, and High School M: 5. Overall, 38% of Texas GEAR UP SG students had participated in at least one college visit by March 31, 2016 (Table F.16, Appendix F), which is an increase of 3% over Year 3 (35%). Based on site visit data, some college visits were being planned for the end of the school year so this percentage may be higher when accounting for the entire school year; these data were not available for this report, however. Because college visits serve as one of the several indicators for Project Objective 4.4, more students will need to participate in such visits in order to meet this objective by the end of the Year 5.

Similar to prior years, college visits included opportunities for students to attend college classes, tour the campus, discover different programs or schools within the university, and learn about campus housing and transportation. Site visit data indicated that students from all six of the Texas GEAR UP SG high schools had the opportunity to participate in college visits, including private and public institutions. Most students reported enjoying the college visits, but some from School M indicated they no longer found the college visits valuable due to lack of organization and uninterested tour guides. Later in the year, School M did provide an opportunity for students to visit one of eight different schools outside of the local community; this opportunity was described as very successful by students, parents, and Texas GEAR UP SG staff as it exposed

<sup>93</sup> Data on students who met with College Preparation Advisors for each school are as follows: School H – 259 students (64%); School I – 194 students (52%); School J – 189 students (90%); School K – 377 students (80%); School L – 69 students (65%); School M – 269 students (88%).

students to schools with a variety programs, sizes, and locations. The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator from School M said the team hopes to explore how students and parents can determine the best fitting school during Year 5 and offer visits to the schools that fit those profiles students are more interested in. The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator for District 2 said their district has had difficulty reaching their district's college visit goal for Year 4 for two different reasons—a school administrator will not allow students with poor grades and/or attendance to attend and some students find it hard to take time out of the classroom due to the rigor of their courses.

### 2.3.3 Job Site Visits/Job Shadowing

Engaging in job site visits is also a recommended federal GEAR UP strategy and may provide students with relevant information about potential future jobs and careers, as well as the education that is required to attain those jobs/careers. All schools reported that at least some students had engaged in job site visits and job shadowing by March 31, 2016; High School H reported two activities, High Schools I and L reported three activities, High School K reported 6 activities, High School M reported 7 activities, and High School J reported 12 activities—for a total of 33 activities, over three times as many activities as in Year 3. Specifically, only four schools conducted job site visits or job shadowing in Year 3, for a total of 9 activities across all schools (Briggs et al., 2016). When looking across schools, the most notable achievement was that High School J had 51% of students participate in a job site visit or job shadowing activity. Overall, participation was 21% across all schools, an increase of 14 percentage points over the overall participation rate in Year 3 (7%) (See Table F.17, Appendix F for the full list of participation levels by school).

Site visit data offered specific insights about job shadowing programs. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School J reported students were able to visit a local sports arena as well as a Health Science lab during Year 4; they said the most beneficial aspect of these visits was the exposure students received to many different types of jobs that they were often unaware of before the visit. An administrator from School M said student feedback revealed that they would like more opportunities for job shadowing and site visits. A representative of a local engineering firm in District 4, one of the district's community alliances, reported that the firm planned to offer externships to 15 students by the end of the school year; the engineering firm representative also felt that it would be most important for these students to see all of the different types of backgrounds and jobs that are needed to run an engineering firm.

Site visit data indicated that offering opportunities for job site visits/job shadowing posed challenges in that it required coordinating a variety of professionals/organizations to meet the wide interests of students. In order to continue to increase student participation in job site visits and/or job shadowing, Texas GEAR UP SG staff will need to find ways to overcome these challenges and increase community collaborations.

### 2.3.4 Summer Programs

In reporting implementation of student support services, the following project objective is relevant:

- Project Objective 4.2: Beginning in the second year, at least 30% of students will be involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level, ease transitions, and increase college awareness.

This section includes findings about primary cohort students' participation in a variety of summer programs during summer 2015.



Overall, 63% of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students participated in summer programs offered in summer 2015 (see Table F.18, Appendix F), an increase of 8% over Year 3 (55%). Based on these data, Project Objective 4.2 was met in Year 4. The majority of students who participated in summer programs participated in student workshops (42%). To a lesser extent, students also participated in other activities over the summer, including the following: college tours (4%), family events (13%), job shadowing (<1%), job/site visits (<1%), parent/family workshops (2%), and science educational trips (2%).<sup>94</sup>

At a high level, site visit data pointed to a few important themes about the implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG summer programs. A member of the Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School H described how summer programs allow students to continue learning and maintain involvement with the school. In between Grades 9 and 10, Texas GEAR UP SG students from all six schools had the opportunity to attend a GEAR UP visit to Southern Arkansas University. During this trip, students sat in classes, stayed in dorms, and ate in the school cafeteria. The College Preparation Advisor from School I commented that the Texas GEAR UP team at their school made an effort to make the academic-based summer programs on the school campus fun and engaging because they found it challenging to garner interest among students to come to school over the summer. The Texas GEAR UP SG Coordinator for District 2 also provided feedback regarding the summer academic programs and reported that providing students with the opportunity to start two to three months ahead of the school year to learn the basics in some of their upcoming courses improves student readiness in the fall, for both the course and any testing administered on the subject. The College Preparation Advisor at School H explained that the school offered a transition camp to prepare the cohort for Grade 10, as well as a variety of other camps including a theater camp, band camp, a marine biology camp, and GeoFORCE.

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

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

- Project Objective 7.2: By the end of the first year, information and workshops aimed at linking college attendance to career success will be available to 100% of cohort students and their parents.

By March 2016, Texas GEAR UP SG high schools held a total of 255 workshops across all six schools (with a range of 16-88 events at each school), which represents a decrease of 85 workshops since Year 3 (340 student events/workshops). Table 2.1 provides a general overview of the number and length of the workshops/events held by each school. High School J held the largest number of events at 88. Although High School I held the fewest events at 16, the school had the largest average number of participants (97) when compared to other schools. Overall, the average number of participants across schools ranged from 17 at High School J to 97 at High School I; this suggests that many of the school events were open to a broad range of students. Across schools, the average length of the events was 2.9 hours. Considering that all schools offered several events to students, all schools met Project Objective 7.2 of 100% of students having access to events. In terms of student participation in workshops and events, overall, 93% of students participated in at least one event. As of March 2016, participation levels ranged from 87% at High School H to 100% at High School L (See Table F.19, Appendix F for the full list of participation levels by school).

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<sup>94</sup> Percentages of student participation in summer programs were calculated based on Grade 9 enrollment data.

**Table 2.1. Number of Grade 10 Student Events/Workshops, Average Number of Participants, and Average Event Length by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Number of Events	Average Number of Participants (range)	Average Activity Length (in hours)
High School H	23	55 (1-246)	1.3
High School I	16	97 (1-299)	0.9
High School J	88	17 (1-187)	1.5
High School K	30	24 (1-422)	3.2
High School L	42	28 (1-105)	7.9
High School M	56	89 (1-276)	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>44</b> <b>(1-422)</b>	<b>2.9</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

Site visit participants discussed some of the workshops and events offered at their respective schools:

- School J offered a financial literacy workshop based on curriculum developed by TG.
- During a lunch workshop at School J, students played the “Get a Life” game developed by AMS Pictures.
- Texas GEAR SG staff at School J reported 10-15 students regularly came to lunch time workshops for TSIA preparation.
- Texas GEAR UP SG conducted in-class workshops to discuss postsecondary education with students at School K. Workshops also covered résumé building and interviewing skills.
- In-class workshops were also held regularly at School M for Texas GEAR UP SG students when teachers attended vertical teaming meetings.
- Students, including those from the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort, attended a college and career fair at School K, which included representatives from local banks who provided financial literacy information. School L also held a college and career fair.
- SAT workshops were coordinated by Texas GEAR UP SG staff at School K for both teachers and students.
- Students at School J attended a National Basketball Association (NBA) game and were able to shadow arena staff members with a variety of jobs.

In planning for future events and workshops, Texas GEAR UP SG staff at Schools H and J would like to partner with other organizations and coordinate workshops to promote self-advocacy and other soft skills.

### STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN FAMILY EVENTS

In addition to workshops/events targeting students only, schools were encouraged to offer family events for both students and parents to provide an opportunity for schools to support parents in engaging with each other and their children about postsecondary education. As shown in Table 2.2, as of March 31, 2016, the six schools offered a combined 20 family events (range of one to six per school). Overall, 15% of students participated in a family and/or parent event (see Table F.20, Appendix F). All of the six high schools had students participate in either a family and/or parent event. High School M had the highest rate of student participation in parent/family events (34%) and High School I had the lowest rate of student participation (2%) (see Table F.20, Appendix F). Parental participation in these events is described in the section on parental engagement (Section 2.4).

**Table 2.2. Number of Grade 10 Family Events, Average Number of Student Participants, and Average Event Length by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Number of Events	Average Number of Participants (range)	Average Activity Length (in hours)
High School H	5	14 (1-22)	2.0
High School I	1	2 (2-2)	2.0
High School J	6	13 (2-31)	1.6
High School K	2	9 (8-9)	1.5
High School L	4	7 (1-13)	1.5
High School M	2	50 (8-92)	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b> <b>(1-92)</b>	<b>1.6</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

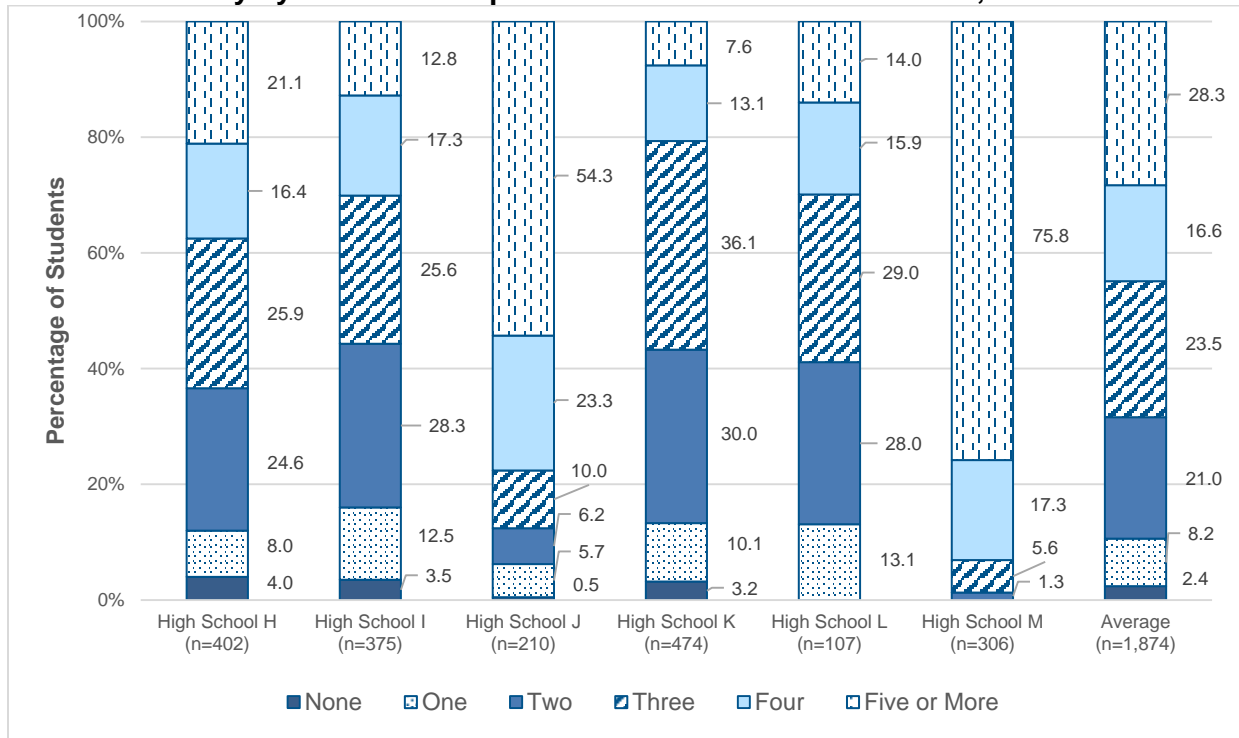
### 2.3.6 Student Participation in a Mix of Texas GEAR UP State Grant Implementation Activities

In addition to the data presented by activity type (e.g., tutoring, mentoring) in prior sections, findings on the mix of implementation illuminated other important trends. To understand the mix of implementation activities across schools, ICF examined which students participated in any implementation activity (student support services, college visits, job site visits/job shadowing, summer programs, and student and family workshops and events) as well as the number of different types of implementation activities in which those students participated. Specifically, students were considered as having participated in one or more Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activity if they participated in tutoring, mentoring, or counseling; at least one college visit; at least one job site visit/job shadowing experience; at least one summer program; at least one student workshop/event; and/or at least one family event.

Only 2% of Grade 10 students had not participated in any Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activities overall (see Figure 2.5). An additional 8% of Grade 10 students had participated in only one type of implementation activity while approximately 89% of students participated in two or more types of implementation activities. This finding represents an increase of 69 percentage points over the same indicator in Grade 9 (20%). Nearly half of Grade 10 students (45%) had participated in four or more types of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activities, compared to 39% in Year 3. Overall, in Year 4, all types of implementation activities—including tutoring, mentoring, counseling, college visits, job site visits/job shadowing, summer programs, student workshops/events, and family events—occurred at all Texas GEAR UP SG schools in Year 4.

In interpreting the findings of this analysis, it is important to note that these findings do not include details on the quality of the activities or the impact of the activities on students. In addition, schools may have strategically chosen to engage in a given activity based on their own assessment of students' needs, based on what they could implement most efficiently in the time frame, and/or based on what activities they perceived would have the greatest impact. Nevertheless, the mix of implementation serves as a marker of each school's success at implementing the range of GEAR UP activities. In general, the Texas GEAR UP SG schools were more successful at implementing a mix of activities and events in Year 4 than they were in Year 3. Forthcoming evaluation reports will present additional information on the relationship between implementation and outcomes.

**Figure 2.5. Percentages of Grade 10 Students Participating in Any Implementation Activity by Number of Implementation Activities and School, 2015–16**



Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.  
 Note: Difference across schools:  $\chi^2(35) = 547.2, p < .001$ .

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

Parental participation in Texas GEAR UP SG activities is also encouraged in the federal GEAR UP model.<sup>95</sup> For Texas GEAR UP SG, the following project objective relates to this effort:

- Project Objective 7.3: Each year, at least 50% of cohort parents, including parents of current and former LEP students, will attend at least three college awareness activities.

As was the case in prior years, no school in Year 4 was successful at achieving this project objective, though in Year 4, schools were more effective in getting parents to attend three or more events as compared to Year 3 (9% in Year 4 and 3% in Year 3). It is important to note, however, that in Year 4, all six high schools had at least some parents attend three or more events. High School M, where 33% of parents attended three or more events, had the most parents attend but still fell below the project objective goal. At the remaining schools, the following percentages of parents attended three or more events: High School J: 7%; High School L: 6%; High School H: 5%; High School I: 4%; and High School K: 1%. Overall, 28% of parents attended at least one event, a decrease of 21 percentage points over Year 3 (49%); High School M again led on this measure (60%). Tables F.21 and F.22, Appendix F display additional data on parental participation in events/workshops along with the number of events, the average number of participants, and the average length of events across schools.

<sup>95</sup> While the term parent is used here given the context of the Project Objective, parental attendance is defined as any adult household member attending an event associated with the given student.

Parental involvement is a focus for all Texas GEAR UP SG high schools because it motivates the students and brings additional buy-in to the program. Site visit participants from most high schools reported they continued to face challenges with regard to involving parents in Texas GEAR UP SG activities and implemented strategies to help overcome those challenges. For example, Texas GEAR UP SG staff from Schools L and M and parents from School J said that many of the parents at their respective schools do not like to come onto the school campus because they are distrustful of the school based on their own experiences as students or because they feel insecure regarding their level of knowledge about postsecondary education. School and district administrators at these schools suggested that holding events out in the community, away from the school, would be a more inviting environment for this population of parents.

By the end of Year 4, School M reported parental engagement had increased from previous years and therefore changed their focus to not only increasing parental engagement, but differentiating information for parents that have consistently attended meetings and those who have only recently started attending meetings offered by Texas GEAR UP SG at their school. Parents from this school suggested that engagement could improve even further by conducting more outreach in Spanish so that more Spanish speaking families will be able to understand the importance of their involvement in the program. Texas GEAR UP SG staff from Schools H, I, K, and L indicated that parents that do attend events are likely to be more engaged if they have the opportunity to hear information and ask questions in small groups or individually. College Preparation Advisors and parents at High Schools H and I said that allowing parents to hear information and ask questions in small groups and individually worked well—particularly during an event dedicated to reviewing students' PSAT scores.

Schools J and M have hired a parent liaison to boost engagement. Texas GEAR UP SG staff from School M said their parent liaison has been instrumental in boosting and maintaining parent engagement due to her willingness to meet parents at any location (their home, in the parking lot, in the hallway) at a time convenient for parents, as well as her consistency in following up with parents failing to maintain engagement with the program. The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator for District 2 reported that a request for a parent liaison has been made to the district. Schools H, I, and M have started conducting home visits with parents that have not yet participated in a Texas GEAR UP SG event, and School J has made plans to do the same during Year 5.

## 2.5 Participation by Teachers in Professional Development Activities

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

- Project Objective 3.1: All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training with regard to differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL.
- Project Objective 3.2: Teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.
- Project Objective 9.1: Annually increase the number of educators participating in GEAR UP professional learning, including through Texas Gateway and face-to-face trainings.<sup>96</sup>

Teacher PD opportunities are offered as a way to support the broad goal of improving academic rigor at participating schools. During Year 4, all districts offered GEAR UP-supported PD for their teachers. In total, there were 207 PD sessions overall (up from 114 PD sessions in Year

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<sup>96</sup> Project Share—now Texas Gateway—is an online communication and teaching platform that is available to teachers statewide. For more information, please visit <https://www.texasgateway.org/>

3), ranging from 80 sessions at High School M to 9 sessions at High School L (see Table F.23, Appendix F). The following PD opportunities were provided at all cohort schools: differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, PBL, and vertical teaming. A total of 517 teachers received PD during the 2015–16 school year (see Table F.24, Appendix F). Since all cohort schools provided differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies and PBL PD, the cohort met Project Objective 3.1 in Year 4.

Teachers and administrators reported during site visits about their experience working with the Support Center Education Outreach Coach during Year 4. The coach worked directly in the classroom with teachers at Schools H, I, J, and M and with administrators at School K to identify teachers in need of additional PD. In addition, site visit participants at Schools H and I referenced PD workshops led by the coach. The teachers across all schools who participated in site visits and were familiar with the coach had very positive feedback regarding their experience as well as the tools and resources introduced to them. Teachers from School M said they were excited to implement the technological tools in the classrooms, such as Google Classroom, but were unable to do so due to blocks put in place by the district information technology (IT) department and weak broadband. Teachers familiar with the PD sessions offered by Texas GEAR UP SG at Schools H and I reported that it was difficult to attend some of the sessions as they were offered on Saturdays; one teacher countered that the financial incentive to attend was an appreciated bonus for attending the sessions.

The following subsections include additional findings regarding PD focused on differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, PBL, vertical teaming, and financial literacy.

### 2.5.1 Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is a strategy in which teachers provide varied instructional methods to meet students' diverse needs. All high schools provided at least some differentiated instruction PD to teachers in Year 4. Across the cohort of schools, 306 staff members received differentiated instruction PD at 82 events in Year 4 (Table F.23 and Table F.24, Appendix F). High School M provided differentiated instruction PD to the greatest number of teachers in Year 4 (87), while High School L provided the same PD to the least number of teachers in Year 4 (2). In some cases, differentiated instruction PD was combined with other types of PD, such as PBL or advanced instructional strategies. Site visit data indicates that much of the differentiated instruction PD was led by the Support Center Educator Outreach Coach. Teachers from School I commented that they enjoyed the sessions and found them to be helpful while others at School H commented that their school has a coach focused on differentiation so they did not find the PD interesting or useful.

### 2.5.2 Advanced Instructional Strategies

Advanced instructional strategies includes PD related to pre-AP and AP courses, the SpringBoard® curriculum for ELA and mathematics, and other topics concerned with academic rigor.<sup>97</sup> Overall, of the 517 teachers who received PD in Year 4, 397 teachers—or 77%—received PD in advanced instructional strategies at 101 different events across all cohort schools in Year 4, making this type of PD the most common PD topic delivered to teachers during the 2015–16 school year (Table F.23 and Table F.24, Appendix F).

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<sup>97</sup> SpringBoard® is the College Board's print and online program for a customizable pathway integrating rigorous instruction, performance-based assessment, and professional learning. More details about this program are available at <http://springboardprogram.collegeboard.org>.

Site visit data provided insights regarding the use of advanced instructional strategies PD at different schools and districts in the cohort. For example, a district official from District 2 reported that that teachers have continued to use the SpringBoard® curriculum for ELA and mathematics to better prepare students for rigorous postsecondary coursework. The student tutors from these schools also attended PD trainings focused on rigor and SpringBoard® so that they would be able to offer assistance to students that was consistent with teachers' expectations for completion of work. School M teachers also mentioned that they have attended SpringBoard® trainings in addition to other PD trainings focused on rigor, such as AP trainings. A school counselor from School I explained her concern that low PSAT scores reveal that students did not receive challenging or rigorous coursework. A teacher from the same school expressed further frustration that students were unable to successfully complete rigorous coursework. As such, it is recommended that Texas GEAR UP SG continue to provide PD to educators on academic rigor in subsequent years.

### 2.5.3 Vertical Teaming

Vertical teaming is a strategy that allows schools to align instruction across grade levels, increase academic rigor, achieve sustainability, and ease the academic transition from middle school to high school and between grades. Similar to Year 3, in Year 4, all high schools participated in at least some vertical teaming. Across the cohort of schools, 255 staff members received vertical teaming PD at 61 events in Year 4 (Table F.23 and Table F.24, Appendix F). Project Objective 3.2 states that teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teaming preparation and implementation each year. Since only High Schools K, L and M had held at least five vertical team events (14, 5, and 37, respectively), Project Objective 3.2 had not been met as of March 31, 2016. The other schools offered minimal vertical teaming events (2 events at High Schools I and J and 1 event at High School H).

Texas GEAR UP SG staff at Schools H and I reported that vertical alignment trainings were held during summer 2015 for teachers, but school staff described the sessions as unstructured, unproductive, and in need of more time. Teachers within a specific content area at School H reported they created their alignment sessions between AP and non-AP courses, but they have not actually used the documentation created during these sessions to guide their lesson planning. Teachers at School L said they conduct vertical alignment with "content teams" so that projects and research skills are able to be built upon each year. Vertical alignment is also implemented at School M and is described in Appendix E.

### 2.5.4 Project-Based Learning

All six Texas GEAR UP SG high schools provided teacher PD on PBL in Year 4, which is an increase over Year 3 when just five of the high schools provided this type of PD. Across the cohort of schools, 105 staff members received PBL PD at 33 events in Year 4 (Table F.23 and Table F.24, Appendix F). The number of teachers receiving PBL PD approximately doubled from Year 3 when 50 teachers received PBL PD. A school administrator and teachers from School J said PBL training was offered through Texas GEAR UP SG during the school year. A school administrator from School M said cohort teachers worked with a local university to obtain novels and utilize inquiry kits in ELA classes; the administrator went on to say that they hoped to use the same strategy in more subject areas in the upcoming school year. The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator for this school reported that instructional coaches requested that the District Coordinator observe the PBL instruction during class time and work directly with teachers to determine how Texas GEAR UP SG can support their instructional strategies.

### 2.5.5 Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation Financial Literacy

TG is a Texas GEAR UP SG collaborator that provides financial literacy instruction to the cohort. Specifically, TG offers a train-the-trainer financial literacy program, provides financial literacy materials to cohort students, serves as a direct point of contact for parents with financial literacy questions, and delivers customized presentations at the request of schools or Texas GEAR UP SG staff. During Year 4, TG staff provided their train-the-trainer financial literacy program to Texas GEAR UP SG staff at five of the six Texas GEAR UP SG schools so that staff at those schools could in turn present financial literacy modules to students and parents. According to TG records, however, staff at only one of the five schools that received the training placed an order for the financial literacy materials needed to deliver the modules to students and parents—which suggests that the majority of the schools who received the train-the-trainer instruction did not start training students and parents accordingly. A school staff member from School H commented during a site visit interview that their school incorporated TG modules into home visits with parents. In addition, although TG reported that none of the six campuses with cohort students made requests during Year 4 for TG staff to make presentations to students and parents, a Texas GEAR UP SG staff member from School J described a financial literacy night during Year 4 hosted by TG. While it is unclear the source of this discrepancy, site visit data suggest, overall, that Texas GEAR UP SG staff may not be fully utilizing the financial literacy instruction opportunities offered by TG. As the cohort learns more about the financial requirements of postsecondary education in the coming years, it is recommended that Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school leadership take greater advantage of the services offered by TG to provide expanded financial literacy instruction opportunities to cohort students and parents.

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

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

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

Similar to Year 3, all six of the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort schools worked to establish alliances within their community with local/city government entities, businesses, and educational institutions in Year 4.

Site visit data about community alliances specified some of the ways in which high schools collaborated with these community groups. Schools H, I, J, and M all described relationships they maintained with local colleges and universities that have provided a variety of services such as PD for teachers, tutors and mentors for students, and soft skill development workshops. All six schools reported they partnered with local businesses that provided students with career exploration activities like job site visits as well with local banks (Schools K, L, and M) to provide financial literacy information to both students and parents. Mentoring was also offered to cohort students in conjunction with other organizations and programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters and CIS. Texas GEAR UP SG staff reported they worked very closely with the other campus programs that have similar goals, but those at School M found it very difficult to form the same relationships with other programs on campus due to lack of focus from the other program staff on Texas GEAR UP SG goals. School J reported that they found it challenging to form



community alliances due to their district's location within the town and county. Specifically, Texas GEAR UP SG staff at School J reported that of the businesses and organizations that would be ideal community alliances, most are located near other schools and districts.

In addition to providing data on community alliances, site visits also provided data on advisory councils. Specifically, a Texas GEAR UP SG staff member from District 4 said the district held three advisory council meetings during Year 4. Members of the council are from a variety of community organizations as well as district and school positions. In addition, this staff member would like to include representatives from local businesses and colleges. The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and a College Preparation Advisor from District 2 both explained that their district had not yet held an advisory council meeting by the time of the spring site visit, but neither felt their program was missing out on the advantages of an advisory council because the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator maintains consistent and frequent communication with their community alliances.

## 2.7 Statewide Services

In addition to the data already presented in this chapter focused on Texas GEAR UP SG activities that occurred within the primary cohort high schools, additional implementation data are available related to Texas GEAR UP SG in statewide initiatives. That is, the Texas GEAR UP SG seeks to impact students not just at the primary cohort schools, but also through the provision of guidance, information, and resources related to college access, readiness, and success for all Texas districts and communities. TEA has identified the following project objectives related to statewide services:

- Project Objective 7.1: By the end of the first year, the Support Center will make information regarding college options, preparation, and financing available to students, parents, and educators throughout the state.
- Project Objective 9.1: Annually increase the number of educators participating in GEAR UP professional learning, including through Texas Gateway and face-to-face trainings.<sup>98</sup>
- Project Objective 9.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 40% of Texas school districts will have used at least one Texas GEAR UP statewide resource, such as materials or PD.

As described in Chapter 1, Texas GEAR UP SG includes collaboration between TEA and various organizations—the Texas GEAR UP technical assistance provider, UT-IPSI; TG; College Board; AMS Pictures; T-STEM Centers; and GeoFORCE. These collaborators are part of the program to play a crucial role in meeting the Texas GEAR UP SG statewide goals. Under TEA's direction, these organizations (the Support Center and AMS Pictures, in particular) develop and disseminate supplemental statewide materials, support the statewide coalition of GEAR UP grantees, and plan and implement the annual Texas statewide GEAR UP conference. Other collaborators also have statewide missions. For example, the T-STEM Centers work with Texas GEAR UP SG schools and also provide services to others schools in their region (East Texas) and training throughout the state. The following sections include descriptions of the statewide services provided by TEA and its collaborators in Year 4.

### 2.7.1 Supplemental Statewide Materials for Parents and Students

As in prior years, in Year 4, the Texas GEAR UP SG website (<http://www.texasgearup.com>) continued to include resources such as interactive lessons, guides, and college planning toolkits

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<sup>98</sup> Project Share—now Texas Gateway—is an online communication and teaching platform that is available to teachers statewide. For more information, please visit <https://www.texasgateway.org/>

(such as grade-level guides). Material continued to cover four major components: Why Go to College, Preparing for College, Finding a College, and Paying for College. In Year 4, additions to the website included the addition of more college readiness resources, videos, and simulation games (e.g., a new “Get a Life” game, a highly interactive, real-world lesson on how a college education affects students’ lives and finances). In order to increase awareness of these resources, TEA and Texas GEAR UP SG collaborators hosted events focused on website promotion. For example, they hosted the second annual Texas GEAR UP lounge at the state conference, which provided an opportunity for all attendees to explore the online tools and resources available on the website.

The website was available statewide in Year 4 and approximately 23% of districts throughout the state accessed the website during that time. In addition, there were 124,853 page views, 67.9% of which were new sessions. Site visit data offered additional information about the use of the Texas GEAR UP SG website. Students participating in a site visit focus group at School I reported that in addition to the College Board website, they also researched colleges and career information on the Texas GEAR UP SG website. The College Preparation Advisor from the same school said they more often use the site BigFuture.org (maintained by the College Board) because they felt it had more resources to offer students and was much easier to navigate. Students from School M said they have used the career assessment inventory available on the Texas GEAR UP website and some of their parents were very frequent visitors of the site. A Texas GEAR UP SG staff member from School J also said she found the career assessment inventory on the website to be a useful resource for students. Overall, the career navigation tools available on the Texas GEAR UP SG website were useful in helping students learn about career options, though other tools and sites were also used to provide students with as much knowledge as possible about career options.

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

To provide statewide teacher PD, TEA provided resources through an online communication and teaching platform that is available to teachers statewide—Texas Gateway (formerly Project Share). In Year 4, AMS Pictures continued to support this effort through the development of PD resources for Texas Gateway. Among the resources on Texas Gateway website are videos emphasizing the importance of college and career readiness in Texas. The resources were added to both the Texas Education iTunesU page as well as to the Texas GEAR UP website so they were accessible for all educators. The Texas Online College and Career Readiness landing page on the Texas Gateway website received 350 views since it was released in January 2016. Further, both the Online College and Career Readiness Resource Center and the Overcoming College-Prep Obstacles Collection on Texas Education on iTunesU have each received about ten searches since they were launched in January 2016 through fall 2016.

TEA staff indicated that TEA still plans to make an investment in Texas Gateway to provide Texas GEAR UP SG related PD courses statewide. The evaluation team will continue to work with TEA to determine how best to use data from this resource in the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation.

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

As detailed in the Annual Implementation Reports published to date (O’Donnel, et al., 2013; Briggs et al., 2015; Briggs et al., 2016), the statewide coalition of GEAR UP grantees is intended to promote statewide collaboration and study critical GEAR UP topic areas. The Texas GEAR UP Coalition is a membership organization of GEAR UP partnership grant directors in Texas, state grant leadership, and key state collaborators. According to the Year 4 APR, the

Coalition met quarterly to “share and leverage resources to positively impact students’ lives, while also providing leadership and unified voice at the local, state and national level.”

### 2.7.4 Statewide GEAR UP Conference

As in prior years, TEA and the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center delivered an annual statewide GEAR UP conference in Year 4 to promote GEAR UP practices statewide. Approximately 265 GEAR UP professionals attended the 2015 Texas GEAR UP conference (approximately 267 attended in 2014). Forty-eight parents participated in the conference in Year 4 as part of the expanded Parent Leadership Institute, offered for the second year in a row. In addition, the conference included a new conference track for GEAR UP educators, the “Ed Academy,” which was attended by 32 teachers from different GEAR UP school districts.

Site visit participants who attended the Texas and National GEAR UP Conferences provided positive feedback about the conferences. Teachers from Schools H, I, K, and M commented that they enjoyed sessions that focused on implementing technology in their classrooms and networking with other teachers at GEAR UP schools in Texas and across the United States. Teachers and Texas GEAR UP SG staff said that parent attendance at GEAR UP conferences is beneficial for the program because they are able to share the information they learn with other parents and have time to establish relationships with Texas GEAR UP SG and school staff.

## 2.8 Conclusion and Next Steps

### 2.8.1 Key Implementation Findings

The following findings regarding implementation are considered key to understanding Year 4 Texas GEAR UP SG implementation:

- **Progress in Advanced Course Taking.** In Year 4, just over half (55%) of the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort was enrolled in at least one advanced course, a decrease of one percentage point from Year 3. Just over one-quarter (27%) of the cohort was enrolled in at least four advanced courses, an increase of three percentage points. These data appear to demonstrate progress toward achieving the objectives under Project Goal 2 (Increase access to and success in quality advanced academic programs). Across all schools, the content area in which students were most likely to be enrolled in an advanced course was ELA.
- **Progress with Student Support Services.** Project Objective 4.1 requires that at least 75% of students participate in at least one type of student support service, including tutoring, mentoring, and/or counseling. All three services were offered at each school and an average of 91% of the cohort received at least one service. Counseling was the service most often received (87%) and increased by 18 percentage points from Year 3. On average, over half of students (51%) received tutoring services, which is the same percentage that received tutoring in Year 3. Almost one-third of students (32%) received mentoring services in Year 4, compared to 10% in Year 3.
- **PSAT Completion.** The percentage of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students who completed the PSAT during Year 4 varied across schools and no school reported a 100% completion rate, which does not put any school on track to meet Project Objective 5.1 (all cohort students complete the ACT Aspire or the PSAT by the end of Year 4). PSAT mean scores ranged from 744 to 864 across schools and the overall mean score for the cohort was 785. PSAT preparation resources, such as PSAT test preparation books, summer academies, and preparation courses, were offered to students by Texas GEAR UP SG and the school,

but many students commented that they did not feel prepared and found the assessment to be difficult.

- **Advanced Mathematics Progress.** The percentage of cohort students enrolled in advanced mathematics decreased slightly in Year 4 to 43%, ranging from 16% to 91% across all Texas GEAR UP SG schools. As an indicator of students who are on the path toward obtaining a distinguished level of achievement (Project Objective 1.2), 34% of cohort students were enrolled in Algebra II during the 2014–15 school year. Teachers at most Texas GEAR UP SG schools expressed concerns about student preparedness for high school mathematics which they attributed to early completion of Algebra I while in Grade 8, instead of the lack of extra basic mathematics usually taken in Grade 8.
- **PD Progress.** Texas GEAR UP SG schools offered an overall total of 207 PD events for differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL as well as vertical teaming, ranging from 9 to 80 events among all six schools. This is nearly double the amount of PD offered in Year 3 (114 events). Trainings in Year 4 for advanced instructional strategies were offered most often (101 events) while PBL trainings were offered least often (33 events). Overall, 517 teachers participated in PD across all six schools. In addition, the Support Center provided PD to all six Texas GEAR UP SG schools through an Educator Outreach Coach. The coach worked directly with teachers and administrators, all of which provided very positive feedback regarding the services and found the strategies and trainings helpful in classrooms.

Another way to summarize Year 4 implementation, as was done in prior years, is to create a high-level view of each school's mix of implementation of various activity types. This summary builds on the work of identifying a mix of implementation strategies intended to involve a range of stakeholders (i.e., students, parents, teachers, community, and statewide collaborators). For the purposes of this high-level view, each school was considered as having engaged in, or not engaged in, each type of activity. There were 19 activities tracked in Year 4, and Table 2.3 summarizes Texas GEAR UP SG strategies implemented by each school in Year 4; data from prior years' implementation are presented in Table 1.2, Chapter 1.<sup>99</sup> Most notable is that none of the middle schools implemented all of the activities tracked in prior years, but in Year 3, three high schools (High Schools H, I, and M) implemented all 18 strategies and the other three high schools nearly did so. In comparison, in Year 4, two high schools (High School J and High School M) implemented all 19 strategies. The remaining high schools came close, however; High Schools H, I, K, and L implemented 17 out of the 19 possible strategies. The strategies that were not implemented by all schools included dual credit enrollment and parent college visits. Whereas all schools implemented parent college visits in Year 3, High School J and High School M were the only schools to implement this strategy in Year 4. Dual credit enrollment was a new strategy included in Year 4 and the only data reported on the implementation of this strategy were site visit data. As additional students take advantage of dual credit enrollment opportunities in subsequent years and as schools report enrollment through GUIDES, it is expected that more schools will be counted as having implemented this strategy. 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.

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<sup>99</sup> Some activities reported in prior years were not applicable in Year 4 such as Other Student Support Services, High School Knowledge Activity, and Parent High School Visit. One new strategy was added to the table in Year 4: Dual Credit Enrollment.

**Table 2.3. Overview of Texas GEAR UP SG Implementation Strategies by School, 2015–16**

	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
<b>Implementation Strategies</b>						
Advanced Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pre-AP/AP Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dual Credit Enrollment <sup>a</sup>			X			X
Summer Programs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Tutoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Mentoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Counseling/Advising	X	X	X	X	X	X
College Visits	X	X	X	X	X	X
Job Site Visits/Job Shadowing	X	X	X	X	X	X
Educational Field Trips	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Workshops/Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Counseling/ Advising	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Event on College Preparation/Financial Aid	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent College Visit			X			X
Teacher Professional Development	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vertical Teaming Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Alliances	X	X	X	X	X	X
Use of Statewide Services	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Total Number of Strategies Implemented (Out of 19)</b>						
	17	17	19	17	17	19

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016; fall 2015 and spring 2016 site visit data.

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

<sup>a</sup> Schools were marked if site visit data indicated that students were currently enrolled in dual credit courses (only Schools J and M). There were no data on dual credit enrollment reported in the data sources used to date to measure implementation of this strategy (i.e., GUIDES).

In addition, Table 2.4 includes indicators regarding whether each school has met or is on track to meet relevant project objectives. That is, based on available data is it likely that the school will meet the given project objective within the expected time frame given their current progress. Overall, Texas GEAR UP SG is on track to meet most objectives, with a few exceptions. No school met Project Objective 5.1, regarding 100% student participation on the PSAT in Year 4, or Project Objective 7.3, regarding 50% parental involvement in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events. In addition, some, but not all schools were on track to Project Objective 3.2, regarding at least five days of vertical teaming; Projective Objective 4.3, regarding the on-time promotion rate exceeding the state average; or Project Objective 7.4., regarding teacher and counselor training on the college admissions and financial aid process. For all other project objectives, all schools were on track to meet the objectives, including the Year 4 objective regarding opportunities for cohort students to complete 18 college credits through AP, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment opportunities (Project Objective 2.1). Table 2.4 displays how specific schools are doing regarding each objective. In order to meet near-term academic preparation objectives (Project Objectives 2.2, 2.3, and 5.1), each Texas GEAR UP SG high school will need to increase their emphasis on advanced course taking/completion and preparation for college entrance exams (both test-taking and successful scores). In addition, each Texas GEAR UP SG high school will also need to expand college admissions and

financial aid training opportunities to teachers and counselors in order to adequately prepare students for the college application process and meet Project Objective 7.4.

**Table 2.4. School Progress Meeting Project Objectives, 2015–16**

Project Objectives	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
2.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all participating high schools will make opportunities available for each student to complete 18 hours of college credit (through AP, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment) by the time he or she graduates from high school. <sup>a</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including limited English proficient (LEP) students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course.	X	X			X	X
2.3: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will be eligible to earn college credit earned by AP exam or through dual credit.	X	X	X	X	X	X
3.1: All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training with regard to differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL.	X	X	X	X	X	X
3.2: Teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.				X	X	X
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.	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.2: Beginning in the second year, at least 30% of the students will be involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level, ease transitions, and increase college awareness.	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.3: By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average.					X	X
4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college. <sup>b</sup>	X	X	X	X	X	X
5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT. By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT. <sup>c</sup>						
7.3: 50% of parents will participate in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events each year.						
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.		X	X			X
8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.	X	X	X	X	X	X
8.2: Participating campuses will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016; fall 2015 and spring 2016 site visit data.

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

<sup>a</sup> AP = advanced placement. Near-term objectives also related to Project Objective 2.1 include the following: Project Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including LEP students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course; Project Objective 2.3: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will be eligible to earn college credit by AP exam or through dual credit.. Schools rated as being in progress toward Project Objective 2.1 are assumed to also be making progress toward these objectives in the later years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation.

<sup>b</sup> High schools were marked as making progress toward Project Objective 4.4 if the school reached 70% on any of the following indicators: Participation in college visits, participation in financial aid counseling, participation in GEAR UP workshops/events, or enrollment in advanced courses. This was a preliminary calculation. The final calculation will be discussed in the Annual Implementation Report #5.

<sup>c</sup> ACT Aspire is the preliminary ACT and PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10 are preliminary to the SAT. The following near-term objective also relates to Project Objective 5.1: Project Objective 5.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of students meeting criterion on the ACT/SAT will meet or exceed the state average. Schools rated as being in progress toward Project Objective 5.1 are assumed to also be making progress toward this objective in the later years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation

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

Data from prior implementation reports (Briggs et al., 2016; Briggs et al., 2015; O'Donnel et al., 2013) about facilitators and barriers primarily came from site visits and/or parent survey data. This section primarily relies on site visit data, with data from GUIDES (reported through March 31, 2016) to supplement findings.

### FACILITATORS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Texas GEAR UP SG staff described school and district administrator engagement as a facilitator (or barrier) to grant implementation at the school level. For example, interviews with collaborators suggested that when principals had greater control over the grant administration at the school level, there was greater school administrator engagement with the grant, which trickled down to other school staff members and ultimately helped to create a college-going culture on campus. This phenomenon was particularly notable at High School M. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at High School M reported that the strong engagement from the principal helped them to successfully implement grant activities. Staff further described that the principal's in-depth knowledge of the grant's goals and the school's progress toward meeting the goals was also a strong facilitator to grant implementation. In contrast, at Districts 1 and 2, while staff described some administrator engagement with the Texas GEAR UP SG, they also noted that administrators did not always have a high enough level of engagement to maximize the potential of the grant.

Potentially as a result of long-term participation in the Texas GEAR UP SG, increased interest in postsecondary education among cohort students was reported during Year 4 site visits. This finding may also serve to facilitate a long-term goal of the grant—for more students to enroll in postsecondary education. Participants at all six Texas GEAR UP SG schools reported during fall and spring site visits that the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort talked about college and postsecondary education more often than previous Grade 10 students. A community partner from School M and teachers from Schools J and L said the cohort students demonstrated a strong interest and understanding of college. Teachers from School K said the students seemed to find college much more accessible because of the number of college visits they had been on and were motivated by the “end goal” of education attainment. These data indicate that student interest in and awareness of postsecondary education may facilitate interest among other cohort students in exploring their own postsecondary options and the long-term benefits it can provide.

As discussed previously, the total number of PD events offered during Year 4 for teachers at Texas GEAR UP SG schools nearly doubled. The Educator Outreach Coach hired by the Support Center in Year 4 is a likely facilitator to this increase. The coach was able to provide more and new Texas GEAR UP SG-sponsored PD as well as resources to teachers. Teachers and administrators provided very positive feedback on the coach's efforts, strategies, and resources. The encouragement to incorporate new strategies and technology in classrooms by the coach demonstrated the high quality of PD offered through Texas GEAR UP SG during Year 4 as well.

### OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS DESCRIBED IN PRIOR YEARS

Although Year 3 site visit data indicated that Texas GEAR UP SG staff had challenges working with the Support Center (Briggs et al., 2016), Year 4 site visit data indicated that this barrier may have been overcome. In District 4, Texas GEAR UP SG staff expressed feeling very supported by Support Center staff and described assistance received from the Support Center on how to foster relationships with school staff and develop innovative parent events. School J reported

similar examples of support provided by the Support Center. Texas GEAR UP SG staff also noted receiving guidance from the Support Center on data management and how to use data to demonstrate student participation to inquiring parents. District administrators from District 2 commented during an interview that Texas GEAR UP SG is the most well-supported grant in their district due to TEA and the Support Center's efforts to support staff and resolve program challenges.

Though parental engagement decreased during Year 4 according to both GUIDES and site visit data, during the spring site visits, GEAR UP staff discussed new approaches for increasing parental involvement planned for implementation during Year 5. For example, staff from multiple schools said that they planned to use home visits as a strategy to reach out to parents who have not yet engaged with the program. Texas GEAR UP SG staff expressed that they hoped home visits would provide a more convenient and less threatening setting to engage families in college readiness discussions, and ultimately increase parent participation in these important discussions. Year 5 data will demonstrate whether or not Texas GEAR UP SG staff have indeed made progress in overcoming this barrier.

Internal school and district approval protocols have hindered the implementation of some Texas GEAR UP SG initiatives. District 2 reported that administrators have their own standards for students to meet in order to participate in activities, such as college visits. Texas GEAR UP SG staff said that the students who may not be allowed to participate in activities due to poor grades or attendance may gain motivation from such activities to become more engaged in their academics so they are college ready. Districts 1 and 4 also planned to hire classroom interventionists as a Texas GEAR UP SG support for teachers and students, but due to lengthy and convoluted approval processes, they were unable to do so for most of the school year. A Support Center representative commented that the approval process for activities and processes is "frustratingly slow" in some districts, so it is imperative to help the Texas GEAR UP SG staff to plan efficiently and provide guidance on communicating and coordinating with school staff to obtain approval in a timely manner.

#### **CONTINUED AND NEW BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION IN YEAR 4**

As demonstrated in Figure 2.1, enrollment in four or more advanced courses increased during Year 4, but teachers from Districts 3 and 4 reported that rigor decreased in these courses because of the higher enrollment. It was suggested during site visits in both districts that more cohort students were only enrolled in advanced or pre-AP courses because the school was trying to meet the Texas GEAR UP SG Project Objective 2.2 (Project Objective 2.2. calls for 60% of the cohort to complete a pre-AP or AP course by Year 5), not because the students were adequately prepared to be in those courses. School and Texas GEAR UP SG staff in District 4 commented that more pre-AP courses for Grade 10 students were offered than ever, but several countered that because students at varying levels of academic preparedness were enrolled in the same course, teachers felt they needed to "water down" curriculum to accommodate those they perceived did not desire to be enrolled in advanced courses and those who they perceived were unable to manage the higher workload. A pre-AP teacher at School M commented that students who did not wish to be enrolled in advanced courses, but were enrolled in those courses anyway, were often disruptive in class and forced teachers to decrease course rigor.

Districts 1 and 2 described the lack of appropriate staff to delegate tasks to as a barrier to meeting specific requirements of the Texas GEAR UP SG. In addition, districts continued to struggle with parent and family engagement program goals. Districts 1 and 2 commented during site visits that staff solely dedicated to facilitating parent and family engagement would increase their district's capacity to interact with and better inform families about GEAR UP activities and



events. District 1 hired a new staff member during Year 4 to work as both a data clerk and parent liaison, but data clerk tasks have dominated this person's time and provided minimal time to devote to increasing parent engagement in a meaningful way. Texas GEAR UP SG staff from District 1 reported that they do not believe the district fully understands the purpose of a parent liaison for Texas GEAR UP SG. Texas GEAR UP SG staff from District 2 reported they are also in need of additional staff to accommodate data collection and family engagement grant requirements. As the number of students in the district and in the cohort continues to grow, according to the staff, managing parental involvement has become increasingly difficult. Staff also commented during a site visit that as the district grows, tracking student involvement in grant initiatives is also challenging.

As in previous years, school and Texas GEAR UP SG staff across schools reported that students in the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort were more motivated to obtain postsecondary education than students before them, but some staff continue to discuss the lack of motivation they perceive students to have while still in high school. Students most often perceived to lack motivation were those enrolled in advanced courses despite their requests to enroll in non-advanced courses. Because of the relationship the College Preparation Advisors often have with students, it was suggested that the program has the capacity to help students be better self-advocates.

Communication barriers among grant staff were again discussed by Texas GEAR UP SG staff in multiple districts during Year 4 site visits, and described in further detail in Appendix E. Communication barriers between Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school and/or district staff were also discussed. Site visit data suggest that high staff turnover rates among administrators and teachers contribute to the communication barriers as new school staff are likely to have minimal familiarity and engagement with the grant and the resources available through the grant.

### 2.8.3 Potential Promising Practices

In addition to engaging facilitators and seeking ways to overcome barriers, there are several emerging promising practices related to Year 4 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.

#### **EXTENDED PD**

The Support Center's Educator Outreach Coach began working in Texas GEAR UP SG schools during Year 4 and provided PD trainings on differentiation, advanced instruction, PBL, and classroom management. It was reported during site visits that she also worked with school administrators to conduct walk-throughs and classroom observations. Teachers in Districts 1, 3, and 4 were familiar with the coach and said she provided useful trainings and strategies to implement in their classrooms. The Support Center reported that the coach had been helpful in connecting them with teachers and administrators to identify specific needs at each school.

#### **PARENT SYMPOSIA**

School M held their third annual parent symposium during Year 4 and again received positive feedback from parents. As with previous symposia, the event was held on a Saturday. School staff and parents commended the event for giving parents a wide selection of sessions to attend that catered to the various topics in which they were interested. The symposium was held district-wide for all parents, but sessions of interest to parents of Texas GEAR UP SG students, such as those on financial literacy, were highlighted. Each session was also offered in both English and Spanish so all parents received the same information at the same time.

## **ADMINISTRATION ENGAGEMENT WITH COLLEGE READINESS GOALS**

During site visits, staff from School M repeatedly pointed to one administrator's investment in the college and career readiness of students and noted the administrator's extensive involvement in the implementation of activities—including grant activities—to promote college and career readiness to students. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at School M reported that the administrator had a high knowledge of the grant, funding, objectives, and goals and was very involved in both planning various initiatives and the decision-making process. Staff added that they were also given the freedom to suggest or try new strategies to meet their goals; the support and lack of resistance made their respective jobs easier and work more successful. The administrator reported during a site visit interview that she felt her contribution to the Texas GEAR UP SG grant was imperative because she sets the schedule for the entire school and Texas GEAR UP SG staff rely on her input to implement the grant. She also commented that she has a reliable team to implement the grant and works closely with the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator at the school. In addition to focusing on the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort, the administrator explained that she focuses on sustaining some of the college awareness and readiness initiatives. Specifically, she said that as an administrator, her goal is sustainability, lasting impact, and the planning and budgeting to ensure future students receive the same opportunities that foster college and career readiness.

## **EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS AT RISK OF NOT GRADUATING**

In District 4, an administrator reported during an interview that students following the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort—including students in Grade 8 during the 2014–15 and 2015–16 school years—have been discussing their endorsement options with school counselors one-on-one and that parents also had the opportunity to discuss the student's endorsement selection with counselors. As part of this conversation, school counselors also discussed students' high school completion and career plans. The administrator explained that District 4 is using these conversations as a strategy for the early identification of students who do not plan to finish high school or plan to obtain a high school equivalency diploma. Identifying these at-risk students before they enter high school has allowed educators to put interventions and tailored services in place in order to meet the needs of those students and sustain postsecondary awareness and readiness for all students.

### **2.8.4 Recommended Next Steps**

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

#### **TEA AND SUPPORT CENTER GUIDANCE ON COLLABORATION BETWEEN COUNSELORS AND GEAR UP STAFF**

As Texas GEAR UP SG students enter Grade 11, the roles of College Preparation Advisors and the school counselors are likely to overlap. Many school counselors who participated in site visits explained that they typically focus on college readiness activities, such as the SAT, and work with students to select colleges to which they should apply. While most school counselors were peripherally engaged in Texas GEAR UP SG, they were unsure what their role would look like in practice during Year 5 of the grant. Some Texas GEAR UP SG staff reported that school counselors were resistant to Texas GEAR UP SG involvement in college preparation activities during Year 4, such as PSAT and TSIA preparation and administration. Support and guidance from TEA and the Support Center for Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school counselors may foster more collaborative relationships with a sustainable impact. Explanation to school counselors and administrators on TEA and the Support Center's expectations of Texas GEAR

UP SG staff may help them understand the role of the grant staff as well as the resources and support they are capable of providing to students, parents, and the campus. Guidance on communicating effectively and how to enhance existing practices for Texas GEAR UP SG staff may help them to approach school counselors confidently with suggestions for collaboration. Establishing a working relationship between the two groups will be crucial to reaching Texas GEAR UP SG college readiness and sustainability goals.

### **PROVIDING CONTINUED ACADEMIC SUPPORTS TO STUDENTS IN AP CLASSES**

Providing in-class tutors in advanced and AP classes may help increase the amount of tutoring Texas GEAR UP SG students receive and increase motivation of students who expressed they did not wish to be enrolled in advanced courses. District 2 administrators reported during Year 4 site visits that the successful Algebra I completion rate of Texas GEAR UP SG students in Grade 8 was due in part to the in-class tutoring available to students. Another administrator from District 2 commented that the in-class tutors have been beneficial to the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort as high school students because they have allowed struggling students to work in smaller groups with the tutors and receive academic support. In-class tutors may increase the amount of targeted support Texas GEAR UP SG students receive, thus increasing the college readiness of the cohort.

### **CONSIDERING STUDENTS' INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF ENDORSEMENT AREAS WHEN PLANNING STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

Allowing students to participate in activities such as college visits and job site visits outside of their endorsements and pathways may help students explore areas of study and careers that they may not have considered previously. Many students indicated during Year 4 site visits that they are not interested in the endorsement they selected or do not intend to study the topic in postsecondary education. Participating in activities that do not align to their endorsement will provide opportunities to develop new interests and consider other topics or majors after high school that they are unable to explore through their endorsement studies.

### **FINANCIAL AID COUNSELING AND OTHER SUPPORT**

Texas GEAR UP SG staff should continue to provide and expand counseling and resources to both students and parents on a wide range of postsecondary education financial aid sources, how they can be obtained, as well as any mid- or long-term effects of relying on different types of aid. An analysis by the financial literacy company, NerdWallet, found that 53% of Texas high school graduates did not fill out the FAFSA during the 2014–15 application cycle and 60% of those who did not complete the FAFSA would have been eligible for a Pell grant.<sup>100</sup> It was suggested in the analysis that many across the United States do not apply for federal aid because they do not believe they will be eligible for assistance. During site visits, the most-often referenced source of financial aid by students is scholarships. Expanding the scope of financial aid discussed (to include federal aid through the FAFSA, state aid through the TAFSA, merit aid, local community scholarships and grants, institutional scholarships and grants, and other aid) will be instrumental to helping students and parents make decisions about postsecondary education—and how to fund postsecondary education, specifically. Early awareness of the plethora of funding as well as the importance of deadlines for applying for aid may prevent seemingly high costs from becoming a barrier to postsecondary education access.

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<sup>100</sup> For more information on the NerdWallet analysis, please visit <https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/loans/student-loans/college-students-fafsa-money/>.

**STREAMLINED COMMUNICATION BETWEEN GEAR UP STAFF AND SCHOOL STAFF**

Streamlined communication between Texas GEAR UP SG staff may improve the planning and implementation of grant activities. Working together year-round to determine how Texas GEAR UP SG activities can most efficiently align with school calendars will allow for ample time to host activities required by grant objectives and goals. Clear communication from Texas GEAR UP SG staff to school staff regarding the purpose of the grant, role of the grant staff, and the resources available to students, teachers, and other school staff may also increase school staff engagement with grant activities.

**PROVIDE DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENT ENGAGEMENT**

Many Texas GEAR UP SG staff commented during site visits that some parents are more likely to engage and ask questions if they are able to do so in a one-on-one or small group setting. During focus groups, parents reported that some parents are too intimidated to ask questions as Spanish-speakers and may feel intimidated visiting school campuses or speaking with school officials due to their own previous experiences with education and educators. Offering parents new opportunities to become informed about college readiness and awareness as well as Texas GEAR UP SG activities and meetings may ease apprehensions that some parents have about engaging with Texas GEAR UP SG staff.

**CONTINUED SUSTAINABILITY**

Some districts were able to discuss plans for sustaining activities or initiatives started or enhanced by the Texas GEAR UP grant once the activities or initiatives are no longer able to be funded by Texas GEAR UP SG. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should continue these discussions with school and district officials to ensure student outcomes, such as postsecondary education enrollment, continue to increase without the grant. Grant, school, and district staff should work together to determine the outcomes that have been impacted by Texas GEAR UP SG activities or resources and how the services or resources that facilitated the impact can be funded through different sources or be replicated through innovative and less costly strategies.

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

Surveys are used in the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation as a source to understand students' and parents' perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation. Survey items provide evidence with regard to the Texas GEAR UP SG goal of increasing primary cohort students' and their parents' knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing (Project Goal 7). These survey data complement the findings presented in Chapter 2 by telling the story of implementation from the perspective of stakeholders—students and parents. Findings presented in this chapter are from the analysis of survey data on postsecondary plans, discussions and knowledge about postsecondary education, understanding of financial aspects related to postsecondary education, and perceptions about Texas GEAR UP SG. Related insights drawn from site visits are included, as appropriate. Analyses that examine the extent to which participation in and perceptions of services and activities are associated with educational aspirations and expectations are also presented.

This chapter focuses primarily on the findings from the spring 2016 surveys with connections to Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 survey data, as relevant (O'Donnel, et al., 2013; Briggs, et al., 2015; Briggs, et al., 2016). Statistically significant differences over time in students' and parents' responses, from spring 2013 to spring 2016, and across schools are noted where appropriate. 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. Appendix G provides tables with additional detail on the findings reported here, including results of statistical significance testing as well as more insight into the fall 2015 parent survey data.<sup>101</sup> Appendix A provides additional technical detail about analyses.

The following evaluation questions are addressed in this chapter:

- What are perceptions of students, parents, and staff of Student Support Services implementation strategies?
- During each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students?
- What are students' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)?
- For 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?
- What information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness?

As applicable, staff, student, and parent perspectives from site visit data will also be provided.

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<sup>101</sup> Statistically significant results reported in this chapter are significant at the  $p < .05$  level, indicating that there is less than a 5% chance that an observed difference occurred due to chance alone. Throughout this section, the term “significant” is only used to refer to statistical significance.

## 3.1 Survey Response Rates and Demographics

This section summarizes the response rates for Texas GEAR UP SG surveys administered in spring/fall 2015 and June 2016, respectively.<sup>102</sup> Respondents included the primary cohort of Grade 10 students and their parents served in the 2015–16 school year.<sup>103</sup> See Appendix G for details about survey administration, data cleaning, and the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents. More detail pertaining to the parent survey administration is included in section 3.1.1. TEA and the evaluation team engaged in a range of strategies to encourage completion of the surveys (see Appendix G), but as indicated in the following sections describing the response rates for each of the surveys, the ED goal of 80% of students responding and 50% of parents responding was not achieved. Data presented in the remainder of the chapter reflect those students and parents who did respond to the survey.

### 3.1.1 Parent Survey

#### SPRING 2015 AND FALL 2016 PARENT SURVEY COLLECTIONS

As mentioned in Texas GEAR UP SG AIR 3, the challenge of reaching a reasonable response rate for parent surveys in spring 2015 led to the re-administration of the parent surveys in fall 2015 (Briggs, et al., 2016). After cleaning the fall 2015 parent survey data (a standard practice to prepare data for analysis by removing invalid responses), 741 surveys remained for analysis out of the possible 1,729 parents of the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort.<sup>104</sup> This represents an overall response rate of 43% for parents.<sup>105</sup> The parent survey response rates for each high school are shown in Table 3.1. In Year 4, schools, on average, continued to struggle to achieve the 50% response rate for parent surveys set by ED, but still improved significantly from response rates in Year 1 (21%) and Year 2 (26%). TEA must report the findings from parent surveys in the APRs throughout the grant period. For response rates, the number of parents at each school was based on the number of students enrolled at the time of submission of enrollment data through GUIDES.<sup>106</sup> Overall, parent survey response rates increased by 17 percentage points from Year 2 (26%) to Year 4 (43%). High School H (47%) came closest to the 50% response rate requirement.

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<sup>102</sup> Only one high school (School M) achieved a sufficient parent response rate in spring 2015. Due to the low response rates from parents in spring 2015, the ICF evaluation team re-administered the parent survey in fall 2015 in all schools except School M. The parent survey data from School M in spring 2015 were combined with the fall 2015 data and are referred to here as fall 2015 data. Given that parents completed a fall 2015 survey, they were not asked to complete a survey again in spring 2016.

<sup>103</sup> The term *parent* is used here to simplify reporting. The surveys indicated that an appropriate parent, family member, or guardian could complete the survey.

<sup>104</sup> Reasons for exclusion included the following: dissenting to taking the survey, indicating not having a child in Grade 10, and completing less than 50% of the survey items. Excluding surveys based on lack of data is a generally accepted practice within an evaluation, given the perception that the lack of completeness of a high number of items may indicate disinterest or a lack of focus on the part of the respondent.

<sup>105</sup> High school M did not retake the parent survey in fall 2015, and the parent survey data used in this report are based on their survey responses from spring 2015.

<sup>106</sup> One parent survey was sent home with each student, although more than one parent of a child may have completed the online survey.

**Table 3.1. Parent Survey Response Rates by School, 2015–16**

School	Number of Parents	Number of Valid Parent Surveys Received	Parent Survey Response Rate
High School H	374	176	47.1%
High School I	322	117	36.3%
High School J	189	79	41.8%
High School K	439	188	42.8%
High School L	105	44	41.9%
High School M	300	137	45.7%
Total	1,729	741	42.9%

Source: Cohort Enrollments Reported by Texas GEAR UP SG Coordinators during Survey Administration, Spring/Fall 2015; Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring/Fall 2015).

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

### PARENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND LENGTH OF TIME IN COHORT

Given that parent demographics were not available from TEA, demographic characteristics of parent respondents—collected via the survey—were compared to demographic characteristics of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools overall (see Table 3.2). By comparing demographic data collected through the parent survey with extant demographic data provided by TEA, Table 3.2 documents an estimate regarding the degree to which parent survey respondents represented the population of parents at the Texas GEAR UP SG schools. As shown in the table below, nearly all demographic data collected in the survey align with the extant data provided by TEA. The largest discrepancy between both sources was the percentage of parents who reported themselves as Hispanic or Latino of any race, with only 71% indicating that as their race. This is eight percentage points less than what was provided in the extant data, and suggests that Hispanic or Latino parents may have been slightly underrepresented in the parent survey findings.

**Table 3.2. Overall Parent Survey Demographics Compared to School Demographics, 2015–16**

Categories	Survey		Overall School Sample	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	334	50%	-	-
Female	336	50%	-	-
Total	670	100%	-	-
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>				
Asian	10	2%	37	<1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	5	<1%	9	<1%
Black or African American	82	13%	881	13.7%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	454	71%	5071	79.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	8	1%	3	<1%
White	75	12%	357	5.6%
Two or more races	6	1%	50	<1%
Race unknown/Do not wish to share	4	<1%	-	-
Total	644	100%	6408	100.0%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring/Fall 2015); Texas Academic Performance Reports, 2015–16.

Note: The data on the overall school sample includes data on the entire school population for each of the six Texas GEAR UP SG schools. In addition, the parent demographic rate is calculated based on one parent per student.

### 3.1.2 Student Survey

#### STUDENT SURVEY RESPONSE RATES

There was an overall response rate of 69% for student surveys. The response rates by school for students are included in Table 3.3. In Year 4, two schools (High Schools J and L) exceeded the student survey goal set by ED to achieve an 80% response rate, and one school (High School K) nearly met this mark with a 78% response rate. Two schools (High Schools I and M) did not meet the 80% response rate. In previous years, TEA was required to report the findings from student surveys in the APRs throughout the grant period, but this is no longer mandatory. For response rates, the number of students at each school was based on the number of students enrolled at the time of submission of Year 4 enrollment data through GUIDES. Overall, student survey response rates decreased slightly by four percentage points from Year 3 (73%).

**Table 3.3. Student Survey Response Rates by School, 2015–16**

School	Number of Students	Number of Valid Student Surveys Received	Student Survey Response Rate
High School H	339	254	74.9%
High School I	326	179	54.9%
High School J	174	149	81.0%
High School K	416	282	77.7%
High School L	106	83	84.7%
High School M	276	185	67.0%
Total	1,637	1,132	69.2%

*Source:* Cohort Enrollments Reported by Texas GEAR UP SG Coordinators during Survey Administration, Spring 2016; Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

#### STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Given that not all students responded to the survey, demographic characteristics of students responding were compared to demographic characteristics of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools overall (see Table 3.4). By comparing demographic data collected through the student survey with extant demographic data provided by TEA, Table 3.4 documents the degree to which student survey respondents represented the population of students at the Texas GEAR UP SG schools. Similar to the comparison between parent survey respondents and the parent population, as shown in Table 3.2, many of the student survey demographic data align with the extant data provided by TEA. The largest discrepancy between both sources was, similar to the parent data, the percentage of students who reported themselves as Hispanic or Latino of any race, with only 70% indicating that as their race. This is nine percentage points less than what was provided in the extant data, and suggests that Hispanic or Latino students may have been slightly underrepresented in the student survey findings.



**Table 3.4. Overall Student Survey Demographics Compared to School Demographics, 2015–16**

Categories	Survey		Overall School Sample	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	526	49%	-	-
Female	512	51%	-	-
Total	1,038	100%	-	-
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Asian	11	<1%	37	<1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	15	1%	9	<1%
Black or African American	111	10%	881	13.7%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	797	70%	5071	79.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	<1%	3	<1%
White	64	6%	357	5.6%
Two or more races	0	0%	50	<1%
Race unknown/Do not wish to share	23	2%	-	-
Total	1,132	100%	6408	100.0%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016); Texas Academic Performance Reports, 2015–16.

Note: The data on the overall school sample includes data on the entire school population for each of the six Texas GEAR UP SG schools.

Among the students responding to the spring 2016 survey, 82% indicated they had attended a Texas GEAR UP SG middle school. Additionally, 92% reported being enrolled in a GEAR UP SG high school in Grade 9. Overall, this implies that the majority of student respondents had been in the cohort since middle school—suggesting that many respondents are likely familiar with the Texas GEAR UP SG program and services.

## 3.2 Postsecondary Plans

The postsecondary plans of Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students and parents are important because they point to their current levels of postsecondary focus and readiness. These were topics that the evaluation team focused on in spring 2016 site visits (see Chapter 2 and Appendix E), particularly as Grade 10 students took the PSAT for the first time in fall 2015.<sup>107</sup> Knowing that most students want to go to college positions Texas GEAR UP SG to respond with efforts to increase the knowledge about how to do so and spend less time convincing students of the importance of a college education. In addition, these data offer an understanding of student perceptions of student support services which helps Texas GEAR UP SG know where to focus efforts and gauge progress in impacting students. Moving forward in Year 5, areas of focus that will be reported on include SAT results of cohort students, the knowledge of available financial aid, and overall college readiness among students. 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 the 2014–15 school year to the 2015–16 school year?

### 3.2.1 Educational Aspirations and Expectations

Plans for attending college can be understood as both the level that one would like to achieve (aspiration) and the level that one anticipates achieving (expectation). As the Texas GEAR UP SG program, as described in Chapter 1, is attempting to promote both aspirations and

expectations in the direction of a four-year college degree or higher. Items on the student survey asked about the highest level of education desired (aspirations), as well as the anticipated level actually expected to achieve (expectations).<sup>108</sup> Figure 3.1 illustrates the percentage of students who selected a four-year degree or higher for each time point and parent data from prior years.<sup>109</sup> Analyses examined the overall distribution of responses and compared them over time. Students' aspirations remained at the same level in spring 2016 as in spring 2015 (72%), as compared to a four percentage point increase between spring 2014 and spring 2015. While students' expectations for achieving a four-year degree or higher significantly increased by 13 percentage points between spring 2013 and spring 2014, students' expectations for achieving this level (four-year degree or higher) have not significantly changed between spring 2014 and spring 2016.<sup>110</sup> Specifically, students' expectations increased by one percentage point from 58% in spring 2014 to 59% in spring 2015, and then again by one percentage point to 60% in spring 2016. Percentages for each response option and each time point are displayed in Table G.6 in Appendix G.

As was the case in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3, students' educational aspirations significantly exceeded their expectations in spring 2016 (see Table G.8, Appendix G).<sup>111</sup> For example, among students who aspire to a four-year degree, 69% expect to achieve at that level or higher, while 32% expect to achieve a two-year degree or less (see Table G.8, Appendix G). Of the 465 students who said they want to get at least a bachelor's degree, 65% of them think that they actually will achieve that level of education (see Table G.8, Appendix G).

Although the gap between aspirations and expectations widened from Year 2 to Year 3 (10 to 13 percentage points, respectively), survey results from Year 4 found a similar, but slightly narrower gap between aspirations and expectations (12 percentage point difference) compared to Year 3. The persistent gap between aspirations and expectations suggests that while Texas GEAR UP SG schools may be contributing to students' hopes for achieving postsecondary goals, these hopes are not yet perceived as realistic. Texas GEAR UP SG schools may want to seek to better understand this gap, as over time aspirations may be undermined by expectations. That is, students who continue to expect to achieve a lower level of education than their aspirations may actually achieve at this lower level. The gap between aspirations and expectations will need to continue to be examined across the high school years to determine if it is influenced by ongoing Texas GEAR UP SG services and activities/events.

As shown in Figure 3.1, both parent aspirations and expectations increased by three and six percentage points, respectively, from spring 2013 to spring 2014. This increase however, was followed by a decrease of five percentage points for aspirations (76%) and an increase of six percentage points (80%) for expectations by fall 2015. This was an unexpected trend as it was shown in previous data that the aspirations usually surpass expectations, both in student and parent survey data. Although not definitive, a possible reason for this would be that parents feel college is more attainable for students after learning about the many resources provided to their children through Texas GEAR UP SG and the school. The impact of these new resources,

<sup>108</sup> The question regarding educational expectations was previously required by ED for both the student and parent surveys. This question has continued to be included in recent surveys in order to track responses longitudinally.

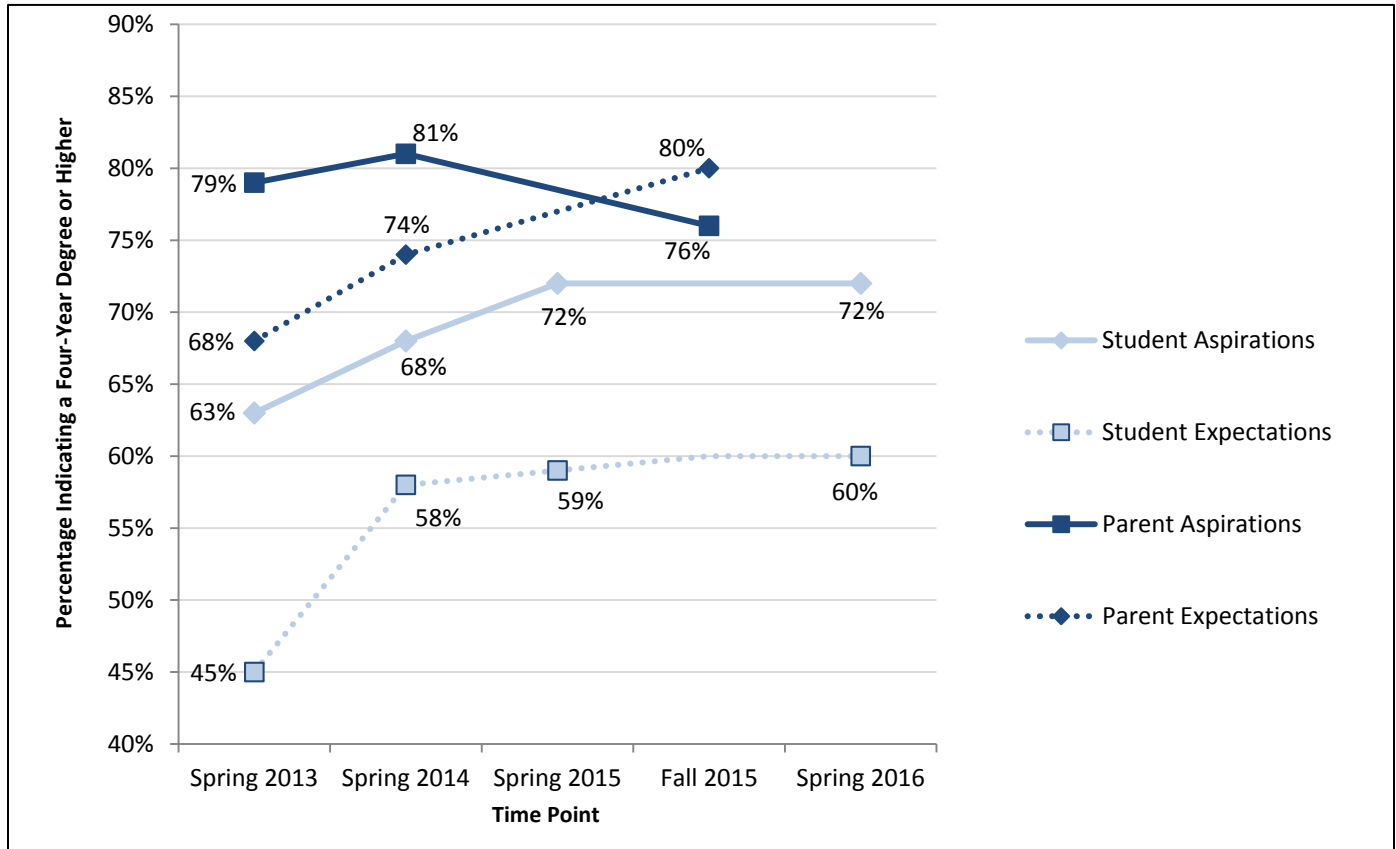
<sup>109</sup> Please note that parent data is not available for spring 2015 and 2016; student data is not available for fall 2015.

<sup>110</sup>  $\chi^2(1) = 9.8, p < .01$ .

<sup>111</sup>  $\chi^2(1) = 33.1, p < .01$ . In the categories of obtaining a two-year college education or less, expectations exceeded aspirations. This finding is interesting, as it seems unlikely, for example, that one would achieve a two-year college degree when aspiring for something less. Reasons for this are limited only to speculation, and were not further addressed in the student survey.

regardless of how effective, may be perceived as providing the student a better chance of attending college than what was seen as possible, or realistic.

**Figure 3.1. Percentages of Parents and Students Who Aspire and Expect to Obtain a Four-Year College Degree or Higher: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Fall 2015 (Only Parent), and Spring 2016 (Only Student)**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring/Fall 2015); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016).

Note: Given the low response rate in spring 2015, parent survey results are not reported. Additionally, low parent response rates in spring 2013 and spring 2014 warrant caution in interpreting the trend data included on parent surveys. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. N counts for each item are included in the full data presented in Table G.6, Appendix G. Neither student aspirations nor expectations were significantly different over time between Spring 2013 and Spring 2016, but were significant between spring 2013 and spring 2014.

Survey responses across schools are included in Appendix G (Table G.9, Appendix G). The percentage of students who aspire to some college or less was highest at High School I (20%) and only 11% at High School L, the lowest of all schools, as was the case in both schools for Year 3 (21% and 5% respectively). To the extent that educational aspirations influence students' actual choices, this suggests that High School I, in particular, has considerable work to do in order to inspire students with a desire to complete both high school and at least some college. With the exception of High School I, at each school more than half of the students responding to the survey indicated that they expected to obtain at least a four-year college degree, with High School L representing the highest percentage (76%), a two percentage point increase from last year. This suggests that each of the high schools is on track to meet Project Objective 5.5 (More than 50% of cohort of students will enroll in postsecondary education in the fall after high school graduation).

Ongoing efforts to help students understand that college is a realistic possibility for them is a suggested effort for all Texas GEAR UP SG schools; this can help to reinforce and maintain that expectation for students who already expect to obtain a college degree and help more students to establish that expectation as well. Data from site visits point to different approaches across schools in how the program is working to influence aspirations and expectations. For example, mentoring is an activity that has been used in various ways throughout schools to promote individual success in and out of academics, and was seen by many as an opportunity to influence the decision to attend postsecondary education. Additionally, increased focus on college entrance test prep through resources such as the Khan Academy, partner organizations including GeoFORCE, AMS Pictures, and other collaborators, will promote college going attitudes among students who may see themselves as undecided.

### 3.2.2 Perceptions of College Plans

Two items on the student survey addressed more specific aspects that may influence postsecondary expectations. One item addressed the respondents' belief that attending college is important in order to be able to attain their career goals, and the other addressed the perception that it is too early to be talking about college. Each of these items may be related to decisions that students will make about attending college. In the first case, if students believe that they can attain their goals and the future they want without attending college, then college attendance becomes less relevant to them. Similarly, if students believe that it is too early to be thinking about college, then they likely are not having discussions or making plans to that end. Although college may have appeared to be something in the distant future in middle school years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, it is anticipated that as students progress through high school in Grade 11 and Grade 12, this will continue to become a more pressing priority.

Similar to data reported in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3, in spring 2016, nearly all students (88%) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that attending college is important for their career goals and their future (see Figure 3.2). In considering this finding, it is important to note the high baseline: 94% of students *agreed* or *strongly agreed* to this item in the first year of the program in spring 2013. Although there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of students that *agreed* or *strongly agreed* to this item since spring 2013, there was not a significant decrease between spring 2015 and 2016.<sup>112</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG staff should continue to support both the majority of students in achieving something that they agree is important for their future as well as the 12% who do not see college as important to their future. While 88% of students agreed or strongly agreed that attending college is important to their future, student agreement differed significantly across schools. The percentage of students in spring 2016 who *strongly agree* that it is important ranges from a high of 63% at High School J to a low of 44% at High School L (see

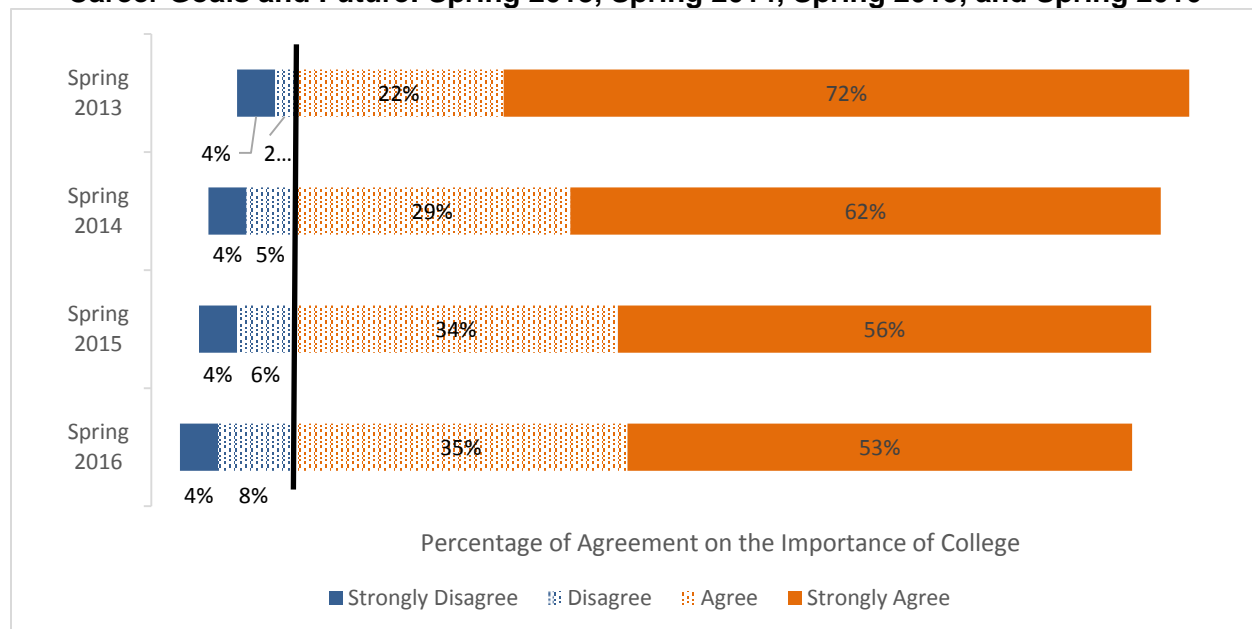
#### Quotes From the Field: Perceptions of College Plans, Spring 2016

- “I think that’s our biggest strength as far as GEAR UP goes is these students are very aware of college, more knowledgeable about college and more believing almost to a point of arrogance that they’re going to college.”
- “They don’t allow themselves to go beyond what is here. I mean even in the community, they pretty much will stay within a certain radius and that’s pretty much it.”

<sup>112</sup> Student selection of *strongly agreed* differed significantly over time since spring 2013:  $\chi^2(3) = 99.6, p < .01$ . Student selection of *strongly agreed* did not differ significantly over time since spring 2015:  $\chi^2(1) = 2.2, p > .05$ .

Table G.12, Appendix G).<sup>113</sup> In future reports this item will continue to be an indicator of how Texas GEAR UP SG impacts outcome data of students' views on attending college.

**Figure 3.2. Students' Levels of Agreement that Attending College is Important for Their Career Goals and Future: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014; Spring 2015; and Spring 2016).

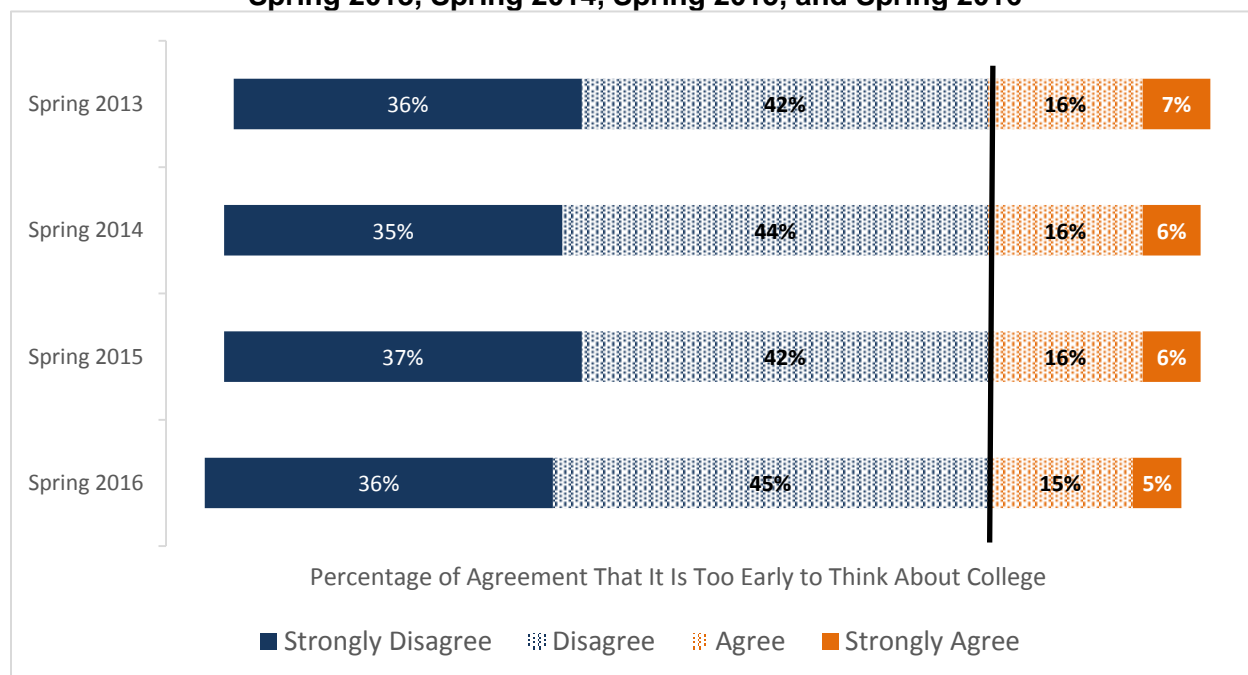
Note: Percentages across those who responded with some level of agreement may not total 100% due to rounding. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

Most students disagreed that it is too early to think about college. However, the percentage of students agreeing that it is too early has not changed over the four years of Texas GEAR UP SG. Consistently over the four times surveyed, nearly one quarter to one fifth of the students (23%, 22%, 22%, and 20% respectively) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that it is too early to think about going to college (Figure 3.3). The percentages of students who either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* did not vary significantly across schools.<sup>114</sup> As students matriculated into high school in Year 3, it was anticipated they might have an increased urgency to begin thinking about college. Although this has not proven the case in Year 3 or in Year 4, it may be that SAT, ACT and other indicators of postsecondary education readiness associated with Grade 11 will reinforce the importance of college among cohort students. This will be looked into further in the coming AIR 5 report. Texas GEAR UP SG activities and events emphasizing the importance of early planning to prepare for postsecondary education may not yet be resonating with this subgroup of 20% of students.

<sup>113</sup> Student levels of agreement differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 28.6, p < .05$ .

<sup>114</sup> Student levels of agreement that it is too early to think about college did not differ significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 24.1, p > .05$ ; Change over time from Spring 2013 to Spring 2016 was not statistically significant:  $\chi^2(6) = 4.1, p > .05$ .

**Figure 3.3. Students' Levels of Agreement That it is Too Early to Think About College: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016).

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

In response to these findings about planning for college, Texas GEAR UP SG and school staff might consider additional ways to emphasize to students that thinking about college should begin now. This is particularly important as students begin preparing to take college entrance exams including the PSAT/SAT and ACT. Students may also need encouragement from Texas GEAR UP SG and school staff to enroll in the appropriate courses that will facilitate college acceptance. TEA should encourage GEAR UP strategies that concomitantly address supporting students who perceive college to be important for their career goals with activities focused on the smaller percentage of students who currently do not perceive college to be important for their career goals and/or are not thinking about it yet.

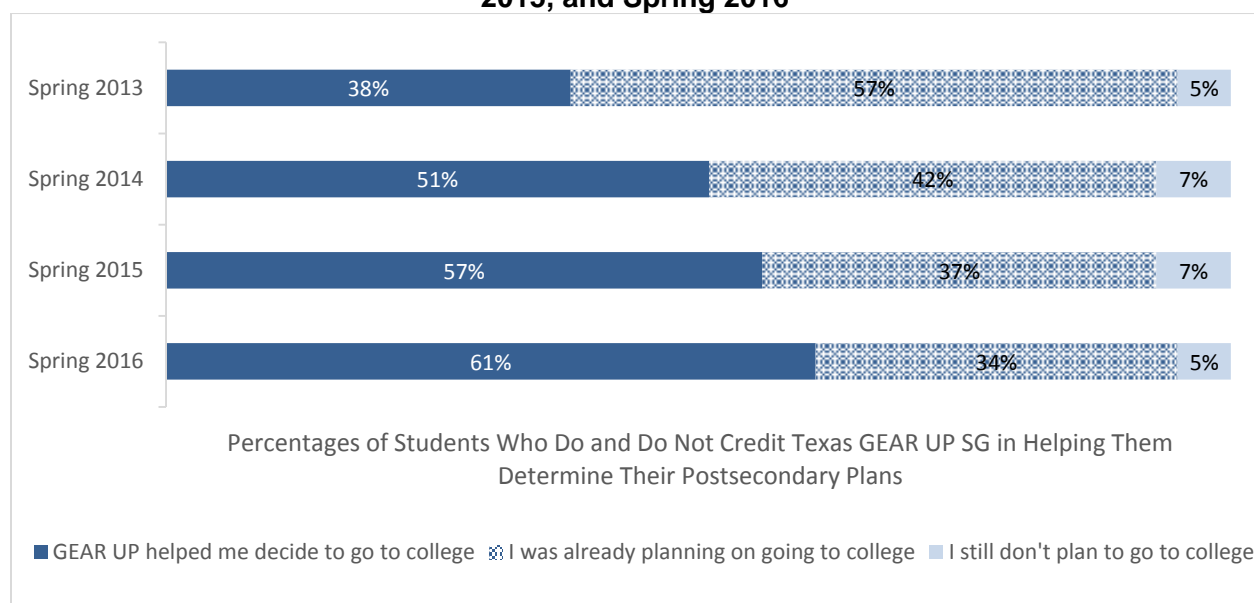
### 3.2.3 Perceived Impact of Texas GEAR UP State Grant on Educational Plans

Given the goals of Texas GEAR UP SG, it is important to understand the extent to which Texas GEAR UP SG is related to postsecondary education decisions. Items on the survey asked students to indicate whether they believe that Texas GEAR UP SG activities/events helped them decide to go to college after high school (see Figure 3.4). Although some of the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students (34%) indicated that they already planned to attend college before ever participating in Texas GEAR UP SG, almost two thirds (61%) of students responded that participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities helped them make the decision to go to college. The latter reflects an increase of five percentage points since Year 3, a 10 percentage point increase since Year 2, and a 23 percentage point increase since Year 1—a

significant increase over time.<sup>115</sup> Overall, 95% of the spring 2016 respondents plan to go to college, which aligns with previous years of this indicator.

Students' perceived impact of Texas GEAR UP SG, as it relates to postsecondary plans, differed significantly across schools (see Table G.13, Appendix G).<sup>116</sup> High Schools I and K, have the highest percentage of students who do not plan to go to college (8% for each school). Moving forward, Texas GEAR UP SG efforts in all schools should seek to address the 5% of students, overall, who still do not plan to go to college, a percentage that decreased by two percentage points from spring 2015 to spring 2016.

**Figure 3.4. Percentages of Students Who Do and Do Not Credit Texas GEAR UP SG in Helping Them Determine Their Postsecondary Plans: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016**



*Source:* Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016), has participating in GEAR UP activities at your school helped you to decide to go to college after high school graduation? Note: Percentages in Figure 3.4 reflect responses after removing respondents that selected the following response option: “Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP at my school but I do plan to go to college,” or “Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP at my school and I do not plan to go to college.” However, when including the “Does not apply” options, the following percentages of total responses to these two options are as follows: Spring 2013: 10.8% (n=1,363), Spring 2014: 6.2% (n=1,287), Spring 2015: 7.2% (n=1,313), and Spring 2016: 8.7% (n=1,132). Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

### 3.2.4 Reasons for Not Continuing Education

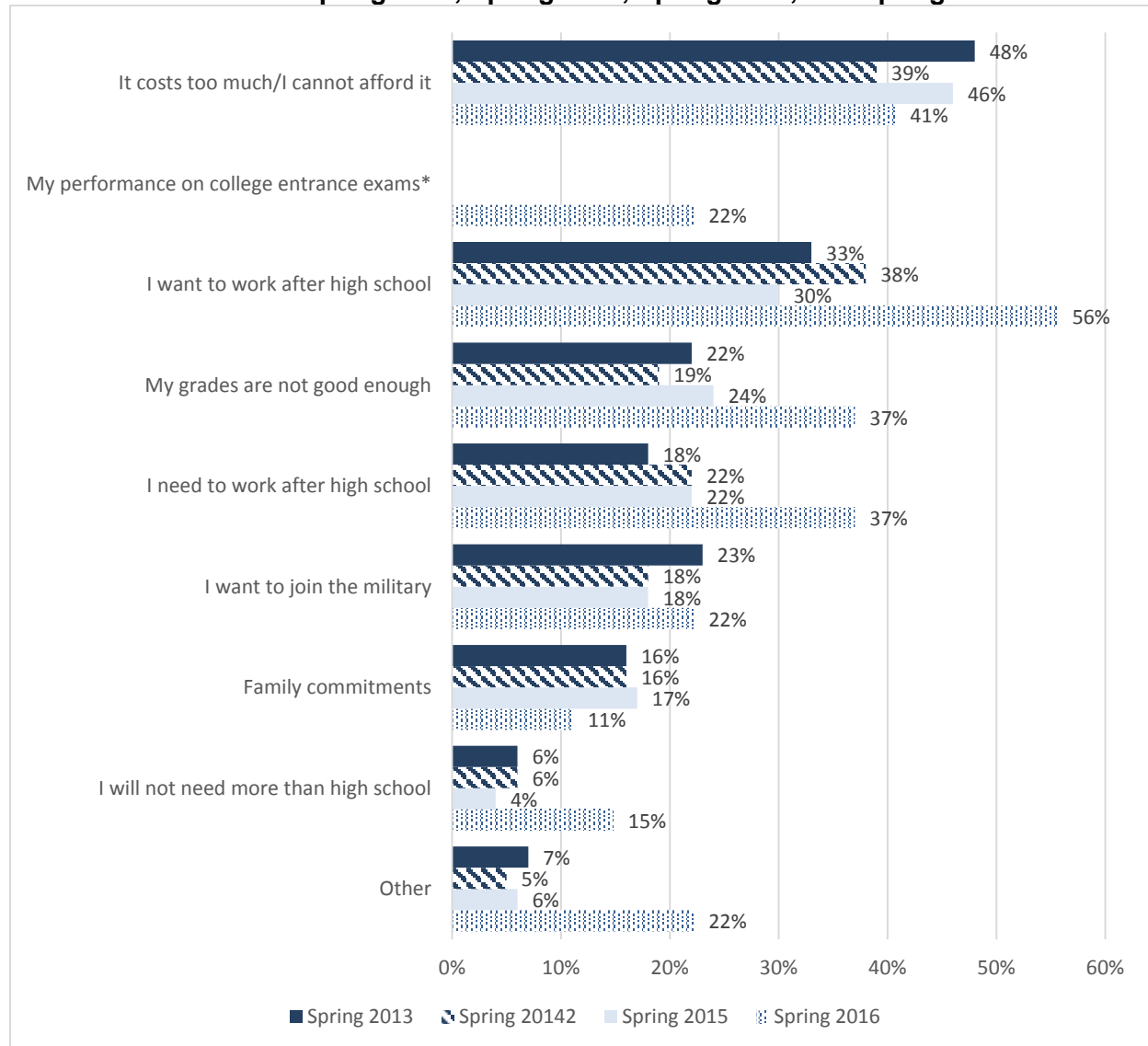
In an effort to better inform and influence those who do not plan on attending college, one item on the student survey asked the following: “If you do not continue your education after high school, what would be the reason(s)?” Reasons provided by students who stated that they do not plan to continue their education after college are summarized in Figure 3.5. The results for the spring 2016 survey generally aligned with or exceeded the results from previous surveys, with some exceptions; concerns about costs (41%), wanting to work (56%), poor grades (37%), and needing to work (56%) were among the most frequently selected reasons. Due to the low

<sup>115</sup> Student perceptions differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(6) = 159.5, p < .01$ .

<sup>116</sup> Student perceptions differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(20) = 101.4, p < .01$ .

number of respondents that selected at least one option in response to this question (n=27), however, the results should be interpreted with caution.

**Figure 3.5. Percentages of Texas GEAR UP SG Students by Reason for Not Continuing Education: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016).  
 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. Due to the skip logic used in programming the spring 2016 survey, the number of respondents to this question is much lower than in previous years, when skip logic was not used: Spring 2013: n=678, Spring 2014: n=689, Spring 2015: n=575, and Spring 2016: n=27. The skip logic functioned as follows: If a respondent answered “Has participating in GEAR UP activities at your school helped you to decide to go to college after high school graduation?” with either “No, I still don’t plan to go to college” or “Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP at my school and I do not plan to go to college,” among five different response options, only then did the respondent see the next question, “If you do not continue your education after high school, what would be the reason(s)? (Select ALL that apply),” as shown in Figure 3.5. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

\* Survey item is new and only used on the Spring 2016 survey. For more information on this question, please refer to Table G.14 in Appendix G.



Unlike in Year 3 in which cost was the most frequently reported reason for not continuing postsecondary education, in Year 4, most students reported either wanting or needing to work after high school as the reason for not pursuing postsecondary education. In addition, from spring 2013 through spring 2016, the selection of the response option, “I want to work after high school,” “Family commitments,” and “Want to join the military” all increased significantly, while the response option, “It costs too much/cannot afford,” decreased significantly.<sup>117</sup> The percentages of students selecting poor grades (37%), needing to work after high school (37%), and believing they do not need more than high school to succeed (15%) as their primary reasons for not continuing their education after high school have not significantly changed since spring 2013.<sup>118</sup>

Given that a substantial percentage of students still see cost as a barrier (41%), Texas GEAR UP SG schools should continue efforts around the financial aspects of college to help address this concern and influence students’ plans to attend college. Additionally, Texas GEAR UP SG schools might consider new ways of comparing the long-term financial benefits for students’ going to college with the benefits of working full-time after high school graduation, as that is currently the main reason for students’ plans to not attend college. Texas GEAR UP SG schools may also wish to help students understand options for working and studying simultaneously and to offer students support services to help them perform better in their courses and increase their grade point average (GPA).

### 3.3 Discussions and Knowledge About College

One way that programs such as Texas GEAR UP SG can support college-going thinking is to provide students and parents with sufficient information to facilitate their discussions about postsecondary education. Site visits (see Chapter 2 and Appendix E) offered details about how students are coming to understand college requirements. Survey data, summarized in the following section, also inform both current levels of knowledge about college and the practices that are helping to improve knowledge about college. 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, college financing)? 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?

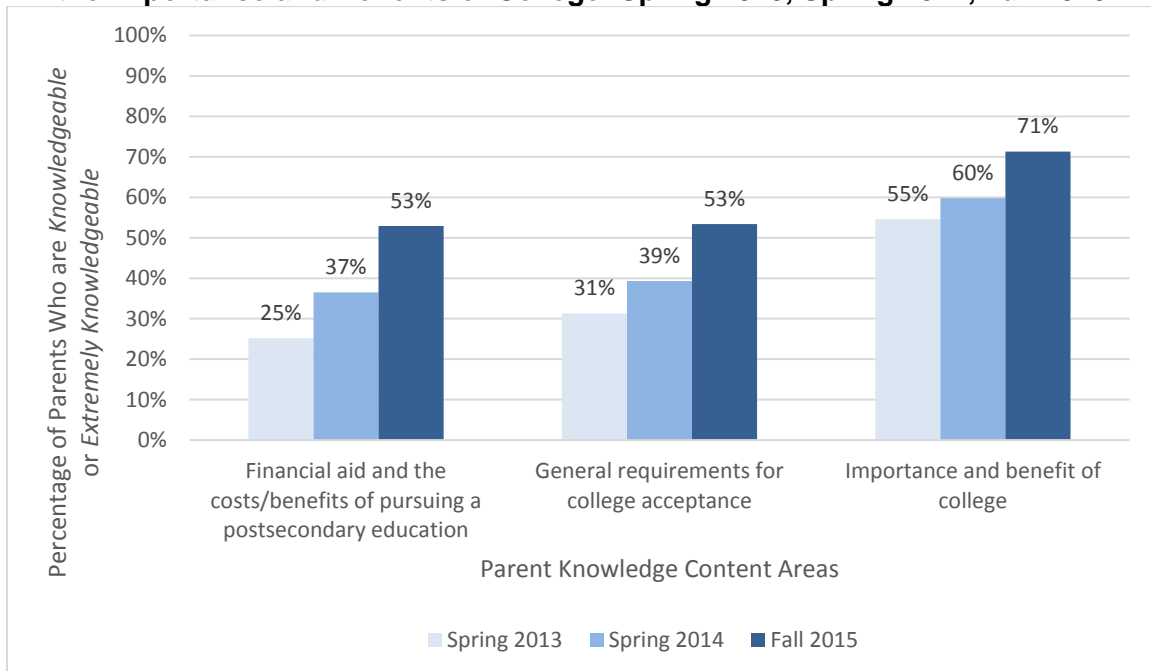
Since spring 2013, parents have reported becoming more knowledgeable about college—in terms of financial aid and the costs/benefits of pursuing postsecondary education, general requirements for college acceptance, and the importance and benefit of college—as indicated in in Figure 3.6. The largest increase in knowledge is in the financial aid and cost/benefit topic, a topic in which the percentage of parents who identified themselves as either *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* doubled from 25% in spring 2013 to just over half (53%) in fall 2015. The topic in which the highest percentage of parents said they felt the most knowledgeable about was the “Importance and benefit of college,” with nearly three quarters (71%) of parents reporting themselves as either *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable*. In order to continue

<sup>117</sup> Significant differences over time from spring 2013: Costs:  $\chi^2(3) = 401.9, p < .01$ , Want to work:  $\chi^2(3) = 15.8, p < .01$ , Family commitments:  $\chi^2(3) = 8.3, p < .05$ , I want to join the military service:  $\chi^2(3) = 13.1, p < .01$ .

<sup>118</sup> Insignificant difference over time since spring 2013: Poor grades:  $\chi^2(3) = 7.5, p > .05$ , Need to work:  $\chi^2(3) = 2.7, p > .05$ , I will not need more than high school to succeed:  $\chi^2(3) = 2.8, p > .05$ . The option *My performance on college entrance exams* was a new item added in spring 2016.

to increase parent knowledge about college, College Preparation Advisors and Parent Liaisons (for schools that have the position filled) should continue to work to build parents' knowledge on each of these topics, especially in Year 6; when students will be applying to colleges and submitting scholarship and financial aid (FAFSA/TASFA) applications.

**Figure 3.6. Percentages of Texas GEAR UP SG Parents Who Are Knowledgeable or Extremely Knowledgeable About Financial Aid, College Acceptance Requirements, and the Importance and Benefits of College: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Fall 2015**



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

Note: Within-year response percentages will not add up to 100% because respondents were able to select multiple responses.

### 3.3.1 Sources of Information

In an effort to build student knowledge about a range of college topics, it helps to understand the frequently used resources that may be the initial approach for information dissemination; awareness of less-often-used resources can also inform the necessary steps to refine the content/delivery of those materials. Analysis of survey data related to this topic informs the following evaluation question: “During each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students and their families?” When asked about what sources of information have helped inform postsecondary education plans, students selected from a list of various sources; two items specifically related to Texas GEAR UP SG are shown in Figure 3.7 (the remaining sources are included in Table G.15 in Appendix G).

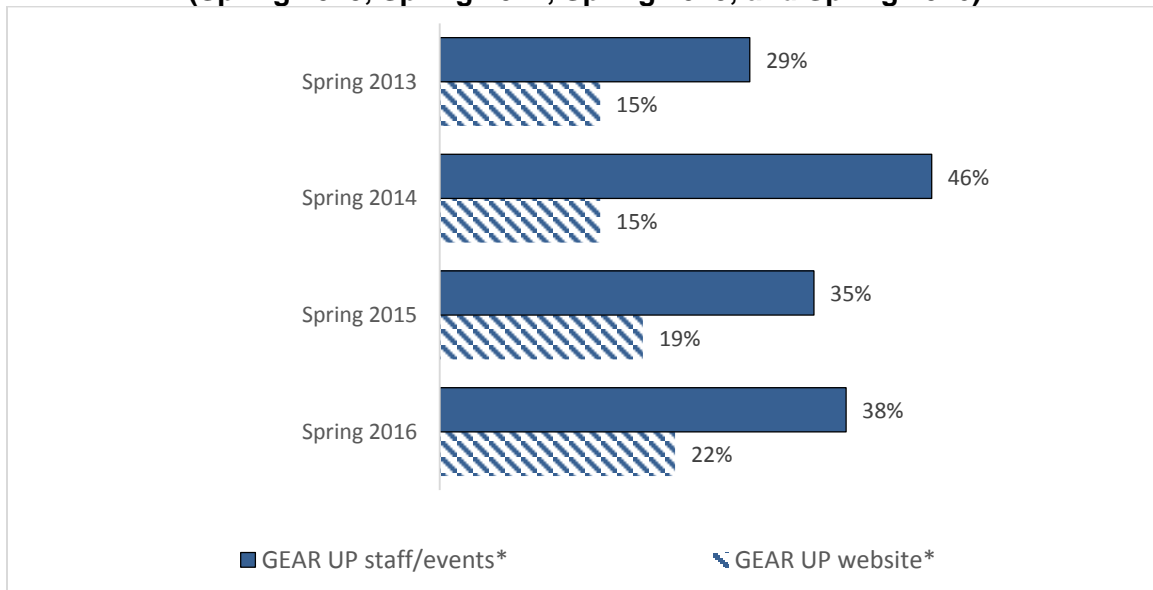
Student-reported use of Texas GEAR UP SG staff and events as a source of information has differed significantly over time from spring 2013 (29%) to spring 2016 (38%).<sup>119</sup> While AMS Pictures continued to work to add resources to the Texas GEAR UP SG website, 78% of students in 2016 did not indicate that the website was a source of information for them

<sup>119</sup> Students' indication of GEAR UP staff/events as a source of information differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(3) = 82.3, p < .05$ .

regarding postsecondary education.<sup>120</sup> This suggests a potential need to direct more students to this resource or to directly engage students and parents with the website, given TEA's efforts through the Texas GEAR UP SG to enhance the website content/design to make it more informative and appealing. TEA should also consider ongoing efforts to understand why the website continues to be underutilized, at least by the participating Texas GEAR UP SG schools.

While students' sources of information changed over time, within-school differences might help to interpret this finding as Year 4 data varied significantly across schools (see Table G.16, Appendix G).<sup>121</sup> For example, 56% of students at High School M reported discussions with GEAR UP staff or information at Texas GEAR UP SG events as a source of information, compared to 22% in High School K. Based on this relatively wide variation, TEA should encourage and support Texas GEAR UP SG staff at all schools (with targeted support at some schools) to maximize opportunities to share information with a broad range of students, including those new to the cohort. This might include engaging in both formal settings (such as Texas GEAR UP SG events) and informal interactions (such as consulting with students in a GEAR UP office at the school).

**Figure 3.7. Student-Reported College Information Sources: Percentages by Source (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016)**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016).

Note: Response percentages will not add up to 100% because respondents were able to select multiple responses. N counts for each item are included in the full data presented in Table G.15, Appendix G. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

\* Students' indication of GEAR UP staff/events as a source of information differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(3) = 82.3, p < .01$ . Students' indication of the GEAR UP website as a source of information differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(3) = 33.0, p < .01$ .

<sup>120</sup> Students' indication of the GEAR UP website as a source of information differed significantly over time:  $\chi^2(3) = 31.4, p < .01$ .

<sup>121</sup> Students' indication of GEAR UP staff/events as a source of information differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 66.4, p < .01$ . Students' indication of the GEAR UP website as a source of information differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 42.7, p < .01$ .

Findings for the same survey item indicate that 77% of students selected two or more sources of information in spring 2016 (similar to 76% in spring 2015; see Table G.15, Appendix G). It appears that Texas GEAR UP SG and other non-grant funded sources continue to provide students with multiple sources of information. However, Texas GEAR UP SG staff may need to intensify their efforts to encourage the nearly one quarter of students (23%) to use more than one resource for making postsecondary plans. For example, Texas GEAR UP SG events and activities can be used as opportunities for students to engage in information-rich discussions with each other and with Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school staff. It appears that the high school setting offers Texas GEAR UP SG staff more opportunities to access additional resources available to students (e.g., being able to ask advice of students currently applying to college) and capitalize on the potential for peer influence with regard to accessing resources (e.g., juniors and seniors modeling how to take advantage of available supports).

A related survey item asked students to indicate whether anyone at school or from Texas GEAR UP SG had spoken to them about college entrance requirements. The majority of the students (79%) indicated that someone had spoken to them, but this differed significantly by school (Figure G.1, Appendix G).<sup>122</sup> More than 80% of students at four schools, compared to two schools in Year 3, indicated that someone from their school/Texas GEAR UP SG had spoken to them about college entrance requirements (High School H: 82%; High School I: 84%; High School J: 85%; High School M: 89%); TEA should explore practices at these schools to shed some light on the ways that they have gone about initiating these discussions as such findings may be helpful to other schools in the cohort.

### 3.3.2 Knowledge About College

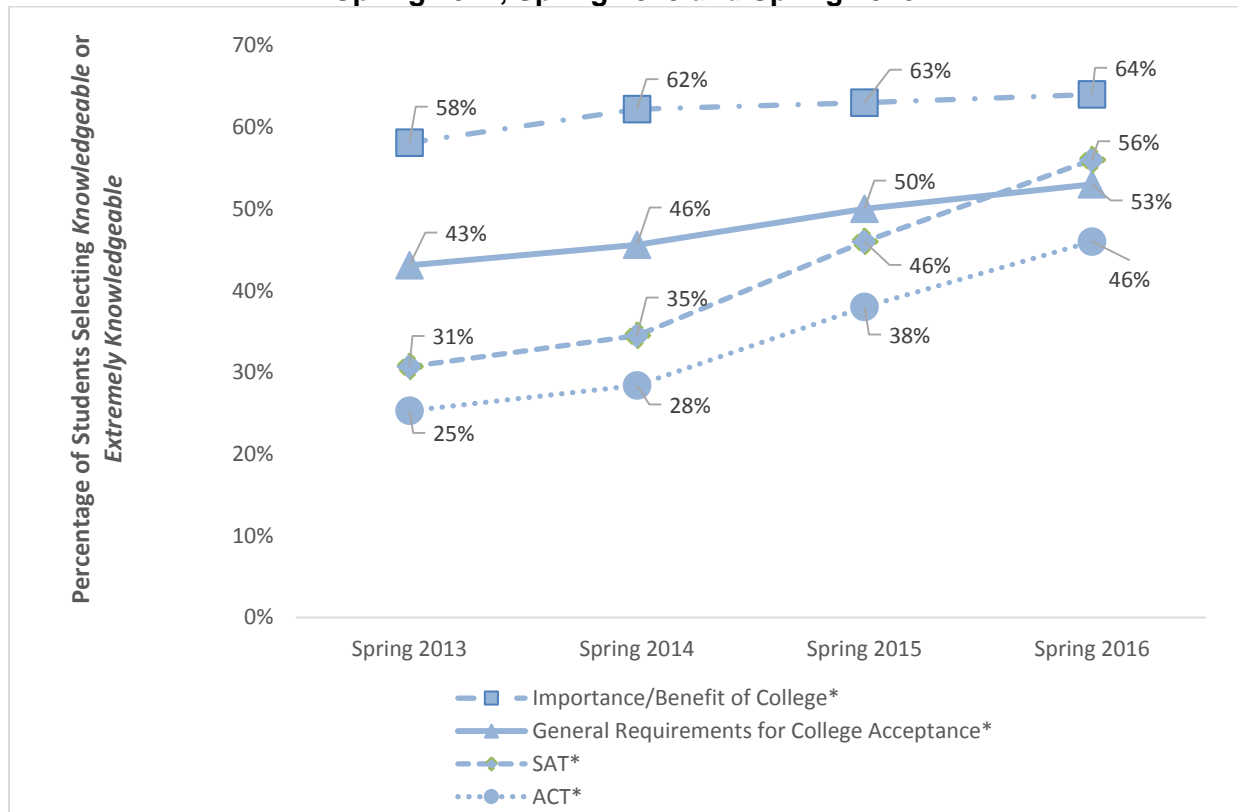
An understanding about specific terms and concepts related to college may be essential for students to be able to make decisions that align with their plans; knowing students' levels of knowledge can help Texas GEAR UP SG focus on particular low-knowledge areas of concern. Monitoring progress in this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

Student surveys asked respondents to indicate how knowledgeable they were about various college-related terms on a four-point knowledge scale, with 1 equaling *no knowledge* and 4 equaling *extremely knowledgeable*. These data, displayed in Figure 3.8, as well as Figure G.2 in Appendix G, are primarily important to guide Texas GEAR UP SG schools in possible directions for future events, activities, and resources. Consistent with prior years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, the highest percentage of students rated themselves as *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about the importance/benefit of college; in spring 2016, 64% of students responding to the survey indicated such (compared to 62% in spring 2014 and 63% in spring 2015).

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<sup>122</sup> Student-reported engagement in discussions about college entrance requirements differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 54.1$ ,  $p < .01$ . This question is required by ED.

**Figure 3.8. Students’ Perceived Knowledge of College Terms and Concepts: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015 and Spring 2016**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016).  
 Note: Response options to the question “How much do you know about each of the following?” were scaled as follows: 1 – No Knowledge, 2 – Slightly Knowledgeable, 3 – Knowledgeable, and 4 – Extremely Knowledgeable. N counts for each item and each response option are included in the full data presented in Figure G.2, Appendix G. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.  
 \* Student-reported knowledge differed significantly over time since spring 2013 for each item: Importance/Benefit of college:  $\chi^2(3) = 21.5, p < .01$ ; General requirements for college acceptance:  $\chi^2(3) = 67.8, p < .01$ ; SAT:  $\chi^2(3) = 192.2, p < .01$ ; and ACT:  $\chi^2(3) = 137.9, p < .01$ .

It appears that Texas GEAR UP SG has potentially contributed to an increase in the percentage of students who feel *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about the SAT and the ACT as both items show a significant increase of 10 and 8 percentage points, respectively, from spring 2015 to spring 2016.<sup>123</sup> This increase was expected as cohort students completed the PSAT test in fall 2015, and are expected to take the SAT in fall 2016. Ultimately, this increase in knowledge about the SAT has surpassed the number of students who are either *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about general requirements for college acceptance. It may be that the high school setting also affords students an opportunity to learn more about these college entrance exams through multiple sources of information. In particular, Texas GEAR UP SG staff can continue to provide students with information about the SAT and ACT as nearly half of the students still see themselves as having either *no knowledge* or being *slightly knowledgeable*

<sup>123</sup> Student-reported knowledge differed significantly from spring 2015 to spring 2016 for the following items: Importance/benefit of college:  $\chi^2(1) = 16.8, p < .01$ ; SAT:  $\chi^2(1) = 23.0, p < .01$ ; and ACT:  $\chi^2(1) = 11.9, p < .01$ . Student-reported knowledge did not differ significantly from spring 2015 to spring 2016 for the following item: General requirements for college acceptance:  $\chi^2(3) = 2.4, p > .05$ .

about these exams. One aspect of being slightly less knowledgeable regarding the ACT as compared to the SAT may be that all of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools elected to participate in PSAT instead of ACT Aspire. Furthermore, students should continue to be exposed to general requirements for college acceptance in addition to information regarding the SAT and ACT. Students may also continue to gain exposure to these concepts as they enroll in advanced courses, so collaboration between Texas GEAR UP SG and school staff may help to maximize these opportunities.

Table G.17 in Appendix G also displays these results as averages over time. For each item, averages fell between 2 (*slightly knowledgeable*) and 3 (*knowledgeable*) between spring 2015 and spring 2016, an overall trend that is consistent with prior years. Unlike past years, data from parent surveys (see Figure G.3, Appendix G) from fall 2015 and student surveys (see Table G.18, Appendix G) from spring 2016 of the Texas GEAR UP implementation reflected that students and parents reported being equally knowledgeable, on average, about the general requirements for college acceptance and the importance/benefit of college. Forthcoming survey results will be of interest to see whether students and parents remain equally knowledgeable and whether the self-reported levels of knowledge continue to increase for both groups.

Students' average perceived knowledge of each of the knowledge items differed significantly across schools, as shown in Table G.18 in Appendix G.<sup>124</sup> For example, the importance/benefit of college differed significantly across schools in spring 2016, with average student responses as low as 2.6 at High School I and K, and as high as 3.2 at High School M.

### 3.3.3 Advanced Course Enrollment

Prior research points to the importance of taking advanced courses for college readiness and college enrollment. For example, Chajewski, Mattern, and Shaw (2011) found that in a national sample of students who took at least one AP course, 83% enrolled in a four-year institution, compared to students who did not take any AP courses, of which only 46% enrolled in a four-year institution. Taking AP courses also provides the advantage that students who score well enough on an AP exam may receive college credit for the course, thus supporting achievement of Project Objective 2.3 (at least 50% of students will be eligible to earn college credit by AP exam or through dual credit).

In Year 3, the following percentages of Grade 9 students reported that they planned on taking advanced courses in Grade 10 (selecting *agree* or *strongly agree*): mathematics, 68%; ELA, 73%; and science, 70% (Briggs et al., 2016).<sup>125</sup> In spring 2016, the percentages of students who reported actually participating in these pre-AP and AP courses were lower than what was planned on, as shown in Figure 3.9 (Table G.21, Appendix G).<sup>126</sup> Each of the response options, across various time points, are in Table G.19 in Appendix G. Year 4. This suggests that across the three subjects included in the analysis, which does not include social studies as it was asked about for the first time in spring 2016, more students intended on being in an advanced

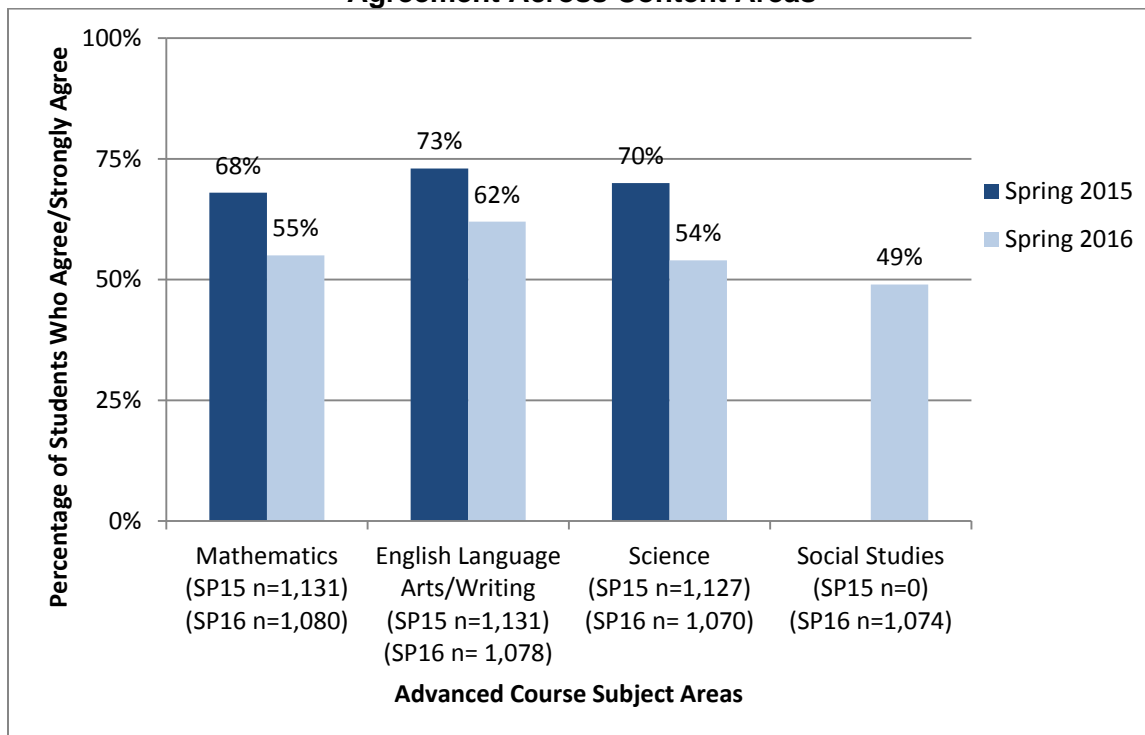
<sup>124</sup> Students' average self-reported knowledge differed significantly across schools for each item: Importance/benefit of college:  $\chi^2(15) = 67.6, p < .01$ ; General requirements for college acceptance:  $\chi^2(15) = 58.4, p < .01$ ; SAT:  $\chi^2(15) = 89.7, p < .01$ ; ACT:  $\chi^2(15) = 77.7, p < .01$ .

<sup>125</sup> Whether or not a student was planning on taking a social studies course was asked about for the first time in the spring 2016 student survey. However, in the spring 2015 student survey and in prior years, students were asked if they had taken social studies during the school year.

<sup>126</sup> In comparison, as reported in Chapter 2, GUIDES data indicated that the following percentages of students were reported by schools as actually enrolled in advanced courses in Grade 10: mathematics, 43%; ELA, 45%; science, 41%; and social studies, 36% (see Table F.4).

course than actually enrolled in an advanced course.<sup>127</sup> 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. Regardless of the driver, Texas GEAR UP SG can play an important role in capitalizing on students' reported plans by encouraging more students to enroll in advanced courses and support their success in passing advanced courses through tutoring and other academic supports.

**Figure 3.9. Comparing Students' Plans to Take Advanced Courses in Spring 2015 with Students Actually Participating in Advanced Courses in Spring 2016: Percentages of Agreement Across Content Areas**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2015 and Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages across those who responded with some level of agreement may not total exactly 100% due to rounding. Results for each response option are included in the full data presented in Table G.19, Appendix G. The item "I am planning to take a pre-AP or AP course in social studies next year" was not included in the student spring 2015 survey, hence why there is no data for this semester in the table.

As reported in spring 2016, students' plans for taking advanced courses differed significantly across schools for each subject area (Table G.20, Appendix G).<sup>128</sup> For example, whereas in High Schools K and L where fewer than 25% of students strongly agreed that they had plans to take an advanced math course, in High School M, 32% of students strongly agreed that they planned to take an advanced math course. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider targeting the nearly one third of the students across schools who do not plan on taking advanced courses (Table G.20, Appendix G), potentially through collaboration with school guidance counselors

<sup>127</sup> The item "I am planning to take a pre-AP or AP course in social studies next year" is new and was first included in the student survey in Spring 2016. Students have not been asked if they are currently participating in a social studies course.

<sup>128</sup> Student perceptions differed significantly across schools in each subject area: Mathematics:  $\chi^2(15) = 62.2, p < .01$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(15) = 56.4, p < .01$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(15) = 57.7, p < .01$ ; and Social Studies:  $\chi^2(15) = 52.4, p < .01$ .

and leveraging the advanced courses that may be available to high school students (and perhaps more so for students in Grade 11 and 12).

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

The goal of Texas GEAR UP SG to increase postsecondary awareness and aspirations also includes financial literacy about college. Site visit data pointed to various efforts to address students' awareness of college financing. For example, High School I described hosting a panel of college representatives to educate and discuss with parents financial aid and other aspects of their respective colleges. Various types of financial aid literacy events have been created by GEAR UP staff in different schools, including High School H, High School K and High School L. At High School H, staff reported planning a parent night, referred to as a *Fiesta y Pachanga*, which will include breakout sessions for small groups of parents to participate in activities around financial aid. Parents at High Schools K and L attended similar sessions about financial aid referred to as Financial Literacy Night. Texas GEAR UP SG staff, at High Schools J and M in particular, reported distributing financial aid search tools and other free workshops that provide information directly to families. Several survey items also addressed students' and parents' thinking about money and college. In general, these findings suggest that there are varying levels of knowledge among different types of financial aid. For example, 71% of students identified themselves as either *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* of scholarship opportunities, whereas only 22% of students consider themselves *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about FAFSA (see Table G.23, Appendix G).<sup>129</sup>

Texas GEAR UP SG staff should continue to 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.

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

Texas GEAR UP SG can play a valuable role in influencing how students understand the financial aspects of college; thus, it is essential to know the extent to which students reported having conversations about financial aid. Students were asked whether anyone from the school or Texas GEAR UP SG staff had spoken with them about the availability of financial aid to help pay for college.<sup>130</sup> In spring 2016, 69% of students responding to the survey indicated that they had engaged in these conversations; this represents a continued increase in this indicator from 2013, including an increase of two percentage points from spring 2015 (see Figure 3.10).<sup>131</sup>

<sup>129</sup> FAFSA is the application for federal aid for college. More information can be found at <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

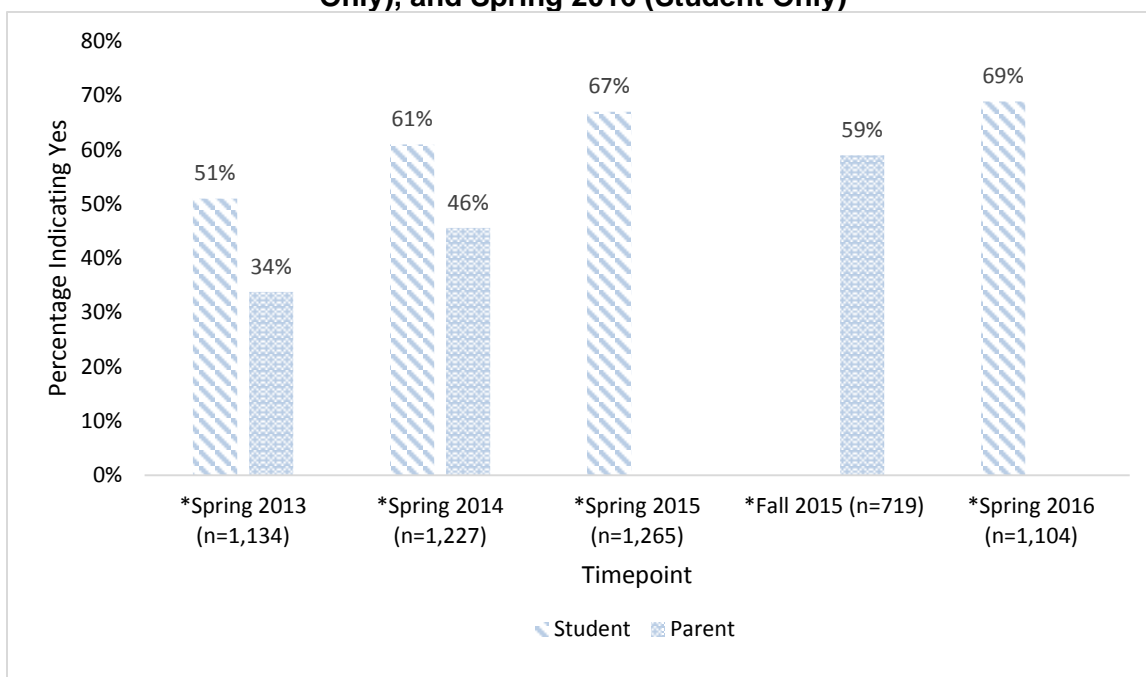
<sup>130</sup> The following question was previously required on the APR by ED: "Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about the availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?" This question has continued to be included in recent surveys in order to track responses longitudinally.

<sup>131</sup> Student responses differed significantly since spring 2015:  $\chi^2(1) = 218.8, p < .01$ .



Although the increase is encouraging, about one third of students (31%) have not reported interactions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff regarding the financial aspects of college. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider using their student participation data to identify students who have not previously participated in events related to educational financing and target those students for participation in future related events. This will help to ensure that all students are exposed to information about the financial aspects of school. Tracking student participation in Texas GEAR UP SG sponsored events may also allow Texas GEAR UP SG staff to follow up with those students who have already participated in events or discussions on financial aid to provide them with additional or more detailed information and guidance on the availability of financial aid. This is particularly important given that, as displayed in Figure 3.5, 41% of students who are not planning to attend college cited the cost/affordability of college as a reason.

**Figure 3.10. Parents' and Students' Discussions with School or GEAR UP Staff About Financial Aid: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015 (Student Only), Fall 2015 (Parent Only), and Spring 2016 (Student Only)**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016); Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring/Fall 2015).

\* The "n" provided is in reference to the student surveys; parent survey n's are as follows: spring 2013: n=396, spring 2014: n=457, fall 2015=719. Parent survey data from spring 2015 is not included due to low response rates and was re-administered in fall 2015 with the exception of one district.

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

Student discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff about financial aid differed significantly across schools, with more than 80% of students at High Schools J and M (83% and 82%, respectively), but only about half of students at High Schools K (51%), indicating that they had

such discussions (Table G.22, Appendix G).<sup>132</sup> Thus, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should target efforts to reach out to all students at all schools, which may help to increase their perceptions of affordability. One approach may be having Texas GEAR UP SG staff include financial aid as part of larger effort in addressing classes of students. Some students who participated in site visit focus groups reported that they had begun to have one-on-one conversations about college financing options with Texas GEAR UP SG staff during the 2015–16 school year.<sup>133</sup>

Parents were also asked whether anyone from the school or Texas GEAR UP SG staff had spoken with them about the availability of financial aid to help pay for college. From spring 2013 (34%) to fall 2015 (59%), there has been a 25 percentage point increase in parents reporting that they discussed with someone in their child’s school or a GEAR UP staff member about financial aid.

### 3.4.2 Knowledge About Financing College

Existing literature points to the importance of providing information about and assistance with the financial aid process to students and parents. Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulos, & Sanbonmatsu (2009) found that high school seniors and recent graduates from low- and moderate-income families who received information about and assistance with the FASFA application were 25–30% more likely to enroll in college than those who did not, which underscores the importance of financial knowledge and support. In spring 2016, most Texas GEAR UP SG students (66%) indicated that they felt *slightly knowledgeable* or *knowledgeable* about financing college (see Figure G.4, Appendix G).<sup>134</sup> Nearly one quarter of students (22%) reported having *no knowledge* regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of pursuing postsecondary education; this finding is in line with results from spring 2015.<sup>135</sup> At the other end of the scale, only 11% of students reported feeling *extremely knowledgeable* on this topic, a finding which is also in line with results from spring 2015.<sup>136</sup> Considering the importance of providing information about and assistance with the financial aid process, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should increase their efforts to provide students and parents with opportunities to learn more about how to finance a postsecondary education.

In addition to overall perceptions regarding student knowledge about financing college, the surveys asked about knowledge of specific financial aid-related terms; average knowledge results are shown in Figure 3.11 (Table G.23 in Appendix G shows the percentages for each response option). On average, students reported being *knowledgeable* about scholarships and being *slightly knowledgeable* regarding other financial aid-related terms. These results are similar to those from spring 2014 and spring 2015 (Briggs et al., 2016; Briggs et al., 2015). Texas GEAR UP SG staff need to focus activities on each of these aspects of financial aid in order to increase knowledge about financial aid. Given that these levels have remained relatively the same since spring 2014, exploring new approaches to disseminate information,

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<sup>132</sup> Student responses indicated that discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff about financial aid differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 71.3, p < .01$ .

<sup>133</sup> At schools for which this was reported, College Preparation Advisors had not yet met one-on-one with each student but had anticipated being able to do so before the school year ended.

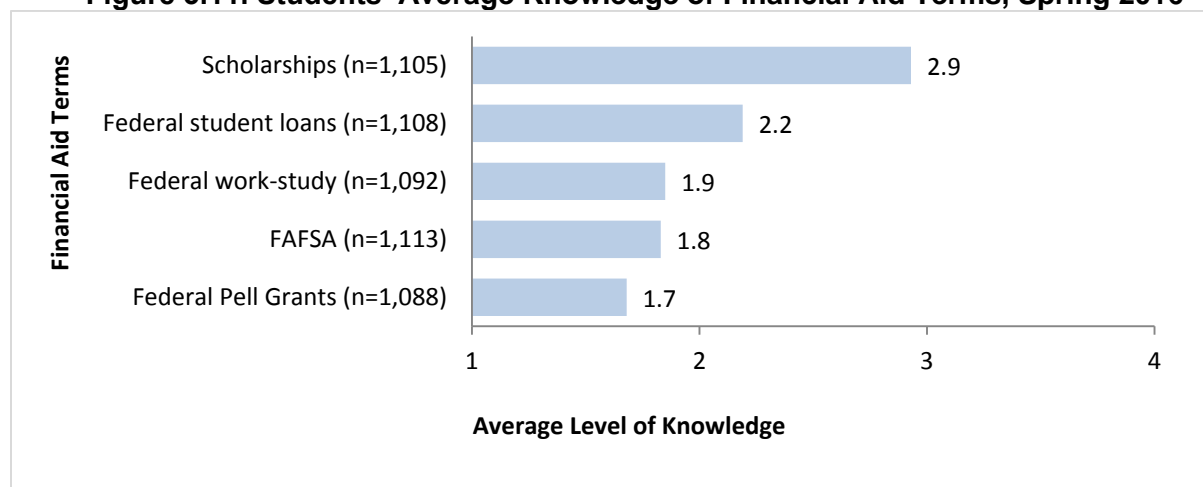
<sup>134</sup> The following question was previously required on the APR by ED: “How much do you know about the following: financial aid and the costs and benefits of pursuing postsecondary education?” The question has continued to be included in recently surveys in order to track responses longitudinally.

<sup>135</sup> Student responses indicating having *no knowledge* regarding financial aid did not differ significantly from spring 2015 to spring 2016:  $\chi^2(1) = .05, p > .05$ .

<sup>136</sup> Student-reported knowledge of the importance and benefits of going to college did not differ significantly across from spring 2015 to spring 2016:  $\chi^2(1) = 1.2, p > .05$ .

using a variety of resources, and/or increasing the intensity of the focus may be necessary to effect change in this area, particularly as the cohort moves into Grades 11 and 12 and the college application process becomes increasingly imminent.

**Figure 3.11. Students' Average Knowledge of Financial Aid Terms, Spring 2016**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Response options to the question “How much do you know about each of the following?” are scaled as follows: 1 – No Knowledge, 2 – Slightly Knowledgeable, 3 – Knowledgeable, and 4 – Extremely Knowledgeable. N counts for each item are included in the full data presented in Table G.23, Appendix G. FAFSA is Free Application for Federal Student Aid; however, the survey items used only the acronym.

### 3.4.3 Perceived Ability to Afford Postsecondary Education

It is important that students have enough knowledge about financing options to perceive college as being affordable through one or more of the many financing options available. In spring 2016, fewer than half of students (43%) reported perceiving that they would *probably* or *definitely* be able to afford a four-year college, and 59% of students reported that they would *probably* or *definitely* be able to afford a community college (Table G.24, Appendix G).<sup>137</sup> Figure 3.12 shows that student perceptions of the affordability of a four-year college decreased, overall, between spring 2013 and spring 2016 by 11 percentage points, and student perceptions of the affordability of community college slightly decreased by eight percentage points, during that same time period, indicating a significant change for both.<sup>138 139</sup> Table G.24 in Appendix G displays the response options for each category; Table G.25 in Appendix G includes results by school. Most students (87%) indicated at least some concern about their ability to afford a four-year college by selecting *probably*, *not sure*, *probably not*, or *definitely not* in response to the question about their ability to afford a four-year college. High School M had the highest percentage of students (22%) who believed that they would *definitely* be able to afford to attend a four-year college. High School K had the lowest percentage of students (8%) who were

<sup>137</sup> The following question regarding perceived affordability was previously required on the APR by ED: “Do you think that you/your child could afford to attend a public four-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family’s resources?” This question has continued to be included in recent surveys in order to track the responses longitudinally.

<sup>138</sup> Student perceptions of affordability of a four-year college differed significantly since 2013:  $\chi^2(3) = 31.5$ ,  $p < .01$ .

<sup>139</sup> Student perceptions of affordability of a local community college differed significantly since 2013:  $\chi^2(3) = 54.4$ ,  $p < .01$ .

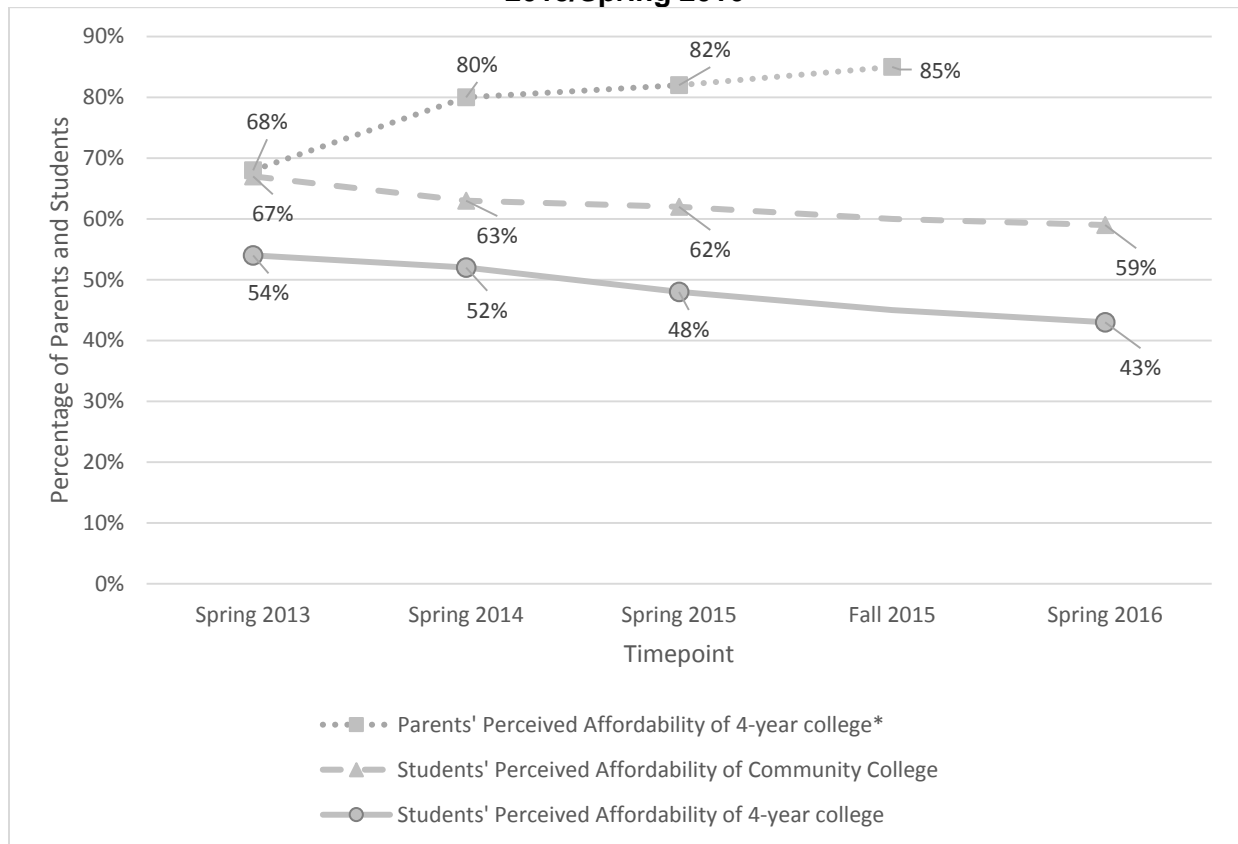
definite about being able to afford a four-year college (See Table G.25, Appendix G).<sup>140</sup> Consistent with the recommendations from other survey items related to the financial aspects of college, these findings affirm the need for Texas GEAR UP SG staff to continue to help students perceive college as an affordable option by exposing them to the multiple financial aid options that are available. More specifically, College Preparation Advisors and other school staff should continue to enhance students' knowledge through one-on-one meetings and other direct conversations with students.

Unlike students' gradual decline in perceiving themselves as not being able to afford either a 4-year college or community college, parents have shown an increase in their perceptions of affordability. Since spring 2013, there has been a 17 percentage point increase in parents who perceive a 4-year college as being affordable. It should be noted that given that the parent survey response rate was 43%, it is possible that the parents who completed the survey may have been more involved in the Texas GEAR UP SG program or in their children's postsecondary education options or plans and so may be more informed about various financing options that would make postsecondary education affordable.

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<sup>140</sup> Student perceptions of affordability of a four-year college differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(3) = 59.6, p < .01$ .

**Figure 3.12. Parents’ and Students’ Perceptions of College Affordability as Being Probably and Definitely Affordable: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Fall 2015/Spring 2016**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring/Fall 2015); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016).

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, 2015, and 2016 survey. The spring 2013 parent survey did not ask about the perceived affordability of a local community college. Low parent response rates in spring 2013 (n=397) and spring 2014 (n=463) warrant caution in interpreting the trend data included on parent surveys. Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. N counts for each item and each response option for spring 2016 are included in the full data presented in Table G.24, Appendix G.

\* Student perceptions of affordability of a four-year college differed significantly over time, from 2013 to 2016:  $\chi^2(3) = 3,526.4, p < .01$ .

### 3.4.4 Perceived Cost of Higher Education

One possible reason for students perceiving postsecondary education as unattainable may be that they overestimate the costs (O’Donnel et al., 2013). Accurate knowledge about the cost of postsecondary education is one step toward perceiving postsecondary enrollment as a possibility. This knowledge may also make it seem to be out of reach; thus, building awareness about the actual costs of various types of schools can be a way for Texas GEAR UP SG to reach out to parents and students who may have otherwise seen college as unattainable for reasons related to cost. Ideally, accurate knowledge is accompanied with information about financial aid and scholarships to pay for the cost. In 2015–16, the actual average cost of tuition and fees for one year at a local two-year community college was \$2,473, and the actual average cost of tuition and fees for one year at a public four-year college or university in Texas was \$5,205 and \$8,319, respectively (College For All Texans, 2015). As indicated in Table 3.5,

student surveys included a question prompting respondents to estimate the amount that it would cost to attend a local public two-year community college and a four-year public college in Texas.

**Table 3.5. Students' Perceived Cost of Higher Education, Percentages by Cost Grouping, Spring 2016**

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 \$6,500	\$6,501 to \$9,400	\$9,401 to \$13,000	\$13,001 to \$18,000	More than \$18,000
Your local public two-year community college?	1,107	18.0%	24.8%	22.9%	12.1%	10.8%	5.7%	5.6%
A four-year public college in your state?	1,084	3.7%	6.5%	13.7%	16.6%	15.7%	18.5%	25.3%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Grey boxes indicate the actual cost ranges for each higher education option.

While students correctly perceived that there were lower costs associated with one year of attendance at a local public two-year community college as compared to a four-year public college in the state, students generally overestimated the costs of both types of colleges. For example, 57% of students thought that one year at a two-year community college would cost more than \$3,000. Similarly, 60% of students estimated the cost of one year at a four-year college to be more than \$9,400, well above the actual average; this includes one in four students (25%) who expect a single year to cost more than \$18,000. Some of the differences between perceived and actual costs may be related to what is known about actual local costs or the inclusion of additional costs related to college (e.g., room and board, books, transportation) in students' estimation. Despite these potential explanations, students' overestimation of the costs of tuition and fees (which was shown to occur in spring 2013, spring 2014, spring 2015, and spring 2016 surveys) suggests that helping students understand actual college costs continues to be crucial in overcoming cost as a barrier to postsecondary education.

### 3.5 Perceptions About Texas GEAR UP State Grant

One way to understand the potential effect of Texas GEAR UP SG activities is to understand participants' perceptions of those activities. An analysis of survey items related to these perceptions addresses the following research questions: What are student, parent, and staff perceptions of student support services implementation strategies? What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by participants (students, parents, and staff) to be effective and therefore potential best practices? Understanding participants' perceptions can also inform decisions about interim improvements in how activities are designed and implemented, as well as which strategies may be leading to desired outcomes. At the school level, this provides an opportunity to identify pockets of success and allows stories about what is working well to emerge. It should be noted that students' perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG activities may be driven in part by their ability, or inability, to identify college as a viable option after high school, and so findings should be interpreted with caution.

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

##### ACTIVITIES OFFERED DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Students reported on their participation in various postsecondary education awareness and readiness activities (e.g., counseling, tutoring, informational events) and how effective they

perceived each activity to be in helping them succeed in school/prepare to go to college. However, the data presented in this section are limited in that they do not include the perceptions of those who did not participate in activities, and, as a result, there is a wide range of total possible maximum number counts for each item (i.e., levels of participation varied). As noted in prior implementation reports (Briggs et al, 2016; Briggs et al, 2015; O'Donnel et al., 2013), students' reports of participation in activities do not always align with schools' reports of student participation in activities. For example, across schools, 95% of students indicated on the student survey that they participated in tutoring during the 2015–16 school year (Table G.28, Appendix G), whereas schools indicated that only 51% of students participated in tutoring during the 2015–16 school year (see Figure 2.3 in Chapter 2). One possible reason for this discrepancy could be that respondents, which represented 69% of the entire Texas GEAR UP SG cohort may have been more likely to have participated in tutoring than the cohort as a whole. In addition, it is also possible that students and/or school staff may have had confusion or misunderstanding regarding what exactly constitutes as tutoring. In general, the Texas GEAR UP SG staff should think about ways to communicate more effectively to students regarding their participation in the various program components.

The surveys included questions prompting student respondents to rate the levels of effectiveness of the activities in which they participated. Lower scores indicated that students perceived the activity as being less effective in preparing them for college and, inversely, higher scores indicated that they perceived the activity as being more effective. On average, students responding to these items found each type of activity in which they participated to be *mostly effective*. Figure 3.12 shows average student perceptions of activities; the results for each response option are displayed in Table G.26 in Appendix G.

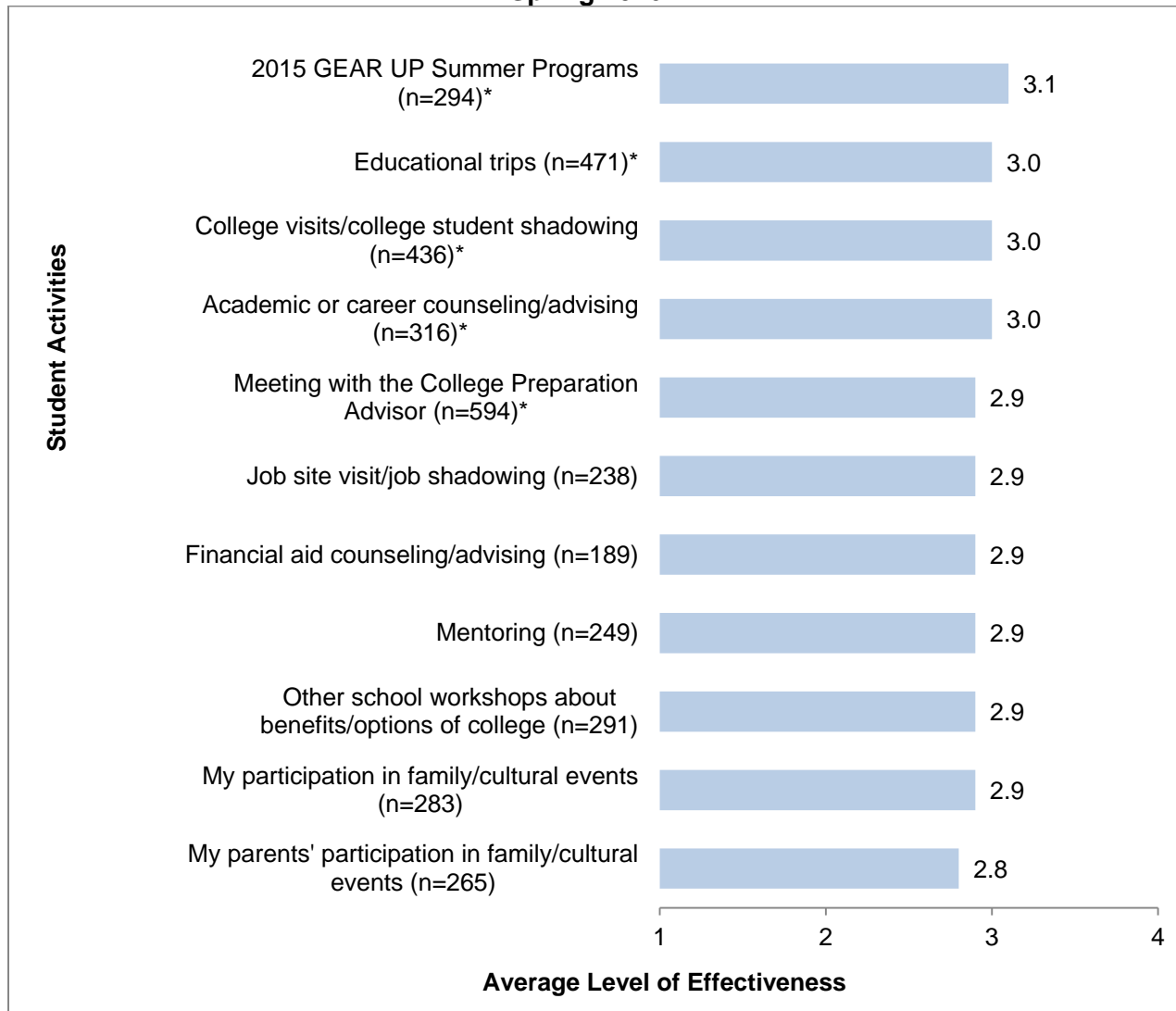
As demonstrated in Figure 3.13, the average levels of perceived effectiveness were the highest for the following activities: 2015 GEAR UP summer programs, educational field trips, college visits, and academic career counseling/advising. Each of these activities was rated an average score of “mostly effective” (3.0). The average levels of perceived effectiveness differed significantly across schools for many activities (Table G.27, Appendix G).<sup>141</sup> In addition, there were meaningful differences in reported participation in these activities across schools (Table G.28, Appendix G).<sup>142</sup> For example, 83% of students at High School M reported going on college visits, as compared to only 35% of the students at High School L. High School M also had more than half of students (55%) report participating in GEAR UP summer programs, compared to 25% at High School K (the remaining schools fell in between these two percentages).

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<sup>141</sup> Average student responses were significantly different across schools: GEAR UP Summer Program-  $F(5, 556) = 3.6, p < .01$ ; Educational trips-  $F(5, 680) = 4.4, p < .001$ ; College visit-  $F(5, 1,063) = 21.1, p < .001$ ; Meeting with the College Preparation Advisor-  $F(5, 1,049) = 17.9, p < .001$ ; Academic or Career Counseling/Advising-  $F(5, 449) = 3.0, p < .05$ ; Tutoring, Any Subject-  $F(5, 739) = 2.3, p < .05$ .

<sup>142</sup> Average student responses regarding participation in selected GEAR UP activities differed across schools: GEAR UP summer program:  $\chi^2(5) = 50.8, p < .01$ ; educational trips:  $\chi^2(5) = 99.2, p < .01$ ; college visit:  $\chi^2(5) = 106.1, p < .01$ ; meeting with the College Preparation Advisor:  $\chi^2(10) = 200.7, p < .01$ ; academic or career counseling/advising:  $\chi^2(5) = 55.4, p < .01$ . Average responses by school are displayed in Table G.26, Appendix G.

**Figure 3.13. Students' Average Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Student Activities, Spring 2016**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: In response to the survey question “How effective was this course/activity in helping you to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?,” students selected one of the following response options: 1 – Not Effective, 2 – Slightly Effective, 3 – Mostly Effective, or 4 – Very Effective. Table G.25, Appendix G includes each response option. \* The degree to which average student responses differed across schools varied: GEAR UP Summer Program-  $F(5, 288) = .64, p > .05$ ; Educational trips-  $F(5, 465) = 5.1, p < .01$ ; College visit-  $F(5, 430) = 5.78, p < .01$ ; Meeting with the College Preparation Advisor-  $F(5, 588) = 5.5, p < .05$ ; Academic or Career Counseling/Advising-  $F(5, 310) = 3.1, p < .05$ .

**STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES WITH COLLEGE PREPARATION ADVISORS**

Because College Preparation Advisors are key facilitators to Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, it is important to monitor their perceived effectiveness. Figure 3.14 illustrates the perceptions of effectiveness of the College Preparation Advisors based on the 54% of students who indicated on the survey that they met with a College Preparation Advisor during



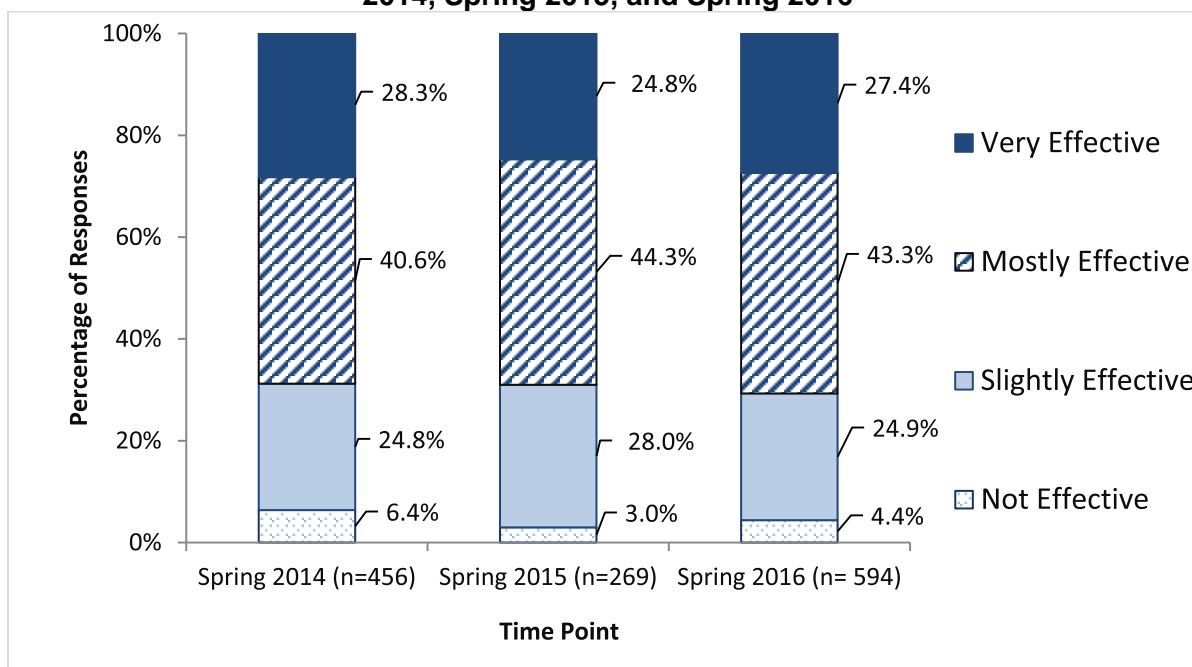
the 2015–16 school year.<sup>143</sup> Among these, 71% of students found meeting with a College Preparation Advisor to be *mostly effective* or *very effective* (compared to 62% in Year 3), which suggests that when students have an opportunity to meet with College Preparation Advisors, students see it as a positive experience. Offering students who have not met with College Preparation Advisors such an opportunity is a suggested next step. However, it may be necessary, given the limited time available for one-on-one sessions with each student, to prioritize meeting only with selected students through a tiered intervention approach and reserving other opportunities (such as Texas GEAR UP SG events) to interact with the remaining students whose needs may not be as intensive. As Texas GEAR SG schools continue to include College Preparation Advisors in postsecondary education awareness and readiness efforts, it will be important to ensure that students are aware of and can access this resource. Further action to ensure that more students perceive interactions with College Preparation Advisors to be effective is another area to consider for continuous growth.

Similar to the qualitative data reported in the Year 3 Annual Implementation Report (Briggs et al., 2016), College Preparation Advisors performed valuable tasks in ensuring the implementation of activities through a regular, consistent presence in schools. Additionally, Year 4 has seen the growth of new roles among College Preparation Advisors, including providing students with information pertaining to college readiness assessments (e.g., PSAT, SAT, ACT). Many students described their College Preparation Advisors as being similar to how one student at High School J described: College Preparation Advisors can be talked to “about anything and everything, summer camps and college and financial aid and a bunch of different stuff.”

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<sup>143</sup> Spring 2015 survey: Percentage of respondents responding in the affirmative to the following questions: “Have you ever met with the College Preparation Advisor at your school?,” 55%; and “Have you participated in this activity during this school year: Met with a College Preparation Advisor?,” 54%. Internal inconsistency in items on the student survey warrants caution in interpretation. To further contextualize these survey results, the Support Center provided data on the number of students who met with their College Preparation Advisors. Across all schools, there were 1,357 students who met with their College Preparation Advisors—or approximately 72%. There are possible explanations for the discrepancy between this percentage and the percentage of students who reported meeting with their College Preparation Advisor in the spring 2016 survey. Since the student survey response rate was 69%, it is possible that the portion of students who responded to the survey were less likely to have met with their College Preparation Advisors in comparison to non-respondents in the cohort. It is also possible that student survey respondents did not realize that the individuals that they met with were their College Preparation Advisors. In other words, the students may have been aware of meetings that they had with certain staff members at school, but may not have known the specific titles of these staff.

**Figure 3.14. Students' Perceived Effectiveness of College Preparation Advisors: Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016).

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

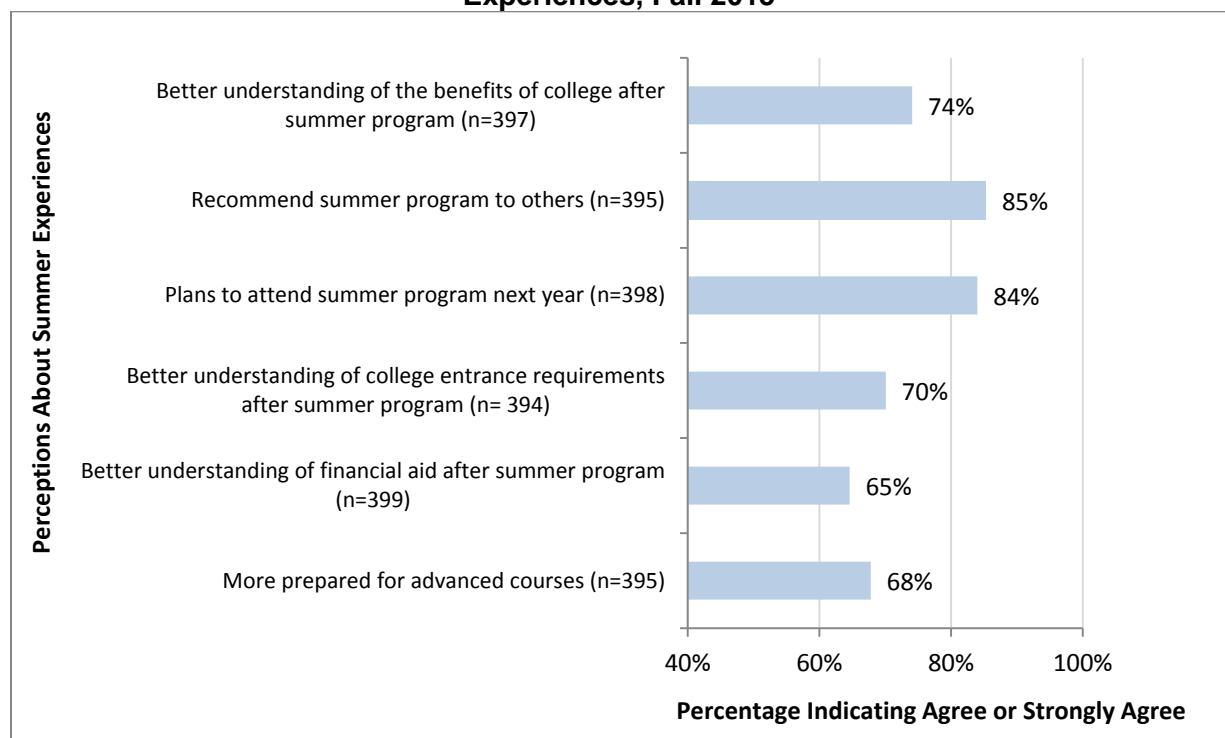
### ACTIVITIES OFFERED IN SUMMER 2015 AND PLANS FOR SUMMER 2016

Since Year 1, each of the schools indicated plans to conduct summer programs focused on activities that would further support student success in advanced courses and general content related to college readiness. In GUIDES, schools reported that 1,021 students enrolled in a summer 2015 program (see Chapter 2.3.4) out of a total of 1,874 students (54%). In the fall 2015 survey, 28% of students stated that they participated in at least one Texas GEAR UP SG summer program at their school. This discrepancy suggests that some students may have been unclear about whether or not their summer program was associated with the Texas GEAR UP SG. Alternatively, it is also possible that students who did not respond to the survey were more likely to have participated in the summer 2015 program than students who did respond to the survey. Figure 3.15 shows student perceptions about the summer program; see the Year 3 Annual Implementation Report (Briggs et al., 2016) for data from the fall 2014 survey about participation in summer 2014 programs. For the survey respondents who stated that they participated in at least one Texas GEAR UP SG summer program in 2015, students perceived having a better understanding of the benefits of college (74%), college entrance requirements (70%), and financial aid (65%) after participating in the summer program. This does not represent a significant change regarding having a better understanding of the benefits of college in comparison to perceptions of the 2014 summer program.<sup>144</sup> Overall, a majority of the students plan to attend Texas GEAR UP SG summer 2016 programs (84%) and would recommend summer programs to others (85%), which is a significant increase over the results from the fall

<sup>144</sup> Data from the Fall 2015 survey did not significantly differ from fall 2014 data regarding college entrance requirements (81%):  $\chi^2(1) = 0.2, p > .05$  or financial aid (77%):  $\chi^2(1) = 0.2, p > .05$ .

2014 survey.<sup>145</sup> In upcoming summer programs, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should focus more on college entrance exam preparation—for the SAT and ACT—and continue to focus on financial aid, given the survey items that reflect concerns regarding the financial aspects of college as well as evolving priorities for students as they enter Grade 11. Additionally, Texas GEAR UP SG staff could use the summer programs as an opportunity to prepare students for advanced courses including supporting students’ development of skills associated with academic success such as organization and planning, especially as students begin enrolling in AP and dual-enrollment courses.

**Figure 3.15. Students’ Perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG Summer Programs by Types of Experiences, Fall 2015\***



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

\* N/A option provided for the first time in the student fall 2015 survey.

Spring 2016 surveys also included questions about a range of Texas GEAR UP SG activities, including summer programs.<sup>146</sup> Of the students who indicated that they participated, 40% rated the 2015 GEAR UP summer program they participated in as *very effective* and 35% rated it as *mostly effective* (see Table G.26, Appendix G). The effectiveness of summer programs for those who do attend is useful to know as Texas GEAR UP SG staff consider ways to encourage a greater percentage of students to attend.

<sup>145</sup> Data from the Fall 2014 survey: “Based on my experiences with the summer 2014 program, I am planning on attending the summer 2015 program if possible” (82%); I would recommend the summer program to other students at my school” (84%). There is a statistically significant increase from 2014 to 2015 for both items: Planning to attend next summer program:  $\chi^2(1) = 9.0, p < .01$ ; Recommend the summer program to other students:  $\chi^2(1) = 4.5, p < .05$ .

<sup>146</sup> Percentage of respondents answering in the affirmative to the following questions: Student Fall 2015 survey item: “Did you participate in the GEAR UP summer 2015 program at your school?” (28%) and Student Spring 2016 survey item: “Have you participated in this activity during this school year?” (33%). Internal inconsistency with items on the student survey warrants caution in interpretation.

Tables G.29 and G.30 in Appendix G list student-reported reasons for attending and not attending summer programs in 2015. Students commonly reported that participation was driven by wanting to participate in a summer program (73%), providing an opportunity for the student to spend time with friends (46%), and anticipated help in Grade 10 classes (43%).<sup>147 148 149</sup> Students' selection of reasons for attending in 2015 significantly differed from 2014. In particular, whereas 73% of students reported that they wanted to participate in a summer program in 2015, 48% of students cited this reason in 2014. The 25 percentage point increase in students wanting to participate is a positive indicator that the summer programs have been successful in getting kids involved with GEAR UP. Commonly cited reasons for *not* attending included not wanting to participate in a summer program (39%), family responsibilities on behalf of the student (19%), and not being in the area at the time (18%).<sup>150 151</sup> Of these three reasons, having family responsibilities on behalf of the student was the only reason provided in 2015 that was not significantly different from the reasons provided in 2014. Texas GEAR UP SG and school staff are encouraged to consider the facilitators and barriers to recruiting more participants for future Texas GEAR UP SG summer programs. For example, making it clear how programs will help students be successful in their high school courses and having school/Texas GEAR UP SG staff encourage students to attend (and make sure that they are aware of the option) might be a helpful strategy. Given site visit data on the multiple competing summer options for high school students (such as camps for sports and band), coordinating the programs in advance may be a helpful strategy to increase participation.

### STUDENT-REPORTED NEEDS FOR INFORMATION, SUPPORT, OR ACTIVITIES

Students were asked to provide direct input on the kinds of information, support, or activities that would help them to be successful in school and prepared for college as shown in Table 3.6. As with Year 3 (Briggs et al., 2016), the most commonly identified need for students was information on financial aid/scholarships (59%), affirming the need for Texas GEAR UP SG to focus more on the financial aspects of college, followed by college visits (57%), which suggests that students enjoy opportunities for learning that occur outside of the traditional classroom. Information on college entrance requirements was selected by more than half of the students (54%). Given that nearly half of the students (44%) reported needing more information on GEAR UP and how to participate, efforts in forthcoming years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation should focus on clear communication with students about what GEAR UP is and how they can become involved.

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<sup>147</sup> Students who selected "spending time with friends" as a reason for attending the summer program reported a significant difference since fall 2014:  $\chi^2(1) = 5.8, p < .05$

<sup>148</sup> Students who selected "wanting to participate" as a reason for attending the summer program reported a significant difference since fall 2014:  $\chi^2(1) = 59.9, p < .01$

<sup>149</sup> Students who selected "driven by anticipated help in Grade 10" as a reason for attending the summer program reported a significant difference since fall 2014:  $\chi^2(1) = 8.4, p < .01$

<sup>150</sup> Students who selected "not wanting to participate" as a reason for not attending the summer program reported a significant difference since fall 2014:  $\chi^2(1) = 5.8, p < .05$

<sup>151</sup> Students who selected "not being in the area" as a reason for not attending the summer program reported a significant difference since fall 2014:  $\chi^2(1) = 123.0, p < .01$

**Table 3.6. Students' Input on Needed Information/Support/Activities, Spring 2016**

Information/Support/Activity	n=1,007
More information on financial aid/scholarships	59%
Opportunities to participate in college visits	57%
More information on college entrance requirements	54%
More information on GEAR UP program/how to participate	44%
Sports, activities, and clubs	44%
Information about taking college entrance exams	44%
Information about dual credit courses where I can earn both	41%
More advanced classes	39%
Information about endorsement options	38%
Tutoring/Individualized care	36%
Bilingual	22%
Other	8%

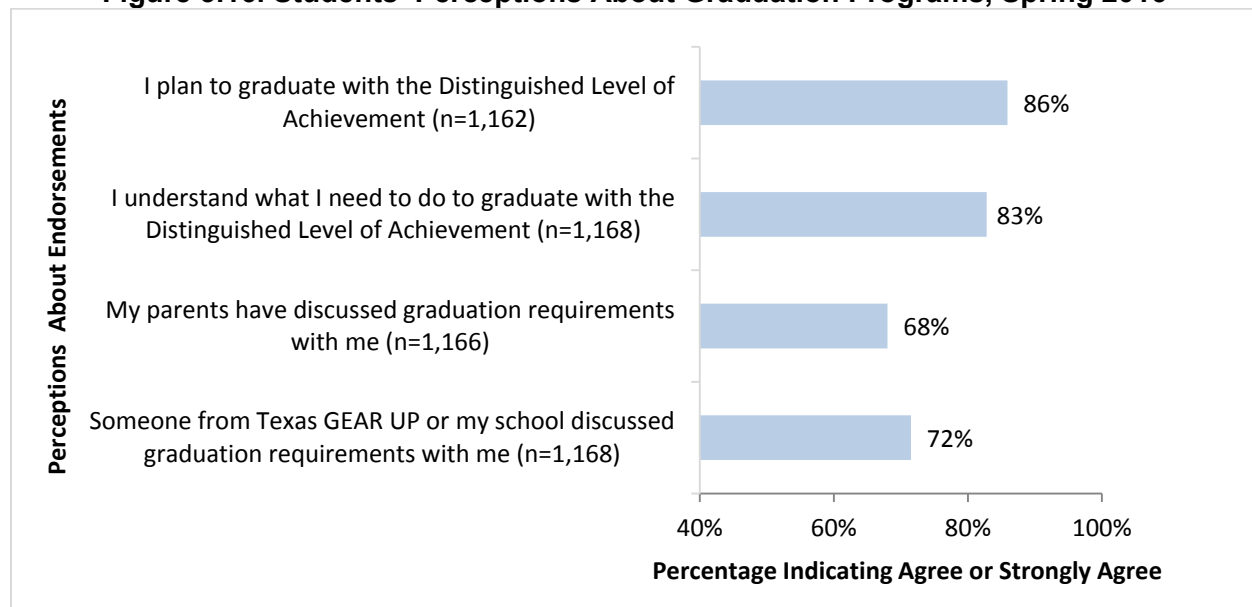
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

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

The Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort, the majority of whom entered Grade 9 during the 2014–15 school year, is the first graduating class to be subject to the new requirements under the Foundation High School Program (FHSP), as summarized in Chapter 1.<sup>152</sup> Knowing students' perceptions about their experiences with endorsements and graduation programs will help to gauge progress toward Project Objective 1.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Program with an endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, including four years of credits in each core subject, will meet or exceed the state average. Survey items related to endorsements and graduation programs also relate to Project Objective 4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college. Thus, efforts through Texas GEAR UP SG implementation offer an opportunity for students to receive supports to help them meet those requirements as a critical step toward college.

Students' perceptions about graduation programs are displayed in Figure 3.16. Most encouraging among the results is that a majority of the students (86%) plan to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement (see Chapter 1 for more details about this graduation option). Just over two-thirds (72%) of students reported that someone from GEAR UP spoke with them about graduation requirements. As students' progress through high school and graduation nears, it will be important for Texas GEAR UP SG staff to continue to be available for students' questions about graduation and to proactively reach out to students to ensure that they are on the path to meeting the requirements of their graduation programs.

<sup>152</sup> While all students who entered Grade 9 in the 2014–15 school year, it is possible that students may have joined the cohort as a result of being retained in Grade 9 or Grade 10 and so are not subject to the Foundation High School Program graduation requirements.

**Figure 3.16. Students' Perceptions About Graduation Programs, Spring 2016**

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Survey results indicate that a majority of the students (65%) understood what they needed to do if they decided to change their endorsement and over three quarters of the students (83%) understood how an endorsement would help them with college/career preparation (see Table G.31, Appendix G). Both of these items show a significant increase since spring 2015.<sup>153</sup> In addition, the percentage of students who found it easy to select an endorsement (68%) also significantly increased from spring 2015 (61%).<sup>154</sup> Although Texas GEAR UP SG staff supported students in helping select appropriate endorsements, 30% of the students were considering dropping the endorsement that they initially selected, a seven percentage point increase since spring 2015 (23%).<sup>155</sup> In forthcoming years of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, efforts might include encouraging students to continue working toward their selected endorsements and offering programs tailored to selected programs (such as college visits to schools that focus on particular endorsement areas).

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

Beyond feedback about specific activities, students were also asked about their overall perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG. As shown in Figure 3.17, there were significant changes

<sup>153</sup> Students who either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the following statements reported a significant difference since spring 2015: "I understand what I need to do if I decide to change my endorsement,"  $\chi^2(1) = 6.3, p < .05$ ; "I understand how my endorsement(s) will help me prepare for college/career,"  $\chi^2(1) = 5.3, p < .05$ .

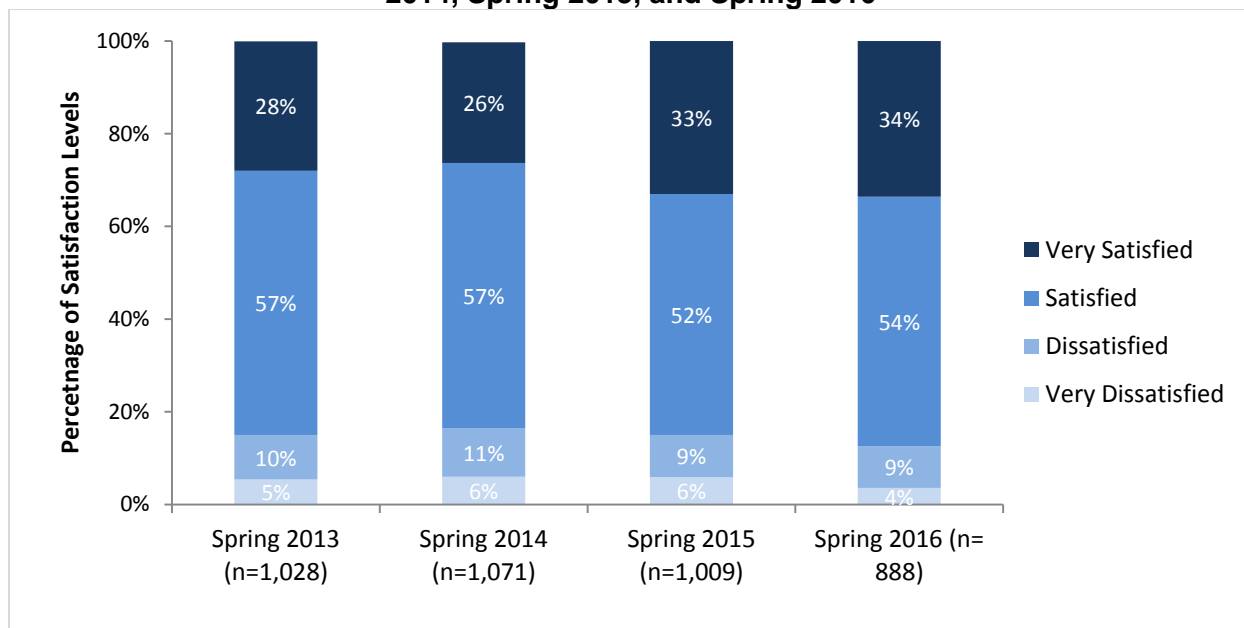
<sup>154</sup> Students who either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the following statement reported a significant difference since spring 2015: "I found it easy to select an endorsement,"  $\chi^2(1) = 12.7, p < .001$ .

<sup>155</sup> Students who either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* with the following statement reported a significant difference since spring 2015: "I plan on dropping my endorsement as soon as I am able to after my sophomore (Grade 10) year,"  $\chi^2(1) = 4.0, p < .05$ .

over time in their overall perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG.<sup>156</sup> For example, the percentage of students who were *very satisfied* was 28% in Year 1, but has increased to 34% in Year 4. It will be important going forward for Texas GEAR UP SG to focus on continuing to offer services that students want in order for them to remain satisfied with the program. However, it is important to note that, overall, 88% of students reported being *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with Texas GEAR UP SG, which is up three percentage points from Year 3 (85%).

Student satisfaction differed significantly across schools (Table G.32, Appendix G).<sup>157</sup> The percentages of students who reported being *very satisfied* was lowest at High School K and L (16% at both) and highest at School J (53%).

**Figure 3.17. Student Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG Overall: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016).

Note: Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. For all three student surveys reported, the “Does not apply” option is not calculated in this figure. To see this option calculated, please see Table G.32, Appendix G.

Parents were also asked about their overall perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG, as shown in Figure 3.18. Generally, parents were more satisfied with the Texas GEAR UP SG than the students, with 95% of parents either *Satisfied* or *Very Satisfied*, compared to 88% of students. This is a 10 percentage point increase from spring 2014, and is identical to the spring 2013 (95%) parent survey results for this item. Additionally, 42% of parents were *Very Satisfied* with the program, as opposed to 34% of students. Overall parent perceptions of the Texas GEAR UP SG also varied across schools.<sup>158</sup> Among those parents who perceived that the question applied to them, 100% of parents at High School J were either *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the Texas

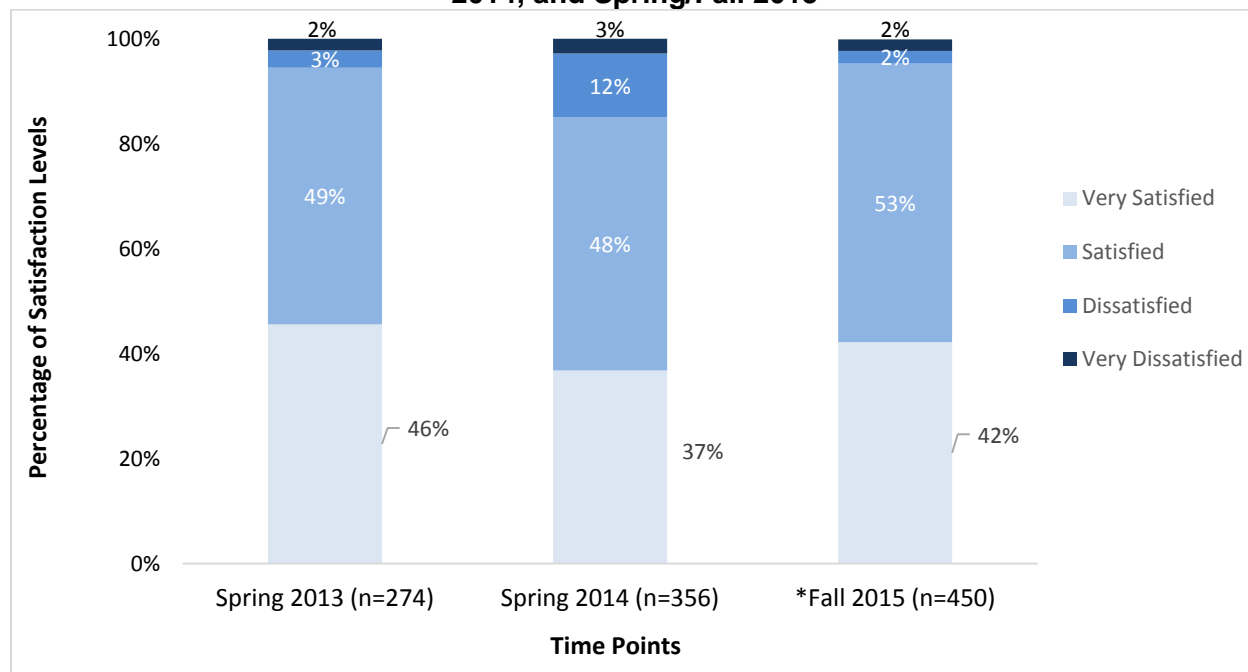
<sup>156</sup> Student-reported satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG differed significantly over time since spring 2013:  $\chi^2(9) = 25.3, p < .01$ .

<sup>157</sup> Student-reported satisfaction with GEAR UP differed significantly across schools in spring 2016:  $\chi^2(20) = 101.9, p < .01$ .

<sup>158</sup> Parent-reported satisfaction with GEAR UP differed significantly across schools in spring/fall 2015:  $\chi^2(20) = 194.4, p < .01$ .

GEAR UP SG program.<sup>159</sup> Although High School L reported 88% of parents being either *satisfied* or *very satisfied*, the lowest across all schools, they reported the most parents who were *very satisfied* with the program at 60% (Table G.33, Appendix G).<sup>160</sup>

**Figure 3.18. Parent Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG Overall: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, and Spring/Fall 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring/Fall 2015).

Note: Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses. When merging the Somerset High School Parent surveys, only was “Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your child’s school?” This was merged into the “Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your child’s school so far this year (2015–16)?” For all three parent surveys reported, the “Does not apply” option is not calculated in this figure. To see this option calculated, please see Table G.33, Appendix G.

### 3.6 Relationships Between Perceptions

In this section, relationships among survey items are explored. Rather than examining only relationships between aggregated items, several individual item scores were created. Because the findings reported here are correlational, it cannot be argued that levels on one variable are influencing or causing levels on another variable. Still, understanding the extent to which various constructs are associated with each other provides insights about the program. For example, knowing that there is a positive linear relationship between discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff and knowledge (as engagement in discussions rises, so, too, do levels of knowledge) might prompt more focus on discussions in the hopes of also affecting knowledge. The following five sections about college entrance requirements, financing college, summer programs, college

<sup>159</sup> As shown in Table G.33, Appendix G, 36% of parents across all schools selected “Does not apply” when asked about their level of satisfaction with the Texas GEAR UP SG. These findings reflect survey results that exclude those parents who selected “Does not apply.”

<sup>160</sup> These findings reflect survey results that exclude those parents who selected “Does not apply.”



visits, and graduation requirements represent central topics that have occurred in Year 4 implementation.

### 3.6.1 College Entrance Requirements

Student discussions about college entrance requirements with someone from their school or Texas GEAR UP SG were positively correlated, to a low but statistically significant degree, with students' perceived knowledge of separate college entrance topic areas (Table 3.7). In other words, having engaged in these conversations was associated with a higher self-reported level of knowledge of college-going concepts, including entrance requirements and anticipated benefits. The results of these correlations mirror the findings in the Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 reports (Briggs et al., 2016; Briggs et al., 2015; O'Donnell et al., 2013).

**Table 3.7. College Entrance Requirement Correlation with Student Knowledge**

Survey Item	Knowledge Topic Area	Means		Correlation Result
<i>Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about...</i>  <b>College entrance requirements?</b>	SAT	Yes	2.7	$r(1,108) = .26, p < .01$
		No	2.1	
	General requirements for college acceptance	Yes	2.7	$r(1,101) = .31, p < .01$
		No	2.0	
	Importance/benefit of college	Yes	2.9	$r(1,108) = .22, p < .01$
		No	2.4	

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Given that these discussions about college entrance requirements relate to knowledge, it is also important to examine the ways that knowledge relates to expectations. College knowledge and expectations were positively correlated to a very low but statistically significant degree (Table G.34, Appendix G).<sup>161</sup> This finding suggests that higher levels of student knowledge about college were associated with higher educational expectations, a relationship similar to findings from prior years. In regard to college entrance requirements, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should focus on increasing opportunities to engage students in discussions about college acceptance—through events, meetings, and advising sessions—as well as identify and implement new means for students to gain knowledge about college-going concepts.

### 3.6.2 Financing College

Student discussions about the availability of financial aid with someone from their school was positively correlated, to a low but statistically significant degree, with students' perceived knowledge about financial terms (Table 3.8). That is, students who had participated in such conversations, as opposed to those who had not, had higher perceived levels of knowledge about financial aid. These results are consistent with the correlations found in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3 reports (Briggs et al., 2016; Briggs et al., 2015; O'Donnell et al., 2013).

<sup>161</sup>  $r(1,106) = .20, p < .01$ .

**Table 3.8. Availability of Financial Aid Correlation with Student Knowledge**

Survey Item	Knowledge Topic Area	Means		Correlation Result
<i>Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about...</i>  <b>The availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?</b>	Scholarships	Yes	3.1	$r(1,077) = .24, p < .01$
		No	2.6	
	Federal student loans	Yes	2.3	$r(1,082) = .24, p < .01$
		No	1.9	
	Federal work-study	Yes	2.0	$r(1,065) = .23, p < .01$
		No	1.5	
	Federal Pell grants	Yes	1.8	$r(1,062) = .22, p < .01$
		No	1.4	
	FAFSA	Yes	2.0	$r(1,086) = .28, p < .01$
		No	1.5	

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

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 positively correlated, to a very low degree, with educational expectations, suggesting that higher levels of knowledge were associated with higher educational expectations (Table G.34, Appendix G).<sup>162</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG staff should engage in efforts to increase knowledge about college costs and financing options because it may be a factor in changing perceptions among students regarding seeing college as a viable option. Likewise, Texas GEAR UP SG should also continue to work with students to perceive college as a viable option as it may serve to motivate students to gain additional knowledge about college costs and financing options.

### 3.6.3 Summer Programs

Student participation in summer programs was positively correlated to a low but statistically significant degree, with the following student perceptions as shown in Table 3.9: educational expectations, knowledge of separate college entrance topic areas (i.e. SAT, general requirements for college acceptance, and importance/benefit of college), and knowledge of financial aid terms (e.g., scholarships, Federal student loans, Federal work-study, Federal Pell grants, and FAFSA). In other words, having participated in summer programs was associated with educational expectations and college entrance and financial aid knowledge. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should encourage more students to participate in summer programs to help influence differing aspects of creating a college-going culture. Likewise, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should also continue to promote a college-going culture through setting high educational expectations and providing knowledge of separate college entrance and financial aid topics, which may, in turn, encourage more students to want to participate in summer programs.

<sup>162</sup>  $r(1,125) = .22, p < .001$

**Table 3.9. Summer Program Correlation with Education Expectations, College Entrance Knowledge, and Financial Aid Terms**

Survey Item	Knowledge Topic Area	Means		Correlation Result
<p><i>Have you participated in this activity during this school year (2015-2016)?</i></p> <p><b>A 2015 GEAR UP Summer Program</b></p>	Educational expectations	Yes	4.7	$r(1,058) = .11, p < .01$
		No	4.4	
	SAT	Yes	2.8	$r(1,048) = .20, p < .01$
		No	2.4	
	General requirements for college acceptance	Yes	2.8	$r(1,043) = .20, p < .01$
		No	2.4	
	Importance/benefit of college	Yes	3.1	$r(1,051) = .17, p < .01$
		No	2.7	
	Scholarships	Yes	3.1	$r(1,038) = .16, p < .01$
		No	2.9	
	Federal student loans	Yes	2.4	$r(1,044) = .13, p < .01$
		No	2.1	
	Federal work-study	Yes	2.1	$r(1,029) = .19, p < .01$
		No	1.7	
	Federal Pell grants	Yes	1.9	$r(1,022) = .19, p < .01$
		No	1.5	
	FAFSA	Yes	2.1	$r(1,045) = .21, p < .01$
		No	1.7	

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

### 3.6.4 College Visits

Student participation in college visits/college student shadowing was positively correlated, to a very low degree, with students' belief of the importance of attending college for their future (Table 3.10). That is, students who participated in this particular Texas GEAR UP SG activity also tended to believe that college is important. Additionally, college visits and college student shadowing also were positively correlated, to a very low but statistically significant degree, with plans for advanced course taking in a pre-AP or AP course in core subjects (Table 3.10). Texas GEAR UP SG staff should arrange for more college visits (perhaps increasing the number of visits, the percentage of student attendance, and/or the number of universities participating) to help influence these key aspects of creating a college-going culture and academic preparation. Likewise, Texas GEAR UP SG should continue to promote key aspects of a college-going culture, as such a culture may contribute to students' desire to participate in college visits and college student shadowing.

**Table 3.10. Summer Participation Correlation with College Visits and College Student Shadowing**

Survey Item	Knowledge Topic Area	Means		Correlation Result
<i>Have you participated in this activity during this school year (2015-2016)?</i>  <b>College visits/college student shadowing</b>	Importance/benefit of college	Yes	3.0	$r(956) = .24, p < .01$
		No	2.6	
	Planning to take a pre-AP or AP course in mathematics	Yes	3.0	$r(950) = .17, p < .01$
		No	2.7	
	Planning to take a pre-AP or AP course in ELA	Yes	3.1	$r(955) = .20, p < .01$
		No	2.7	
	Planning to take a pre-AP or AP course in Science	Yes	3.0	$r(958) = .17, p < .01$
		No	2.7	
	Planning to take a pre-AP or AP course in Social Studies	Yes	2.9	$r(956) = .18, p < .01$
		No	2.6	

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

### 3.6.5 Graduation Requirements

Two additional correlations emphasize the importance of Texas GEAR UP SG initiating and continuing conversations with students about key aspects of high school graduation. Students' discussions about graduation requirements with someone from Texas GEAR UP SG or their school was positively correlated, to a low but statistically significant degree, with students' understanding about how their endorsement would help them prepare for college or a career (Table 3.11). Additionally, students' discussions with someone from Texas GEAR UP SG or their school about graduation requirements was positively correlated, to a low degree, with their plans to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement (Table G.34, Appendix G).<sup>163</sup>

**Table 3.11. College Entrance Requirements Correlation with Endorsements**

Survey Item	Knowledge Topic Area	Means		Correlation Result
<i>Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about...</i>  <b>College entrance requirements?</b>	I understand how my endorsement(s) (major/minor) will help me to prepare for college and a career.	Yes	3.0	$r(1,109) = .10, p < .01$
		No	2.9	

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Efforts to continue speaking with students (both one-on-one and in group settings) should be continued across the Texas GEAR UP SG schools, as such discussions may help students know what they need to do in order to graduate ready for college. Likewise, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should also continue to inform students about graduation requirements; such information may serve to inspire students to want to have discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG and students about college entrance requirements.

## 3.7 Summary

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 student knowledge and to changes in student perceptions. However, it is important to acknowledge that definitive cause-and-effect relationships between Texas GEAR UP SG

<sup>163</sup>  $r(1,107) = .35, p < .001$ .

activities and these outcomes cannot be made. For this aspect of the evaluation, there is no group of students who are not participating in Texas GEAR UP SG who may serve as a comparison group regarding how student perceptions about these issues change over time. Although in some cases student participants perceive Texas GEAR UP SG is having an impact, readers should interpret the findings with caution.

### 3.7.1 Key Findings

In Year 4, parent and student survey data suggested several potential directions for continued implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, many of which are related to students' levels of understanding regarding college readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, financing college). There are several key findings reported in this chapter, which are highlighted below. In many cases, the findings differed significantly by school, meaning that an overall finding may not necessarily represent the survey findings from any individual school.

- **Continued Growth in Some Aspects of Students' College-Going Mentality.** For two student survey items, findings show continued progress in desired student perceptions. Aspirations to obtain a four-year degree or higher have steadily increased over time, as well as expectations. Students' reported knowledge of college-related terms/concepts, especially the SAT and ACT, continued to increase from spring 2015 to spring 2016, which presumably informs students' plans to attend college. Also notable is that the percentage of students who reported that GEAR UP helped them decide to go to college increased in Year 4. Additionally, more students have utilized the Texas GEAR UP SG website in Year 4 than in previous years. Although other areas may not reflect positive changes, overall perceptions remain high, such as students' attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about the importance of college and plans for taking advanced courses.
- **Student Plans Following Graduation.** Spring 2016 student survey data on graduation programs, as well as the low number of students identifying reasons for not continuing education, show promise that most students are on the path to fulfilling postsecondary college ready requirements. However, a clearer picture as to the plans of graduating students who do not plan to or cannot go to college has begun to emerge. Unlike in previous years, Year 4 shows more students wanting to work or needing to work after high school; in comparison, in previous years, more students indicated that postsecondary education costs too much. In the Year 5 Annual Implementation Report, the evaluation team will explore trends over time on these items with the hopes of continued progress in students' perceptions regarding their postsecondary plans.
- **Positive Experiences with Texas GEAR UP SG Activities.** From college visits to tutoring support, students rated all activities as mostly effective, on average. In particular, students' feedback about summer programs was positive. Correlational data from survey results suggest that participation in summer programs and in college visits was positively associated with education expectations and knowledge of college related terms.
- **Gap Between Aspirations and Expectations.** Between Year 3 and Year 4, survey data indicate that students continue to have educational aspirations that exceed their education expectations, and have remained static in the discrepancy between the two. It may be that providing students with factual information about college, such as the requirements and costs, needs to be paired with ongoing efforts to support students in seeing those requirements as attainable. This could entail academic supports (such as tutoring to help students increase their GPAs and prepare for the SAT/ACT), as well as mentoring services to help students see examples of others who are able to meet college requirements. Unlike student aspirations and expectations, in Year 4, parent survey data have indicated an inverted shift in which parents have higher expectations than aspirations. This is the first

time since the beginning of the Texas GEAR UP SG program that this has happened. It may be that parents, although optimistic about their child attaining a postsecondary education, are also realistic or believe themselves unable to provide that aspiration to their children. Further analysis on this topic will be conducted in the Year 5 Annual Implementation Report.

- **Continued Increase in Knowledge of College Entrance Requirements.** In both the student and parent surveys, a steady increase from Year 1 in the level of knowledge of topics ranging from financial aid to the importance and benefit of college took place. In particular, parent knowledge in 1) financial aid and the cost and benefits to pursuing a postsecondary education, 2) general requirements for college acceptance, and 3) the importance and benefits of college increased by at least five percentage points each year, as shown in Figure 3.6, with the highest increase taking place between spring 2014 and fall 2015, at 16 percentage points, for the topic “understanding the cost and benefits to pursuing a postsecondary education.” Despite significant gains in these areas, a large portion of parents still considered themselves only *slightly knowledgeable* or *not knowledgeable*. Schools might consider continuing or enhancing their efforts to reach out to parents and establish a larger foothold. Chapter 2 includes site visit data pertaining to parent interaction, successes, and challenges in further detail.
- **Nuances of Areas in Which Perceptions Remain the Same.** In many areas, survey data reflect positive changes in perceptions over time. However, there were a few areas where it seems that Texas GEAR UP SG activities had not yet been able to influence the desired changes in perceptions. The following areas remained relatively similar between Year 3 and Year 4: expectations for obtaining a four-year degree or higher, agreement that it is too early to think about college, and overall satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG. It is important to note that, in some cases, a closer examination of school-level data shows a more positive outlook. For example, in spring 2016, 5% of students selected that they do not plan to go to college, but at High School M, it was 4%, and at High School J, it was 1%. For other items, such as expectations about obtaining a four-year degree and it being too early to begin thinking about college, there is more room for growth.

In other areas, survey responses reflected increasing concerns, such as the six percentage point increase of students from 6% in spring 2013 to 12% spring 2016 who do not think it is important to attend college. Additionally, the perceived affordability of a four-year college as being either *Probably* and *Definitely* affordable has decreased by 11 percentage points from 54% in the spring 2013 to 43% in spring 2016. Other areas, which have shown little to no change, include the use of Texas GEAR UP SG staff/events as a resource, which although increased by nine percentage points from 29% in spring 2013 to 38% in spring 2016, it is still lower than the 46% reported in spring 2014. Also, the perceived effectiveness of College Preparation Advisors among students shows only a two percentage point decrease from 31% in spring 2014 to 29% in spring 2016. Given that Year 4 reflects the second year of a high school setting, these areas should be a focus in Year 5. Survey data in forthcoming years will continue to examine those trends with the anticipation that such trends will either reverse or improve.

### 3.7.2 High Levels of Implementation and Perceptions of Successes at High School M and High School J

Throughout this chapter, significant differences across schools have been discussed for various question items in the student survey. It is also important to connect this across items. As in past years, High School M stands out as exceeding other schools on multiple survey items. This school had the highest percentage of students for each of the following items:

- Selected *strongly agree* about the importance of attending college

- Reported discussions with GEAR UP staff/information at GEAR UP events as a source of information about college
- Reported percentage of students who utilized the GEAR UP website in every implementation strategy
- Indicated that they had discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG or someone from their school about college entrance requirements
- Average student knowledge of each of the following items: SAT, ACT, general requirements for college acceptance, and the importance/benefit of college
- Reported *strongly agreeing* about plans on taking advanced mathematics, ELA, and science courses
- Selected *probably* or *definitely* about the perceived affordability of community college
- Selected *probably* or *definitely* about the perceived affordability of a four-year college
- Percentage of students reporting that they participated in each of the following activities: mentoring, meeting with a College Preparation Advisor, GEAR UP summer program, academic advising, and college visits
- Average perceptions of effectiveness for GEAR UP summer program, educational trips, college visits (tied with School J and School L); Meetings with College Preparation Advisors (tied with School J); academic or career counseling/advising; mentoring; job site visits/shadowing (tied with School M); school workshops; students' participation in family/cultural events; parents' participation in family/cultural events

In Year 4, High School J also stood out as exceeding other schools on multiple survey items. This school had the highest percentage of students for each of the following items:

- Reported *strongly agreeing* that attending college is important to students' future
- Reported being *very satisfied* with Texas GEAR UP SG overall
- Selected "Yes, GEAR UP helped me decide to go to college"
- Reported percentage of students who engaged in discussions with GEAR UP staff about financial aid
- Reported percentage of students who participated in financial aid counseling and job site visits/shadowing
- Average perceptions of effectiveness for college visits (tied with School L and School M); Meetings with College Preparation Advisors (tied with School M); and job site visits/shadowing (tied with School M)

It will be important to continue to evaluate the extent to which High School M and High School J remain "high performers" and whether the schools continue to make progress over time as reflected in the survey data.

High School M's consistency in exceeding other schools across several survey items suggest that High School M may serve as an example for specific aspects of Texas GEAR UP SG, as well as an overall case of success. However, it is important to note that there may be external factors at play, such as an environment that is particularly receptive to Texas GEAR UP SG services, related programming that reinforces Texas GEAR UP SG goals, and so forth. High School J's emergence as a leading school in the past year should also be investigated to understand the factors that have caused the school to lead in some areas of implementation and perceptions.

### 3.7.3 Facilitators and Barriers

Facilitators and barriers to implementation were identified from an analysis of student and parent survey data collected during the 2015–16 school year. Those associated with key successes or challenges are identified here.

## BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

- **Students' Shifting Perceptions About the Importance of College.** Between spring 2013 and spring 2016, students' perceptions regarding career and college plans shifted, which may be linked to an increase in students who did not believe that college is important for their future. Survey results shown in Figure 3.2 show that 88% of students *Agreed* or *Strongly agreed* in spring 2016 that college is important for their future career goals, which is a decrease of 6 percentage points from spring 2013 and included a decrease of nineteen percentage points among those who strongly agreed. During the same time period, among students who indicated that they do not plan to pursue postsecondary education, those who indicated they want to work, need to work, or will not need education beyond high school to be successful (as seen in Table G.14, Appendix G) also increased. This finding may indicate why fewer students reported that college is important. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider addressing this barrier to implementation in upcoming years as students finalize their postsecondary plans.
- **Students' Knowledge of College Entrance Exams.** As shown in Figure 3.8, in spring 2016, students' perceived knowledge of the ACT and SAT were 46% and 56%, respectively. To better increase the chances of cohort students preparing for and successfully completing either college entrance exam, College Preparation Advisors should hold additional discussions or workshops with students regarding the content of these college entrance exams. As of spring 2016, 71% of students found the effectiveness of College Preparation Advisors to be either *mostly effective* or *very effective*, which suggests that if College Preparation Advisors hold discussions or workshops on college entrance exams, students may not only be likely to learn about the exams and how to prepare for the exams accordingly, but may feel more confident in their knowledge of these exams.
- **Students' Knowledge of Financial Aid Options.** Students' knowledge of different financial aid options varies greatly, depending on the type of aid. In particular, as shown in Table G.23, in spring 2016, students' knowledge of scholarships is significantly higher than those of other federal financial aid sources, with 71% of students being either *Knowledgeable* or *Extremely knowledgeable*. This is compared to 37% and 24% for Federal student loans and Federal work-study, respectively. To support student knowledge about various financial aid options, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should work with community alliances and other resources within the Texas GEAR UP SG schools to provide information on a variety of aid options beyond scholarship opportunities. As shown in Figure 3.10, the percentage of students and parents indicating that they have had discussions with someone from their school or with a Texas GEAR UP SG staff member about financial aid was 69% and 59%, respectively, so perhaps staff can readjust the already existing discussions focus more on financial options beyond scholarships.

## FACILITATORS TO IMPLEMENTATION

- **Students Taking Pre-AP and AP Courses.** As of spring 2016, 62% of student survey respondents reported taking a pre-AP or AP course in ELA in the 2015–16 school year, followed closely by mathematics (55%), science (55%), and social studies (49%) (Table G.21, Appendix G). Generally, as shown in Figure 3.4, nearly two thirds of students (61%) credit Texas GEAR UP SG with helping them decide to go to college, and nearly three quarters (72%) aspire to obtain a four-year college or higher (Figure 3.1). It may be helpful for Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school faculty to continue discussing the importance of participating, and succeeding, in pre-AP and AP courses in the college application process. Such discussions may encourage students who currently aspire to go to college, but are not currently taking an advanced course, to participate in a pre-AP or AP course before graduating.



- **Discussions with Faculty or GEAR UP Staff About Financial Aid.** As shown in Figure 3.10, there has been an increase in both parents and students indicating that they have participated in discussions with school or Texas GEAR UP SG staff about financial aid, with an 18 and 25 percentage point increase from spring 2013 to spring 2016 among students and parents, respectively. Because many Texas GEAR UP SG staff have been involved with the participating schools and cohort students for multiple years, they have likely developed rapport between parents, students, and school staff, which may have played a critical role in increasing the number of students and parents who have had financial aid discussions. Despite the success in increased percentages of students and parents on financial aid, as pointed out earlier in this section, it will be critical to use these discussions as a means to increase knowledge about financial aid resources other than scholarships.
- **Parents' Increased Knowledge About College.** As shown in Figure 3.6, there has been an increase every year, from spring 2013 through fall 2015, of the percentage of parents who are either *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about *financial aid and the costs/benefits of pursuing a postsecondary education, general requirements for college acceptance, and the importance and benefit of college*. Discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff and Texas GEAR UP SG parent events may have contributed to this increase in knowledge. In addition, as noted in Figure 3.7, 38% of students reported that GEAR UP staff and events were a source of college information. As such, students may also be a source of information for parents.



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

The following chapter includes an analysis of how TEA and the schools budgeted and expended funds for Texas GEAR UP SG in state fiscal year (FY) 2015 (September 1, 2014 through August 31, 2015), as well as budgeted data for FY 2016 (September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2016).<sup>164</sup> There are three key areas of analyses for both time points: (1) the overall Texas GEAR UP SG as managed by TEA, (2) the overall budget and spending data from the four Texas GEAR UP SG school districts, and (3) the districts' cost categories (i.e., payroll, professional and contracted services, supplies and materials, other operating costs, capital outlay). At a basic level, the budget and expenditure data provide an accounting of how federal grants are utilized by the Texas GEAR UP SG. In addition to the data throughout these sections providing early information from which to begin to analyze costs over the course of the project, the data will also contribute to eventually understanding the sustainability of project outcomes after funding ends. That is, understanding how funds are utilized at the state and district levels and examining those trends within cost categories will inform projections about how services might be continued after grant funding from this award concludes. The following evaluation questions related to costs are addressed in this chapter:

- For what services and activities do grantees use grant funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
- To what extent were grantees able to secure matching funds?
- For what services and activities do grantees use matching funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?

### 4.1 Overall Texas GEAR UP Budget and Expenditures

In the third year of the Texas GEAR UP SG (FY 2015), TEA received \$5 million from ED; this is the same amount received in FY 2014. 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.

Table 4.1 provides an overview of how TEA allocated and expended federal GEAR UP grant funds for state FY 2015. With 71% of funds expended on “other program activities,” this table details the various projects that TEA funded under this category. For comparison, in FY 2014, “other program activities” accounted for 69% of expended funds (Briggs et al., 2015). Projects on which TEA expended the highest percentage of funds included the following: product development (43%), technical assistance (23%), and grants to districts (23%); TEA expended the highest percentage of funds in the same three categories in FY 2014. Product development reflects the significant investment made by TEA in the Texas GEAR UP website (<http://www.texasgearup.com>), which became available statewide by the end of FY 2013; FY 2015 included continued revisions and expanded content. In some FY 2015 cases, expended amounts reflect a slightly lower amount than the allocated funds. For example, the expended amount for “technical assistance” reflects 85% of funding allocated and “grants to districts” reflects 90% of the funding allocated. Progress in district implementation in Year 3 is reflected by 90% of allocated funds in the “grants to districts” category being expended, compared to only 65% in Year 1 (Briggs et al., 2015) and 87% in Year 2 (Briggs et al., 2016). TEA continued to

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<sup>164</sup> The Year 5 Annual Implementation Report will include final data for Year 4, including expenditures.

expend the full amount of allocated funding in Year 3 for “Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation” and “Texas Education Agency direct and indirect administrative costs.”

**Table 4.1. Texas GEAR UP SG Award Funds and Matching Contributions, Fiscal Year 2015**

Categorical Cost Data for Year 3					
Category	Grant Funds Budgeted <sup>a</sup>	Grant Funds Allocated <sup>b</sup>	Grant Funds Expended	Grant Funds Unexpended <sup>c</sup>	Matching Contributions
Grants to Districts	\$1,358,000	\$1,386,755	\$1,244,107	\$142,648	\$1,244,107
Technical Assistance (UT-IPSI) <sup>d</sup>	\$1,457,000	\$1,457,000	\$1,230,973	\$226,027	\$136,585
Product Development (AMS Pictures)	\$1,610,000	\$2,298,035	\$2,298,035	–	\$285,000 <sup>f</sup>
Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	–	–
Texas Education Agency Direct and Indirect Admin Costs <sup>e</sup>	\$325,000	\$325,000	\$325,000	–	–
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>\$5,716,790</b>	<b>\$5,348,454</b>	<b>\$368,675</b>	<b>\$1,665,692</b>

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

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

<sup>c</sup> Total FY 2015 Grant Funds Unexpended column accounts for both budgeted funds that were not allocated and allocated funds that were not expended.

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

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

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

Table 4.2 provides information about how TEA budgeted to use funds in FY 2016. ED awarded \$5 million to TEA to implement Year 4 of the Texas GEAR UP SG. This award, in addition to carryover from prior years, was set up in the agency’s FY 2016 budget. Funds were allocated to projects from this budget (combining funds originating in Year 4 with any funds carried over from previous years). The total amount allocated for FY 2016 projects was \$5,692,761. Overall, TEA allocated \$3,790,575 (67%) for “other program activities,” a similar percentage as in prior years. Projects to which TEA allocated the highest percentage of funds included the following: technical assistance (34%), product development (28%), and grants to districts (28%). Technical assistance budgeted amounts included the salaries for College Preparation Advisors and other UT-IPSI based positions or activities—including the state conference, other services for the SG, and statewide outreach efforts—that benefit Texas GEAR UP SG, which was also the case for FY 2014 and FY 2015.

**Table 4.2. Texas GEAR UP SG Award Funds, Fiscal Year 2016**

Categorical Cost Data for Year 4		
Category	Grant Funds Budgeted <sup>a</sup>	Grant Funds Allocated <sup>b</sup>
Grants to Districts	\$1,458,000	\$1,577,186
Technical Assistance (UT-IPSI) <sup>c</sup>	\$1,457,000	\$1,930,575
Product Development (AMS Pictures)	\$1,510,000	\$1,610,000
Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation	\$250,000	\$250,000
Texas Education Agency Direct and Indirect Admin Costs <sup>d</sup>	\$325,000	\$325,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>\$5,692,761</b>

<sup>a</sup> The Grant Funds Budgeted column indicates the budgeted funding breakdown for Year 4 federal funds (\$5,000,000).

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

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

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

## 4.2 School Districts' Expenditures in Fiscal Year 2015

At the time of the Texas GEAR UP SG Year 3 Annual Implementation Report (Briggs et al., 2016), expenditure data for FY 2015 were not yet available. Grantee districts may report expenditures to the TEA expenditure reporting system at any time during the grant period until final expenditure reporting is due, which occurs in September of the fiscal year following the end date of the award period. Some districts may reconcile expenditures toward the end of the year, and some districts have large end-of-year and summer program expenditures that show up later in the year. Most districts have accounting processes that allow for the gap between reporting to TEA's expenditure system and receiving the drawdown. The update for Year 3 is particularly important because the data at the time of the Year 3 report did not include the funds spent. Overall, the four districts spent 90% of their grant funds, compared to Year 1 and Year 2 in which districts overall spent only 65% and 88% of their budgeted funds, respectively. Only one district (District #1) spent less than three-quarters (70%) of their budgeted funds. In Year 3, all districts met the requirement of matching 100% of the expended funds. FY 2015 grant funds remaining after the districts reported their final expenditures were carried over by TEA into the next fiscal year and redistributed across FY 2016 GEAR UP project activities.

Each year, the districts are required to reapply for funds and receive a new notification of grant award (NOGA) that reflects their total budget for the fiscal year. In Year 4 (FY 2016), TEA budgeted for subgrants from the Texas GEAR UP SG totaling just under \$1.5 million to four school districts to serve students in six high schools during the 2015–16 school year (aligning with the state FY 2016, which was September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2016). The Year 5 implementation report will include data on Year 4 expenditures, data on matching funds, and future Year 6 budgets.

**Table 4.3. Texas GEAR UP SG School District Percentage of Awarded Amounts Expended and Matched, Fiscal Year 2015**

School District	Fiscal Year 2015 Percentage of Award Amount Expended	Fiscal Year 2015 Percentage Matched
District 1	69.9%	100%
District 2	99.6%	100%
District 3	89.6%	100%
District 4	95.5%	100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>89.7%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency-reported drawdowns through the end of the Year 3 grant cycle for Fiscal Year 2015 as of October 31, 2015. District Notice of Grant Awards for Fiscal Year 2016 (as amended where relevant).

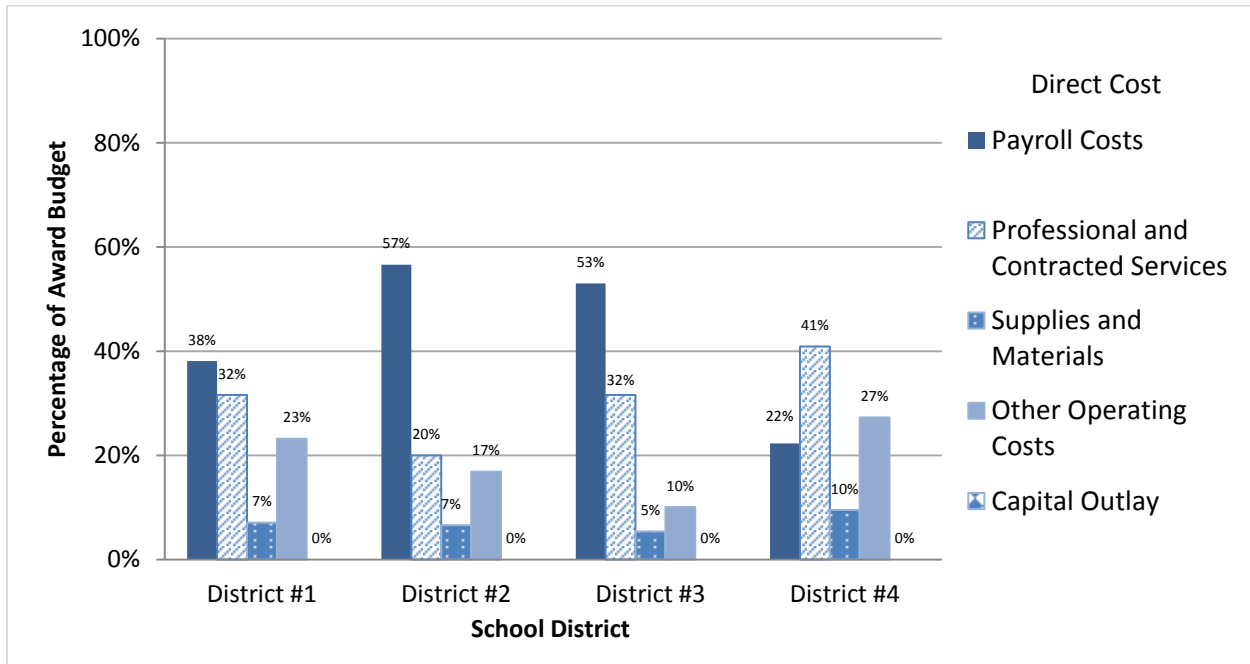
## 4.3 Description of District Budget and Expenditures in Fiscal Year 2015 by Cost Categories

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 2015 Final Expenditures

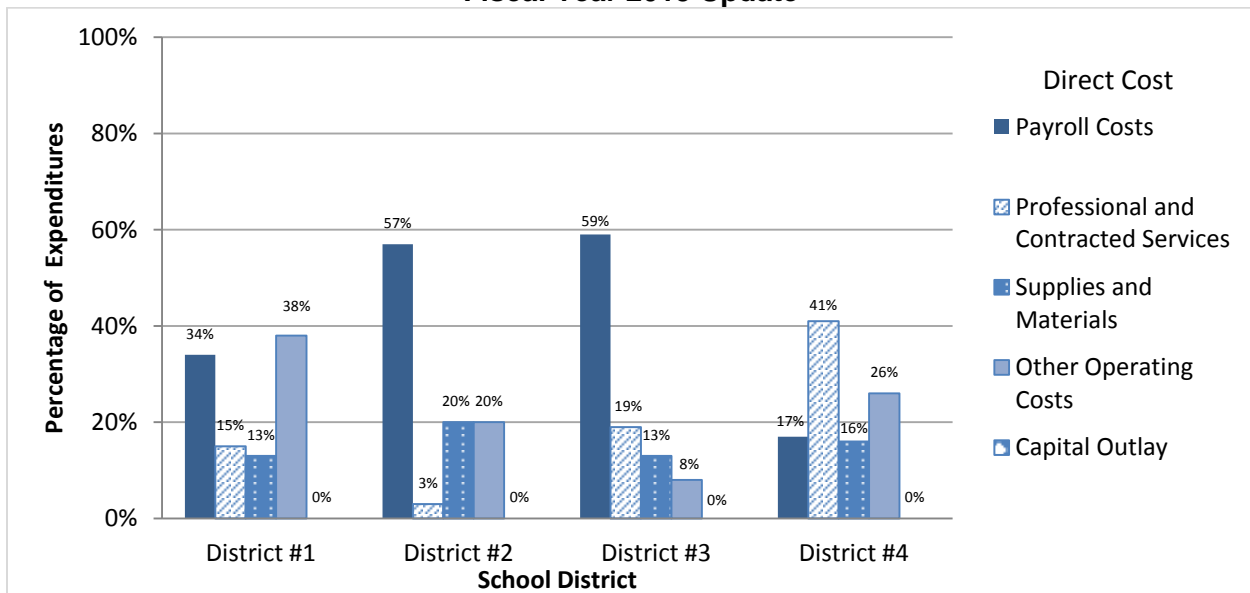
Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show updated information for FY 2015 (Year 3), including the budgeted amounts by cost category reported in the Year 3 Annual Implementation Report (Briggs et al., 2016), as well as new data on the expenditures by cost category. Comparisons between planned and actual expenditures offer some information about whether districts used funds as originally planned. For example, although District 3 only budgeted 5% of their funds for supplies and materials, the district ended up spending 13% of expended funds in this cost category. In Year 3, there were many areas in which districts' expenditures were greater than their originally budgeted funds. For example, District 1 had expenses for other operating costs that exceeded budgeted amounts (23% budgeted, 38% expended). District 2 also spent above-budgeted amounts in supplies and materials (7% budgeted, 20% expended) and other operating costs (17% budgeted and 20% expended). District 3 spent above-budgeted amounts in payroll (53% budgeted, 59% expended) and supplies and materials (5% budgeted, 13% expended). Lastly, District 4 spent above-budgeted amounts in supplies and materials (10% budgeted and 16% expended, respectively).

**Figure 4.1. Percentage of Texas GEAR UP SG Award Budget by Direct Cost Category, Fiscal Year 2015**



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

**Figure 4.2. Percentage of Texas GEAR UP SG Expenditures by Direct Cost Category, Fiscal Year 2015 Update**



Source: TEA-reported final drawdowns through October 31, 2015.

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

Additional expenditure analyses included looking within the cost categories given in which the percentage of grant funds varied widely across districts (Figure 4.2). Two districts (Districts 2 and 3) spent the highest portion of grant funds on payroll services (57% and 59%, respectively). As discussed in greater detail in the Year 1 Annual Implementation Report (O'Donnel et al., 2013), payroll services included funds for project management, project coordinators, project directors, tutors, and parent coordinators, for example. In Year 1, District 4 did not expend any

of their budgeted funds on payroll (Briggs et al., 2015), but in Year 2, they spent 15% of their expended funds on payroll, reflecting an investment in staff to oversee and implement Texas GEAR UP SG.

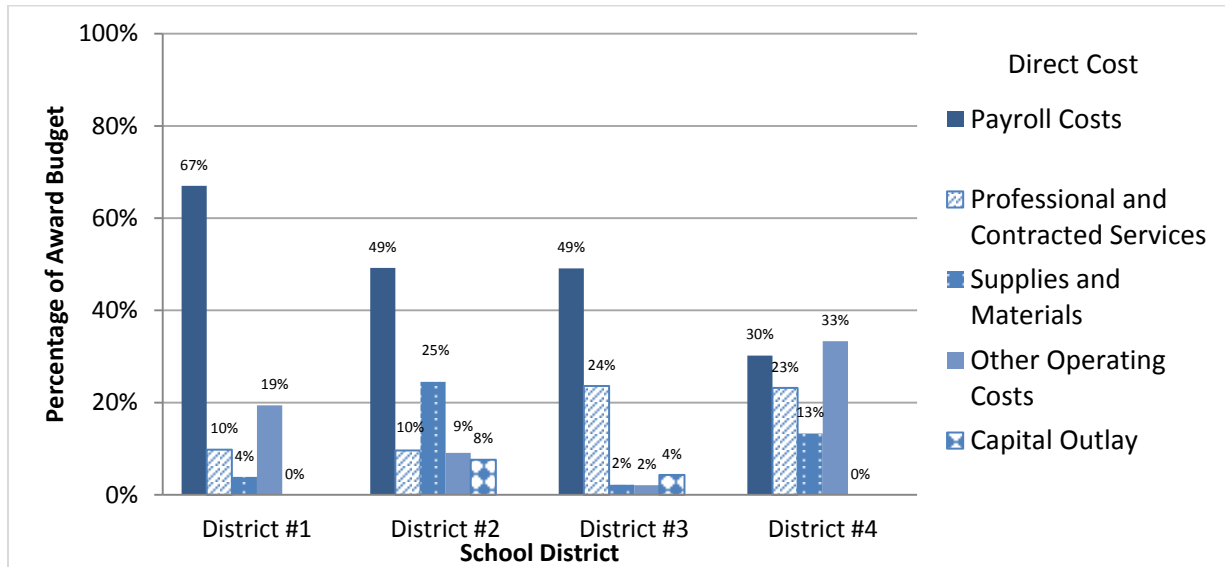
District 4 drew down the highest percentage for professional and contracted services (41%), similar to the previous year, compared to other districts and compared to other expenses in District 4. Examples of professional and contracted services, as described in the Year 1 Annual Implementation Report, included staff development, student services, and parent outreach. In looking at expenses for supplies and materials (for items such as tablets and graphing calculators), District 2 drew down the highest percentage at 20% and Districts 1 and 3 only drew down 13%, the lowest percentage among the four districts. One district (District 4) spent the same in this category this year (16%) as it did in Year 3, perhaps reflecting the same need for investment in consumables, such as test preparation materials. Districts 1 and 3 have also increased spending from Year 2 to Year 3 on supplies and materials from 8% to 13% and 4% to 13%, respectively. For other operating costs (including expenses for employee conferences and student college visits), District 1 drew down the highest percentage with 38%, compared to 8% in District 3. Although no district drew down funds in the capital outlay cost category in Year 1, in Year 2 two districts (Districts 2 and 3) expended 19% and 29% in the capital outlay cost category, respectively. In Year 3, none of the districts drew down funds in this category. In Year 3, Districts 2 and 3, in particular, also spent a high proportion of their funds on payroll; although a slight change in both districts was prevalent in comparison to Year 2, with a decrease of one percentage point and an increase of five percentage points, respectively. Future evaluation reports will explore these and other trends with more data over time.

### 4.3.2 Fiscal Year 2015 Budgeted Funds

Figure 4.3 shows information for FY 2016 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: 67%, District 2: 49%, and District 3: 49%); District 4 only planned to spend 30% in this category, an 8 percentage point increase from amounts budgeted in Year 3. These trends were similar for FY 2015 budgeted amounts (Figure 4.1); in Year 4, budgeted items in this cost category included funds for data entry clerks and parent liaisons. Qualitative data from the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation point to the value of both of these roles in supporting implementation by building staff capacity. District 4 planned to spend 23% of their funds on professional and contracted services (similar to the budget amount in Year 2). Districts 2 and 3 budgeted for a smaller percentage of their grant funds for professional and contracted services in FY 2016 as compared to FY 2015; District 1 however decreased their budget for this category from 32% in Year 3 to 10% in Year 4. Budgets for supplies and materials, also varied across districts from the lowest budget of 2% to the highest budget of 25%; Operating costs varied from 2% (District 3) to 33% (District 4). Although some districts expended funds for capital outlay in Year 2, none of the four districts budgeted Texas GEAR UP SG funds for this expense for Year 3; District 2 and 3 will see 8% and 4% budgeted for capital outlays in FY 2016. The Year 5 annual implementation report will summarize FY 2016 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 2016**



Source: District Notice of Grant Awards for Fiscal Year 2016 (as amended where relevant): District 1: March 31, 2016; District 2: July 9, 2015; District 3: October 26, 2015 (amended on March 17, 2016, April 15, 2016, and May 25, 2016); and District 4: October 20, 2015 (amended on April 15, 2016, and May 11, 2016).

### 4.3.3 Summary

ED will award a total of \$33 million to implement the Texas GEAR UP SG initiative, which was provided to TEA in annual \$5 million awards for the first six years, and \$3 million dollars in the seventh year. TEA budgets those funds in a manner that follows federal and state required accounting processes. This section included a look at budgeted awards compared to the final data on expenditures in FY 2015, including analyses within cost categories and comparisons between planned and actual expenses. The following chapter ties the prior chapters together by summarizing the findings, offering recommendations, and pointing to next steps.



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

Year 4 of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation reflects opportunities and challenges in offering various program components in high schools. This chapter provides a summary of findings organized by key evaluation research questions. Progress on TEA project objectives for the Texas GEAR UP SG is presented where appropriate. Findings are based on the following sources:

- GUIDES data submitted by Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort schools, reflecting summer 2015 through March 31, 2016
- Site visits conducted by the evaluation team with each Texas GEAR UP SG school in fall 2015 and again in spring 2016
- Student survey data collected in spring 2016 and parent survey data collected in spring/fall 2015
- Telephone interviews with TEA and its collaborators conducted in April 2016

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

### 5.1 Overall Implementation and Perceptions of Implementation

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

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

While more activities and strategies were implemented in Year 4, variability in student participation remained. Almost half (45%) of all Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students participated in at least four Texas GEAR UP SG activities. School M continued to have the highest percentage of students participating in five or more activities (76%); over half of School J students also participated in five or more activities.

In examining a mix of implementation, each school was considered as having engaged in at least 17 of the 19 implementation strategies tracked in Year 4; two schools engaged in all 19 strategies. As with the earlier indicators of mix of implementation, this summary does not take into account quality, quantity, or the effect of the given implementation activity. This information serves as an indicator as to whether each school is on target to meet various project objectives. With that in mind, it is promising that advanced course enrollment, tutoring, mentoring, counseling, parent events, college visits, and student workshops all continued to occur at all Texas GEAR UP SG high schools in the 2015–16 school year. Overall, 88% of students reported being *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with Texas GEAR UP SG, an increase of three percentage points in Year 3.

Although it is not certain whether any particular activity, as compared to engaging in a range of activities, is linked to desired outcomes, the Texas GEAR UP SG encourages schools to participate in a broad range of activities. While all six Texas GEAR UP SG schools were generally successful at implementing a mix of activities and events in Year 4, schools could benefit by initiating a broader range of activities moving forward and others may benefit from engaging a higher proportion of students in the activities they already offer.

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

Texas GEAR UP SG staff continued to inform students and their parents about endorsement options and monitor course schedules to ensure graduation requirements were fulfilled; GUIDES data in Year 4 indicated that almost all cohort students had selected an endorsement as part of their graduation plan. To prepare for the SAT and ACT during Year 5, most students (74%) also took the PSAT and TSIA, according to GUIDES and site visit data. The mean PSAT score across the Texas GEAR UP SG schools was 785, which is more than 200 points lower than the 2015 national average for Grade 10 students. The mean score ranged from 744–864 across the six Texas GEAR UP SG schools. Though not widely taken advantage of, students had access to test preparation books, tutoring sessions, workshops, and summer academies to help them prepare for the PSAT and TSIA. In looking ahead to college entrance examinations that students will begin taking in Year 5, the SAT and ACT, many students in the cohort lacked knowledge about these tests; in spring 2016, only 56% of students felt knowledgeable or very knowledgeable about the SAT and 46% felt knowledgeable or very knowledgeable about the ACT. Progress towards graduation was also measured in Year 4 with on-time promotion rates; 88% of Texas GEAR UP SG students were eligible to be promoted from Grade 9 to Grade 10, which was lower than the statewide promotion rate of 91.4% in 2014–15 school year.<sup>165</sup>

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

In Year 4, all six high schools implemented the following core Texas GEAR UP SG activity types: advanced course enrollment, student support services (tutoring, mentoring, and counseling/advising), college visits, parent events, teacher PD, community alliance involvement, and use of statewide services. By March 31, 2016, all six high schools had established a strong foundation of robust services, which is reflected in the fact that 91% of Grade 10 students participated in tutoring, mentoring, and/or counseling, and each school met Project Objective 4.1. In addition, approximately 61–71% students found various support services—including tutoring/homework assistance in core courses, mentoring, counseling/advising, and meetings with College Preparation Advisors—to be *mostly* or *very effective* depending on the specific service (Table G.26, Appendix G).

### 5.1.3 Advanced Course Taking

The percentage of students enrolled in four or more advanced courses increased three points from Year 3 to Year 4 (24% and 27% respectively) and over half (55%) of students were enrolled in an advanced course in Year 4. In addition, 60% of students had completed at least one pre-AP/AP course prior to Grade 10 and 7% of students were enrolled in their first pre-AP/AP course. This is important progress toward Project Objective 2.2 (By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including LEP students, will complete a pre-AP or AP

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<sup>165</sup> See [http://tea.texas.gov/acctres/retention\\_student\\_performance\\_2014-15.pdf](http://tea.texas.gov/acctres/retention_student_performance_2014-15.pdf). Note that the state-level retention figure is not technically an average, but is the collective rate for all students in the grade level.

course). During site visits, some school faculty and staff reported that they felt a notable number of students were inappropriately placed in and not academically prepared for advanced courses. On average, 64% of students reported on the survey that they agree or strongly agree that they will take an advanced mathematics, ELA/writing, science, and/or social studies course in Year 5.

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

Schools did not have at least 50% of parents attend at least three parent events (Project Objective 7.3) in Year 4, similar to the previous three years. Overall, 9% of parents attended three or more events and 28% of parents attended at least one event, a decrease of 21 percentage points from Year 3. Texas GEAR UP staff reported during site visits that they found that parent and family events with the most successful levels of engagement are those in which parents had the opportunity to listen to information and ask questions in small groups or individually.

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

Another project objective is that 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college by the end of the project's fifth year (Project Objective 4.4). Across schools, 64% of students reported that they are *knowledgeable* or *very knowledgeable* about the importance/benefits of college. While 42% of students reported that they are *knowledgeable* or *very knowledgeable* about financial aid and the costs/benefits of pursuing postsecondary education, students reported having greater knowledge about some specific types of aid; for example, 71% of students reported being *knowledgeable* or *very knowledgeable* about scholarships. Although about a third of Texas GEAR UP cohort students (34%) indicated that they already planned to attend before ever participating in GEAR UP, almost two-thirds (61%) of students responded that participating in GEAR UP helped them make the decision to go to college. Overall, 22% and 38% of students, respectively, said the Texas GEAR UP website and discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff were sources they used to find out information about college. Student discussions about college entrance requirements with someone from their school or Texas GEAR UP SG was shown to be positively correlated, to a low but statistically significant degree, with students' perceived knowledge of separate college entrance topic areas. In addition, student discussions about the availability of financial aid with someone from their school was positively correlated, to a low but statistically significant degree, with students' perceived knowledge about financial terms.

#### 5.1.6 Teacher Participation in Texas GEAR UP State Grant PD

In Year 4, all six high schools reported that they each held at least one PD event for differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL, which put them on track to meet Project Objective 3.1. Each school also reported that at least one vertical teaming meeting was held during Year 4. PD opportunities increased in Year 4, due in part to the Educator Outreach Coach hired by the Support Center. The coach worked directly with teachers and administrators to provide PD resources and facilitate events. Site visit participants provided very positive feedback and reported their time with her to be valuable.

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

All six schools continued to establish new and maintain existing alliances in their community supporting Project Goal 8. Examples of this collaboration in Year 4 included universities offering PD for teachers as well as tutoring, mentoring, and soft skill workshops for students. Other

community and campus organizations offered opportunities for students to participate in job site visits and other career exploration activities. One school found working with other campus organizations difficult due to competing focus areas and the other organizations' lack of investment in Texas GEAR UP SG's goals. An additional challenge in forming community alliances, as described by one College Preparation Advisor, was the isolated location of the Texas GEAR UP SG school.

### 5.1.8 Statewide Services

In addition to the Texas GEAR UP SG program in the schools, TEA continued to work on statewide Project Objectives 7.1, 9.1 and 9.2, which are related to college readiness. AMS Pictures continued to update the Texas GEAR UP website in Year 4 to provide supplemental statewide materials for students and parents.<sup>166</sup> An additional online service available during Year 4 and supported by AMS Pictures was Texas Gateway, formerly known as Project Share, which provided PD resources for teachers. Texas GEAR UP SG staff, school staff, parents, and teachers also participated in the Texas GEAR UP conference in Year 4, delivered by the Support Center.

### 5.1.9 Facilitators and Barriers

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

In order for implementation to be successful, it is important to understand any potential facilitators and barriers to participation. In Year 4, it was often reported that strong engagement from all stakeholders facilitated successful implementation, particularly school administrators and students. Texas GEAR UP SG staff and Texas GEAR UP SG collaborators indicated that strong administrator engagement fostered investment in a college-going culture among program and school staff. In addition, it was noted in Year 4 that long-term student participation in the grant fostered a stronger interest in postsecondary education. Teacher engagement with the grant is also important, as recognized by the PD requirements. The increased PD opportunities in Year 4 was facilitated by the new Educator Outreach Coach hired by the Support Center. Survey data also indicated that participation in Texas GEAR UP SG activities may have increased student academic readiness as well as parent and student knowledge of financial aid and the benefits of college. In addition, 71% of students found their College Preparation Advisor(s) to be mostly or very effective, which may have also contributed to increased student academic readiness.

Lack of appropriate Texas GEAR UP SG staff and poor communication among Texas GEAR UP SG staff and between Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school staff were among the barriers to in Year 4. In addition, teachers of cohort students reported that they felt they needed to decrease the level of rigor in advanced courses due to increased enrollment of academically unprepared students and a perceived lack of motivation among some students to take on the necessary workload to be college ready. In addition, 66% of students reported that they were only slightly knowledgeable or knowledgeable of financial aid, over half (54%) reported no knowledge of Federal Pell grants, and almost half reported no knowledge of FASFA and Federal work-study options (43% and 45% respectively). This lack of knowledge may speak to the perceived lack of affordability some students reported (only 43% of students reported they will probably or definitely be able to afford to attend a public 4-year college). Additionally, the increased desire or need to work may have contributed to the decrease in students who reported on the spring 2016 survey that college is important to their future career.

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<sup>166</sup> See [www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)

### 5.1.10 Potential Best Practices

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

Four Texas GEAR UP SG activities/initiatives implemented during Year 4 were identified as potential promising practices worthy of continued follow-up in the future. The Parent Symposium was once again held by School M and described as successful because it allowed parents to select the sessions they attended based on their interests. The extended PD provided by the Support Center's Educator Outreach Coach provided schools the opportunity to tailor the trainings and resources for teacher PD based on the needs of the teachers and school. School administrator investment in the college readiness of students and engagement in the Texas GEAR UP SG was reported by program staff as necessary for implementation and sustainment of grant initiatives. Finally, an administrator from a previous Texas GEAR UP SG middle school reported that school staff continued conversations with students in Grade 8 regarding endorsement selection and have incorporated strategies into the conversations to help identify students at-risk of not finishing high school as early as possible. These activities are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.8.

### 5.1.11 Grant and School District Budgets and Expenditures

Final expenditures from the FY 2015 budget of \$5 million (\$5.7 million allocated with the inclusion of carryover funds) was just over \$5.3 million, an amount supplemented by 100% matching funds. Of the \$5.3 million, \$2.3 million was expended on product development, reflecting the continued investment made by TEA to update the Texas GEAR UP website (<http://www.texasgearup.com>) through a contract with AMS Pictures.

TEA awarded a total of \$1.4 million to the districts in Year 4. In examining district spending updates for FY 2015, the four districts expended approximately 90% of their grant funds (compared to 88% in FY 2014), and one district expended just over two-thirds of their grant funds (District 1: 70%). All districts met the 100% match requirement. Districts also expended their budgets in FY 2014 in ways that differed somewhat from the planned budgets. For example, the following districts spent below-budgeted amounts on payroll: District 1 (38% budgeted, 34% expended) and District 4 (22% budgeted, 17% expended).

The \$5 million that TEA received from ED to implement the Texas GEAR UP SG in FY 2016 was supplemented with 100% matching funds. In FY 2016, TEA allocated the highest percentage of funds, including the following: technical assistance (34%), product development (28%), and grants to districts (28%).

## 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 4 are presented here. Collectively, these include the following:

- **Offer a Variety of Academic and Emotional Support Platforms to Ensure College Readiness.** Academic supports, such as tutoring, and emotional supports, such as mentoring and counseling, may improve students' perceived lack of motivation in advanced classes and aid students who were academically unprepared and enrolled in advanced classes. While the percentage of students who aspire to obtain a 4-year degree or higher has steadily increased over time, these supports may better prepare students for success and increase persistence in postsecondary education and increase the number of students who expect to obtain a 4-year degree or higher.

- **Provide Additional and Varied Opportunities for Parent Engagement.** As all six Texas GEAR UP SG schools continued to struggle with parent engagement, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider hosting parent and family events that allow parents to discuss their child's postsecondary plans and readiness in groups and spaces that are more intimate. College Preparation Advisors reported in site visits that parents seem to be more engaged and ask more questions when they are able to receive information in smaller groups or in one-on-one counseling sessions. Parents also suggested on site visits that some cohort parents have negative associations with the school staff and campus based on personal experiences. Events and counseling sessions in locations within the communities, neighborhoods, or even homes of the parents may make parents feel more comfortable to ask more questions and participate in more events.
- **Broaden Participation in Student Events Held on College Campuses.** Students rated their experiences with Texas GEAR UP SG activities as mostly effective. In addition, student participation in college visits and summer programs was found to be positively correlated to educational expectations and knowledge of college-related terminology. It is noteworthy, however, that as reported by students and Texas GEAR UP SG staff, students are selected to participate in many events—including college visits—and nominated for programs—such as summer programs—based on their selected endorsements and pathways. Several students across all six schools reported that they do not plan to study their endorsement during postsecondary education or are not interested in the subject. Furthermore, 30% of students reported planning to drop their endorsement (Table G.31, Appendix G). By allowing students to participate in programs and events based on self-identified interests rather than their selected endorsements, the number of students interested in participating in these activities may increase as well as their perception of Texas GEAR UP SG and the appeal of postsecondary education.
- **Continue to Expand Sustainability Efforts.** Some districts were able to speak to sustainability efforts that have been planned for or already implemented. TEA, the Support Center, and Texas GEAR UP SG staff should work with school and district staff to identify strategies and initiatives that demonstrated measurable success in increasing postsecondary education readiness and awareness. Stakeholders should consider facilitating discussions to determine how the strategies and initiatives may be funded via other sources, replicated through innovative and less costly means, and prioritized among other school and district goals. The entire range of Texas GEAR UP SG initiatives, including student supports, parent supports, teacher PD, and community alliance relationships, should be considered in these discussions to foster a college-going culture throughout their school.

### 5.3 Next Steps in Evaluation

The evaluation will continue in the 2016–17 school year, when the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort is in Grade 11. The Year 5 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 2016 will focus on summer programming; parent surveys in fall 2016 will focus on ED required parent items. Site visits and student surveys in spring 2016 will focus on implementation during the school year.



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## Appendix A: Evaluation Questions and Project Goals

### A.1 Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation Questions

Figure A.1 provides an overview of the evaluation questions addressed in this Year 4 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 Year 4 of implementation only.

**Figure A.1. Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation Questions**

Evaluation Questions
<b>1. Implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG Strategies and Identification of Potential Best Practices</b>
<b><i>1.1 To evaluate implementation of Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grant (SG) strategies intended for teacher professional development (PD) to improve academic rigor and data-driven instruction</i></b>
1.1.1 What types of PD implementation strategies were identified by grantees in their action plans?
1.1.2 When and to what extent did grantees implement PD strategies?
1.1.3 What percentage of core content teachers had the opportunity to participate in PD training regarding each of the following: differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, project-based learning (PBL), other? What percentage of core content teachers actually participated in each PD opportunity? To what extent, if any, did teachers other than core content teachers have an opportunity to participate and actually participate in PD?
1.1.4 When and how did grantees provide PD regarding vertical team preparation and implementation to Middle School and High School teachers? Were appropriate teachers from all schools on the vertical team able to attend the PD?
1.1.5 What are perceptions of teachers who attend given PD regarding: training itself, impact on teacher practice, and impact on vertical alignment, as appropriate to training?
1.1.6 What facilitators and barriers can be identified to implementing PD opportunities? If barriers to implementing were identified, to what extent were grantees able to overcome such barriers and how? Do grantees anticipate and are they able to overcome barriers in following years?
1.1.7 In what ways are trained teachers implementing data driven strategies? Differentiated instruction? PBL?
<b><i>1.2 To evaluate implementation of student support services Texas GEAR UP SG strategies</i></b>
1.2.1 What types of student support services implementation strategies were identified by grantees in their action plans?
1.2.2 What types of information were utilized to identify students for participation in student support services implementation activities?
1.2.3 When and to what extent did grantees implement student support services strategies with students?
1.2.4 What are student, parent, and staff perceptions of student support services implementation strategies?
1.2.5 What facilitators and barriers can be identified regarding implementing student support services strategies? If barriers to implementing were identified, to what extent were grantees

<b>Evaluation Questions</b>
able to overcome such barriers and how? Do grantees anticipate and are they able to overcome barriers in following years?
1.2.6 During each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students? How do grantees inform students about opportunities to learn about college attendance and career success? How many activities are held for students to attend? How and to what extent do grantees provide information to students regarding information that is available through the state office?
1.2.7 By the end of the year, how many students (percentage) participate in each type of college readiness activity conducted by grantees? How many activities does each student attend?
1.2.8 What are students' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)?
<b>1.3 To identify potential best practices</b>
1.3.1 What practices implemented by the grantee might be identified as potential best practices based on data?
1.3.2 What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by grantees (students, parents, staff) to be effective, and therefore a potential best practice?
1.3.3 What individual strategies and/or mix of strategies were provided?
<b>2. Family, School and Community Impact</b>
<b>2.1 To evaluate the impact of GEAR UP on families (parents)</b>
2.1.1 Each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students' families? How do grantees inform families about opportunities to learn about college attendance and career success? How many activities are held for parents to attend? How and to what extent do grantees provide information to parents regarding what is available through the state office?
2.1.2 By the end of each year, how many parents (%) attend each type of activity conducted by the grantees? How many activities does each parent attend?
2.1.3 Each year it is measured, what are parents' levels of understanding regarding a range of topics linked to understanding college and career readiness (e.g., college expectations and aspirations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)? Do parents report having gained knowledge over the year based on information and activities provided by the grantee?
2.1.4 What information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness?
2.1.5 What facilitators and barriers do schools and parents report regarding participation in college readiness activities? If barriers were identified, to what extent were grantees able to overcome such barriers and how? Do grantees anticipate and are they able to overcome barriers in following years?
<b>2.2 To evaluate the impact of GEAR UP on community alliances</b>
2.2.1 At the end of each grant year, how many collaborations have schools formed with business alliances? In what ways and how often have business collaborations offered opportunities for career exploration to students?
2.2.2 At the end of each grant year, how many collaborations have schools formed with government entities? Community groups? In what ways and how often have collaborations offered opportunities for career exploration to students? Opportunities to provide information regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness and readiness?
2.2.3 What are the perceptions of the school and of the community alliances regarding the collaboration as it relates to meeting GEAR UP goals? What facilitators and barriers to collaboration are reported? If barriers were identified, to what extent were grantees able to

Evaluation Questions
overcome such barriers and how? Do grantees anticipate and are they able to overcome barriers in following years?
<b>3. Statewide Impact</b>
<b>3.1 To evaluate the impact of GEAR UP on statewide availability of information and professional learning opportunities</b>
3.1.1 What types of information regarding college readiness have been made available through the state? Are there any topics relevant to college readiness not yet available?
3.1.2 What steps if any has the state office taken to communicate to schools and families about information available?
3.1.3 Each year, how many GEAR UP professional learning opportunities are made available to educators (e.g., Texas Gateway, face-to-face)? How many educators, including those not at current GEAR UP campuses, are participating in such opportunities?
<b>4. Cost and Sustainability Outcomes</b>
<b>4.1 To evaluate use of GEAR UP funding</b>
4.1.1 For what services and activities do grantees use grant funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
4.1.2 To what extent were grantees able to secure matching funds?
4.1.3 For what services and activities do grantees use matching funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
<b>4.2 To evaluate sustainability of GEAR UP implementation</b>
4.2.1 To what extent are grantees able to sustain activities initiated with the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort with following cohorts of students?

## A.2 Texas GEAR UP SG 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 Foundation High School Plan plus Endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, 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-Advanced Placement (AP) or AP course.
- Project Objective 2.3: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will be eligible to earn college credit by AP exam or through dual credit.

Project Goal 3 - Provide PD for strong data-driven instruction.

- Project Objective 3.1: All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training with regard to differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL.
- Project Objective 3.2: Teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.

Project 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.<sup>167</sup> By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT.
- Project Objective 5.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of students meeting criterion on the ACT/SAT will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.3: The number of students who graduate college ready in mathematics and English will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.4: The cohort completion rate will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.5: More than 50% of cohort of students will enroll in postsecondary education in the fall after high school graduation.

Project Goal 6 - Support first-year college retention.

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

Project Goal 7 - Provide postsecondary information and opportunities.

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

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<sup>167</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG initially indicated a goal aligned with students taking ACT PLAN by the end of project's fourth year. However, ACT has replaced PLAN with ACT Aspire. Similarly, the PSAT has been replaced by the PSAT/NMSQT and PSAT 10, although we refer to in this report as the PSAT.



Project Goal 8 - Build and expand community partnerships.

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

Project Goal 9 - Promote college readiness statewide.

- Project Objective 9.1: Annually increase the number of educators participating in GEAR UP professional learning, including through Texas Gateway 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 PD.



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

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

### B.1 Longitudinal Design

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

**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

## B.2 Quasi-Experimental Design

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

### B.2.1 Propensity Score Matching

PSM is the optimal method for establishing an equivalent comparison group in non-experimental studies. PSM refers to a class of multivariate methods for constructing comparison groups based on pairing study subjects, in this case schools, based on what is known about those subjects. Propensity scores represent the estimated probability that a program participant is assigned to an intervention based on observable variables. The evaluation team and Texas GEAR UP SG program staff determined the criteria for matching Texas GEAR UP SG and non-Texas GEAR UP SG comparison schools with various characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, free/reduced lunch status, grade level, academic achievement in reading and mathematics at baseline, special education/limited English proficiency (LEP) status, completion rates, parent

education level). By using PSM to identify a very close non-Texas GEAR UP SG match (or multiple matches) for each Texas GEAR UP SG school, it is possible to estimate the value-added effect of the Texas GEAR UP program. That is, if two schools are found to be similar on a range of characteristics, but students at only one school receive the GEAR UP “treatment,” then any potential differences in outcomes may be attributable to GEAR UP participation. Seven middle schools (one per Texas GEAR UP SG school) were selected for the comparison group based on PSM.

Specific details regarding the PSM are in the forthcoming comprehensive report. The information presented here represents an overview of the PSM. ICF conducted a school-level PSM using an Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and Common Core Data. Each GEAR UP school was matched with one comparison school (nearest-neighbor method). Final determinations were based on the extent to which balance on covariates between intervention and control sample is achieved. Three aspects of the PSM are described here.

- **Ratio.** A fixed 1-to-1 ratio was used; each GEAR UP school was paired with one comparison school.
- **Algorithm.** The nearest-neighbor method is one of the most straightforward and fast algorithms. Exact matching was required only for a limited subset of variables, particularly, school’s grade span and campus urban-centric locale.
- **Distance metric.** The propensity score is an extremely useful metric distance that summarizes many covariates in a single measure. The propensity score is based on a logistic regression of an indicator of group membership on all the covariates for which balance is desired. For this school-level regression, being in the GEAR UP group is a relatively rare occurrence (i.e., only seven cases). This can limit the utility of the propensity score as a balancing score in the present application. However, there are alternative distance metrics that can be used, including Mahalanobis distance; robust Mahalanobis distance; weighted Mahalanobis distance where the weights are determined to maximize balance (Diamond and Sekhon, 2013). All the alternatives will be explored, and the final choice will be based on the covariate balance they achieve.

## B.3 Methodology

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

## B.4 Data Sources and Data Collection

Evaluators used several data sources for this report, including data reported through the GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System (GUIDES), 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 the process of collecting data that were included in this report.

### B.4.1 Annual Performance Data

During the 2012–13 school year, the ICF team worked with TEA to develop an appropriate tool for collecting annual performance data. Beginning in 2013–14, TEA’s collaborator for technical assistance, The University of Texas at Austin’s Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI), contracted with a provider of a system to collect Texas GEAR UP SG annual performance data. The general strategy was similar to that used in Year 1 and Year 2, but grantees were eventually able to enter annual performance data in an ongoing manner; 2014–15 annual performance reporting was similar. In Year 3, TEA added an additional organization, Community TechKnowledge (CTK), to support data collection using GUIDES, a customized tool for collecting Texas GEAR UP SG data. TEA continued to use GUIDES during the 2015–16 school year.

In order to broadly understand what is collected through GUIDES, we have retained prior years’ description here. Annual performance data are aligned with requirements for the U.S. Department of Education (ED) 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 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 GUIDES.

### 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.
- **Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR).** TAPR is an updated version of TEA’s AEIS. TAPR contains campus-level performance information about every public school and district in Texas. TAPR also provides extensive profile information about staff, finances, and programs. The evaluation also includes AEIS data from the 2009–10 school year, as data from this year informed the selection of schools for participation in Texas GEAR UP SG.

### B.4.3 Student and Parent Surveys

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) requires that GEAR UP grantees survey students and parents at least every two years, with an additional requirement that programs survey at least 80% of their students and at least 50% of their parents at these intervals. Texas GEAR UP SG

students and parents were first surveyed in spring 2013.<sup>168</sup> In fall 2013 and fall 2014, students were surveyed, primarily with respect to participation in and perceptions of summer 2014 implementation activities. Both students and parents were surveyed in spring 2014 and spring 2015. Due to the low parent response rates in spring 2015, parents were surveyed again in fall 2015, as described in the Year 3 Annual Implementation Report (Briggs et al., 2016). Students were also surveyed in fall 2015 and again in spring 2016. All surveys used during the 2015–16 school year are provided in Appendix D. Surveys undergo several layers of review and required approval by both ICF’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) and TEA’s Data Governance Board (DGB).<sup>169</sup> Both student and parent surveys were available online as well as in paper format. Schools collected the data independently following instructions provided by the evaluation team as required by IRB.<sup>170</sup> Students and parents could choose to take the survey in either English or in Spanish. Survey data were collected anonymously.

The ED has identified items that must be included on the surveys (i.e., five items each on the student and parent survey). From this basic foundation, GEAR UP programs are free to add additional questions. Items were selected for inclusion in the Texas GEAR UP SG surveys from surveys developed by members of the ICF evaluation team with prior experience evaluating GEAR UP programs and based on sample surveys (i.e., CoBro Consulting, 2010). Content areas on the survey were finalized with TEA and included information regarding such items as: a) student/parent satisfaction with the program and program activities; b) student/parent questions on educational expectations and aspirations; and (c) student and parent knowledge regarding postsecondary education, including financial knowledge. Spring 2016 surveys included additional items about endorsements and graduation plans. Understanding what information parents and students have learned and retained that Texas GEAR UP SG districts provided is important in determining whether students/parents have attained a base of knowledge about college that makes the prospect of college attendance less daunting both financially and personally.

#### **B.4.4 Telephone Interview with Texas Education Agency Collaborators**

To best understand the role of various collaborators and progress at the state level, the ICF team developed interview protocols and conducted interviews with the Texas GEAR UP SG state director at TEA and with appropriate personnel from each of the statewide TEA collaborators in spring 2016 (see Appendix D for interview protocols). The interview with the TEA Texas GEAR UP SG director provided information regarding the process of managing the Texas GEAR UP SG grants to districts, and coordinating with the state technical assistance office to ensure that grant activities are implemented and meeting suggested targets. In addition, questions were asked regarding any changes in the project objectives for the Texas GEAR UP SG, the level of school buy-in from districts, frequency of contact with districts and schools, the status of TEA’s work with collaborators and statewide initiatives, and factors that have facilitated or hindered GEAR UP implementation this past year.

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<sup>168</sup> Federal GEAR UP requirements are for biannual collection of survey data. Survey collection was not required in Year 1. Year 1 surveys were conducted because the evaluation team believes they provide an important baseline to better understand Texas GEAR UP SG outcomes. Surveys will undergo minor revisions as needed to reflect appropriate Texas GEAR UP SG implementation and goals prior to each submission.

<sup>169</sup> IRB approval was received to use passive consent from parents for student participation in the surveys. Parents were notified that the survey was planned and asked to inform the school if they did not want their child to participate. Students also provided their own assent for participation in the surveys.

<sup>170</sup> The surveys took about 20 to 30 minutes for students to complete. Ideally student surveys would take no more than 15 to 20 minutes. If appropriate, future survey versions will be shortened.

Representatives from all but one of the seven statewide Texas GEAR UP SG collaborators participated in telephone interviews with the evaluation team. All collaborators had a single interview with two staff members. 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. Eight protocols were developed to gather data from stakeholders. These protocols were for Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator interviews, College Preparation Advisor interviews, high school administrator interviews, middle school administrator interviews, teacher focus groups, student focus groups, parent focus groups, and community alliance interviews/focus groups. The content of the protocols was aligned to Texas GEAR UP SG project objectives, relative to implementation in Year 4. 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 were completed at each of the six Texas GEAR UP SG high schools in fall 2015 and spring 2016. The evaluation team made copies of interview and focus group protocols available to schools (see Appendix D) prior to participating in the visit. Telephone calls and emails were used to communicate with each site regarding the visit and to develop a site visit schedule. Schedules varied by school based on the availability of participants, but all schools were asked to schedule time for separate interviews with the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator, College Preparation Advisor, and administrator at the school, as well as focus groups with students, parents, teachers, and community alliances. The team customized materials for specific sites based on information reported through GUIDES 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 Administrator Interviews.** The ICF team designed interview protocols for administrators (principals, assistant principals, vice principals, and school counselors), school-site College Preparation Advisors, and Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators. In most cases, interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. At each school, an interview was requested with both an administrator as well as school-site GEAR UP SG staff. In a few cases, administrators participated in focus groups together. Overall, ICF conducted interviews with 25 school/district administrators and 22 Texas GEAR UP SG staff members (including tutors, data clerks, and parent liaisons).
- **Teacher Focus Groups.** ICF conducted teacher focus groups at all of the high schools in the Texas GEAR UP SG. Due to classroom coverage issues, the size and duration of focus groups varied widely. The typical teacher focus group had an average of three teachers and lasted approximately 45 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. 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 2015 and spring 2016, ICF conducted teacher focus groups with 71 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, 70 students participated in focus groups.
- **Parent Focus Groups.** ICF conducted focus groups with parents at all sites. The purpose of these focus groups was to examine parent knowledge of the program and of higher education, their participation in program activities, and their perceptions of effectiveness. The evaluation team provided Spanish-speaking personnel at sites where the school requested such support. Overall, 43 parents participated in focus groups. The typical parent focus group averaged five participants.
- **Community Alliance Interview/Focus Groups.** In setting up the site visits, all sites were asked about current relationships with community alliances to the Texas GEAR UP SG; time was allotted in the schedule to interview community alliances if available. Overall, 14 representatives from community organizations participated in an interview or focus group.

## B.5 Data Security and Cleaning

The ICF team received all data provided by TEA via a secure, password protected environment. In Year 4, all surveys were administrated electronically, via Survey Monkey, using ICF's secure, password protected account. 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.

Upon receipt of the GUIDES data in April 2016, ICF reviewed the data and asked TEA to follow up with schools for clarification regarding some responses. The survey data were 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 GUIDES and survey data. ANOVAs were utilized only to compare means across schools. These analyses were also used to explore change over time.

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

## EXAMINATION OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN VARIABLES

To examine relationships between variables (e.g., relationship between students having conversations with someone at school about college entrance requirements and students' perceived knowledge of college entrance topic area), correlation tests (e.g., Spearman's  $\rho$  and Pearson's  $r$ ) were also conducted.

## LEVEL/MIX OF IMPLEMENTATION

As more outcomes become available, it will be of interest to continue exploring whether specific implementation activities are associated with outcomes and/or if it is some level (amount) or mix of implementation that is related to outcomes. Findings will be reported in forthcoming comprehensive reports. Annual implementation data were 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 Analysis of Site Visit Qualitative Data

Findings from the qualitative analyses were cross-referenced with findings from quantitative analyses to more completely answer evaluation questions of interest. The evaluation team utilized qualitative analytic software (ATLAS.ti) to code transcribed interview data with program-specific codes.<sup>171</sup> In addition, Appendix E provides case study summaries.

## DATA REVIEW

Evaluators conducted detailed coding of qualitative data using keyword searches and, in some cases, reviewing entire transcripts to look for specific themes (such as facilitators or barriers). The site visit team also conducted extensive content analysis to identify themes as well as similarities/differences across the sites.

## CASE STUDIES

Case studies were developed for each of the four districts. School-level case studies were not utilized in order to maintain the confidentiality that was assured to participants in the evaluation site visits. The purpose of these case studies was to describe implementation from the various perspectives of those who participated in the site visits. These case studies also identified any

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<sup>171</sup> ATLAS.ti is a qualitative analytic software. More information about the product can be found at <http://atlasti.com/>.

notable differences across the schools as well as emerging promising practices and challenges for each district.

## B.7 Reference

Diamond, A., & Sekhon, J. S. (2013) Genetic matching for estimating causal effects: A general multivariate matching method for achieving balance in observational studies. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 95(3), 932–945. Retrieved from <http://sekhon.berkeley.edu/papers/GenMatch.pdf>.



## Appendix C: Texas GEAR UP State Grant Annual Performance Reporting Data Requested from Grantees, 2015–16

As described in Appendix B, the ICF team worked with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop an appropriate tool for collecting annual performance data for the 2012–13 school year. Beginning in 2013–14, TEA’s collaborator for technical assistance, The University of Texas at Austin’s Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI), contracted with a provider of a system to collect Texas GEAR UP SG annual performance data. The general strategy was similar to that used in Year 1 and Year 2, but grantees were able to enter annual performance data in an ongoing manner; 2014–15 annual performance reporting was similar. Instructions were provided to each Texas GEAR UP SG school to assist them in providing required APR data in the GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System (GUIDES), the data collection system developed by UT-IPSI.

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
<b>Student Profile</b>	
First Name <sup>1</sup>	Enter student’s full legal first name
Middle Name	Enter student’s full legal middle name
Last Name <sup>1</sup>	Enter student’s full legal last name
Date of Birth <sup>1</sup>	Enter DOB in following format: MM/DD/YYYY
Phone Number(s) <sup>1</sup>	Enter as: XXX-XXX-XXXX
Gender <sup>1</sup>	Male or Female
School Year <sup>1</sup>	Select current school year from 2013–14, 2014–15, etc.
Address <sup>1</sup>	Street address, city, state, zip
Race <sup>1</sup>	Select or type from following list (dropdown in GUIDES): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Indian or Alaska Native – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliations or community recognition.</li> <li>• Asian – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. This area includes, for example, China, India, Japan, Korea, and the Philippine Islands.</li> <li>• Black or African American – A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.</li> <li>• Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii or other pacific islands such as Samoa and Guam.</li> <li>• White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.</li> <li>• Two or more races</li> <li>• Race Unknown</li> </ul>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Ethnicity <sup>1</sup>	Select or type from the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, Hispanic or Latino – A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• Ethnicity Unknown</li> </ul>
Unique ID <sup>1</sup>	10-digit number unique to all students in Texas
Local ID <sup>1</sup>	Variable-length-digit number at district level. May change if student moves across districts.
Limited English Proficiency Status <sup>1</sup>	Select the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Limited English Proficient (LEP) status indicator code from the drop down list as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>0 Not LEP</b></li> <li>• <b>1 Identified As LEP</b></li> <li>• <b>F Student Exited from LEP Status – Monitored 1 (M1)</b> – student has met criteria for bilingual/English Speakers of other Languages program exit, is no longer classified as LEP in PEIMS, and is in his or her first year of monitoring as required by 19 TAC §89.1220(l) and is not eligible for funding due to the fact that they are not LEP</li> <li>• <b>S Student Exited from LEP Status – Monitored 2 (M2)</b> – student has met criteria for bilingual/English Speakers of other Languages program exit, is no longer classified as LEP in PEIMS, and is in his or her second year of monitoring as required by the 19 TAC §89.1220(l) and is not eligible for funding due to the fact that they are not LEP</li> </ul>
Grade <sup>1</sup>	Enter current grade in school (7, 8, 9, 10, etc.)
School <sup>1</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kennedy High School</li> <li>• Memorial High School</li> <li>• Estacado High School</li> <li>• Manor High School</li> <li>• New Manor Tech High School</li> <li>• Somerset High School</li> </ul>
Early College High School <sup>2</sup>	Is the student part of Manor Early College High School (Yes/No)
District <sup>1</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edgewood ISD</li> <li>• Manor ISD</li> <li>• Lubbock ISD</li> <li>• Somerset ISD</li> </ul>
Eligible for Free- or Reduced- Price Lunch <sup>1</sup>	Select Yes or No
Special Education <sup>1</sup>	Select Yes or No to indicate if currently identified as special education
Education Plan/Program <sup>1</sup> (required only if special education is YES) <sup>2</sup>	Does the student have an Individualized Education Plan? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes or No</li> </ul>
At-risk of dropout status <sup>1</sup>	Yes or No
Status of enrollment <sup>1</sup>	Select Active or Inactive

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
<b>Academic Milestones</b>	
Degree Plan <sup>2</sup>	Endorsements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)</li> <li>• Business &amp; Industry</li> <li>• Public Services</li> <li>• Arts &amp; Humanities</li> <li>• Multidisciplinary Studies</li> <li>• No Endorsements</li> <li>• Not on Foundation</li> </ul>
Change “promoted to next grade” to “At the end of the school year, student is <b>ELIGIBLE</b> to be promoted to next grade” <sup>1, 2</sup>	Yes/No
Special Note <sup>2</sup>	Open-ended text field to describe why a student is not enrolled in any course, or is missing course outcome, or is missing promotion.
Completed Algebra I in any previous year? <sup>2</sup>	Yes or No
Completed a Pre-Advanced Placement (AP) or AP course in any previous year? <sup>2</sup>	Yes or No
ACT Score <sup>2</sup>	Numeric Score Not taken
SAT Score <sup>2</sup>	Numeric Score Not taken
PSAT Score <sup>2</sup>	Numeric Score Not taken
ACT Aspire Score <sup>2</sup>	Numeric Score Not taken
<b>Course Listing</b>	
District <sup>1</sup>	District the student linked from student profile
School Year <sup>1</sup>	School Year linked from student profile
Grade Level <sup>1</sup>	Grade linked from student profile
<i>Following fields are asked for each course</i>	
Course Name <sup>1</sup>	Open-ended text field
Course/Section Number <sup>1</sup>	Open-ended text field Unique identifier for each course. Does not include section identifier.
Is the course an advanced <sup>1</sup> course?	Yes/No

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
	“Advanced Courses” are classes that are identified as above grade level by the student’s school. Most honors, pre-AP, and AP courses are considered Advanced, but that is dependent on the grade level of the student. (ex. Grade 9 student enrolled in Algebra 2 is considered an advanced course)
Course Hours (Aug – Mar) <sup>1</sup>	Numeric; decimal in terms of hours (0.5); Advanced Courses only Calculated by the campus for each student in each advanced course section and entered as: [Maximum seat time in hours for the course for the reporting period] – [total excused and unexcused absences in hours by course section number] – [total time in hours a student was not enrolled during the reporting period] – [number of hours lost for that course due to school closure]
Course Hours (Apr – Aug) <sup>1</sup>	Numeric; decimal in terms of hours (0.5); Advanced Courses only Calculated by the campus for each student in each advanced course section and entered as: [Maximum seat time in hours for the course for the reporting period] – [total excused and unexcused absences in hours by course section number] – [total time in hours a student was not enrolled during the reporting period] – [number of hours lost for that course due to school closure]
Course Completion <sup>1</sup>	Yes/No
If AP course completed and student completed AP exam, what was the exam score? <sup>2</sup>	Numeric (1-5) AP Exam not taken
Semester/Trimester 1 Score <sup>1, 2</sup>	Numeric
Semester/Trimester 2 Score <sup>1, 2</sup>	Numeric
Trimester 3 Score <sup>1, 2</sup>	Numeric
<b>Exam/State Assessment Tracking</b>	
Grade Level <sup>1</sup>	Grade linked from student profile
<i>Following fields are asked for State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Math, STAAR Reading, STAAR Writing, and fields will be added as relevant to the year in which the cohort is.</i>	
Date/Month Exam is taken <sup>1</sup>	DD/MM/YYYY or MM/YYYY
Raw Score <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Scale Score <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Level of Performance <sup>1</sup>	Level I: Unsatisfactory Level II: Satisfactory at the Phase-in Standard



Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
	Level II: Satisfactory at the Recommended Standard Level III: Advanced
Type of Assessment <sup>1</sup>	STAAR STAAR – Modified STAAR – Alternate STAAR – Linguistically Accommodated
<i>For students that take the following exam only</i>	
Month/Year taken - Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)	DD/MM/YYYY or MM/YYYY
Proficiency Level – TELPAS Reading	Beginning Intermediate Advanced Advanced High
TELPAS Reading Raw Score	Numeric
TELPAS Reading Scale Score	Numeric
Proficiency Level – TELPAS Writing	Beginning Intermediate Advanced Advanced High
Proficiency Level – TELPAS Speaking	Beginning Intermediate Advanced Advanced High
Proficiency Level – TELPAS Listening	Beginning Intermediate Advanced Advanced High
TELPAS Composite Scale Score	Numeric
TELPAS Composite Rating	Beginning Intermediate Advanced Advanced High
<b>Absence Tracking</b>	
School Year <sup>1</sup>	Linked from Student Profile
Total Unexcused Absences – Quarter 1 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Total Excused Absences – Quarter 1 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Unexcused Absences – Quarter 2 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Excused Absences – Quarter 2 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Unexcused Absences – Quarter 3 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Excused Absences – Quarter 3 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Unexcused Absences – Quarter 4 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Excused Absences – Quarter 4 <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
Total Unexcused Absences	Numeric
Total Excused Absence	Numeric
Total Absences	Numeric
<b>Student Enrollment/Withdrawal Tracking</b>	
Date of Action <sup>1</sup>	MM/DD/YYYY; date when enrollment or withdrawal occurs
Type of Action <sup>1</sup>	Left School Enrolled mid-year Changed District Moved up a grade
If Left School, Reason?	Out of District Out of State Left School System Home Schooling Incarcerated Enrolled in Other TX School Other [SPECIFY]
If changed district, specify	Edgewood ISD Lubbock ISD Manor ISD Somerset ISD Other [SPECIFY]
Notes	Open ended text field
<b>Discipline Referrals</b>	
Date of Incident <sup>2</sup>	Date on which discipline infraction occurs – mm/dd/yyyy

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Disciplinary Action Taken	Expulsion (01 – 05) Suspension (06) Partial Suspension (25-26) Placement (07, 13-14) Truancy (16-17) Continuation (08-12)
<b>Event Tracking For Students</b>	
Name of Event	
Date of Event	Date when Event occurs
Attended <sup>1</sup>	Yes/No
Hours Spent at Event <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
<b>Educator Profile</b>	
First, Middle, and Last Name <sup>1</sup>	Full legal first, last, and middle name
School	School educator is primarily associated with
District <sup>1</sup>	District educator is associated with
Local ID <sup>1</sup>	District-level numeric identifier for each teacher.
Unique ID <sup>1</sup>	State-level numeric identifier for each teacher.
Grade Level <sup>1</sup>	Indicate the grade level educator is teaching. When possible, indicate an individual grade level based on primary responsibilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade K-4</li> <li>• Grade 5</li> <li>• Grade 6</li> <li>• Grade 7</li> <li>• Grade 8</li> <li>• Multiple Middle School grade levels</li> <li>• Grade 9</li> <li>• Grade 10</li> <li>• Grade 11</li> <li>• Grade 12</li> <li>• Multiple High School grade levels</li> <li>• Not Applicable (District/ School Administrator)</li> </ul>
Content Area <sup>1</sup>	Select from the following which best describes the content taught by this teacher: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• ELA</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• Social Studies</li> <li>• Not a content area teacher (Middle/ High School)</li> <li>• Not applicable (Elementary)</li> </ul>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
If a content area teacher, does the teacher teach any courses that are eligible for college credit? <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
If Not a Content Area teacher, specify role <sup>2</sup>	If Content Area is “Not a Content area teacher” is selected, open-ended text field to specify job title
Program Type	Select all that apply from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular Education</li> <li>• Special Education</li> <li>• Bilingual/English Speakers of other Languages Education</li> <li>• Career and Technical Education</li> <li>• Gifted and Talented Education</li> <li>• Not Applicable (Administration)</li> </ul>
Status	Active/Inactive
<b>Event Tracking for Educators</b>	
Name of Event <sup>1</sup>	
Date of Event <sup>1</sup>	Date when Event occurs
Attended <sup>1</sup>	Yes/No
Hours Spent at Event <sup>1</sup>	Numeric, please round to the nearest half hour, using decimal format (one and a half hours = 1.5)
<b>Parent Profile</b>	
Parent First, Middle, and Last Name <sup>1</sup>	Full legal name of the parent
Parent ID <sup>1</sup>	The Parent ID is a self-constructed value based on their child's Unique ID.
School <sup>1</sup>	School their child is currently enrolled in
District <sup>1</sup>	District their child is currently enrolled in
Student <sup>1</sup>	Student(s) the parent is associated with
Email	Email ID of the parent
<b>Event Tracking for Parents</b>	
Name of Event <sup>1</sup>	
Date of Event <sup>1</sup>	Date when Event occurs
Attended <sup>1</sup>	Yes/No

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Hours Spent at Event <sup>1</sup>	Numeric
<b>Grant Events: Student Services</b>	
Students <sup>1</sup>	Link to students
Date for Service <sup>1</sup>	Enter date in the following format: MM/DD/YYYY
Did Parents participate in service? <sup>1, 2</sup>	Yes/No
Parents	Link to parents
College Prep Advisors <sup>2</sup>	Link only to College Prep Advisors from “Other Contacts” list
Service Type <sup>1</sup>	<b>Select one from the following:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tutoring/Homework Assistance</li> <li>2. Mentoring</li> </ol> Counseling/Advising/Academic Planning/Career Counseling
If tutoring, what subject?	Select: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• English and Language Arts</li> <li>• Social Studies</li> </ul> Required only if Tutoring is selected above.
If counseling/ advising or mentoring, did it cover financial aid?	Select Yes or No  Required only if Counseling or Mentoring is selected as Service Type so it is a sub-set of Counseling or Mentoring services.
Delivery method for activity <sup>1</sup>	For the activity above, please indicate if it was delivered in-person or virtual.
Number of Hours (per day) <sup>1</sup>	Enter number of hours the activity occurred – round to the nearest whole hour (Enter 15 min increments as 0.25, enter ½ hour increments as “0.5”), so four and half hours would be entered as “4.5” and four hours and 45 min will be entered as “4.75”
Explain why number of hours per day for this service exceeds 4 hours <sup>2</sup>	Open-text field
Reason for Service <sup>1</sup>	Planning/justification for services: Indicate how the decision was made to have student be involved in tutoring/homework assistance: <b>Select ONE reason:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher/counselor input</li> <li>• Diagnostic data</li> <li>• Teacher/counselor input AND Diagnostic Data</li> <li>• Student Request/walk-in</li> <li>• Parent request/walk-in</li> </ul>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
<b>Events Planning</b>	
Name of the Event <sup>1</sup>	Text field. Unique event identifier
Description of Event	Open text field
Date of the Event <sup>1</sup>	Event Date mm/dd/yyyy
Date Event Planning Started <sup>1</sup>	Date event record is created for planning purposes
District <sup>1</sup>	Linked to relevant cohort district(s)
School <sup>1</sup>	Linked to relevant cohort school(s)
GEAR UP Partner	Linked to relevant GEAR UP Partner(s)
Type of Event <sup>1</sup>	Select one from following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College Tour</li> <li>• College Student Shadowing</li> <li>• Family Event</li> <li>• Student Workshop</li> <li>• Parent Workshop</li> <li>• Job/Site Visit</li> <li>• Job Shadowing</li> <li>• Math Educational Field Trip</li> <li>• English Language Arts Educational Field Trip</li> <li>• Science Educational Field Trip</li> <li>• Other Educational Field Trip</li> <li>• Educator Professional Development (PD)</li> <li>• Other Educator Event</li> </ul>
Is the event a summer program? <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
If Summer Program, select one: <sup>2</sup>	Choose from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic Enrichment (This may include transition across grade levels, college going content – college enrollment, etc.)</li> <li>• Remedial Services (This may include study skills, organization skills, tutoring, etc.)</li> </ul>
If Student or Parent Workshop is selected, please specify	Select one from the following if Student or Parent Workshop selected as Event Type: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisor Introduction</li> <li>• Academic Program</li> <li>• Applications and Admissions College</li> <li>• Applications and Admissions Pre-College</li> <li>• Achievement Appreciation</li> <li>• Application Drive</li> <li>• Assembly</li> <li>• Cafeteria Visit</li> <li>• Career Exploration</li> <li>• College Knowledge</li> <li>• College Fair</li> </ul>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essays and Personal Statements</li> <li>• Financial Literacy</li> <li>• GEAR UP Evaluation</li> <li>• Sporting Events</li> <li>• Test Preparation</li> <li>• Test Registration Drive</li> <li>• Skills focused<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Texas GEAR UP website<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
If Educator PD Content	Mark all that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiated Instruction</li> <li>• Advanced Instructional Strategies</li> <li>• Project Based Learning</li> <li>• Vertical Teaming</li> <li>• Financial Literacy</li> <li>• GEAR UP Specific</li> </ul>
Event Status <sup>1</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Planned</li> <li>• Reviewed</li> <li>• Attendance Pending</li> <li>• Reported</li> <li>• Cancelled</li> <li>• Not Applicable</li> </ul>
Event Length <sup>1</sup>	Total number of cumulative hours over all event dates.
Event Description <sup>1</sup>	Text field; description of the event including agenda attached.
Delivery Method <sup>1</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-person</li> <li>• Virtual</li> </ul>
Is the Event funded by district's GEAR UP funds? <sup>1, 2</sup>	Yes/No
If yes, what is the estimated event cost? <sup>2</sup>	Amount in \$
If no, source of funds? <sup>2</sup>	Text field
List of primary cost items <sup>2</sup>	
Scope <sup>1, 2</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-wide</li> <li>• Cohort-only</li> <li>• Partial Cohort</li> </ul>
Group <sup>1, 2</sup>	Mark all that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Educators</li> <li>• Other Contacts</li> </ul>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Final Agenda upload (PDF) 2	File upload link
Government Performance and Results Act Goals Fulfilled <sup>1, 2</sup>	Mark all that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government Performance and Results Act Goal 1: Increase the academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education of GEAR UP students.</li> <li>• Government Performance and Results Act Goal 2: Increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in postsecondary education.</li> <li>• Government Performance and Results Act Goal 3: Increase the educational expectations and family knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing</li> </ul>
Registered Students <sup>1</sup>	Link to students attending
Registered Educators <sup>1</sup>	Link to educators attending
Registered Parents <sup>1</sup>	Link to parents attending
Registered Other Contacts <sup>1</sup>	Link to GU Partner staff attending
Non-Cohort Attendance	Enter attendance for following grades: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• K-4 -</li> <li>• Grade 5 -</li> <li>• Grade 6 -</li> <li>• Grade 7 -</li> <li>• Grade 8 -</li> <li>• Grade 9 -</li> <li>• Grade 10 -</li> <li>• Grade 11 -</li> <li>• Grade 12 -</li> </ul>
<i>Following fields were developed by the Project Manager during Advisor Training and are required for Advisor monitoring, district planning and audit, and general Event Planning purposes. Most fields are not mandatory. These were also added to in case districts requested specific fields that were useful to them for planning purposes</i>	
Standards of Service <sup>1, 2</sup>	Mark all that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Contact</li> <li>• Family Contact</li> <li>• Parent Contact</li> <li>• Field Trip</li> <li>• Summer Programming</li> <li>• Classroom Observations</li> </ul>



Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before/After School Programs</li> <li>• College Clubs</li> <li>• Lunch Programs</li> <li>• Community Service</li> <li>• PD</li> </ul>
Food Provided <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
How is the food provided? <sup>2</sup>	Text field
Transportation Type <sup>2</sup>	Select one: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Bus</li> <li>• Coach Bus</li> <li>• School Van</li> <li>• Private Van</li> </ul>
Translator Required <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
Setup/Breakdown procedures <sup>2</sup>	Text field
Visitor protocol distributed <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
Feedback received from parents <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
Reminder calls made	Yes/No
Thank-you letters distributed <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
<b>Internal Meetings</b>	
Name of the Meeting <sup>1,2</sup>	Name of the meeting according to the agenda.
Jurisdiction <sup>1,2</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GEAR UP State Level</li> <li>• District Level</li> <li>• School Level</li> </ul> <p>GEAR UP State Level meeting do not include any districts or schools and are strictly either internal UT-IPSI meetings or meetings with/between GEAR UP Partners.</p> <p>District or School level is defined as per the scope of the meeting and the attendees involved.</p>
Type of Meeting <sup>1,2</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Review</li> <li>• Grant Assistance</li> <li>• Advisory Council</li> <li>• Public Inquiry</li> <li>• Advisor PD</li> <li>• Districts Educator PD</li> <li>• Statewide Educator PD</li> </ul>

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UT-IPSI PD</li> <li>• Outreach Activities</li> <li>• State Office Assistance and Coordination</li> <li>• Program Administration</li> </ul> <p><b>Planning and Review</b> - defined as planning for the future or review/ monitoring discussions either within district or with UT-IPSI.</p> <p><b>Grant Assistance</b> – defined as questions from districts and guidance/guidelines provided by UT-IPSI including data assistance.</p> <p><b>Advisory Council</b> - defined as advisory council meetings organized by districts</p> <p><b>Public Inquiry</b> - defined as responses to phone, email, and website inquiries from public or vendors/ partners/etc. (UT-IPSI use only)</p> <p><b>Advisor PD</b> – defined as bi-annual training provided by UT-IPSI to Advisors (UT-IPSI use only).</p> <p><b>District Educator PD</b> - defined as any PD training provided by UT-IPSI staff to cohort districts.</p> <p><b>Statewide Educator PD</b> - defined as any PD training organized/ provided by UT-IPSI staff for statewide programs or non-cohort districts.</p> <p><b>UT-IPSI PD</b> - PD received by UT-IPSI staff (UT-IPSI use only)</p> <p><b>Outreach Activities</b> - Meetings or any communication made to facilitate GEAR UP activities with potential partners.</p> <p><b>State Office Assistance and Coordination</b> - includes meetings and assisting TEA, ICF, and AMS.</p> <p><b>Program Administration</b> - Contractual oversight and initiation, business services, travel, purchasing, etc.</p>
Districts involved <sup>2</sup>	Link to districts involved in this meeting
Schools involved <sup>2</sup>	Link to schools involved in this meeting
GEAR UP Partner(s) involved? <sup>2</sup>	Link to GEAR UP Partners attending this meeting.
Date of the Meeting <sup>1, 2</sup>	Date – mm/dd/yyyy
Type of Contact <sup>1, 2</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Phone Call</li> <li>• In-Person</li> <li>• Web Conference</li> </ul>
Hours spent <sup>1, 2</sup>	Hours in increments of 15 minutes and entered as 0.25 e.g. 30 minute meeting is 0.5 and 2 hour 45 minutes meeting is 2.75

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Notes <sup>1, 2</sup>	Text field for brief content and description of meeting
Attach Agenda or Meeting Minutes <sup>2</sup>	Upload PDF/Word file
Educators participating <sup>2</sup>	Link to Educator profiles that attend this meeting
Other Contacts participating <sup>2</sup>	Link to Other Contact profiles that attend this meeting
Parents participating <sup>2</sup>	Link to Parent profiles that attend this meeting
<b>GEAR UP Partners</b>	
Partner Name <sup>1</sup>	Full Name of the organization or entity
Type <sup>1</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Institution</li> <li>• Non-Profit Organization</li> <li>• Community Organization</li> <li>• Faith-based Organization</li> <li>• Professional Association</li> <li>• Business</li> <li>• Government</li> <li>• School/District</li> <li>• Volunteer Group</li> <li>• GEAR UP Program</li> </ul>
Local Education Agency (LEA)? <sup>1, 2</sup>	Is the organization a local education agency?
Institution of Higher Education (IHE)? <sup>1</sup>	Is the organization an Institution of Higher Education?
If IHE, what type?	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four-year Public University/College</li> <li>• Four-year Private University/College</li> <li>• Two-year Private Community College</li> <li>• Two-year Public Community College</li> <li>• Historically Black College or University</li> <li>• Hispanic Serving Institution</li> <li>• Tribally Controlled Colleges &amp; Universities</li> <li>• Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions</li> <li>• Alaska Native Serving Institution</li> </ul>
District partnering with? <sup>2</sup>	Linked to District(s) partnering with
School partnering with? <sup>2</sup>	Linked to School(s) partnering with
Address, City, State, and Zip	Full address of the main office of the organization
Email, Phone and Fax	Email, Phone and fax number of the partner
Website	Website of the partner

Data element (as it appears in GUIDES)	Definition
Summarize the partner's specific support and commitment to the project <sup>2</sup>	Text field
Partner Identification and Cost Share Form Completed? <sup>2</sup>	Yes/No
<b>Other Contacts</b>	
Name <sup>1, 2</sup>	Full legal name of the person
Title <sup>1, 2</sup>	Official job title or role at the GEAR UP Partner organization
GEAR UP Partner associated with <sup>1, 2</sup>	Link to the GEAR UP Partner
Email <sup>2</sup>	Email ID
Office Phone Number <sup>2</sup>	Phone number xxx-xxx-xxxx
Status <sup>1</sup>	Select from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active</li> <li>• Inactive</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>This item is required

## 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 2015, parents were surveyed, and in spring of 2016 only students were surveyed. In addition to student and parent surveys, site visits were conducted to interview various stakeholders in all districts during both fall 2015 and spring 2016.

### D.1 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Student Survey: Fall 2015

Reminder: You may have completed a similar survey in fall 2014 for GEAR UP. We will be asking just a few questions this fall to learn about summer programs and your high school career. In spring 2016, we will ask you additional questions to learn about your thinking and understanding about GEAR UP.

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the impact of the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) program at your school. Because you are enrolled in a GEAR UP school in 2015–16, 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 10-15 minutes. Please answer the following questions about your school experiences, future education plans and opinions about GEAR UP.

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

If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a study participant, you or your parent/legal guardian can call Thomas Horwood, ICF International at (703) 934-3000.

#### **Study Assent**

For students 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: <INSERT SCHOOL LINK>

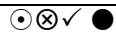
#### Instructions for completing this survey on paper:

Read each question carefully. Some will ask that you select only one option, while others will ask you to select ALL that apply.

You may use any writing instrument to complete the survey, but a pencil may be preferred as it will allow you to more easily change your answers if needed.

Make a **HEAVY MARK** that completely fills the circle of your answer choice:

Incorrect Marks    Correct Mark



If you change your answer, please be sure to erase your original mark as cleanly as possible.  
Try to avoid making stray marks on the form.

### **Where Attended School in Past**

#### **1. Did you attend any of the following middle schools when you were in Grade 8 (2013-2014)?**

<input type="radio"/> Brentwood Middle School	<input type="radio"/> Decker Middle School	<input type="radio"/> E.T. Wrenn Middle School	<input type="radio"/> Dunbar College Prep Academy
<input type="radio"/> Gus Garcia Middle School	<input type="radio"/> Manor Middle School	<input type="checkbox"/> Somerset Junior High School	<input type="radio"/> Did not attend any of the schools listed when I was in Grade 7 or Grade 8

#### **2. Did you attend any of the following high schools last year (2014-2015, Grade 9)?**

<input type="radio"/> Estacado High School	<input type="radio"/> John F. Kennedy High School	<input type="radio"/> Manor High School	<input type="radio"/> Manor New Tech High School
<input type="radio"/> Memorial High School	<input type="radio"/> Somerset High School	<input type="radio"/> Did not attend any of the schools listed last year when I was in Grade 9 (2014-2015)	

### **Summer Program(s) 2015**

#### **3. Did you participate in a summer 2015 program?**

- Yes (continue to question 4)
- No (skip items 4-9 and go to question 10 (NOTE to DGB skip logic will take to correct question))

#### **4. How many summer 2015 programs did you attend?**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

#### **5. Where was/were the summer program(s) you attended offered? (Select ALL that apply)**

- My local high school district (school I was attending in Grade 9 or 10)
- Another school district in Texas
- A community college or university in Texas
- A business or community organization in Texas
- In a state other than Texas

#### **6. What type(s) of summer program(s) did you participate in? (Select ALL that apply)**

- A college readiness program designed to help me learn more about what I would need to do to apply to college successfully
- A college readiness program designed to help me learn more about financial aid for college
- An academic enrichment program designed to help me be better prepared to take AP or Pre-AP courses
- A tutoring program
- A program to learn more about careers I might be interested in
- A job shadowing program or internship
- Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

- 7. First, think about the summer 2015 program(s) you attended. If the item asks about a topic that was not related to the summer program you attended, please indicate not applicable. If the topic is related, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statements about the summer 2015 program(s) you attended.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I attended the summer program(s) for the majority of days it was offered.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I enjoyed the activities offered during the summer program(s) I attended.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 8. First, think about the summer 2015 program(s) you attended. If the item asks about a topic that was not related to the summer program you attended, please indicate not applicable. If the topic is related, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statements about the summer 2015 program(s) you attended.**

	Not Applicable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I feel more prepared to take Advanced Placement [AP], Pre-AP or college credit courses after attending the summer program(s).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I have a better understanding of financial aid for college after attending the summer program(s).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I have a better understanding of college entrance requirements after attending the summer program(s).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I have a better understanding of the benefits of college after attending the summer program(s).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. I have a better understanding of careers I might be interested in after attending the summer program(s).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. I have a better understanding of a specific career/job after attending the summer program(s).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. The summer program(s) prepared me academically for taking one or more of my high school classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. The summer program(s) provided me with skills to help me in my high school classes (for example, time management skills, organization skills).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. I would recommend the summer program(s) I attended to other students at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Based on my experiences with the summer 2015 program(s) I attended, I am planning on attending a summer 2016 program(s) if possible.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**9. What thoughts, if any, do you have about the summer 2015 program(s) you attended and how it benefited you?**

**10. Select the reasons that you attended one or more summer 2015 program(s). (Select ALL that apply)**

- I wanted to participate in a summer program(s)
  - My parents wanted me to participate in a summer program(s)
  - The academic content focus of a summer program(s) was of interest to me
  - The summer program(s) provided an opportunity for me to spend time with friends
  - I thought it would help me to do well in my Grade 10 classes
  - I thought it would help me to do well in my AP, Pre-AP or college credit classes
  - The summer program(s) was scheduled on days that I could attend
  - The summer program(s) was scheduled at a time of day that I could attend
  - The school strongly encouraged me to attend the summer program(s)
  - Someone from GEAR UP strongly encouraged me to attend the summer program(s)
  - Other (please describe other reasons for attending):
- 

**11. (NOTE skip logic to here if did not attend Summer 2015 program(s)) Select from the following reasons that you did NOT attend a summer 2015 program. (Select ALL that apply)**

- I did not want to participate in a summer program
  - My parents did not want me to participate in a summer program
  - The academic content focus of the summer programs I was aware of were not of interest to me
  - None of my friends were attending a summer program
  - Our family was not in the area during the time that summer programs I was aware of were scheduled (e.g., on vacation)
  - The summer programs I was aware of were scheduled at a time of day that did not work for me
  - The summer programs I was aware of were related to careers/jobs that I am not interested in learning more about.
  - I had a job and could not miss work to attend
  - I had family responsibilities and could not attend (e.g, watching siblings)
  - The school did not inform me about any summer programs I might attend
  - The school did not encourage me to attend any summer programs
  - Other (please describe other reasons for NOT attending):
-



**12. So far, how challenging would you say high school has been for you academically?**

- Extremely Challenging
- Challenging
- A little Challenging
- Not at All Challenging

**13. If your school or GEAR UP program was to plan a summer 2016 program, what might they plan that would be of interest to you in attending?****Background****14. What is your current grade level?**

- Grade 9
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**15. What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

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

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

**17. What is the language you use most often at home? (Please select only one)**

- Both English and Spanish
- Only English
- Only Spanish
- Another language (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

**18. What is the language you use most often with friends? (Please select only one)**

- Both English and Spanish
- Only English
- Only Spanish
- Another language (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

**19. Are you Hispanic/Latino? (Please select only one)**

- No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

**20. What is your race? (Select ALL that apply)**

- American Indian or Alaska Native (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This area may include, for example, native Indians from the United States, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.)
- Asian (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. This area includes, for example, China, India, Japan, Korea, and the Philippine Islands.)
- Black or African American (A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii or other pacific islands such as Samoa and Guam.)
- White (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe (including Spain), North Africa, or the Middle East.)
- I do not wish to share

Thank you. Your time and answers are greatly appreciated.

## D.2 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Parent Survey: Fall 2015

Reminder: You may have completed a similar survey in prior years for the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). We are asking questions annually to understand how your thinking and understanding about GEAR UP changes over time. This is the only survey related to GEAR UP that you will be asked to complete this year.

GEAR UP schools throughout Texas, including the one your child attends, 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 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 2015-2016, 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 10-15 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 10, participating in GEAR UP. If you do not have a child in Grade 10, 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. **The Texas Education Agency's goal is to have at least 50% of parents complete the survey and share their perspectives on the program – please consider participating as your answers are important for fully understanding the program.**

If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a study participant, please call Thomas Horwood, ICF International at (703) 934-3000.

### Study Assent

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

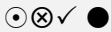
For parents/legal guardians taking the on-line version: By clicking on the link below, you will be provided with the information on the consent form and informed that completing the survey indicates that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate by completing the on-line survey. If you need to stop the on-line survey before completing it and return to it at a later time, you will be able to do so. Here is a link to the survey: [<INSERT SURVEY LINK>](#).

Instructions for completing this survey on paper:

- Read each question carefully. Some will ask that you select only one option, while others will ask you to select ALL that apply.
- You may use any writing instrument to complete the survey, but a pencil may be preferred as it will allow you to more easily change your answers if needed.

- Make a **HEAVY MARK** that completely fills the circle of your answer choice:

Incorrect Marks Correct Mark



- If you change your answer, please be sure to erase your original mark as cleanly as possible.
- Try to avoid making stray marks on the form.

**1. Please confirm that this is the only time you completed the GEAR UP Parent/Guardian Survey in Fall 2015.**

- Yes, this is my only time completing this survey in Fall 2015.
- I completed the survey in Fall 2015 for another student I have participating in GEAR UP. This is my first time completing for this child who is also participating in GEAR UP. \*Please complete this survey.\*
- No, I completed the survey online in Fall 2015. \*Please STOP and DO NOT complete this survey. Thank you for completing it online!\*

**2. a. Do you currently have a child in Grade 10? 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?**

**(NOTE: If you do not have a child in Grade 10 or participating in GEAR UP, please do not complete the remainder of the survey.)**

- Grade 9
- 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?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Have you talked with your child about attending college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Has anyone from your child’s school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about the availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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

	Definitely not	Probably not	Probably	Definitely
a. A local <u>public community college</u> using financial aid, scholarships, and your family’s resources?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. A <u>public 4-year college</u> using financial aid, scholarships, and your family’s resources?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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

	Not Knowledgeable	Slightly Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
a. Financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. General requirements for college acceptance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Importance/benefit of college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**8. Overall, how challenging would you say high school has been for your child academically?**

- Extremely Challenging
- Challenging
- A little Challenging
- Not at All Challenging

**9. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about high school graduation plans at your child’s school.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Someone from Texas GEAR UP or my child’s school has discussed graduation requirements with my child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I have discussed graduation requirements with my child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I understand how my child’s endorsement(s) will help my child to prepare for college and a career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. My child plans on dropping her/his endorsement(s) as soon as she/he is able to after sophomore (Grade 10) year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. I understand what my child needs to do to graduate with the distinguished level of achievement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. I plan for my child to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**About Your Experiences with GEAR UP**

**10. Please answer each of the following.**

	Yes	No
a. I participated in at least one GEAR UP activity during the 2014-2015 school year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I participated in at least one GEAR UP activity during summer 2015.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I have participated in at least one GEAR UP activity so far this school year (2015-2016).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**11. 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): \_\_\_\_\_

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

- Child care
- Work Schedule
- Interest/relevance of topics
- Language barriers
- Time/schedule
- Transportation
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Overall, how satisfied were you with the GEAR UP program at your child’s school last year (2014-2015)?**

- Does not apply, I did not participate in GEAR UP events last school year or my child was not in a GEAR UP school last school year
- Very Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

**14. Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your child’s school so far this year (2015-2016)?**

- Does not apply, I have not participated in GEAR UP
- Very Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

**15. Please share anything that you would like us to know about your experiences with the GEAR UP program. What have you liked/not liked? Is there anything you would like to see the GEAR UP program doing with you and your child?**

**Background**

**16. Did your child attend any of the following middle schools in 2013-2014 (Grade 8) (Select all that apply)?**

<input type="radio"/> Brentwood Middle School	<input type="radio"/> Decker Middle School	<input type="radio"/> E.T. Wrenn Middle School	<input type="radio"/> Dunbar College Prep Academy
<input type="radio"/> Gus Garcia Middle School	<input type="radio"/> Manor Middle School	<input type="radio"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Somerset Junior High School	<input type="radio"/> Did not attend any of the schools listed when I was in Grade 7 or Grade 8

**17. Did your child attend any of the following high schools last year (2014-2015) (Select all that apply)?**

<input type="radio"/> John F. Kennedy High School	<input type="radio"/> Memorial High School	<input type="radio"/> Estacado High School	
<input type="radio"/> Manor High School	<input type="radio"/> Manor New Tech High School	<input type="radio"/> Somerset High School	<input type="radio"/> My child did not attend any of the schools listed last school year (2014-2015)

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

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

**19. What is your child's gender?**

- Female
- Male

**20. What is the language you use most often at home?**

- English
- Spanish
- Both English and Spanish
- Another language (please specify)

**21. 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 11
- Grade 12
- College student or college graduate
- Other (please specify):

**22. Are you Hispanic/Latino? (Select One)**

- No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

**23. What is your race? (Select one or ALL that apply)**

- American Indian or Alaska Native (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This area may include, for example, native Indians from the United States, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.)
- Asian (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. This area includes, for example, China, India, Japan, Korea, and the Philippine Islands.)
- Black or African American (A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii or other pacific islands such as Samoa and Guam.)
- White (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe (including Spain), North Africa, or the Middle East.)



**24. 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.3 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Student Survey: Spring 2016

Reminder: You may have completed a survey in fall 2015 for the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). We will be asking questions each Fall and Spring through your senior year to learn how your thinking and understanding about GEAR UP changes over time.

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the impact of the Texas GEAR UP program at your school. Because you were enrolled in a GEAR UP school in 2015-2016, we would like to include you in the study of the Texas GEAR UP program. As part of this important research, you are being asked to complete a survey which should take approximately 15-20 minutes. Please answer the following questions about your school experiences, future education plans, and opinions about GEAR UP. If you continue to participate in a GEAR UP school, you will be asked to complete a survey in fall 2016 about your participation in GEAR UP summer activities and events in order to understand how the program is meeting its goals of supporting your success in school and college readiness over time. Please read the following prior to deciding to take the survey:

- **Confidentiality:** Your answers to these questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Your name is NOT collected on the survey, so the research team will not be able to put your name in written reports. Your teachers, administrators, other students and your parents/legal guardians will not be able to see your responses to the survey questions. All findings will be summarized across all students who complete the survey.
- **Risks/Benefits:** The study presents minimal risk to you. Researchers will not identify specific students with the data we provide, and the research team has procedures in place to keep survey data safe/confidential. 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. Answering the survey questions helps build knowledge in the state and nationally about how to support students to prepare for college or other postsecondary education. Where appropriate, GEAR UP schools can use the information learned to adjust GEAR UP programming.
- **Voluntary Participation:** All students in your grade level at this school are being asked to participate in this study. We encourage you to take the survey. Input given about students' experiences will be important to better understanding the program. However, you do not have to participate in the survey if you do not want to. You may agree to participate now and change your mind after you begin. You will still be able to participate in all school and GEAR UP activities even if you do not complete the survey. We hope you will answer each question on the survey, but you may skip any question that you do not wish to answer.

If there is someone monitoring the survey, you can raise your hand and ask questions at any time during the survey. If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a study participant, you or your parent/legal guardian can call Thomas Horwood, ICF International at (703) 934-3000.

### Study Assent

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.

**About Previous School Attendance**

**1. Did you attend any of the following schools in Grade 7 and/or Grade 8? Check all schools that you attended in Grade 7 and/or Grade 8 for any time.**

<input type="radio"/> Brentwood Middle School	<input type="radio"/> Decker Middle School	<input type="radio"/> E.T. Wrenn Middle School	<input type="radio"/> Dunbar College Prep Academy
<input type="radio"/> Gus Garcia Middle School	<input type="radio"/> Manor Middle School	<input type="radio"/> Somerset Junior High School	<input type="radio"/> Did not attend any of the schools listed when I was in Grade 7 or Grade 8

**2. Did you attend any of the following high schools last year (2014-2015) when you were in Grade 9?**

<input type="radio"/> Estacado High School	<input type="radio"/> John F. Kennedy High School	<input type="radio"/> Manor High School	
<input type="radio"/> Manor New Tech High School	<input type="radio"/> Memorial High School	<input type="radio"/> Somerset High School	<input type="radio"/> Did not attend any of the schools listed last year when I was in Grade 9 (2014-2015)

**About College**

**3. What is the highest level of education that you want to complete? (Please select only one)**

- Some high school
- High school
- Some college
- 2-year college degree (Associates degree)
- 4-year college degree (Bachelor's degree)
- More than a 4-year college degree

**4. What is the highest level of education that you expect to complete? (Please select only one)**

- Some high school
- High school
- Some college
- 2-year college degree (Associates Degree)
- 4-year college degree (Bachelor's degree)
- More than a 4-year college degree

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

- Yes (Skip to question 9)
- No, I was already planning on going to college. (Skip to question 9)
- No, I still don't plan to go to college.
- Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP at my school but I do plan to go to college. (Skip to question 9)
- Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP at my school and I do not plan to go to college.

**6. You indicated that you currently do not plan to continue your education after high school, has your thinking about this changed from the past to now?**

- In prior years, I expected to continue my education after high school but I no longer expect to do so. (Skip to question 8)
- I have never expected to continue my education after high school. (Skip to question 7)

**7. If you do not continue your education after high school, what would be the reason(s)? (Select ALL that apply)**

- Family commitments
- I need to work after high school.
- I want to work after high school.
- I will not need more than high school to succeed.
- I want to join the military service after high school.
- It costs too much/I cannot afford it.
- My grades are not good enough to get into college.
- My performance on college entrance exams (e.g., SAT, ACT) has not/will not be good enough to get into college.
- Other (Please write in other reason(s): \_\_\_\_\_)

**8. You indicated that you have changed your mind about continuing your education after high school, what would be the reason(s)? (Select ALL that apply)**

- Family commitments
- I need to work after high school.
- I want to work after high school.
- I will not need more than high school to succeed.
- I want to join the military service after high school.
- It costs too much/I cannot afford it.
- My grades are not good enough to get into college.
- My performance on college entrance exams (e.g., SAT, ACT) has not/will not be good enough to get into college.
- Other (Please write in other reason(s).): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

- I do not plan to continue my education after high school
- Information from a class activity or assignment
- Doing research specifically at the Texas GEAR UP website: www.texasgearup.com
- Research that I have done on my own (other than on the Texas GEAR UP website)
- Information from or discussions with friends or other people my age
- Information from a college visit
- Information from a GEAR UP summer program
- Information from or discussions with GEAR UP staff or GEAR UP events (other than college visits or summer programs)
- Information from programs other than GEAR UP (e.g. AVID, Breakthrough, Communities in Schools)
- Information from or discussions with parents/family members
- Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors
- Information from a college fair
- Information from television
- Information from watching sports
- None, I have not yet begun to seek outside sources of information for my future college education.
- Other (please describe other sources): \_\_\_\_\_

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

	\$1 to \$1,000	\$1,001 to \$1,900	\$1,901 to \$3,000	\$3,001 to \$6,500	\$6,501 to \$9,400	\$9,401 to \$13,000	\$13,001 to \$18,000	More than \$18,000
a. Your local public two-year community college? <i>(Please select only one)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. A four-year public college in Texas? <i>(Please select only one)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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

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

**13. 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)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. SAT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. ACT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Federal Pell Grants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Federal student loans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Federal work-study	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Scholarships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Financial aid and the cost and benefits to you in pursuing postsecondary education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. General requirements for college acceptance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Importance/benefit of college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**About Your Experiences**

**14. 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 (2015-2016). If you participated in the course or activity during this school year, please answer “yes” and then choose the answer that best matches how effective the course or activity was in helping you to succeed in school/prepare to go to college. If you did not participate in the course or activity, please answer “no” and skip to the next item.**

Have you participated in this activity during this school year (2015-2016)?			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 II	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Taking a pre-AP or AP mathematics course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Taking a pre-AP or AP English/language arts course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Taking a pre-AP or AP science course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Taking a pre-AP or AP social studies course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Tutoring/homework assistance in math	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Tutoring/homework assistance in English/language arts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- h. Tutoring/homework assistance in science
- i. Tutoring/homework assistance in social studies
- j. Mentoring
- k. A 2015 GEAR UP Summer Program

**15. Please indicate whether or not you would like to change your endorsement(s) (major/minor) if given the opportunity.**

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Not Applicable
I have no plans to change my endorsement(s) (major/minor).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have already changed my endorsement(s) (major/minor).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan to change my endorsement(s) (major/minor) in the near future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**16. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your endorsement(s) (major/minor).**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I understand how my endorsement(s) (major/minor) will help me to prepare for college and a career.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I found it easy to select my endorsement(s) (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I understand what I need to do if I decide to change my endorsement(s) (major/minor).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I plan on dropping my endorsement(s) (major/minor) as soon as I am able to after my sophomore (Grade 10) year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**17. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your high school graduation plans.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Someone from Texas GEAR UP or my school has discussed graduation requirements with me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. My parents have discussed graduation requirements with me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I understand what I need to do to graduate with the distinguished level of achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. I plan to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**18. Have you ever met with the College Preparation Advisor at your school?**

- Yes

- No (Skip to question 21)
- I did not know that my school has a College Preparation Advisor (Skip to question 21)

**19. Please briefly describe what you met with your College Preparation Advisor about. For example, talked about courses to take in high school, talked about applying to college, or talked about financial aid for college. How has meeting with the College Preparation Advisor helped you to think about your plans after high school?**

**20. How effective have your conversations with the College Preparation Advisor been in helping you to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?**

- Not Effective
- Slightly Effective
- Mostly Effective
- Very Effective

**21. For these questions, we would first like to know about specific activities you may have participated in during this school year (2015-2016). 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 (2015-2016)?		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	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Financial aid counseling/advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. College visits/college student shadowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Job site visit/job shadowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Educational field trips	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. My participation in family/cultural events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. My parent(s) participation in family/cultural events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**22. 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.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



- b. It is too early for me to think about college.
- c. I am planning to take a pre-AP or AP course in mathematics next year.
- d. I am planning to take a pre-AP or AP course in English/language arts next year.
- e. I am planning to take a pre-AP or AP course in science next year.
- f. I am planning to take a pre-AP or AP course in social studies next year.

**23. What kind of information, support, or activities do you need from your school/GEAR UP to help you be more successful in school and be more prepared for college? (Select ALL that apply).**

**I would like:**

- More pre-AP/AP classes
- Information about participating in GEAR UP events
- Tutoring
- Opportunities to participate in college visits
- Information about college entrance requirements
- Information about college financial aid/scholarships
- Information about college student clubs and sports
- Information and events presented in other languages like Spanish
- Information about taking college entrance exams (i.e., SAT, ACT, TSI [Texas Success Initiative] exam)
- Information about dual credit courses where I can earn both high school and college credit
- Information about endorsement options
- Other information, support or activities you would be interested in participating in or learning more about? (please specify)

**24. Please indicate if you have taken any of the following:**

	Yes, I have taken	No, but I plan on taking before the end of the current school year	No, I have not taken and I have no current plans to take this school year
PSAT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ACT Aspire	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SAT Practice Test	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ACT Practice Test	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
AP Exam Practice Test	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**25. How aware are you about opportunities to earn college credit (AP courses, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment) while in high school?**

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Slightly aware
- Not aware

**26. So far, how challenging would you say high school has been for you academically?**

- Extremely challenging
- Challenging
- A little challenging
- Not at all challenging

**27. How many GEAR UP activities (NOT including summer programs) have you attended during the 2015-2016 school year?**

- I have not attended any GEAR UP activities offered at my school (*Skip to question 29*)
- 1 – 3 GEAR UP activities
- 4 – 6 GEAR UP activities
- More than 6 GEAR UP activities
- Does not apply: I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP

**28. How effective have the GEAR UP programs and activities this year been in helping you understand the following?**

	Not at all effective	Somewhat effective	Effective	Very Effective
a. Academic readiness at each grade level in high school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Financial readiness using family resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Scholarships, Federal student loans, Pell grants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. College entrance requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied
- Does not apply: I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP

**Background**

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

- Grade 9
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12
- Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

**31. What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

**32. What is the language you use most often at home? (Please select only one)**

- English
- Spanish
- Both English and Spanish
- Another language (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

**33. What is the language you use most often with friends? (Please select only one)**

- English
- Spanish
- Both English and Spanish
- Another language (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

**34. Are you Hispanic/Latino? (Please select only one)**

- No, not of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

**35. What is your race? (Select ALL that apply)**

- American Indian or Alaska Native (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This area may include, for example, native Indians from the United States, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.)
- Asian (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. This area includes, for example, China, India, Japan, Korea, and the Philippine Islands.)
- Black or African American (A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii or other pacific islands such as Samoa and Guam.)
- White (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe (including Spain), North Africa, or the Middle East.)

Thank You for Completing the Survey!

## D.4 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: Parent Survey

### Survey of Parent/Guardian of GEAR UP Students: Spring 2015

**Reminder:** You may have completed a similar survey in spring 2014 for GEAR UP. We will be asking questions annually to understand how your thinking and understanding about GEAR UP changes over time.

Schools throughout Texas are participating in a statewide study to learn about preparing middle and high school students for college or other postsecondary education. The Texas Education Agency has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the impact of the GEAR UP program in which your child is participating. Because of your child's enrollment in a GEAR UP school in 2014-2015, we would like to include you in the study of the Texas Education Agency GEAR UP program. As part of this important research, you are being asked to complete a survey which should take approximately 15-20 minutes. These questions are about your child's experiences in school and your expectations for his/her future. Please answer the following questions about your child who is in Grade 9, participating in GEAR UP. If you do not have a Grade 9 child, but have a child in different grade who is participating in GEAR UP please complete the survey for that child. **If you have more than one child in GEAR UP, please complete a survey for each child.**

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

If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a study participant, please call Thomas Horwood, ICF International at (703) 934-3000.

#### **Study Assent**

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

For parents/legal guardians taking the on-line version: By clicking on the link below, you will be provided with the information on the consent form and informed that completing the survey indicates that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate by completing the on-line survey. If you need to stop the on-line survey before completing it and return to it

at a later time, you will be able to do so. Here is a link to the survey: [INSERT SCHOOL LINK]

**Instructions for completing this survey on paper:**

- Read each question carefully. Some will ask that you select only one option, while others will ask you to select ALL that apply.
- You may use any writing instrument to complete the survey, but a pencil may be preferred as it will allow you to more easily change your answers if needed.
- Make a HEAVY MARK that completely fills the circle of your answer choice:

Incorrect Marks Correct Mark



- If you change your answer, please be sure to erase your original mark as cleanly as possible.
- Try to avoid making stray marks on the form.

**1. Please confirm that this is the only time you completed the GEAR UP Parent/Guardian Survey in Spring 2015.**

- Yes, this is my only time completing this survey in Spring 2015.
- I completed the survey for another student I have participating in GEAR UP. This is my first time completing for this child. \*Please complete this survey.\*
- No, I completed the survey online in Spring 2015. \*Please STOP and DO NOT complete this survey. Thank you for completing it online!\*

**2. a. Do you currently have a child in Grade 9? Please complete the survey thinking about this child.**

- Yes (Please complete the survey thinking about this child. Continue to item 3)
- No (Continue to item 2b)

**b. If no, in what grade do you have a child participating in GEAR UP for whom you would like to complete a survey?**

- Grade 6
- Grade 7
- Grade 8
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**About College**

**3. What is the highest level of education that you want your child to complete? (Please select only one)**

- Less than high school
- High school
- Some college
- 2-year college degree (Associate's degree)
- 4-year college degree (Bachelor's degree)
- More than a 4-year college degree

**4. What is the highest level of education that you expect your child to complete? (Please select only one)**

- Less than high school
- High school
- Some college
- 2-year college degree (Associate’s degree)
- 4-year college degree (Bachelor’s degree)
- More than a 4-year college degree

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

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

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

- Information based on my own enrollment in or experience in college
- Information based on another of my children’s enrollment (current or previous) in college
- Information from another family member currently enrolled in college
- Information from another family member who graduated from college
- Information from or discussion with friends or other parents
- Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors
- Doing research specifically on the Texas GEAR UP website [www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)
- Research that I have done on my own (other than on the Texas GEAR UP website)
- Information from a GEAR UP college visit
- Information from a GEAR UP summer program
- Information from or discussions with GEAR UP staff or GEAR UP events (other than college visits or summer programs)
- Information from college materials or college fairs.
- None, I have not yet begun to seek outside sources of information for my child’s future college education
- Other (please describe other sources):

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

	\$1 to \$1,000	\$1,001 to \$1,900	\$1,901 to \$3,000	\$3,001 to \$6,500	\$6,501 to \$10,400	\$10,401 to \$14,000	\$14,001 to \$18,000	More than \$18,000
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- a. Your local public two year community college? (*Please select only one*)
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------
- b. A four-year public college in your state? (*Please select only one*)
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

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

- |  |                           |                         |                 |                   |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
|  | <i>Definitely<br/>not</i> | <i>Probably<br/>not</i> | <i>Probably</i> | <i>Definitely</i> |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
- a. A local public community college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------
  - b. A public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

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

- |  |                              |                                   |                                    |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|  | <i>Not<br/>Knowledgeable</i> | <i>Slightly<br/>Knowledgeable</i> | <i>Extremely<br/>Knowledgeable</i> |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
- a. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------
  - b. SAT
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------
  - c. ACT
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------
  - d. Federal Pell Grants
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------
  - e. Federal student loans
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------
  - f. Federal work-study
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------
  - g. Scholarships
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------
  - h. Financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------
  - i. General requirements for college acceptance
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------
  - j. Importance/benefit of college
 

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

**GEAR UP Summer Program 2014**

**10. Thinking back to last summer (Summer 2014), did your child participate in a GEAR UP summer program or in a summer 2014 transition to high school program?**

- Yes (continue to question 11)
- No (skip to question 14)
- I don't know (skip to question 15)



**11. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about the 2014 summer program.**

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
a. My child attended the summer program for the majority of days I knew about it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. My child enjoyed the activities offered during the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. My child felt more prepared to take Algebra I after attending the summer program. (NOTE we will add a not applicable option for this item)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. My child had a better understanding of financial aid for college after attending the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. My child had a better understanding of college entrance requirements after attending the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. My child had a better understanding of the benefits of college after attending the summer program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. The summer program prepared my child for what it would be like to be a high school student overall.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. The summer program prepared my child for what it would be like to take high school classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. The summer program provided my child with skills to help her/him succeed in high school classes (for example, time management skills, organization skills).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. The summer program prepared my child socially for being a high school student (for example, learning about joining school clubs, making new friends).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. During the summer program my child was introduced to some of the Grade 9 teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. During the summer program my child was introduced to some of my high school counselors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. During the summer program, my child learned where she/he could get help if needed it at the high school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. I would recommend the summer program to other parents at my child's school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. Based on my experiences with the summer 2014 program, I am planning on having my child attend the summer 2015 program if available.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**12. Select the reasons that your child attended the summer 2014 GEAR UP program.  
(Select ALL that apply)**

- My child wanted to participate in the summer program
- It was important to me that my child participate in the program
- The academic content focus of the program was of interest to me and my child
- The summer program provided an opportunity for my child to spend time with friends
- I thought it would help my child to learn more about succeeding in high school
- I thought it would help my child to do well in Grade 9 classes
- The summer program was schedule on days that my child could attend
- The summer program was scheduled at a time of day that my child could attend
- The school strongly encouraged the participation of my child in the summer program
- Other (please describe other reasons for attending):

**13. What additional thoughts, if any, do you have about the Summer 2014 GEAR UP program and how it benefited (or not) your child?**

**14. If your child did NOT attend the summer 2014 GEAR UP program, select the reasons that your child was NOT able to attend. (Select ALL that apply)**

- My child refused to participate in the summer program
- It was not important to me that my child participate in the program
- The academic content focus of the program was not of interest to me and my child
- None of my child's friends was attending the summer program
- Our family was not in the area during the time that the summer program was scheduled (e.g., on vacation)
- The summer program was scheduled at a time of day that did not work for my child
- My child had a job and could not miss work to attend
- My child had family responsibilities and could not attend (e.g., watching siblings)
- The school did not inform me about the summer program
- The school did not encourage me to have my child attend the summer program
- Other (please describe other reasons for NOT attending):

**15. Overall, how challenging would you say it has been for your child to change from being a middle school (Grade 8) student to a high school student?**

- Extremely Challenging
- Challenging
- A little Challenging
- Not at All Challenging

**16. What advice would you give your school to help prepare next year’s freshman (Grade 9 students) to succeed in high school?**

**17. Please indicate if your child has selected any of the following endorsements (major/minor). Check all that apply.**

- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)
- Business & Industry
- Public Services
- Arts & Humanities
- Multidisciplinary Studies)

**18. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your child’s endorsement (major/minor).**

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
a. Someone from Texas GEAR UP or my child’s school helped my child prepare to choose an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I helped prepare my child to choose an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. My child understood who he/she could talk to about choosing an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. My child understands what he/she needs to do if he/she decides to change endorsements (major/minor).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. My child found it easy to select an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. My child would have liked to wait until the end of Grade 9 to select an endorsement (major/minor).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. I understand how my endorsement(s) will help my child to prepare for college and a career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. My child plans on dropping her/his endorsement(s) as soon as she/he is able to after sophomore (Grade 10) year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**19. Please answer each of the following.**

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. My child has already officially changed his/her endorsement at least one time. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. My child plans to officially change his/her endorsement in the near future.    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**20. What advice would you give your school to help prepare next year’s freshman (Grade 9 students) about selecting an endorsement (major/minor)? Please also share any advice about changing your endorsement if you have experienced that.**

**21. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about high school graduation plans at your child’s school.**

- |  | <i>Strongly<br/>Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i>       | <i>Agree</i>          | <i>Strongly<br/>Agree</i> |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| a. Someone from Texas GEAR UP or my child’s school has discussed graduation requirements with my child.  | <input type="radio"/>        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |
| b. I have discussed graduation requirements with my child.   | <input type="radio"/>        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |
| c. I understand what my child needs to do to graduate with the Distinguished Level of Achievement.       | <input type="radio"/>        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |
| d. I plan for my child to graduate with a Distinguished Level of Achievement                             | <input type="radio"/>        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |
| e. My child understands what he/she needs to do to graduate with the Distinguished Level of Achievement. | <input type="radio"/>        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |
| f. My child plans to graduate with a Distinguished Level of Achievement.                                 | <input type="radio"/>        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |

**About your child’s and your experiences**

**22. For the following set of questions, we would first like to know if your child participated in the *academic course* or activity during this school year (2014-2015). If your child participated in the course or activity, please answer “yes” and then choose the answer that best matches how effective the course or activity was in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college. If your child did not participate in the course or activity, please answer “no” and skip to the next activity.**

**Has your child participated in this activity during this school year (2014-2015)?**

If you do not know if you child participated in any of the activities listed below, please feel free to skip that item.

**If Yes, how effective was this activity in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?**

	Yes	No	<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>Slightly Effective</i>	<i>Mostly Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>
a. Taking Algebra I	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Taking an advanced mathematics course other than Algebra I (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Taking an advanced English/language arts course (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Taking an advanced science course (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Taking any other advanced courses (*Insert appropriate course names for corresponding school here*)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Tutoring/homework assistance in math	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Tutoring/homework assistance in English/language arts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Tutoring/homework assistance in science	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Tutoring/homework assistance in social science	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Mentoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. The 2014 GEAR UP Summer Program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**23. For these questions, we would first like to know about the other activities your child participated in during this school year (2014-2015). If your child participated in the activity, please answer “yes” and then choose the answer that best matches how effective the activity was in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college. If your child did not participate in the activity, please answer “no” and skip to the next activity.**

**Has your child participated in this activity during this school year (2014-2015)?**

**If yes, how effective was this activity in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?**

If you do not know if your child participated in any of the activities listed below, please skip that item.

	Yes	No	<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>Slightly Effective</i>	<i>Mostly Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>
a. Academic or career counseling/advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Financial aid counseling/advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Met with the College Preparation Advisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. College visits/college student shadowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Job site visit/job shadowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Educational field trips	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Family/cultural events held by the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**24. Think about the GEAR UP events/activities you participated in this school year (2014-2015). How effective was each in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college? If you did not participate in the given type of activity, indicate that and skip to the next type of activity.**

	<i>Not applicable/ Did not participate or attend</i>	<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>Slightly Effective</i>	<i>Mostly Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>
a. Parent/family counseling/advising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Parent workshops on the importance/benefits of college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Parent/family workshops about college options/requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Parent/family workshops about financing college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Parent/family high school or college visits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Family/cultural events held by the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

g. Meeting(s) with GEAR UP staff

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

- Encouragement from your child
- Incentives (food, raffle, etc.)
- Interest/relevance of topics
- Outreach from school/GEAR UP staff
- Translated services/material available
- Other (please specify):

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

- Child care
- Work Schedule
- Interest/relevance of topics
- Language barriers
- Time/schedule
- Transportation
- Other (please specify):

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

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

- f. I will encourage my child to participate in summer GEAR UP 2014 activities.

**28. Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your child’s school?**

- Does not apply, I have not participated in GEAR UP
- Very Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

**29. What kind of information, support, or activities do you need from GEAR UP to help your child be successful in school and be prepared for college? (Select ALL that apply)**

**I’d like information about:**

- GEAR UP participation
- Tutoring
- College visits
- College entrance requirements
- College financial aid/scholarships
- Information and events presented in other languages like Spanish
- Other activities you would be interested in participating in or learning more about? (please specify):

**Background**

**30. Please select the school your child attended in Grade 8:**

- Brentwood
- Decker
- Dunbar College Prep Academy
- E.T. Wrenn
- Gus Garcia
- Manor
- Somerset
- Other school not listed here

**31. When your child was in Grade 8, did she/he take Algebra I?**

- No
- Yes, I successfully completed Algebra I (received a grade A, B, or C)
- Yes, but I did not successfully complete Algebra I (received a grade D or below)
- Unsure/Don’t know

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

- Yes
- No



- Not Sure

**33. What is your child's gender?**

- Female
- Male

**34. What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

**35. What is the language you use most often at home?**

- English
- Spanish
- Both English and Spanish
- Another language (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**36. Other than the child you focused on in completing this survey, in what other grades do you have children? (Select all that apply.)**

- I do not have any children other than the one for whom I completed this survey
- Younger than kindergarten
- Kindergarten through Grade 5
- Grade 6
- Grade 7
- Grade 8
- Grade 9
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12
- College student or college graduate
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**37. Are you Hispanic/Latino? (Select One)**

- No, Not Of Hispanic, Latino, Or Spanish Origin
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, Another Hispanic, Latino, Or Spanish Origin

**38. What is your race? (Select one or ALL that apply)**

- American Indian Or Alaska Native (A Person Having Origins In Any Of The Original Peoples Of North America, Who Maintains Tribal Affiliation Or Community Attachment. This Area May Include, For Example, Native Indians From The United States, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, And Costa Rica.)
- Asian (A Person Having Origins In Any Of The Original Peoples Of The Far East, Southeast Asia, And The Indian Subcontinent. This Area Includes, For Example, China, India, Japan, Korea, And The Philippine Islands.)
- Black Or African American (A Person Having Origins In Any Of The Black Racial Groups Of Africa.)
- Native Hawaiian Or Other Pacific Islander (A Person Having Origins In Any Of The Original Peoples Of Hawaii Or Other Pacific Islands Such As Samoa And Guam.)
- White (A Person Having Origins In Any Of The Original Peoples Of Europe (Including Spain), North Africa, Or The Middle East.)

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

- Less Than High School
- High School
- Some College
- 2-Year College Degree (Associate's Degree)
- 4-Year College Degree (Bachelor's Degree)
- More Than A 4-Year College Degree

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

## D.5 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2015: District 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 with a particular interest in this past summer and this school year so far. 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. APR Data, action plans, and prior interview data (in particular, reported plans for the 2015–16 school year) will be reviewed prior to conducting the site visits in order to add any site-specific probes.*

**Note to interviewer: If our evaluation team has already met the person and had a chance to engage with them previously, review prior notes and identify any key issues that were not addressed. If basic items were all addressed and unlikely to change, skip the item. Questions to focus on change within current year and over the year have been identified. Identify prior discussions about planned activities/services to inquire about progress on those plans. In addition, please ask the coordinator to reflect on sustaining with follow-on cohorts throughout as appropriate.**

1. **What have been your roles and responsibilities in GEAR UP this semester?**
  - a. *If new, tell us about your roles and responsibilities. Experience/training? [NOTE: if new, revise questions in later sections to ask what roles/responsibilities they are aware of, how they are accomplishing their roles and responsibilities, and if they have been told that their actions, roles, or responsibilities have changed from those of prior years' district coordinators].*
  - b. *How have your responsibilities changed since last school year? Has your role increased or diminished at all this school year? If so, what factors have contributed to that?*
  - c. *What GEAR UP activities are you involved with this semester? (e.g., vertical team, before/after school services, teacher professional development, partners, college visits,*

- statewide GEAR UP activities). What GEAR UP activities/programs do you deliver yourself? What activities do you oversee or delegate to others? (Probe for perceptions of this oversight/management structure).*
- d. *How do you interact with the college preparation advisor(s) at your school(s)? How has this changed from last school year?*
- 2. Are there any changes in how GEAR UP is structured at this school(s) for this school year? Since last school year?**
- a. *If known: Have any of the key players changed?*
- b. *If not known: What is the structure of GEAR UP at this school/these schools? Who are the key players? Who are the key players on a day-to-day basis? How has this changed from prior years?*
- c. *Have your perceptions of the management structure of GEAR UP in your district changed since last school year? If so, please explain.*
- d. *What impact has the state implementation office had on GEAR UP operations in your district this semester? How often have you interacted with the implementation office this semester?*
- e. *What are your perceptions of the state implementation office's role in GEAR UP?*
- f. *Who has been involved in the GEAR UP planning process (advisory councils, parents, school leaders, teachers, principal)? Who is involved now? Are these groups helping to inform GEAR UP programming decisions/activities/programs? If so, how? What are barriers/facilitators to involving these groups?*
- g. *How did preparing for long-term success of GEAR UP fit into this year's planning? (Probe for graduating college ready (distinguished level of achievement/endorsements), college entrance requirements knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation, on-time promotion and graduation PSAT 10 and ACT Aspire and SAT). Probe in general for how the endorsements and Foundation High School Program graduation requirements (Class of 2018) have influenced GEAR UP planning.*
- 3. Effective transitions to high school and between grades while in high school is another important element in promoting student preparation for college. As students moved from Grade 9 to Grade 10, have there been any additional activities to help them to transition between grade levels in a way that prepares students for college level work? (If no, probe for details about why they did not offer summer activities. If yes, probe for details on each event and for focus on academic rigor using the following probes.)**
- a. *Who was responsible for planning and conducting the summer activities?*
- b. *For each activity, what percentage of students attended?*
- c. *What are your perceptions about the success of these activities? What factors may have contributed to the success of these activities?*
- d. *What challenges did you face? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
- e. *What summer transition activities, if any, did your site offer this past summer for students entering Grade 9 in the 2015–16 school year? In what ways, if any, were they similar to or different from those you provided to GEAR UP students last summer (summer 2014)?*
- 4. The primary goal of GEAR UP is to promote college readiness and college going. In what ways has GEAR UP contributed to the college-going culture in the GEAR UP school(s) in this district? Has it changed from prior years? Is the change across a broad range of students? What features of GEAR UP do you think have contributed to**

**this change? If any factors identified, do you think those factors will continue in the future? [Reminder to probe for sustainability.]**

- a. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Relative to being college ready and college going -- What are the characteristics of in the GEAR UP school(s) in this district and its students (e.g., student and staff demographics, student needs)? How did you consider these characteristics/needs in designing a GEAR UP action plan at the GEAR UP school(s) in this district this year? (Probe on English Language Learners in particular, subgroups in general throughout.) Has this changed over prior years?*
- b. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What are the characteristics of households from which students come? (Family structure, employment status, education, attitudes toward postsecondary education.) Has this changed over prior years?*
- c. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: How involved are parents in their children's education? Has parent involvement changed from prior years? Engaging parents of new Grade 9 students?*
- d. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What challenges/successes has/have the GEAR UP school(s) in this district had with students being promoted on time? What plans does/do the GEAR UP school(s) in this district have to improve on-time promotion? How have students been doing on the ACT/SAT? What steps do you see taking to improve in this area going forward? (Probe for using ACT Aspire/PSAT 10) How many youth from the district have been going to college after graduating? In general, how would you say your district has been doing on these issues relative to other districts in the state? Are there any changes from prior years? {Probe specifically on Grade 9 to Grade 10 promotion rates and any change even if small, given it is relatively high.}*
- e. *What programs and student support services are available to students this semester? What is it the level of student involvement in these services (percentage of participation) approximately? How has this changed since prior years? How helpful are these programs at preparing students to be college going? What, if any, programs/services have been sustained (continued implementation for this year's Grade 9 students? What programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful? Are there any plans for new/additional programs/support services for this year? What programs or services related to college readiness are available to students other than GEAR UP?*
- f. *What programs and services are available to families [e.g., programs that inform about college; family nights; support services (e.g., counseling)]? What is the level of participation [note goal of 50% of parents attending 3 or more activities]? How has this changed over the years? What programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful? What, if any, programs or services for families have been continued for parents of this year's Grade 9 students? Are there any plans for new/additional programs/support services for this year? What programs or services related to college readiness for families are there other than GEAR UP?*

5. **Improving the number of advanced/honors and college credit courses as well as the number of students involved in these is also a GEAR UP goal. To what extent has your school increased the number of advanced courses so far? Does your school(s) have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered in high school grades and/or to increase enrollment in these courses? How would you describe the progress in students passing advanced courses? [Probe for dual credit and AP as part of advanced and for sustainability.]**

- a. *If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not?*
- b. *If not already addressed, ask all; otherwise ask once a year for change: Tell us about how your offerings of advanced courses have changed over time. Any new advanced courses or any advanced courses no longer offered? Planned for future grades? (Cite list of advanced/honors math, English, science courses based on latest GUIDES data and/or prior site visit knowledge.)*
- c. *To what extent, if any, have you seen any change in the interest of GEAR UP students in advanced courses in comparison to prior years' students? To what extent was the school prepared to enroll a greater number of students in advanced courses? Grade 9 students enrolled in advanced courses?*
- d. *A goal of GEAR UP is to provide students with opportunities to receive 18 hours of college credit by graduation. Since we last talked, what progress has the school taken to ensure that this goal can be met?*
- e. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/district are to take these (advanced and college credit) courses? At this point, have this year's GEAR UP students seemed better prepared than students in the past or about the same? Any idea of how Grade 9 students since the GEAR UP cohort have arrived prepared?*
- f. *How would you describe progress towards the goal of having 70% of students having knowledge of and being academically prepared for college?*

**6. Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing the number of, and student enrollment in, advanced courses and college credit courses. How, if at all, has the role of GEAR UP in supporting teacher professional development (PD) changed since last spring?**

- a. *What specific GEAR UP PD has been provided over the summer or so far this semester?*
- b. *If none provided, what has prevented site(s) from conducting teacher/administrator PD? What is the plan to begin conducting PD for Grade 11 teachers? How might any barriers to conducting be overcome?*
- c. *How pleased are you with the number and type of PD activities related to GEAR UP you have been able to provide this semester?*
- d. *Did attendance at provided PD meet expectations? Probe for any needed clarity regarding who was offered the training (e.g., grade levels, content areas, administrators and teachers) and how the PD was delivered (i.e., online/face-to-face)?*
- e. *To what extent did any given PD align with GEAR UP goals (e.g., improved academic rigor, student success, college admissions training)? What gaps in PD have you identified with regard to alignment to GEAR UP goals?*
- f. *To what extent were Grade 10 teachers already familiar with GEAR UP because of prior participation in PD that was vertically aligned? How has this semester's PD training focused on vertical alignment with regard to meeting GEAR UP goals? In what ways is the school/district meeting the goal of 5 days of vertical team preparation? Probe for continued vertical alignment efforts with middle school as well as across high school grades or content areas.*
- g. *What are your perceptions on the success of GEAR UP's teacher PD strategies deployed to improve academic rigor and promote student achievement this semester (e.g., AP courses and training, data-driven instruction, project-based learning, differentiated instruction, etc.) To what extent were they successful? What factors contributed to their success?*
- h. *What barriers do you face in implementing GEAR UP PD programs this semester? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*

- i. *In what ways, if any, has GEAR UP PD continued for other teachers (i.e., those currently teaching Grade 9)? How can PD being delivered to Grade 10 teachers be sustained for other teachers in the school or to Grade 10 teachers next year? How might the skills taught be enhanced in teachers who have already participated?*
  - j. *What non-GEAR UP PD are Grade 10 teachers receiving this semester? How might this PD support GEAR UP goals?*
- 7. Outside of PD, how are teachers / school staff involved with GEAR UP? (e.g., field trips, college visits, afterschool programs, etc.) Did this change over the course of the school year?**
- a. *How are teachers/staff involved in college visits and awareness activities? Do teachers integrate GEAR UP/college themes into their lessons? If so, how? If not, why not?*
  - b. *Have teachers delivered any financial literacy curricula to students this semester? If so, what are your perceptions of this activity? If not, why not?*
- 8. What business, government, education, and community alliances, if any, are involved with GEAR UP? Any changes since last spring? Is this collaboration occurring at the district or school level?**
- a. *If no, what challenges have you faced in engaging organizations to participate in GEAR UP?*
  - b. *If yes, how have community organizations supported GEAR UP at the school this year? What services/support has each partner provided?*
  - c. *Tell us about the organizations' roles in providing matched funding to the GEAR UP program. If any partner provided matching funds, please describe.*
  - d. *What factors help facilitate organizations' involvement? How might you build on this in the future?*
  - e. *What barriers did you encounter in working with organizations? 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 alliance in future years? Why/why not? To what extent have organizations continued to deliver supports to students other than the current Grade 10 cohort of GEAR UP students?*
  - g. *Do you plan on recruiting new organizations? 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?*
- 9. One goal of Texas GEAR UP was to have schools put in place programs that might help students successfully transition to high school level coursework and be better prepared for college and college level coursework.**
- a. *Have any additional transition events occurred since we last spoke, as students shifted to Grade 10? How successful were these activities?*
  - b. *How well would you say that this year's students have transitioned to high school? What aspects of transitioning have gone well/not so well: developing high school level study habits (time management skills, organization skills); social transition (e.g., joining clubs, making friends in high school); students knowing teachers and counselors (knowing who/where they can go to for help when needed). How about focus on being ready for college?*
  - c. *What factors may have contributed to the success of student transitions? To what extent do you think the district will be able to sustain these facilitators?*
  - d. *What challenges did the school face in helping students to transition? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future? What might you do differently in the future to help these types of transition activities to be more successful?*

**10. How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events? [Probe for GEAR UP Website ([www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)) and GEAR UP conferences]**

- a. *Did you/your school/students/parents participate in any statewide activities/events this semester? What was the purpose of the event? Who/how many attended?*
- b. *Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this semester? If yes, which resources and how did you use them? If not, why not? Probe for use of TEA Graduation Tool Kit or district tools (while not a GEAR UP specific tool may be of use to support GEAR UP).*
- c. *Discuss facilitators and barriers to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events.*

**11. We understand students will be participating in the PSAT 10 and/or ACT Aspire this year. Do you have a role in student participation in these activities?**

- a. *If yes, tell us about your role. Are you or will you be working at all with the Khan Academy? Other programs or strategies for helping students with participating in these programs? What is your vision of success regarding participating in these preparation programs?*
- b. *Any anticipated challenges regarding participation in these programs? If yes, how might you overcome those challenges?*
- c. *Any early preparation for students taking the SAT and ACT beyond the PSAT 10 and ACT Aspire?*

**12. Is there anything else we should know about GEAR UP at your school/district and how you/the school/the district is working to meet project goals?**

*Thank you for your time.*



## D.6 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2016: 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 with a particular interest in this school year since we last spoke to you in Fall 2015. 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. APR Data, action plans, and prior interview data (in particular, reported plans for the 2015–16 school year) will be reviewed prior to conducting the site visits in order to add any site-specific probes.

**Note to interviewer:** If our evaluation team has already met the person and had a chance to engage with them previously, review prior notes and identify any key issues that were not addressed. If basic items were all addressed and unlikely to change, skip the item. These items are indicated by “*If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change*” Questions to focus on change within current year and over the year have been identified. Identify prior discussions about planned activities/services to inquire about progress on those plans. In addition, please ask the coordinator to reflect on sustaining with follow-on cohorts throughout as appropriate.

#### 1. What have been your roles and responsibilities in GEAR UP since we last spoke in the fall?

- a. *If new, tell us about your roles and responsibilities. Experience/training? [NOTE: if new, revise questions in later sections to ask what roles/responsibilities they are aware of, how they are accomplishing their roles and responsibilities, and if they have been told that their actions, roles, or responsibilities have changed from those of prior years’ district coordinators].*

- b. *Have your responsibilities changed over this school year? Over the past four years? If yes, how have they changed? Has your role increased or diminished at all this school year? If so, what factors have contributed to that?*
  - c. *What GEAR UP activities have you been involved with? (e.g., vertical team, before/after school services, teacher professional development, partners, college visits, statewide GEAR UP activities). What GEAR UP activities/programs do you deliver yourself? What activities do you oversee or delegate to others? (Probe for perceptions of this oversight/management structure).*
  - d. *How do you interact with the college preparation advisor(s) at your school(s)? How has this changed over time? How do you interact with other campus and district GEAR UP staff?*
  - e. *How do you interact with district administrators? How do you interact with campus administrators? How satisfied are you with this interaction and the role they each play in GEAR UP? Any challenges or ways you would like their role to change, if at all?*
- 2. Are there any changes in how GEAR UP is structured at this school(s) for this school year? Over the course of this school year?**
- a. *If known: Have any of the key players changed? Do you know why these changes took place?*
  - b. *If not known: What is the structure of GEAR UP at this school/these schools? Who are the key players? Who are the key players on a day-to-day basis? How has this changed over the course of the year? If changes have been made, how have they impacted the day-to-day implementation of the grant?*
  - c. *Have your perceptions of the management structure of GEAR UP in your district changed since Fall/last school year? If so, please explain.*
  - d. *What are your perceptions of the state implementation office's role in GEAR UP? What impacts has IPSI had on GEAR UP operations in your district this year? TEA? How often have you interacted with IPSI and/or TEA this year?*
  - e. *Who has been involved in the GEAR UP planning process for the current and upcoming school years (advisory councils, parents, school leaders, teachers, principal, other campus staff)? Who is involved now? Which district and campus staff are currently involved in the planning? Are these groups helping to inform GEAR UP programming decisions/activities/programs? If so, how? What are barriers/facilitators to involving these groups? In what ways have you had to change GEAR UP implementation plans throughout the year to accommodate any student, campus, or district needs that arose throughout the year?*
  - f. *How has preparing for long-term success of GEAR UP (meeting GEAR UP Project Objectives) fit into your planning for going forward into summer and next year? (Probe for graduating college ready (distinguished level of achievement/endorsements), college entrance requirements knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation, on-time promotion and graduation, PSAT 10 and ACT Aspire and ACT/SAT).*
- 3. The primary goal of GEAR UP is to promote college readiness and college going. In what ways has GEAR UP contributed to the college-going culture in the GEAR UP school(s) in this district? Has it changed over the course of the year? Is the change across a broad range of students? What features of GEAR UP do you think have contributed to this change? If any factors identified, do you think those factors will continue in the future? [Reminder to probe for sustainability.]**
- a. *Have you been involved in any planning to maintain or sustain any initiatives started or enhanced with GEAR UP once the grant is no longer in place at this site? Are there any plans for maintaining or sustaining any initiatives?*

- b. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Relative to being college ready and college going -- What are the characteristics of in the GEAR UP school(s) in this district and its students (e.g., student and staff demographics, student needs)? How did you consider these characteristics/needs in designing a GEAR UP action plan at the GEAR UP school(s) in this district this year? (Probe on English Language Learners in particular, subgroups in general throughout.) Has this changed over prior years? How will you use this information in future planning?*
  - c. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What are the characteristics of households from which students come? (Family structure, employment status, education, attitudes toward postsecondary education.) Has this changed over prior years? How will you use this information in future planning?*
  - d. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: How involved are parents in their children's education? Has parent involvement changed from prior years? Engaging parents of new Grade 9 students?*
  - e. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What challenges/successes has/have the GEAR UP school(s) in this district had with students being promoted on time? What plans does/do the GEAR UP school(s) in this district have to improve on-time promotion? How have students been doing on the ACT/SAT? What steps do you see taking to improve in this area going forward? (Probe for using Aspire/PSAT 10). How many youth from the district have been going to college after graduating? In general, how would you say your district has been doing on these issues relative to other districts in the state? Are there any changes from prior years? {Probe specifically on Grade 9 to Grade 10 promotion rates and any change even if small, given it is relatively high.} Is this school or district planning to make any changes in the way they prepare students for these assessments?*
  - f. *What programs and student support services were available to students this year? How helpful are these programs/services at preparing students to be college going? What, if any, programs/services have been sustained through continued implementation for this year's Grade 9 students? What programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful for Grade 9 and 10 students? Are there any plans for new/additional programs/support services for next year? What programs or services related to college readiness are available to students other than GEAR UP?*
  - g. *What programs and services were available to families this year [e.g., programs that inform about college; family nights; support services (e.g., counseling)]? What was the level of participation [note goal of 50% of parents attending 3 or more activities]? How has this changed over the course of the year and over the years of GEAR UP implementation? What IPSI or campus GEAR UP (IPSI Family Engagement Coordinator, campus parent liaison) staff have you worked with to meet this goal? What types of support have they provided? What parent/family programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful? What, if any, programs or services for families have been continued for parents of this year's Grade 9 students? Are there any plans for new/additional programs/support services for the 2016-17 school year? What programs or services related to college readiness for families are there other than GEAR UP?*
- 4. Improving the number of advanced/honors and college credit courses as well as the number of students involved in these is also a GEAR UP goal. To what extent has your school increased the number of advanced courses so far? Does your school(s) have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered in high school grades and/or to increase enrollment in these courses? How would you describe the progress in students passing advanced courses? [Probe for dual credit and AP as part of advanced and for sustainability.]**

- a. *If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not?*
- b. *If not already addressed, ask all; otherwise ask once a year for change: Tell us about how your offerings of advanced courses have changed over time. Any new advanced courses or any advanced courses no longer offered? Planned for future grades? (Cite list of advanced/honors math, English, science courses based on latest GUIDES data and/or prior site visit knowledge.)*
- c. *To what extent, if any, have you seen any change in the interest of GEAR UP students in advanced courses in comparison to prior years' students? To what extent was the school prepared to enroll a greater number of Grade 10 students in advanced courses? To what extent was the school about to sustain last year's efforts and enroll a greater number of Grade 9 students in advanced courses than in previous years?*
- d. *A goal of GEAR UP is to provide students with opportunities to receive 18 hours of college credit by graduation. How will the students at your school be able to meet this goal (what opportunities will they have to earn credit)? How has the progress on this goal been going so far? Since we last talked, what steps/ progress has the school taken to ensure that this goal can be met?*
- e. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/district are to take these (advanced and college credit) courses? At this point, have this year's GEAR UP students seemed better prepared than students in the past or about the same? Any idea of how many Grade 9 students since the GEAR UP cohort have arrived prepared to take advanced and college credit courses?*
- f. *How would you describe progress towards the goal of having 70% of students having knowledge of and being academically prepared for college? What indicators do you have for this?*
- g. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing the number of, and student enrollment in, advanced courses and college credit courses.*

**5. How, if at all, has the role of GEAR UP in supporting teacher professional development (PD) changed over the course of the year?**

- a. *What specific GEAR UP PD has been provided over the course of the year?*
- b. *If none provided, what has prevented site(s) from conducting teacher/administrator PD? What is the plan to begin conducting PD for Grade 11 teachers? How might any barriers to conducting be overcome?*
- c. *How pleased are you with the number and type of PD activities related to GEAR UP you have been able to provide this year?*
- d. *Did attendance at provided PD meet expectations? Probe for any needed clarity regarding who was offered the training (e.g., grade levels, content areas, administrators and teachers) and how the PD was delivered (i.e., online/face-to-face)?*
- e. *To what extent did any given PD align with GEAR UP goals (e.g., improved academic rigor, student success, college admissions training)? What gaps in PD have you identified with regard to alignment to GEAR UP goals?*
- f. *To what extent were Grade 10 teachers already familiar with GEAR UP because of prior participation in PD that was vertically aligned? How has this year's PD training focused on vertical alignment with regard to meeting GEAR UP goals? In what ways is the school/district meeting the goal of 5 days of vertical team preparation? Probe for continued vertical alignment efforts with middle school as well as across high school grades or content areas.*
- g. *What are your perceptions on the success of GEAR UP's teacher PD strategies deployed to improve academic rigor and promote student achievement this year (e.g., AP courses and training, data-driven instruction, project-based learning, differentiated*

*instruction, etc.) To what extent were they successful? What factors contributed to their success?*

- h. What barriers do you face in implementing GEAR UP PD programs this year? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*
- i. In what ways, if any, has GEAR UP PD continued for other teachers (i.e., those currently teaching Grade 9)? How can PD being delivered to Grade 10 teachers be sustained for other teachers in the school or to Grade 10 teachers next year? How might the skills taught be enhanced in teachers who have already participated?*
- j. What non-GEAR UP PD are Grade 10 teachers receiving this year? How might this PD support GEAR UP goals?*
- k. Have GEAR UP staff or the district/school worked with Grade 11 teachers to familiarize them with GEAR UP? Please specifically describe any GEAR UP professional development or vertical alignment Grade 11 teachers have participated in.*

**6. Outside of PD, how are teachers / school staff involved with GEAR UP? (e.g., field trips, college visits, afterschool programs, tutoring, etc.) Did this change over the course of the school year?**

- a. How are teachers/staff involved in college visits and awareness activities? Do teachers integrate GEAR UP/college themes into their lessons? If so, how? If not, why not?*
- b. In what other ways do you interact with teachers and build relationships with them? How do you distribute GEAR UP information to teachers? Are they responsive and receptive to the information? In what ways have you prepared Grade 11 teachers for GEAR UP students, goals, resources, and activities next year?*
- c. Have teachers delivered any financial literacy curricula to students this year? If so, what are your perceptions of this activity? If not, why not?*
- d. Has GEAR UP been able to provide teachers with resources/materials for their classroom? If so, please describe. What are your perceptions of extent/how teachers utilize the resources?*

**7. What business, government, education, and community alliances, if any, are involved with GEAR UP? Any changes since last semester? Is this collaboration occurring at the district or school level?**

- a. If no, what challenges have you faced in engaging organizations to participate in GEAR UP?*
- b. If yes, how have community organizations supported GEAR UP at the school this semester? What services/support has each partner provided?*
- c. Tell us about the organizations' roles in providing matched funding to the GEAR UP program. If any partner provided matching funds, please describe.*
- d. What factors help facilitate organizations' involvement? How might you build on this in the future?*
- e. What barriers did you encounter in working with organizations? 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 alliance in future years? Why/why not? To what extent have organizations continued to deliver supports to students other than the current Grade 10 cohort of GEAR UP students?*
- g. Do you plan on recruiting new organizations this summer or next year? 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? Who makes up your advisory board? What role would you like the advisory board to play in the implementation of GEAR UP? How is that role different to their current role?*

- i. *Do you have any gaps in the alliances and community partnerships that you are seeking to fill? What challenges are facing in filling those gaps? How are you overcoming them?*
- 8. One goal of Texas GEAR UP was to have schools put in place programs that might help students successfully transition to high school level coursework and be better prepared for college and college level coursework.**
- Have any additional transition events occurred since we last spoke? How successful were these activities?*
  - What factors may have contributed to the success of student transitions to advanced coursework? To what extent do you think the district will be able to sustain these facilitators?*
  - What challenges does your school face in helping students to transition to high school and advanced coursework? Being prepared for college level coursework? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future? What might you do differently in the future to help these types of transition activities to be more successful?*
  - What GEAR UP programs or initiatives are keeping students engaged in school and focused on successfully completing high school and entering college? Do you think the GEAR UP cohort is where they should be in order to successfully transition out of high school into postsecondary education?*
- 9. One of the GEAR UP goals is to have at least 30% of the students involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level (AP classes; dual credit classes), ease transitions, and increase college awareness each summer. Tell us about your experiences with engaging students in these types of summer programs.**
- Tell us about the upcoming summer? Have you been involved in identifying potential summer programs for students to attend? What types of programs? Where are the programs located (e.g., locally, elsewhere in Texas, in another state)? Who will provide the programs (e.g., university or community college, business)?*
  - Please share information about any district or school sponsored/organized college visits planned for summer 2016?*
  - How successful would you describe student enrollment in upcoming summer programs as being?*
  - What challenges have there been to engaging students in enrolling in summer programs? Ideas on how to overcome those challenges going forward?*
- 10. How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events? [Probe for GEAR UP Website ([www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)) and GEAR UP conferences]**
- Did you/your school/students/parents participate in any statewide activities/events this semester/year? What was the purpose of the event? Who/how many attended?*
  - Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this semester/year? If yes, which resources and how did you use them? If not, why not? Probe for use of TEA Graduation Tool Kit or district tools (while not a GEAR UP specific tool may be of use to support GEAR UP). How helpful were the tools/resources you used?*
  - Discuss facilitators and barriers to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events.*
  - Are there any other resources that would be helpful to have delivered or offered at the state-level?*

**11. We understand students participated in the TSI, PSAT 10, and/or Aspire this year. Do you have a role in student participation in these activities?**

- a. *If yes, tell us about your role. Did you/ the students work at all with the Khan Academy? Other programs or strategies for helping students with participating in these programs? What is your vision of success regarding participating in these preparation programs?*
- b. *Any anticipated challenges regarding participation in these programs? If yes, how might you overcome those challenges?*
- c. *Any early preparation for students taking the SAT and ACT beyond the PSAT 10 and Aspire?*
- d. *Did you have a role in helping the teachers prepare the students for the assessments?*
- e. *Was there any variation in the way or amount of preparation students received? How did you address students unsatisfied with their performance on these assessments? What supports were offered, if any, for future assessments?*

**12. Is there anything else we should know about GEAR UP at your school/district and how you/the school/the district is working to meet project goals?**

*Thank you for your time.*

## D.7 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2015: College Preparation Advisor Protocol

### Interviewer Guidelines:

- Briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP state grant initiative to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your role as the College Preparation Advisor for GEAR UP at your school with a particular interest in this past summer and this school year so far. 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 (i.e., student and parent event, demographic, and participation data), action plans, and prior interview data (in particular, reported plans for the 2015–16 school year) 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 school year? Has your role increased or diminished at all this school year? If so, what factors have contributed to that?*
- 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? To what extent are data systems in place to identify students in need of services? Tell me about any one-on-one interactions you have had with students.*
- e. *Are you involved with sustainability of GEAR UP programming with the middle schools or Grade 9? Involved with it through vertical teaming? Tell me about how you see GEAR UP goals being sustained or not and your role in that.*



- f. We know you are hired and supervised by IPSI, but work on the school campus. In what ways if any does this structure affect your role? Does it help or hinder your ability to meet project goals? Generally, what is your perspective on this model/structure?
  - g. What is your role in spreading GEAR UP across the campus, specifically to the teachers? To what extent do you go in to the classrooms? Meet with teachers? How would you describe those interactions?
2. **How has your interaction with the GEAR UP coordinator for this school changed since last school year? With guidance counselors/teachers/parents/administrators?**
    - a. *Who do you report to and has that changed since last school year? (Probe for level/frequency of interaction with coordinator and supervisor as well as teachers/parents.)*
    - b. *What new training have you received this school year? How useful has this training been so far? From who? (Probe for IPSI role)*
3. **Tell me about any progress made toward accomplishing the main GEAR UP goals/objectives for this year and strategies to achieve progress. This can include progress over the summer.**
    - a. *What are the primary goals for this year? [Probe for: Promoting student success in Algebra II, success in advanced math and science courses, AP courses, dual enrollment courses generally]; on-time promotion exceeding state average; ensuring students had an effective transition between grade levels while in high school; familiarizing students/families with college entrance requirements, PSAT10/Aspire, financial literacy. Check against project goals in general.]*
    - b. *To what extent were you involved in executing the GEAR UP planning process for this school year? If involved, how? If not, why not? [Probe for who else is involved in the GEAR UP planning process (parents, school leaders, teachers, principal)? How has your role in planning changed from the prior year?]*
    - c. *How does preparing for **long-term success** of GEAR UP students fit into executing this year's plan? [Probe for graduating college ready (distinguished level of achievement/endorsements), college entrance requirement knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation, ACT/SAT, increasing number of and enrollment in advanced courses.]*
  4. **What activities/events has your school offered to students/parents, particularly students rising to Grade 10 and their parents, this past summer and so far this school year? (Probe for details on each event.)**
    - a. What are your perceptions about the success of these events? What factors may have contributed to the success of these events?
      - a. *Tell me about your role to help meet the goal to have at least 50% of parents attend 3 events. Is this a continued challenge or have you made more progress in this area? If progress, what worked to increase attendance?*
      - b. *What challenges did you face (with students and/or parents)? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
      - c. *What was your role in these events? What role, if any, did other GEAR UP/school staff or collaborators play? Was this a change in roles as compared to last year?*
      - d. *Are there activities/events that support student academic achievement (such as tutoring)? If so, what is your perception of these activities?*
      - e. *Any changes since last school year (i.e., from spring to fall semester)?*
      - f. *What summer transition activities, if any, did your site offer this past summer for students entering Grade 9 in the 2015–16 school year? In what ways, if any, were they*

*similar to or different from those you provided to GEAR UP students last summer (summer 2014)?*

5. **What services have you provided directly to GEAR UP students this past summer and so far this school year? (Probe for selecting/changing endorsements; developing educational plans; mentoring; developing career plans; assessing education interests, college entrance requirements and financial literacy.)**
  - a. *For each service, how was it provided (one-to-one, group, etc.)? If one-to-one, what is a typical session like? (Probe for timing and duration.) If no one-to-one meetings, how do you provide these services to students? What if anything would you like to see change in how services are delivered?*
  - b. *What are the data available to you or other supports to help you identify or provide these services to students?*
  - c. *What are your perceptions of these services this past summer and so far this school year? (Probe for perceptions of understandings of the new graduation plans and endorsements and how this links to college readiness and how that's changed since spring)*
  - d. *Any changes since last year (i.e., from last school year to this school year or from last spring to this fall)?*
  - e. *How would you describe progress towards the goal of 75% of students receiving student support services (tutoring, mentoring, counseling)?*
  
6. **What business, government, education, and community alliances, if any, are involved with GEAR UP? Any changes since last spring? [If no partners are identified, probe for any involvement in identifying/recruiting partners.]**
  - a. *Have these organizations supported college preparation and awareness activities this semester (e.g., through providing services, hosting college visits)?*
  - b. *If no, what challenges have you faced in engaging these organizations?*
  - c. *If yes, how have community alliances supported GEAR UP this school year? What services/support has the partner provided?*
  
7. **Effective transitions to high school and between grades while in high school is another important element in promoting student preparation for college. As students moved from Grade 9 to Grade 10, have there been any additional activities to help them to transition between grade levels and be better prepared for college, including college level work? What activities in this area, if any, occurred over the summer or so far this school year? What activities are underway/planned for this school year? (Probe for use of or planned use of EXPLORÉ, high school visits, academic early warning systems; the goal here is to learn about what the school or program have done to help students become more independent as a student by going to class, studying, and doing work outside of class to succeed, etc.)**
  - a. *What were your perceptions about the success of students' transition to being a high school student (and specifically a Grade 9 and now Grade 10 student) so far? ? Academically? Socially? Engaging in college ready strategies? What factors may have contributed to the success of their transition? (Note: Relative to successfully transitioning to being a high school student, probe for content (e.g., making high school culture clear, training on specific "soft" skills like organization or study skills, encouraging to get involved, taking AP or dual enrollment courses, introducing to teachers, etc.)*
  - b. *Activities to help students pick a potential college major and to select a college that is aligned with that career goal? In general, are students talking about going to college and wanting to be ready for college?*

- c. *Any challenges you have identified with student transition to high school level work and environment? If yes, any plans to address these challenges?*
- d. *Any activities planned going forward to continue to help students to transition and be successful each year while in high school?*
- 8. One of the GEAR UP goals is to have at least 30% of the students involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level (AP classes; dual credit classes), ease transitions, and increase college awareness each summer. Tell us about your experiences with engaging students in these types of summer programs.**
- a. *Tell us about student participation in summer programs this past summer? Were you involved in guiding students towards any programs? Type of programs students attended to your knowledge? Where they attended (e.g., locally, elsewhere in Texas, in another state)? Who provided the programs (e.g., university or community college, business)?*
- b. *Please share information about any district or school sponsored/organized college visits that occurred in summer 2015?*
- c. *If aware of student participation, how successful would you describe that participation as being? About how many students were involved in summer programs [how close to goal of 30% enrolled]?*
- d. *If not aware of student participation, what challenges have there been to engaging students in the summer? Ideas on how to overcome those challenges going forward?*
- e. *Has any planning occurred to date for summer 2016? Ideas for what would you like/not like to see occur in summer 2016?*
- 9. How has your involvement with and knowledge about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events changed since last school year? [Probe for Graduation Tool kit (statewide activity outside of GEAR UP), GEAR UP website, GEAR UP conferences] [(Note this question is not relevant if new to role, can probe for any perception of change from prior based on feedback received to date.)]**
- 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 past summer or so far this school year? If yes, which resources and 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?*
- 10. We understand students could be participating in the PSAT 10 and/or Aspire this year. Do you have a role in that?**
- a. *If yes, tell us about that. Are you or will you be working at all with the Khan Academy? Other programs or strategies for helping students with this? What is your vision of success regarding participating in these programs?*
- b. *Any anticipated challenges regarding participation? If yes, how might you overcome those challenges?*
- 11. Is there anything else you would like us to know about GEAR UP in your school and how you/the school is working to meet project goals?**

*Thank you for your time.*

## D.8 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2016: 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 for GEAR UP at your school with a particular interest in this school year since we last talked. 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 (i.e., student and parent event, demographic, and participation data), action plans, and prior interview data (in particular, reported plans for the 2015–16 school year) 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 role/responsibilities changed since we last spoke? If so, what factors have contributed to that?*
- b. *What GEAR UP activities are you involved with (e.g., college visits, before/after school services, tutoring/mentoring)?*
- c. *How do you generally interact with students? (Probe for one-to-one, group contact, workshop, mentoring. Probe for frequency/duration of interaction.) Tell me about any formal or informal one-on-one interactions you have had with students and how these are contributing to achieving GEAR UP goals.*
- d. *What factors at the school help facilitate your interaction with students? What barriers do you face in interacting with students? If barriers, how have you/will you address them? To what extent are data systems in place to identify students in need of services? What kind of information do you use to guide the interaction? Where do you get it from (GEAR UP records, school data system, teachers, counselors)? Does that*

*work well for you? Is there any additional information or data that would be helpful in guiding interactions with students?*

- e. *Have you been involved with preparing to sustain any of the GEAR UP initiatives for next year's Grade 10 students? Tell me about how you see GEAR UP goals being sustained or not and your role in that.*
  - f. *We know you are hired and supervised by IPSI, but work on the school campus. In what ways if any does this structure affect your role? Has it helped or hindered your ability to meet project goals? Generally, what is your perspective on this model/structure?*
  - g. *What is your role in spreading awareness of GEAR UP across the campus, specifically to the teachers? To what extent do you go in to the classrooms? Meet with teachers? How would you describe those interactions?*
- 2. How has your interaction with the GEAR UP coordinator for this school changed since last semester? With other GEAR UP campus or district staff such as the parent liaison or data clerk? With guidance counselors/teachers/parents/administrators?**
- a. *Who do you report to and has that changed? (Probe for level/frequency of interaction with coordinator and supervisor as well as teachers/parents.)*
  - b. *In what ways do you collaborate with other GEAR UP staff (coordinator, liaison, data)? To what extent do you work as a team to address GEAR UP goals and the ASPR requirements? How well would you say the various GEAR UP staff are working together as a team towards the goals?*
  - c. *What new training have you received this school year? How useful has this training been so far? From who? (Probe for IPSI role)*
- 3. Tell me about any progress made toward accomplishing the main GEAR UP goals/objectives for this year and strategies to achieve progress.**
- a. *What were the primary goals for this year from your perspective? [Probe for: Promoting student success in Algebra II, advanced courses, AP courses, dual enrollment courses generally]; foundation high school plan with endorsement or distinguished; on track for four years of credit in core subjects; on-time promotion exceeding state average; ensuring students had an effective transition between grade levels while in high school; familiarizing students/families with college entrance requirements, PSAT10/ACT Aspire, financial literacy. Check against project goals in general.] How well informed of the goals were you through the year? Do you think others in your school and district (GEAR UP coordinator, principal, teachers, parents) were well-informed and understood the goals?*
  - b. *To what extent were you involved in executing GEAR UP this school year and the planning for next year? If involved, how? If not, why not? [Probe for who else is involved in the GEAR UP planning process (parents, school leaders, teachers, principal)? How has your role in planning changed from the prior year?] Do you think the execution of GEAR UP this year met the goals? Why or why not? What elements helped facilitate the goal completion? What barriers did GEAR UP face when trying to meet goals?*
  - c. *How did preparing for long-term success of GEAR UP students fit into executing this year's plan? [Probe for **graduating college ready (distinguished level of achievement/endorsements), college entrance requirement knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation, ACT/SAT, increasing number of and enrollment in AP/ Pre-AP courses, other advanced courses, and***

**dual credit courses.]** *What role did you have in encouraging students to stay with their plan to graduate with an endorsement? Encouraging students to complete Algebra II?*

4. **What activities/events has your school offered to students/parents, particularly Grade 10 students and their parents, this school year? (Probe for details on each event.)**
  - a. *To what extent have you begun working with/collaborating with the IPSI Family Engagement Specialist? What kind of support has the specialist provided to date? How, if at all, did she change your plan for parent engagement this year? Has this led to any implementation activities? To improved success in engaging families? Please describe how you have been able to implement your parent engagement plan.*
  - b. *How did you encourage student/parent attendance at events? For each event, were participation/attendance levels consistent with program targets? If not, why not?*
  - c. *What are your perceptions about the success of these events? What factors may have contributed to the success of these events?*
  - d. *Tell me about your role to help meet the goal to have at least 50% of parents attend 3 events. Is this a continued challenge or have you made progress in this area? If progress, what worked to increase attendance?*
  - e. *What about activities/events that support student academic achievement and postsecondary readiness (such as tutoring, college visits)? If so, what is your perception of these activities?*
  - f. *What challenges did you face (with students and/or parents)? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
  - g. *Thinking about student engagement and family engagement, any changes over the course of the school year (i.e., from fall to spring semester)?*
  
5. **What postsecondary readiness focuses services have you provided directly to GEAR UP students this school year? (Probe for /changing endorsements; developing educational plans; mentoring; developing career plans; assessing education interests, college entrance requirements and financial literacy.)**
  - a. *What are your perceptions of these services so far this school year? (Probe for perceptions of understandings of graduation plans and endorsements and how this links to college readiness. Have perceptions changed since fall)?*
  - b. *Any changes over the course of the year (i.e., from last school year to this school year or from last spring to this fall)?*
  - c. *How would you describe the extent of providing student support services (tutoring, mentoring, counseling)? How might the school sustain these services with future students if perceived as helpful? What challenges might they face in sustaining them?*
  
6. **What business, government, education, and community alliances, if any, are involved with GEAR UP? Any changes since the fall semester? [If no alliances are identified, probe for any involvement in identifying/recruiting alliances.]**
  - a. *Have these organizations supported college preparation and awareness activities this semester (e.g., through providing services, hosting college visits)?*
  - b. *If no, what challenges have you faced in engaging these organizations?*
  - c. *If yes, how have community alliances supported GEAR UP this school year? What services/support has the alliance provided?*
  - d. *Have you/the school engaged in any additional activities to help students transition to being prepared for advanced course work and, eventually college level coursework this year? What activities do you have planned to help students be prepared for Grade 11/Grade 12 coursework? (Probe for use of or planned use of academic early warning systems; the goal here is to learn about what the school or program has*

**done to help students become more independent as a student by going to class, studying, and doing work outside of class to succeed, etc.)**

- e. *What types of skills might contribute to student success in advanced coursework? How prepared do you perceive students at this school to be on those skills? To what extent do students understand what they need to be doing to succeed? How has this changed/stayed the same over the time you have been in this role and interacting with students?*
  - f. *Have you engaged in any activities to help students pick a potential college major and/or to select a college that is aligned with that career goal? In general, are students talking about going to college and wanting to be ready for college? Are they talking about the specific college they would like to attend yet? How has the way they talk about college changed since they started in GEAR UP? Thinking back over your time in this role, how has the way students talk about plans for the future and for attending college changed/stayed the same?*
  - g. *Any activities planned going forward to continue to help students to transition and be successful each year while in high school? How will these activities keep students engaged and focused on transition to college? Is the cohort on track to successfully transition into college after graduating high school?*
- 7. One of the GEAR UP goals is to have at least 30% of the students involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level (AP classes; dual credit classes), and increase college awareness each summer. Tell us about your experiences with engaging students in these types of summer programs.**
- a. *Tell us about the upcoming summer. Have you been involved in guiding students towards any programs? If so, what types of programs? Where are the programs located (e.g., locally, elsewhere in Texas, in another state)? Who will provide the programs (e.g., university or community college, business)?*
  - b. *Please share information about any district or school sponsored/organized college visits planned for summer 2016?*
  - c. *How successful would you describe student enrollment in summer programs as being? About how many students will be involved in summer 2016 programs [how close to goal of 30% enrolled]?*
  - d. *What challenges have there been to engaging students in enrolling in summer programs? What challenges were faced in implementing these programs (probe for scheduling conflicts, lack of district/ campus staff, funding issues)? Ideas on how to overcome those challenges going forward?*
- 8. How has your involvement with and knowledge about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/ resources/ events changed since last semester? [Probe for teacher PD, GEAR UP website, GEAR UP conferences] (Note this question is not relevant if new to role, can probe for any perception of change from prior based on feedback received to date.)**
- a. *Did you/your school/teachers/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 school year? If yes, which resources and how did you use them? If not, why not?*
  - c. *Discuss facilitators and barriers to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*
- 9. We understand students could be participating in the TSI, PSAT 10 and/or ACT Aspire this year. Do you have a role in that?**

- a. *If yes, tell us about that. Are you or will you be working at all with the Khan Academy? Other programs or strategies for helping students with this? What is your vision of success regarding participating in these programs?*
- b. *Any anticipated challenges regarding participation? If yes, how might you overcome those challenges?*
- c. *Do you think the students were prepared? Did you have a role in preparing them? What worked well? What challenges did you face? How did you address students unsatisfied with their performance on these assessments?*

**10. Is there anything else you would like us to know about GEAR UP in your school and how you/the school is working to meet project goals?**

***Thank you for your time.***



## D.9 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2015: Administrator Interview Protocol

### Interviewer Guidelines:

- Note to briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP state grant initiative to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals with a particular interest in this past summer and this school year so far. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your role in GEAR UP as a school/district leader with a particular interest in this past summer and this school year so far. 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. Try to find out ahead of time if administrator is new to district or continues from last year, in new or same role and use that to guide initial items in particular. Consider prior responses to customize the inclusion, order, and language of questions as appropriate. The most recent APR data, action plans, and prior interview data in particular, reported plans for the 2015–16 school year will be reviewed prior to conducting the site visits in order to add any site-specific probes.

**Interviewer notes:** If you already met the person and had a chance to engage with them previously, review prior notes and identify any key issues that were not addressed. If basic items were all addressed and unlikely to change, skip the item. Questions to focus on change within current year and over year have been identified. Identify prior discussions about planned activities/services to inquire about progress on those plans.

1. **Tell me a little about yourself. (Probe for how long at school, how long in role if not already known). If already met, reintroduce self and begin interview.**
  - a. *If new to school/district, what if anything do you know about GEAR UP? Have you heard anything so far about school/district participation in GEAR UP? Be prepared to briefly explain program and goals and let them know we are still interested in their thoughts.*
2. **Are there any changes in how GEAR UP is structured at your school since last year?**

- a. *If not known: What is the structure of GEAR UP at this school? Who leads GEAR UP planning and activities/events with students? With staff? With families? Who are the key players on a day-to-day basis? How has this changed from prior years? What are your thoughts on how it might change going forward?*
  - b. *How and to what extent are you involved in GEAR UP since we last spoke? (Probe for when first learned about it/when began focusing on GEAR UP if not already known.) How if at all has the extent of your involvement changed from prior years? How satisfied are you with your role in the program? To the extent satisfied, what do you like about your role (what factors contribute to satisfaction); if unsatisfied, how would you like your role to differ (what factors contribute to dissatisfaction)? How has your satisfaction changed from prior years?*
  - c. *At this point, in general how satisfied are you with the structure of the program? To the extent satisfied, what do you like about the structure (what factors contribute to satisfaction); if unsatisfied, how would you like structure to differ (what factors contribute to dissatisfaction)? How has your satisfaction changed from prior years?*
  - d. *Since we last spoke, have you interacted with the state GEAR UP implementation office? If so, how would you describe the relationship between the office and you/your GEAR UP site? How satisfied have you been? What would you like to see stay the same? What would you like to change? How have interactions changed from prior years?*
  - e. *What new business, government, education and community organizations are involved in GEAR UP at your site since we last spoke? To what extent has GEAR UP played a role in establishing these alliances? If organizations are active in the program, what are your perceptions about their roles? Has there been any change in organizations or their involvement from prior years? If no organizations are involved, are there plans to involve some over the course of this year? What are the plans to get partners involved? Probe for distinction between school- and district-level alliances. Has collaboration with business, government, education and community organizations initiated through GEAR UP continued at your site?*
  - f. *How does GEAR UP leverage or coordinate with other programs/services within the school building? With other programs/services in the community? (Probe for links with specific programs.) How has this changed from prior years?*
- 3. The primary goal of GEAR UP is to promote college readiness and college going. In what ways has GEAR UP contributed to the college-going culture at this school? Has it changed from prior years? Is the change across a broad range of students? What features of GEAR UP do you think have contributed to this change? If any factors identified, do you think those factors will continue in the future? What more do you think the GEAR UP program could be doing to improve college-going culture at this school?**
- a. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Relative to being college ready and college going -- What are the characteristics of this school and its students (e.g., student and staff demographics, student needs)? How did you consider these characteristics/needs in designing a GEAR UP action plan at the school this year? (Probe on English Language Learners in particular, subgroups in general throughout.) Has this changed from prior years?*
  - b. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What are the characteristics of households from which students come? (Family structure, employment status, education, attitudes toward postsecondary education). Has this changed from prior years?*

- c. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: How involved are parents in their children's education? Has parent involvement changed from prior years?*
- d. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What challenges/successes has the school had with students being promoted on time? What plans does school have to improve on-time promotion? How have students been doing on the ACT/SAT? What steps do you see taking to improve in this area going forward? (Probe for using PSAT 10/ ACT Aspire) How many youth from the district have been going to college after graduating? In general, how would you say your school/district has been doing on these issues relative to other schools/districts in the state? Are there any changes from prior years?*
- e. *What programs and student support services (other than GEAR UP) are available to students this semester? (e.g., other programs that encourage/support attending college; student support services that assist with on-time promotion and school success (e.g., mentoring, counseling, tutoring). What is the level of student involvement in these services (percentage of participation) approximately? How has this changed from prior years? How helpful are these programs at preparing students to be college going? What programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful? Are there any plans for new/additional programs/support services for next year?*
- f. *What programs and services (other than GEAR UP) are available to families? For example, other programs that inform about college; family nights; support services (e.g., counseling). How has this changed from prior years? What programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful? Are there any plans for new/additional programs/support services for next year?*

**4. Let's discuss endorsements and the Foundation High School Program graduation plan. How has that been going at this school? What features of GEAR UP, if any, have been helpful in implementing the changes? Are there any challenges/barriers to implementing changes? How has this changed from prior years? Are there any planned changes?**

- a. *How has your school handled the changes introduced with the Foundation High School Program graduation plan? Probe for endorsements that are available and decisions about selecting/changing endorsements. Remind that this is related to HB 5 changes in graduation requirements to the Foundation High School Program if needed. Any change from prior years/planned for next year in endorsement offerings?*
- b. *What have you learned so far about students selecting endorsements? What factors contribute to selection of endorsements? Does going to college/being college ready appear to play a role in how students select endorsements? Does being career oriented appear to play a role in how students select endorsements? Are there any changes you would like to see so that students select endorsements to facilitate being college going/college ready and/or career ready? How about changing endorsements? Is there any change from prior years?*
- c. *If not already addressed ask all/in spring ask for change: Who at your school has a key role in helping students succeed both in selecting/changing an endorsement and graduating with an endorsement? What has the school done to help teachers /students with selecting endorsements and selecting courses in line with endorsements? Probe for any use of the TEA Graduation Toolkit or other district resources. How has this changed from prior years? What, if any, changes are planned for next year to help students with endorsement selection/changes?*
- d. *To your knowledge, are there any practices related to endorsements and the Foundation High School Program initiated through GEAR UP that have continued for other students (current Grade 9 students; middle school students, if known)?*

- 5. Are services/events encouraged or sponsored by GEAR UP helping to promote the goals of student success and college readiness in your school? If so, how? If not, why not? (NOTE: Focus on support services and activities/events related to GEAR UP goal of college readiness.)**
- For tutoring / mentoring/ academic support services, how were decisions made to involve students in these activities? Has this changed from prior years?*
  - As each GEAR UP event was planned, how were decisions made about which students and parents to invite to participate in college readiness/awareness events, if any held so far this year? Were some events open to all parents/students while others were not? What are your perceptions about the success of college readiness/awareness efforts? What factors facilitate success of events? What barriers impede success? What programs are being continued for other students (current Grade 9 students, middle school students if known, etc.)?*
  - The goal is to have at least 50% of parents attend 3 events each year; to what extent do you see your school succeeding at meeting this goal? What might the school need to do to be more successful? How do you see the high school successfully meeting this goal? What factors facilitated the success of any given event/activity or service? What barriers impeded success of events? Any plans for the upcoming year? How has this changed from prior years? What programs are being continued for other families (parents' of Grade 9 students)?*
  - If not known: Is GEAR UP supporting any early warning system for students at your school? (Probe for details of the warning system). If not, why not? How are students identified? Are there data systems in place? Any plans to put a system in place? If already known to have a system: How has the early warning system been used at your school? How helpful has it been at identifying students with needs and providing services to those students? Any challenges with using the system? Any plans for changes to the system? How has this changed from prior years?*
  - If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Were you involved in any conversations about services/activities/events that occurred in the past and how you might build on their success/learn from their failures? Has your school been able to sustain any successful services/activities/events over time (from one semester to the next or one year to the next)?\* (for example, mentors, TG financial literacy courses for parents)*
- 6. Improving the number of advanced and college credit courses, including dual credit and AP courses, as well as the number of students involved in these is also a GEAR UP goal. [NOTE: Clarify throughout advanced includes dual credit and AP courses]**
- If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Tell us about how your offerings of advanced courses has changed over time. Are there any new advanced courses or any advanced courses no longer offered? What are the advanced courses planned for Grade 11? (Cite list of advanced/honors math, English, science courses from Grade 10 based on APR and/or prior site visit knowledge.). Does your school have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered and/or to increase enrollment in advanced courses/AP courses? If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not? In what ways, if any, do other students (current Grade 9 or middle school students if known) continue to have opportunities to take advanced courses? For example, did you have many students who started Grade 9 this year who had already completed Algebra I?*
  - To what extent, if any, have you seen any change in the interest of GEAR UP students in advanced courses in comparison to prior years' students? To what extent was the school prepared to enroll a greater number of students in advanced courses?*

- c. *A goal of GEAR UP is to provide students with opportunities to receive 18 hours of college credit by graduation. Since we last talked, what steps has the school taken to ensure that this goal can be met? What about student progress towards graduating with a distinguished level of achievement (including Algebra II, endorsement and 26 credits)?*
- d. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/district are to take these (advanced and college credit) courses? At this point, have this year's GEAR UP students seemed better prepared than students in the past or about the same? What successes or challenges are there in students completing/passing advanced courses? [note Year 3 goal of 85% of students passing Algebra I]*
- e. *How would you describe progress towards the goal of having 70% of students having knowledge of and being academically prepared for college?*
- f. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing the number of, and student enrollment in, advanced courses and college credit courses.*

**7. Since we last talked: Have you/the teachers at your school engaged in any GEAR UP related professional development (PD)? (If new, ask since GEAR UP began in the district in 2012–13)? This includes any GEAR UP-related PD that occurred in the summer. If so, what were your impressions of it? If not, what barriers prevented conducting GEAR UP-related PD?**

*Also probe for any additional PD activities that we should be aware of that were not reported in APR, which may have occurred after the latest APR submission. Probe for impressions of pre-AP/AP and/or Algebra I or II-related professional development; improving academic rigor, differentiated instruction, project-based learning, financial literacy.*

- a. *If not already known: What are the school's/district's major goals for teacher and administrator professional development for the current school year?*
- b. *Has any PD occurred since we last spoke? (Probe whether PD was provided by GEAR UP including through Project Share).<sup>172</sup> If none, why not?*
- c. *How successfully were major goals for teacher and administrator professional development related to GEAR UP met? Has the number of PD events held this year met your expectations for the year? Why/why not? What about participation in these events, did it meet expectations?  
Probe for any critical PD still needed at the school in the upcoming year in order for GEAR UP to be successful?*
- d. *What factors contribute to current successes related to PD? What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*
- e. *Has the school begun to make plans/goals for next year for teacher/administrator professional development related to GEAR UP? If yes, what role did GEAR UP play in this effort?*
- f. *In what ways, if any, has GEAR UP PD continued for other teachers (i.e., those currently teaching Grade 9, middle school teachers if known)?*

**8. Since we last talked, have you or any of the teachers at this school been engaged in any vertical alignment activities? NOTE if none identified in prior conversations or in response to main prompt, has the school begun to work on establishing a team/plan to ensure that vertical alignment occurs? Why/why not? When do you anticipate beginning to work on vertical alignment?**

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<sup>172</sup> Project Share has since been renamed to Texas Gateway.

- a. *If not already known: Were you or the teachers at this school engaging in vertical alignment activities since the GEAR UP program began in 2012-2013 school year?*
- b. *If new vertical alignment events have occurred, underway or planned, what is the scope of the effort? (Probe for: Grades and major subjects covered by vertical alignment and whether new vertical alignment activities were provided through GEAR UP or through other funding).*
- c. *In what ways is the school/district meeting the goal of 5 days of vertical team preparation? What are your perceptions about the success of this vertical alignment work? What factors contribute to successes?*
- d. *What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them?*
- e. *What are your perceptions about the value of vertical alignment? How will it impact student achievement? How will it impact teachers and instruction at the school? If not satisfied with current status of vertical alignment, what might need to occur to improve satisfaction?*
- f. *If vertical alignment between middle and high school occurred in prior years, to what extent is has that continued to occur this year?*

**9. Effective transition to high school is another important element in promoting student preparation for college and college level coursework, as well as increased awareness of college to build interest in attending college.**

- a. *This year's Grade 10 students had an opportunity to participate in a summer program before starting Grade 9 to help with the transition. In what ways, if any, were summer transition programs provided for this year's Grade 9 students (summer 2015) similar to those you provided to GEAR UP students in summer 2014? Has this been helpful to those Grade 9 students in your opinion? (If appropriate, probe for use of or planned use of EXPLORE, high school visits, academic early warning systems.)*
- b. *What types of skills do you think it takes for a student to be successful in high school, and ultimately college aware and ready? How successful would you say the Grade 10 students have been at having these skills? How well would you say that GEAR UP students (Grade 10) have transitioned to high school and into Grade 10? What aspects of transitioning have gone well/not so well: developing high school level study habits (time management skills, organization skills); social transition (e.g., joining clubs, making friends in high school); students knowing teachers and counselors (knowing who/where they can go to for help when needed) Engaging in college ready strategies?*

**10. What factors may have contributed to the success of their transition? (Note: Relative to successfully transitioning to being a high school student, probe for content (e.g., making high school culture clear, training on specific "soft" skills like organization or study skills, encouraging to get involved, taking AP or dual enrollment courses, introducing to teachers, etc.)**

- a. *How would you describe Grade 10 students with regard to awareness of college and interest in attending college? Are you aware of any activities to support awareness and interest in attending college or in choosing a career and how that might link to postsecondary education?*
- b. *What factors may have contributed to the success of student transitions? Any activities planned going forward to continue to help students to transition and be successful each year while in high school? To what extent do you think the district will be able to sustain these facilitators?*

**11. Any challenges you have identified with student transition to high school level work and environment? If yes, any plans to address these challenges? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future? What might you do**

**differently in the future to help these types of transition programs to be more successful? One of the GEAR UP goals is to have at least 30% of the students involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level (AP classes; dual credit classes), ease transitions, and increase college awareness each summer. Tell us about your experiences with engaging students in these types of summer programs. (If not aware, focus on Probes d & e.)**

- a. *Tell us about student participation in summer programs this past summer? Were you involved in guiding students towards any programs? Type of programs students attended to your knowledge? Where they attended (e.g., locally, elsewhere in Texas, in another state)? Who provided the programs (e.g., university or community college, business)?*
- b. *Please share any college visits that occurred in summer 2015?*
- c. *If aware of student participation, how successful would you describe that participation as being? About how many students were involved in summer programs [how close to goal of 30% enrolled]?*
- d. *If not aware of student participation, what challenges have there been to engaging students in the summer? Ideas on how to overcome those challenges going forward?*
- e. *Has any planning occurred to date for summer 2016? Ideas for what would like/not like to see occur in summer 2016?*

**12. How involved/knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events? [Probe for GEAR UP website ([www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)), GEAR UP activities/events (e.g., GEAR UP conference)?]**

- a. *What statewide activities/events do/did you/your school/district participate in this semester?*
- b. *Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this semester? If yes, how did you use them? If not, why not?*
- c. *What facilitators and barriers are there to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*
- d. *To what extent do students in other grades use these resources?*

**13. We understand students could be participating in the PSAT 10 and/or ACT Aspire this year. Do you have a role in that?**

- a. *If yes, tell us about your role. Are you working at all with the Khan Academy? Other programs or strategies for helping students with this? What is your vision of success regarding participating in these programs?*
- b. *To what extent does your school encourage students to take the SAT and ACT? Have there been any activities to date with the Grade 10 students to promote taking these in the future.*
- c. *Any anticipated challenges regarding participation? If yes, how might you overcome those challenges?*

**14. What are your overall thoughts about the GEAR UP program?**

- a. *Generally, what are the key successes that you feel can be contributed to the GEAR UP program across years? What factors do you think contributed to the success of the program?*
- b. *Generally, what barriers did you encounter in promoting goals of GEAR UP this semester? This year? Were you able to overcome any barriers? Overcome over the course of the year? Over prior years? Plans to overcome going forward?*
- c. *How/to what extent was the school keeping in mind long-term GEAR UP goals in conducting events/activities and providing services this semester? (e.g., on-time promotion; ACT Aspire/ACT/SAT, college credit, etc. but also college entrance*

*requirements and financial literacy.) Are there any changes from prior years? What are plans to change going forward?*

**15. Looking ahead, what roles would you like GEAR UP to play at your school?**

- a. *How might successful GEAR UP activities be sustained for next year's Grade 9 and Grade 10 students and their families? For Grade 9 and 10 students in the future? For middle school students (if known)?*
- b. *How might GEAR UP activities be sustained with any new teachers at the school and/or other grades?*
- 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 2016: Administrator Interview

### 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 with a particular interest in this school year. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your role in GEAR UP as a school/district leader with a particular interest in this school year so far. 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. Try to find out ahead of time if administrator is new to district or continues from the fall, in new or same role and use that to guide initial items in particular. If no, excludes items on interview that they would not be able to answer (e.g., comparison to prior years). Consider prior responses to customize the inclusion, order, and language of questions as appropriate. The most recent APR data, action plans, reported plans for the 2015–16 school year, and prior interview data in particular, will be reviewed prior to conducting the site visits in order to add any site-specific probes.

**Interviewer notes: If you already met the person and had a chance to engage with them previously, review prior notes and identify any key issues that were not addressed. If basic items were all addressed and unlikely to change, skip the item. These items are indicated by “If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change”**  
**Questions to focus on change within current year and over year have been identified. Identify prior discussions about planned activities/services to inquire about progress on those plans.**

1. **Tell me a little about yourself. (Probe for how long at school, how long in role if not already known). If already met, reintroduce self and begin interview.**
  - a. *If new to school/district, what if anything do you know about GEAR UP? Have you heard anything so far about school/district participation in GEAR UP? Be prepared to briefly explain program and goals and let them know we are still interested in their thoughts.*

- 2. Are there any changes in how GEAR UP is structured at your school over the course of the year/from the prior year? Since last year?**
- If not known: What is the structure of GEAR UP at this school? Who leads GEAR UP planning and activities/events with students? With staff? With families? Who are the key players on a day-to-day basis? How has this changed over the course of the year/from the prior year? What are your thoughts on how it might change going forward?*
  - How and to what extent are you involved in GEAR UP since we last spoke? (Probe for when first learned about it/when began focusing on GEAR UP if not already known.) How, if at all, has the extent of your involvement changed from prior years? How satisfied are you with your role in the program? To the extent satisfied, what do you like about your role (what factors contribute to satisfaction); if unsatisfied, how would you like your role to differ (what factors contribute to dissatisfaction)? How has your satisfaction changed over the current year/from the prior year?*
  - At this point, in general how satisfied are you with the structure of the program? To the extent satisfied, what do you like about the structure (what factors contribute to satisfaction); if unsatisfied, how would you like structure to differ (what factors contribute to dissatisfaction)? How has your satisfaction changed over the current year/from the prior year?*
  - Since we last spoke, who have you interacted with about GEAR UP? Have you interacted with the state GEAR UP implementation office (define if they are unsure who this is)? If so, how would you describe the relationship between the office and you/your GEAR UP site? How satisfied have you been? What would you like to see stay the same? What would you like to change? How has your satisfaction changed over the current year/from prior years?*
  - What new business, government, education and community organizations are involved in GEAR UP at your site since we last spoke? To what extent has GEAR UP played a role in establishing these alliances? If organizations are active in the program, what are your perceptions about their roles? Has there been any change in organizations or their involvement over the course of the year? If no organizations are involved, are there plans to involve some over the course of this year? What are the plans to get partners involved? Probe for distinction between school- and district-level alliances. Has collaboration with business, government, education and community organizations initiated through GEAR UP continued at your site?*
  - How does GEAR UP leverage or coordinate with other programs/services within the school building? With other programs/services in the community? (Probe for links with specific programs.) How has this changed over the course of the year? Going forward: Over prior years?*
- 3. The primary goal of GEAR UP is to promote college readiness and college going. In what ways has GEAR UP contributed to the college-going culture at this school? Has it changed from prior years? Is the change across a broad range of students? What features of GEAR UP do you think have contributed to this change? If any factors identified, do you think those factors will continue in the future? What more do you think the GEAR UP program could be doing to improve college-going culture at this school?**
- If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Relative to being college ready and college going -- What are the characteristics of this school and its students (e.g., student and staff demographics, student needs)? How did you consider these characteristics/needs in designing a GEAR UP action plan at the school this year? (Probe on English Language Learners in particular, subgroups in general throughout.) Has this changed from prior years?*

- b. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What are the characteristics of households from which students come? (Family structure, employment status, education, attitudes toward postsecondary education). Has this changed from prior years?*
- c. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: How involved are parents in their children's education?*
- d. *Has parent involvement changed from prior years?*
- e. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: What challenges/successes has the school had with students being promoted on time? What plans does school have to improve on-time promotion? Are GEAR UP staff or programs included in any of these plans? Do you think there is potential for them to be involved? How have students been doing on the ACT/SAT? What steps do you see taking to improve in this area going forward? (Probe for using PSAT 10/ ACT Aspire) How many youth from the district have been going to college after graduating? Do you know what their persistence rates are? What are some of the reasons students from your school are leaving college? In general, how would you say your school/district has been doing on these issues relative to other schools/districts in the state? Are there any changes from prior years?*
- f. *If not already addressed ask all/ otherwise ask once a year for change: What programs and student support services (other than GEAR UP) are available to students this school year? (e.g., other programs that encourage/support attending college; student support services that assist with on-time promotion and school success such as mentoring, counseling, tutoring. What is the level of student involvement in these services (percentage of participation) approximately? How has this changed from prior years? How helpful are these programs at preparing students to be college going? What programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful? Are there any plans for new/additional programs/support services for next year or this summer?*
- g. *What programs and services (other than GEAR UP) are available to families? For example, other programs that inform about college; family nights; support services (e.g., counseling). How long have they been in place? How has this changed over the course of the year? Going forward: Over prior years? How successful have parent events been? What programs do you hope to sustain in future years because they have been helpful? Are there any plans for new/additional programs/support services for next year?*

**4. Let's discuss endorsements and the Foundation High School Program graduation plan. How has that been going at this school? What features of GEAR UP, if any, have been helpful in implementing the changes? Are there any challenges/barriers to implementing changes? How has this changed from prior years? Are there any planned changes?**

- a. *Tell us about the endorsements offered at your school. Any challenges in offering endorsements or students being able to select an endorsement? What about having the right courses and the right number of each courses aligned with each endorsement? Tell us about any successes or challenges associated with being able to connect students with the endorsements and coursework they are interested in.*
- b. *Did going to college/being college ready appear to play a role in how students select endorsements? Did being career oriented appear to play a role in how students select endorsements? Are there any changes (people, staff, inclusion/exclusion of resources) you would like to see so that students select endorsements to facilitate being college going/college ready and/or career ready? How about changing endorsements?*

- c. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Who at your school has a key role in helping students succeed in selecting/changing/adding an endorsement and graduating with an endorsement? What has the school done to help teachers/students with selecting endorsements and selecting course options in line with endorsements? How many students have been changing or adding endorsements? Are students still interested in the endorsements, pathways, and coursework they initially selected? Are you aware if GEAR UP staff or programs played a role in the endorsement(s) students selected? If yes, how influential was GEAR UP? If no, do you think it would have been appropriate for GEAR UP to play a role? Probe for any use of the TEA Graduation Toolkit or other district resources. What kind of career exploration activities have students participated in to help them select their endorsement? How has this changed from prior years? What, if any, changes are planned for next year to help students with endorsement selection/changes?*
- d. *To your knowledge, are there any practices related to endorsements and the Foundation High School Program initiated through GEAR UP that have continued for other students (current graduates interested in having an endorsement, current Grade 9 students; middle school students, if known)?*
- 5. Are services/events encouraged or sponsored by GEAR UP helping to promote the goals of student success and college readiness in your school? If so, how? If not, why not? (NOTE: Focus on support services and activities/events related to GEAR UP goal of college readiness.)**
- a. *For tutoring/mentoring/academic support services, how were decisions made to involve students in these activities? How has this changed over the course of the year/Over prior years? Who is involved in making those decisions?*
- b. *As each GEAR UP event was planned, how were decisions made about which students and parents to invite to participate in college readiness/awareness events, if any held so far this year? Were some events open to all parents/students while others were not? What are your perceptions about the success of college readiness/awareness efforts? What factors facilitate success of events? What barriers impede success? What GEAR UP initiated programs are being continued for other students (current Grade 9 students, middle school students if known, etc.)?*
- c. *The goal is to have at least 50% of parents attend 3 events each year; to what extent do you see this school succeeding at meeting this goal? What might the school need to do to be more successful? How do you see the high school successfully meeting this goal? What factors facilitated the success of any given event/activity or service? What barriers impeded success of events? Any plans for increasing parent attendance for the upcoming school year/next school year? How has this changed over the course of the year/Over prior years? What programs are being continued for other families (parents' of Grade 9 students)? What kind/populations of parents or families are you able to successfully engage with? Which do you struggle with more? What kind of support do you receive from GEAR UP and IPSI staff to facilitate successful parent engagement as an administrator?*
- d. *If not already known whether services/ events encouraged or sponsored by GEAR UP help to promote the goals of student success and college readiness: Is GEAR UP supporting any early warning system for students at your school? (Probe for details of the warning system). If not, why not? How are students who may be struggling identified by the early warning system? Are there data systems in place? Any plans to put a system in place?*
- e. *If already known to have a system: How has the early warning system been used at your school? How helpful has it been at identifying students with needs and providing services to those students? Any challenges with using the system? Any plans for*

*changes to the system? How has this changed from prior years? What variables inform the early warning? Who is notified of the warning? Are GEAR UP staff notified about their students? To what extent are students who have been identified by the system able to be connected to appropriate supports? What successes/challenges have you had at connecting students to support services?*

- f. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Were you involved in any conversations about services/activities/events that occurred in the past and how you might build on their success/learn from their failures? Has your school been able to sustain any successful services/activities/events over time (over the course of the year/Over prior years)? (For example, mentors, TG financial literacy courses for parents)*

**6. Improving the number of advanced and college credit courses, including dual credit and AP courses, as well as the number of students involved in these is also a GEAR UP goal. [NOTE: Clarify throughout advanced includes dual credit and AP courses]**

- a. *If not already addressed ask all/otherwise ask once a year for change: Tell us about how your offerings of advanced courses has changed over time. Are there any new advanced courses or any advanced courses no longer offered? What are the advanced courses planned for Grade 11? (Cite list of advanced/honors math, English, science courses for current year based on APR if available and/or prior site visit knowledge). Does your school have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered and/or to increase enrollment in advanced courses/AP courses or dual credit/enrollment courses? If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not? In what ways, if any, do other students (current Grade 9 or middle school students if known) continue to have opportunities to take advanced courses? For example, had most Grade 10 students this year already completed Algebra I and needed to be placed in more advanced courses?*
- b. *To what extent, if any, have you seen any change in the interest of/performance of GEAR UP students in advanced courses in comparison to prior years' students? To what extent was/has the school prepared to enroll a greater number of students in advanced courses this year/next year?*
- c. *A goal of GEAR UP is to provide students with opportunities to receive 18 hours of college credit by graduation. What progress has the school made on this goal to date? Since we last talked, what steps has the school taken to ensure that this goal can be met? What about student progress towards graduating with a distinguished level of achievement (including Algebra II, endorsement, and 26 credits)?*
- d. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/district are to take these (advanced and college credit) courses? At this point, have this year's GEAR UP students seemed better prepared than students in the past or about the same? What successes or challenges are there in students completing/passing advanced courses?*
- e. *What types of non-academic skills do you think it takes for a student to be successful in high school, and ultimately college aware and ready? How successful would you say the Grade 10 students have been at having these skills? What aspects of being a successful high school student have gone well/not so well for the GEAR UP students? In what ways, if at all, have noticed students recognizing when they need supplemental help to succeed academically and are motivated to seek it out on their own? Do they know where to turn for the help? To what extent is the district able to guide them to supports or programs?*
- f. *How would you describe progress towards the goal of having 70% of students having knowledge of and being academically prepared for college?*

- g. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing the number of, and student enrollment in, advanced courses and college credit courses.*

**7. Since we last talked: Have you/the teachers at your school engaged in any GEAR UP related professional development (PD)? (If first time talking to this person and in district since 2012–13, ask since GEAR UP began in the district in 2012–13)? This includes any GEAR UP-related PD that occurred in summer or school year. *If so, what were your impressions of the PD? Of teachers ability to implement what was learned in the PD into their classrooms? If not, what barriers prevented conducting GEAR UP-related PD?***

**Also probe for any additional PD activities that we should be aware of that were not reported in APR, which may have occurred after the latest APR submission. Probe for impressions of pre-AP/AP and/or Algebra I or II-related professional development; improving academic rigor, differentiated instruction, project-based learning, financial literacy.**

- a. *If not already known: What are the school's/district's major goals for teacher and administrator professional development for the current school year?*
- b. *Has any PD occurred since we last spoke? (Probe whether PD was provided by GEAR UP including through Project Share).<sup>173</sup> If none, why not?*
- c. *How successfully were major goals for teacher and administrator professional development related to GEAR UP met? Has the number of PD events held this year met your expectations for the year? Why/why not? What about participation in these events, did it meet expectations?  
Probe for any critical PD still needed at the school in the current or upcoming school year in order for GEAR UP to be successful?*
- d. *What factors contribute to current successes related to PD? What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*
- e. *Has the school begun to make plans/goals for next year for teacher/administrator professional development related to GEAR UP? If yes, what role did GEAR UP play in this effort?*
- f. *In what ways, if any, has GEAR UP PD continued for other teachers (i.e., those currently teaching Grade 9, middle school teachers if known)?*

**8. Since we last talked, have you or any of the teachers at this school been engaged in any vertical alignment activities? NOTE if none identified in prior conversations or in response to main prompt, has the school begun to work on establishing a team/plan to ensure that vertical alignment occurs? Why/why not? When do you anticipate beginning to work on vertical alignment?**

- a. *If not already known: Were you or the teachers at this school engaging in vertical alignment activities since the GEAR UP program began in 2012-2013 school year?*
- b. *If new vertical alignment events have occurred, underway or planned, what is the scope of the effort? (Probe for: Grades and major subjects covered by vertical alignment and whether new vertical alignment activities were provided through GEAR UP or through other funding).*
- c. *In what ways is the school/district meeting the goal of 5 days of vertical team preparation? What are your perceptions about the success of this vertical alignment work? What factors contribute to successes?*
- d. *What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them?*

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<sup>173</sup> Project Share has since been renamed to Texas Gateway.

- e. *What are your perceptions about the value of vertical alignment? How will it impact student achievement? How will it impact teachers and instruction at the school? If not satisfied with current status of vertical alignment, what might need to occur to improve satisfaction?*
- f. *If vertical alignment between middle and high school occurred in prior years, to what extent is has that continued to occur this year?*

**9. Increased awareness of college and building interest in attending college is another important aspect of GEAR UP.**

- a. *How would you describe GEAR UP (current grade) students with regard to awareness of college and interest in attending college? Are you aware of any activities to support awareness and interest in attending college or in choosing a career and how that might link to postsecondary education? Has this changed over the course of the year/over prior years/over experiences with other schools?*

**10. One of the GEAR UP goals is to have at least 30% of the students involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level (AP classes; dual credit classes), ease transitions, and increase college awareness each summer. Tell us about your experiences with engaging students in these types of summer programs. (If not aware, focus on Probes d & e,)**

- a. *Has any planning occurred to date for summer 2016? What types of summer programs are planned this year? Ideas for what would like/not like to see occur in summer 2016? Were you or will you be involved in guiding staff/students towards any summer programs for this year? How responsive to outreach regarding these programs were the staff/students? How is that outreach usually conducted?*

**11. How involved/knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events? [Probe for GEAR UP website ([www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)), Project Share Gateway and TEA's iTunes U page, GEAR UP activities/events (e.g., GEAR UP conference)?]<sup>174</sup>**

- a. *What statewide activities/events do/did you/your school/district participate in this school year?*
- b. *Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this school year? If yes, how did you use them? If not, why not? Did you find them useful? Why or why not?*
- c. *What facilitators and barriers are there to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*
- d. *To what extent do students in other grades use these resources?*

**12. We understand students could be participating in the TSI, PSAT 10 and/or ACT Aspire this year. Do you have a role in that?**

- a. *If yes, tell us about your role. Did you work at all with the Khan Academy? Other programs or strategies for helping students with this? What was your vision of success regarding participating in these programs?*
- b. *To what extent does your school encourage students to take the SAT and ACT? Have there been any activities to date with the Grade 10 students to promote taking these in the future.*
- c. *Any s regarding participation? If yes, how did you overcome those challenges?*
- d. *What kind of preparations for taking these assessments did students receive? Which students had the opportunity to take advantage of this preparation?*

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<sup>174</sup> Project Share has since been renamed to Texas Gateway.

**13. What are your overall thoughts about the GEAR UP program?**

- a. *What role or input, if any, did you have in the implementation of GEAR UP? Are you satisfied with this level of involvement? Would you have preferred to have been involved more or less? What role in the grant implementation would you like to have as the program progresses? In what ways can the GEAR UP program supplement the campus' goals and objectives?*
- b. *Generally, what are the key successes that you feel can be contributed to the GEAR UP program across years? What factors do you think contributed to the success of the program?*
- c. *Generally, what barriers did you encounter in promoting goals of GEAR UP this school year? This year? Were you able to overcome any barriers? Overcome over the course of the year? Over prior years? Plans to overcome going forward?*
- d. *How/to what extent was the school keeping in mind long-term GEAR UP goals in conducting events/activities and providing services this school year? (e.g., on-time promotion; ACT Aspire/ACT/SAT, college credit, etc. but also college entrance requirements and financial literacy.) Are there any changes from prior years? What are plans to change going forward?*
- e. *Do you think GEAR UP is achieving the college readiness goal at your school?*

**14. Looking ahead, what roles would you like GEAR UP to play at your school?**

- a. *In what ways have you been able to sustain any activities or programs initiated by GEAR UP for this year's Grade 9 students? How might successful GEAR UP supports and activities be sustained for next year's Grade 9 and Grade 10 students and their families? For Grade 9 and 10 students in the future? For middle school students (if known)?*
- b. *How might GEAR UP activities be sustained with any new teachers at the school and/or other grades?*
- 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?*

**15. Please share anything else you would like us to know about GEAR UP and how it has been going in your district/at your school.**

*Thank you for your time.*



## D.11 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2015: Student Focus Group Protocol

### Facilitator Guidelines:

- Introduce yourself and/or leaders of the focus group as representatives of ICF International and describe your roles in supporting the meeting (i.e., facilitator, note taker). Students selected for the focus group should have experience with one or more GEAR UP activities/workshops.
- Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group: *Those funding the GEAR UP program would like to know what it is like to be a part of the program. Particularly, they are interested in students' experience with GEAR UP's college awareness activities, tutoring, mentoring, summer programs, and field trips. This is not an evaluation of your school or your GEAR UP leaders. The purpose of this focus group is to get a variety of views about the program, so that we can gather information about activities to help plan for the future. People can agree or disagree with comments, but only one person can speak at a time. The session will take approximately 30-50 minutes.*
- Convey to each participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the focus group is voluntary; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop participating in the focus group at any time – participation will not impact you at school; (3) the information will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; (4) focus group data will be maintained in secure areas; and (5) please respect others' privacy by not sharing any information outside of the focus group.*
- Ask permission to record the focus group: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording. If at least one person chooses not to have the focus group recorded, we will not record the session but will take notes. We will not include your name(s) in these notes. Any information that can be used to identify a student will be removed from transcripts prior to being shared.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. Review and ask participants to sign the assent form. Parent permission forms will be collected prior to the focus group.
- Each focus group should have six to eight participants. The focus group is open to any 10<sup>th</sup> grade GEAR UP student in the 2015-2016 school year. Ideally at least some will have participated in GEAR UP activities/events/services but this is not required for participation in the focus group.

### Materials

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

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
2min	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> Please introduce yourself, your name, and how long you've been involved in GEAR UP (i.e., has anyone been involved since Grade 7?). Have you participated in a		

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	GEAR UP focus group with us previously?		
3 min	<p><b>WHAT IS GEAR UP?</b></p> <p>When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What activities, events, or programs do you think of? For those of you who have been involved in prior grades, how has your thinking about the GEAR UP program changed over time? <i>Probe for where they have heard about GEAR UP at school, if anywhere. Provide examples of activities from APR/GUIDES to help get students started if needed.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Basic knowledge if available</li> </ul>	<p>List student ideas on chart paper. <i>Provide background if students lack basic knowledge.</i></p>
5 min	<p><b>EXPERIENCE WITH GEAR UP</b></p> <p>We would like to know the range of any activities/events you attended or participated in this year to help you succeed in school and be prepared to go to college. What did you do? When did you do it? Who wants to go first? <i>(Review list of site-specific activities from APR/GUIDES to provide examples of activities if needed to get started. Prompt for summer 2015 activities and any activities/events from current school year-tutoring/mentoring/ counseling, college visits, etc.) Probe specifically for participation in GeoForce, PREP, Fish Camp; and if these come up, ask the students: Has there been any follow through on these specific programs?</i></p> <p><i>Any plans to participate in activities that GEAR UP is offering this year that you know about?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When</li> <li>○ Nature of activity</li> <li>○ Content covered/goal of activity</li> </ul>	<p>List student responses on chart paper. Then ask to see if other students participated in named activities. Prompt for recent activities in the past month. Prompt specifically for helping to select courses/endorsements and for helping to make the transition to high school (learning how to navigate schools, selecting/changing classes, meeting teachers/ counselors). (NOTE: We will have a list of endorsements to share so that we are communicating about the same things.)</p>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
<p><b>5-8 min</b></p>	<p><b>LEARNING / ATTITUDE CHANGE</b></p> <p>Take a piece of paper in front of you. Write down things you learned from any activities/events you attended or services you received to help you succeed in school and be prepared to go to college. Write as many as you can think of. Think about any that may have changed your thinking about attending college in particular. (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 college including learning about attending college/ entrance requirements/ financial aid.)</p> <p>(after 2min)</p> <p>I'd like each of you to select the most valuable learning experience from your list. Please share with the group and talk about why you selected it. Ask if others in the group agree.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Change in attitude</li> <li>○ Change in knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>List ideas shared on chart paper. Discuss how different ideas may be related.</p> <p>Separate ideas based on attendance vs. not at activities.</p> <p><b>Probe for any change in thinking about attending college that has occurred for them since participating in GEARUP.</b></p>
<p><b>5-8 min</b></p>	<p><b>MORE GENERAL: ACADEMIC RIGOR AND ADVANCED COURSES</b></p> <p>How challenging has high school been for you so far? How were you prepared for the move from Grade 9 to Grade 10? What helped? What would you have liked? Would you like to share anything about challenges or successes related to passing a grade and moving to the next grade? (<i>Probe for summer transition activity participation as</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Perceptions and participation</li> <li>○ Barriers and challenges</li> <li>○ Transition from Grade 9 to Grade 10</li> <li>○ Graduation Toolkit (endorsements/distinguished honors)</li> <li>○ Advanced courses (18 hours of college credit before graduation)</li> <li>○</li> </ul>	<p>List what students are participating in</p> <p>Focus in on subject area</p> <p>Why/why not taking listed courses</p> <p>If not sure what distinguished level of achievement is, ask if anyone knows. If answer is no, move on.</p>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	<p><i>well as school year events to help transition.)</i></p> <p>Please tell me about the endorsement(s) you selected (major/minor). How have your teachers/administrators/GEAR UP staff helped you with meeting the endorsement requirements/goals (e.g., helping you to select courses to take)? Is anyone planning to change or drop an endorsement? Tell us about that.</p> <p>Is anyone working towards a distinguished level of achievement? What prompted you to seek that?</p> <p>One goal of GEAR UP is to encourage student participation in advanced courses and courses that will give them college credit and to improve how challenging courses are at your school. Have you already completed Algebra I? Are you currently in any advanced or dual credit courses (Geometry, Algebra II or AP courses, including in other subjects besides mathematics)? Do you plan to participate in advanced courses in the future? What roles do teachers/administrators/parents/GEAR UP staff play in helping you select advanced courses? Have you participated in other course activities/courses that you find particularly challenging? Why/why not? If so, what do you like/not like about challenging/advanced courses?</p> <p><i>Probe: Are students in Algebra II or beyond in Grade 10? If so, what is your/their impression of the course and its difficulty level so far?</i></p> <p><i>Perceptions of any AP courses</i></p>		

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator’s Activity
	<p><i>taking? Are there courses that you wish you could take a more challenging level in but none is offered? In general, how challenging do you find courses?</i></p>		
<p><b>7-10 min</b></p>	<p><b>EFFECTIVENESS</b></p> <p>We would like you to tell us what is “working well” in GEAR UP and at your school as far as helping you to be successful in school and to prepare to go to college. What issues might we want to look at to improve your school for the future? We will use the chart paper to write down your thoughts. Please tell us what is working well and issues that could be improved. Who wants to go first?</p> <p>How knowledgeable would you say that you are regarding college requirements? [Probe on ACT/SAT and plans for this year and next.]</p> <p>To what extent do you feel academically prepared for college? {Probe for any specifics like knowing major and/or where they may want to attend and meeting entrance requirements associated with that.]</p> <p><i>(NOTE: If students begin to focus on issues like a disliked teacher or cafeteria food, remind them that we want to focus on success in school in general. Let them know that if they think some teachers engage in strategies that do/do not help them to be successful we want to know about that but we do not need to analyze any given teacher, etc.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Understanding college admissions and financial literacy</li> <li>○ Learning about/Taking PSAT10/SAT and ACT Aspire/ACT</li> <li>○ Implementation issues (facilitators and barriers)</li> <li>○ Student learning</li> <li>○ Outcome (change in attitude, views, and knowledge)</li> <li>○ Factors that shape specific implementation, learning, and outcomes</li> </ul>	<p>Use the chart paper to list students’ ideas for each category. Prompt for tutoring, mentoring, college visits if needed. Note that students may have different views about whether a service or program is working well.</p>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
5-8 min	<p><b>SOURCES OF INFORMATION</b></p> <p>We would like to create a map of where information and knowledge about college are coming from. We know people learn not just from classes, but from other people, and we want to capture this information. Could you list where you learn about college and career options? Please list as many sources as you can think of. Who wants to go first?</p> <p><i>PROBE: Any people / information / resources you would like to have access to in order to prepare for college?</i></p> <p><i>If state websites or Texas GEAR UP social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) do not come up, ask if they have heard of them and/or visited state GEAR UP website (<a href="http://www.texasgearup.com">www.texasgearup.com</a>) or the Texas GEAR UP social media sites.</i></p> <p><i>Consider probing for who they think provides the best / most accurate the information they receive from various resources is and any barriers to seeking information.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formal (school, GEAR UP)</li> <li>○ Informal (friends, family, media)</li> </ul>	<p>Use the chart paper to list and group student responses.</p>
3-5 min	<p><b>STUDENT SUGGESTIONS</b></p> <p>Do you have any suggestions to improve the GEAR UP program? What opportunities would you like to have/information do you need to succeed in school and to feel prepared to go to college after high school? [Probe for any interest in summer opportunities]</p> <p><i>Possible follow up questions to their ideas:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Implementation issues</li> <li>○ Content</li> <li>○ Delivery</li> <li>○ Resource</li> <li>○ Where students are in their learning about college</li> </ul>	<p>If no suggestions offered, focus on information needs</p>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	<p><i>"Why is that important?" "How will it change the way you learn about college?"</i></p>		
<p><b>2 min</b></p>	<p><b>CLOSING</b></p> <p>Is there anything else we should know to understand how students in your grade in this school are working with GEAR UP staff and programs?</p>		

**Thank you very much for your time.**

## D.12 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2016: 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.
- Student Assent and Parent Consent: Only students with signed parent consent can participate in the focus group. Confirm that have these and walk student through their assent to participate.
- 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 10<sup>th</sup> grade GEAR UP student in the 2015–16 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	<p><b>INTRODUCTION</b></p> <p>Please introduce yourself, your name, and how long you've been involved in GEAR UP (i.e., has</p>		



Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	anyone been involved since Grade 7?). Have you participated in a GEAR UP focus group with us previously?		
3 min	<p><b>WHAT IS GEAR UP?</b></p> <p>When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What activities, events, or programs do you think of? For those of you who have been involved in prior grades, how has your thinking about the GEAR UP program changed over time? <i>Probe for where they have heard about GEAR UP at school, if anywhere. Provide examples of activities from APR/GUIDES to help get students started if needed.</i></p>	Basic knowledge if available	List student ideas on chart paper. <i>Provide background if students lack basic knowledge.</i>
5 min	<p><b>EXPERIENCE WITH GEAR UP</b></p> <p>We would like to know the range of any activities/events you attended or participated in this year to help you succeed in school and be prepared to go to college. What did you do? When did you do it? Who wants to go first? <i>(Review list of site-specific activities from APR/GUIDES to provide examples of activities if needed to get started. Prompt for any activities/events from current school year-tutoring/mentoring/ counseling, college visits, etc.) Probe specifically for participation in GeoForce, PREP, and if these come up, ask the students: Has there been any follow through on these specific programs?</i></p> <p><i>Any plans to participate in activities that GEAR UP is offering this summer that you know about?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When</li> <li>○ Nature of activity</li> <li>○ Content covered/goal of activity</li> </ul>	List student responses on chart paper. Then ask to see if other students participated in named activities. Prompt for recent activities in the past month. Prompt specifically for helping to prepare for the PSAT 10, ACT, or TSI.

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	<p>Did anyone take the PSAT 10 or ACT Aspire? The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Assessment? If so, did you feel prepared to succeed on the test? What kind of preparations for taking these types of tests did you have sponsored by the school or by GEAR UP? What type of preparation might be helpful to you going forward for taking these types of tests?</p>		
<p><b>5-8 min</b></p>	<p><b>LEARNING / ATTITUDE CHANGE</b></p> <p>Take a piece of paper in front of you. Write down things you learned from any activities/events you attended or services you received to help you succeed in school and be prepared to go to college. Write as many as you can think of. Think about any that may have changed your thinking about attending college in particular.</p> <p>(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 its goals and what they would like to learn more about college including learning about attending college/entrance requirements/financial aid).</p> <p>(after 2min)</p> <p>I'd like each of you to select the most valuable learning experience from your list. Please share with the group and talk about why you selected it. Ask if others in the group agree.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Change in attitude</li> <li>○ Change in knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>List ideas shared on chart paper. Discuss how different ideas may be related.</p> <p>Separate ideas based on attendance vs. not at activities.</p> <p><b>Probe for any change in thinking about attending college that has occurred for them since participating in GEARUP and within the past year. What, if anything, contributed to these changes over time.</b></p>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator’s Activity
5-8 min	<p><b>MORE GENERAL: ACADEMIC RIGOR AND ADVANCED COURSES</b></p> <p>How challenging has high school been for you so far? How What skills do you think help you to succeed in school? In advanced classes? Has the school supported you in building these skills? Any challenges to succeeding in school/advanced classes? (<i>Probe for summer transition activity participation as well as school year events to help transition into Grade 11.</i>)</p> <p>Please tell me about the endorsement(s) you selected (major/minor). How have your teachers/administrators/GEAR UP staff helped you with meeting the endorsement requirements/goals (e.g., helping you to select and enroll in courses to take)? Is anyone planning to change, add, or drop an endorsement? Has anyone already changed, dropped, or added an endorsement? Tell us about that. Did you talk to any other staff members at your school, like your college prep advisor or a counselor, about adding an endorsement or changing your endorsement?</p> <p>Were you able to select an endorsement that was of interest to you? Tell us about the courses you need to graduate with this endorsement. Any challenges?</p> <p>Tell us about how you see your endorsement preparing you for what you want to do after high school and for going to college.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Perceptions and participation</li> <li>○ Barriers and challenges</li> <li>○ Transition from Grade 10 to Grade 11</li> <li>○ Graduation Toolkit (endorsements/distinguished honors)</li> <li>○ Advanced courses (18 hours of college credit before graduation)</li> </ul>	<p>List what students are participating in</p> <p>Focus in on subject area</p> <p>Why/why not taking listed courses</p> <p>If not sure what distinguished level of achievement is, ask if anyone knows. If answer is no, explain meaning to students.</p>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	<p>Probe for: <i>Do you plan on studying the same topic in college? Do you think you will work in the field of your endorsement once you've graduated?</i></p> <p>In the past year, have you had any opportunities through your school or GEAR UP to participate in activities aligned with your post high school goals? Have you done any job shadowing, work internships, college visits or career field trips? If not, is that something you would be interested in?</p> <p>Is anyone working towards a distinguished level of achievement? What prompted you to seek that? <i>Algebra II is required to graduate with distinguished level of achievement, how prepared do you feel to succeed in Algebra II (Probe if already in it or planning to take next year). Challenges or concerns about graduating at distinguished level? How do you see graduating with distinguished level of achievement as preparing you for college?</i></p> <p>One goal of GEAR UP is to encourage student participation in advanced courses (AP courses) and courses that will allow you to earn college credit; and, generally, to improve how challenging courses are at your school. Are you currently in any advanced or dual credit courses (AP courses, including in other subjects besides mathematics)? <i>Tell us about any pre-AP or AP courses you are taking. Are there courses that you wish you could take a more</i></p>		

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator’s Activity
	<p><i>challenging level in but none is offered? In general, how challenging do you find courses? Do you plan to participate in advanced courses or dual credit courses in the future? What roles do teachers/administrators/parents/GEAR UP staff play in helping you select advanced or dual credit 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? Tell us about any practice or actual AP exams you have taken and how that went.</i></p>		
<p><b>7-10 min</b></p>	<p><b>EFFECTIVENESS</b></p> <p>We would like you to tell us what is “working well” in GEAR UP and at your school as far as helping you to be successful in school and to prepare to go to college. What issues might we want to look at to improve your school for the future? We will use the chart paper to write down your thoughts. Please tell us what is working well and issues that could be improved. Who wants to go first?</p> <p>How knowledgeable would you say that you are regarding college requirements? [Probe on TSI, ACT/SAT and plans for next year, linking back to PSAT 10/ACT Aspire where appropriate, as well as preparations to take these assessments. Has anyone had any special training to prepare them (Probe specifically for Khan Academy.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Understanding college admissions and financial literacy</li> <li>○ Learning about/Taking PSAT-10/SAT and ACT Aspire /ACT</li> <li>○ Implementation issues (facilitators and barriers)</li> <li>○ Student learning</li> <li>○ Outcome (change in attitude, views, and knowledge)</li> <li>○ Factors that shape specific implementation, learning, and outcomes</li> </ul>	<p>Use the chart paper to list students’ ideas for each category. Prompt for tutoring, mentoring, college visits if needed. Note that students may have different views about whether a service or program is working well.</p>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	<p>Tell us about selecting a college to attend. Has anyone already selected a college? What steps are you taking to select a college? To what extent do you feel academically prepared for college? {Probe for any specifics like knowing major and/or where they may want to attend and meeting entrance requirements associated with that.]</p> <p><i>(NOTE: If students begin to focus on issues like a disliked teacher or cafeteria food, remind them that we want to focus on success in school in general. Let them know that if they think some teachers engage in strategies that do/do not help them to be successful we want to know about that but we do not need to analyze any given teacher, etc.)</i></p>		
5-8 min	<p><b>SOURCES OF INFORMATION</b></p> <p>We would like to create a map of where information and knowledge about college are coming from. We know people learn not just from classes, but from other people, and we want to capture this information. Could you list where/from whom you learn about college and career options? Please list as many sources as you can think of. Who wants to go first?</p> <p>How does your school and GEAR UP staff share information with you (e.g., one-on-one, hand-outs, announcements)? Are there any other ways you would prefer to receive information? Do GEAR UP staff usually have an answer for your questions about college and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formal (school, GEAR UP)</li> <li>○ Informal (friends, family, media)</li> </ul>	Use the chart paper to list and group student responses.

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
	<p>career options? What kind of sources do they give you to find answers?</p> <p>Do you think your parents are well-informed about college and career options? Do you know where they usually turn to find this information?</p> <p><i>PROBE: Any people/information/resources you would like to have access to in order to prepare for college?</i></p> <p><i>If state websites or Texas GEAR UP social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) do not come up, ask if they have heard of them and/or visited state GEAR UP website (<a href="http://www.texasgearup.com">www.texasgearup.com</a>) or the Texas GEAR UP social media sites.</i></p> <p><i>Consider probing for who they think provides the best/most accurate the information they receive from various resources is and any barriers to seeking information.</i></p>		
3-5 min	<p><b>STUDENT SUGGESTIONS</b></p> <p>Do you have any suggestions to improve the GEAR UP program? What opportunities would you like to have/information do you need to succeed in school and to feel prepared to go to college after high school? [Probe for any interest in summer opportunities]</p> <p><i>Possible follow up questions to their ideas:</i></p> <p><i>“Why is that important?” “How will it change the way you learn about college?”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Implementation issues</li> <li>○ Content</li> <li>○ Delivery</li> <li>○ Resource</li> <li>○ Where students are in their learning about college</li> </ul>	<p>If no suggestions offered, focus on information needs</p>

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

**Thank you very much for your time.**



## D.13 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2015: Parent Focus Group Protocol

### Facilitator Guidelines:

- Introduce yourself and/or leaders of the focus group as representatives of ICF International and describe your roles in supporting the meeting (i.e., facilitator, note taker). This session is expected to include a translator.
- Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The purpose of this focus group is to better understand parents thinking about the GEAR UP program and how parents are participating in services and activities under the GEAR UP program. Your contribution to the evaluation effort is extremely valuable and will give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the successes, benefits, and challenges associated with GEAR UP. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. We expect this focus group to take approximately 45 minutes.*
- Convey to each participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the focus group is voluntary and data collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop participation at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; and (4) focus group data will be maintained in secure areas; and (5) please respect others' privacy by not sharing any information outside of the focus group.*
- Ask permission to record the focus group: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording. If at least one person in the focus group chooses not to have it recorded, we will not record the session but will take notes. We will not include your name(s) in these notes. Any transcripts of the conversation shared with TEA will have all identifying information removed.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *Please review and sign the consent form.*
- Each focus group should have six to 10 participants. *The focus group is open to any parent of a GEAR UP student in the 2015-2016 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 10 students, do you have students in any other grades? Probe to find out if any parents participated in prior GEAR UP focus groups. When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What do you know about it? If long-term cohort parent, how has your understanding of the program changed over time. (If needed, facilitator provides a short overview of the program including specific examples where appropriate. Note to ask about participation in events more specifically in a separate question.)**

- a. *What and how/how often has the school communicated with parents so far this year about the GEAR UP program (e.g., mail/email, robo-calls, at school events)? In what ways, if any, have you interacted with the parent outreach liaison?*
- b. *What is your understanding of the goals of GEAR UP at your high school? For students? Parents? Teachers? The school/district? Statewide?*

**2. What activities, events, or programs do you think of? (e.g., College workshops/visits for students, financial literacy, Tutoring/mentoring/academic support services, workshops for parents, summer programs)**

**Let's talk about the summer activities as they relate to GEAR UP. Did your child attend any such activities this past summer?**

- a. *If your child did attend, what did you/your child think about the activities? Were there activities or events that occurred during the summer that you think were particularly helpful or not particularly helpful? Since the school year started, do you think the summer activities have helped your child to be more successful in high school this year?*
- b. *What do you think was the purpose of the summer activities (e.g., specific content like math, being a successful high school student, college going thinking)?*
- c. *How successful would you describe your child's move from being a Grade 9 student to being a Grade 10 student has been?*
- d. *If your child did attend, to what extent were parents involved in the summer activities? Were you able to be involved? Why/why not?*
- e. *For all parents, how and when did the school inform you about the summer activities? Were there features of the summer activities 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 activities?*
- f. *Would you encourage the school to continue these types of summer activities in the future? Why/why not? Any recommendations for changing the activities to improve them or things you would not change?*

**3. Now let's talk about the school year so far. Have your children shared any information with you about their experiences in the GEAR UP program so far during the current school year? If so, what information have they shared?**

- a. *Experience with college awareness (including workshops, tours); Experience with tutoring/mentoring; experience with course selection/endorsement selection; Experience with information resources/educational planning (e.g., encourage/prepared to take advanced courses)?*
- b. *Have you had conversations with your child about selecting an endorsement and how their selection might impact being accepted by a college?*
- c. *What, if anything, do you think about the events/activities your student has participated in (college visits, job shadowing)? Any ideas about events/activities you would like you child to participate in/have made available to your child based on what you know about GEAR UP?*
- d. *Are there any GEAR UP activities that you are aware of that you wish your child could participate in but was not/will not be able to? What factors facilitate or hinder your child's ability to participate in GEAR UP?*

**4. (If not already discussed) GEAR UP is also interested in helping students to succeed in high school at each grade and be ready for college level work. What if anything would you say about your child regarding succeeding high school? Academically? Socially? Engaging in college ready strategies? What factors may have contributed their success/struggles? (Note: Relative to successfully transitioning to being a high**

***school student, probe for content (e.g., making high school culture clear, training on specific “soft” skills like organization or study skills, encouraging to get involved, taking AP or dual enrollment courses, introducing to teachers, etc.)***

- a. *In general, what indicators of success in high school have you seen? What about challenges?*
- b. *What do you think you/your school has done well to help your child succeed in high school and be college ready?*
- c. *What more do you think you/your school could do to support your child to succeed in high school and beyond? Probe for any involvement in summer activities.*

**5. How helpful has GEAR UP been in helping your child to think about attending college? Choosing a major in college?**

- a. *Anything you think has been particularly helpful with this? Not helpful?*
- b. *What more would you like to see your school/GEAR UP doing?  
Knowing what GEAR UP can provide to your children, do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services in the summer and the current school year have been/would be helpful to your children as far as helping them to succeed in school/be ready for college? If yes, in what ways?*
- c. *Probe for helping students succeed/stay in school; successfully taking advanced courses (e.g., Geometry, Algebra II, AP classes) support students to take higher-level classes; promoting early college awareness; usefulness in planning for college academically/financially; encouraging to take advanced classes*

**6. Have you or another adult in your household attended a GEAR UP activity or event during the current school year? (Probe again about summer if it has not already been discussed).**

- a. *If yes, what activities or events did you attend? Did you participate in any events around financial literacy? (Probe to understand if the parents knew about courses and did/did not attend as compared to not knowing about courses.)*
- b. *What did you most like about what you participated in? Least like? What did you learn from them? What factors facilitated your participation/encouraged you to participate?*
- c. *If no, why not? What barriers prevented you from attending (e.g., schedule, child care/family issues, work schedule, other)? What services or supports might help you attend future GEAR UP activities or events?*

**7. Probe whether few/some/all parents were aware of activities and events. Probe for how schools might be able to successfully meet the goal of at least 50% of parents attending at least three events. Do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services are/would be helpful for you as a parent to help your child succeed in college? If yes, in what ways? How do they build on what you already know?**

- a. *What do you think has been/would be most helpful for your child’s school to do to help your child succeed in school/be prepared to go to college?*
- b. *Has the school or someone from GEAR UP communicated with you about advanced course or college credit opportunities at your school and encouraged you to have your child enroll in these types of courses? Probe for awareness of endorsements, graduation plans, or distinguished level of achievement.*
- c. *Probe for: supporting you in helping your child to succeed in school, learning to advocate for your child, usefulness in academic and financial planning for college*

**8. The program at this school is part of a statewide Texas GEAR UP program. Have you received any information about statewide GEAR UP? [Describe materials and [www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com) in more detail].**

- a. *If yes, what information did you receive? How/from whom?*
  - b. *Have you accessed any statewide resources to date? If so, what did you learn from them? What did you think of them? Probe for quality of the resources and ability to meet various levels of understanding/literacy*
  - c. *If no, facilitator will describe. Would you like to learn more about these resources? What would be the best way to inform you about statewide initiatives? What ways are not helpful in informing you about new resources?*
  - d. *Did you participate in last year's state GEAR UP conference? If yes, what did you get out of that experience? How were you notified of the opportunity to attend? Are you planning to attend this year?*
- 9. What more would you like to learn from GEAR UP about helping your child to succeed in school/preparing for your child to attend college?**
- a. *Are there things you really feel you do not yet know enough about to help your child? (Gaps in knowledge)*
  - b. *How is GEAR UP helping you and your student navigate his/her selected endorsement path?*
  - c. *What ideas do you have 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 2016: 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 2015-2016 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 10 students, do you have students in any other grades? Probe to find out if any parents participated in prior GEAR UP focus groups.**
2. **When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What do you know about it? If long-term cohort parent, how has your understanding of the program changed over time. (If needed, facilitator provides a short overview of the program including**

**specific examples where appropriate. Note to ask about participation in events more specifically in a separate question.)**

- a. *What and how/how often has the school communicated with parents so far this year about the GEAR UP program (e.g., mail/email, robo-calls, at school events)? In what ways, if any, have you interacted with GEAR UP staff [or parent outreach liaison (if your district has one)]? How do you feel about this means of communication (effectiveness, timeliness, frequency, means)?*
- b. *What information are they communicating to you through outreach, resources, meetings, and events? Is there any additional information you would like to receive from GEAR UP staff?*
- c. *What is your understanding of the goals of GEAR UP at your high school? For students? Parents? Teachers? The school/district? Statewide?*
- d. *What activities, events, or programs do you think of? (e.g., College workshops/visits for students, financial literacy, Tutoring/mentoring/academic support services, workshops for parents, summer programs)*

**3. Now let's talk about the school year so far. Has your child(ren) shared any information with you about their experiences in the GEAR UP program during the current school year? If so, what information have they shared?**

- a. *Experience with college awareness (including workshops, college visits/tours); Experience with tutoring/mentoring; experience with course selection/endorsement selection; Experience with information resources/educational planning (e.g., encourage/prepared to take advanced courses)? Experience with career exploration (e.g., job site visits, job shadowing, career fairs)?*
- b. *In general, what has been your experience with your child around completing a high school endorsement? Have you had conversations with your child about their selected endorsement and how their selection might impact being accepted by a college? Have they found it easy/difficult to enroll in the classes they need for their endorsement? Have they decided to add another/drop their endorsement or change/add to their endorsement? What contributed to any decision to change/drop/add endorsements? Probe for awareness of endorsements, graduation plans, or distinguished level of achievement.*
- c. *What, if anything, do you think about the events/activities your student has participated in (college visits, job shadowing)? Any ideas about events/activities you would like your child to participate in/have made available to your child based on what you know about GEAR UP?*
- d. *Are there any GEAR UP activities that you are aware of that you wish your child could participate in but was not/will not be able to? What other factors facilitate or hinder your child's ability to participate in GEAR UP?*
- e. *Are there any other types of activities you would like your child to participate in to prepare them for college?*

**4. (If not already discussed) GEAR UP is also interested in helping students to succeed in high school at each grade and be ready for college level work. What, if anything, would you say about your child regarding succeeding in high school? Academically? Socially? *Engaging in college ready strategies? What factors may have contributed to their success/struggles? (Note: Probe for content (e.g., making high school culture clear, training on specific "soft" skills like organization or study skills, encouraging to get involved, taking AP or dual enrollment courses, , etc.)***

- a. *In general, what have you seen/experienced to suggest your child is succeeding in high school and will be prepared for college? What about challenges?*

- b. *What do you think you/your school has done well to help your child succeed in high school and be college ready?*
  - c. *What more do you think you/your school could do to support your child to succeed in high school and beyond?*
- 5. How helpful has GEAR UP been in helping your child to think about attending college? Choosing a major in college? Choosing the college they want to attend?**
  - a. *Anything you think has been particularly helpful with this? Not helpful?*
  - b. *What more would you like to see your school/GEAR UP doing?*
  - c. *How about understanding college entrance requirements and affording college? Has the school engaged with you/your child to be prepared to meet requirements/afford college?*
- 6. Let's talk about the summer activities as they relate to GEAR UP. Do you plan for your child to attend any activities this summer?**
  - a. *If you are planning to have your child attend, what is the general focus of the summer program your child will attend? What was it about this program that you hoped would benefit your child to participate in? How do you think they will be helpful to your child next school year or as they prepare to apply for and enroll in postsecondary education?*
  - b. *How many programs are they planning to attend? Do you know who is hosting or offering the program (high school, TX college, business or community organization)? Is the program local or in the state of Texas?*
  - c. *Do you think your child will be prepared to succeed academically in Grade 11? If your child is attending a summer program, how do you think it will help further prepare them to succeed academically?*
  - d. *Do you plan to be involved in the summer program your student attended? Why/why not?*
  - e. *For all parents, how and when does the school inform you about the summer activities? Are there features of the summer activities 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 activities?*
- 7. Knowing what GEAR UP can provide to your children, do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services in the summer or during the 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; encouraging students to take and to successfully complete higher-level/more advanced classes (e.g., Geometry, Algebra II, AP classes) and/or dual enrollment classes; usefulness in planning for college academically/financially**
- 8. Have you or another adult in your household attended a GEAR UP activity or event during the current school year?**
  - a. *If yes, what activities or events did you attend? Did you participate in any events around financial literacy? (Probe to understand if the parents knew about courses and did/did not attend as compared to not knowing about courses.)*
  - b. *What did you most like about what you participated in? Least like? What did you learn from them? What factors facilitated your participation/encouraged you to participate?*
  - c. *If no, why not? What barriers prevented you from attending (e.g., schedule, child care/family issues, work schedule, other)? What services or supports might help you attend future GEAR UP activities or events?*
  - d. *What other resources do you use to get information on preparing your child for college?*

- e. *Probe whether few/some/all parents were aware of activities and events. Probe for how schools might be able to successfully meet the goal of at least 50% of parents attending at least three events.*
- 9. Do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services are helpful for you as a parent to help your child succeed in college? If yes, in what ways? How do they build on what you already know? Any activities, events, and services that might be helpful to you as a parent going forward?**
- 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?*
  - Has the school or someone from GEAR UP communicated with you about advanced placement course or college credit (dual enrollment) opportunities at your school and encouraged you to have your child enroll in these types of courses? How has your child been doing in these classes? Has GEAR UP played a role in that success? How or why not?*
  - 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*
- 10. The program at this school is part of a statewide Texas GEAR UP program. Have you received any information about statewide GEAR UP? [Describe materials and [www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com) in more detail].**
- If yes, what information did you receive? How/from whom?*
  - 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*
  - 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?*
  - Did you participate in this year's state GEAR UP conference? If yes, what did you get out of that experience? How were you notified of the opportunity to attend?*
- 11. 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?**
- Are there things you really feel you do not yet know enough about to help your child? (Gaps in knowledge)?*
  - How is GEAR UP helping you and your student navigate his/her selected endorsement path?*
  - What ideas do you have for future workshops/activities/resources?*
- 12. 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 2015: Teacher Focus Group Protocol

### Facilitator Guidelines:

- Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group: *GEAR UP is a federally funded strategy to promote college awareness and academic achievement in high-need middle and high schools across the country. In support of that goal, GEAR UP also supports school-wide improvements and 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 2014–15 or 2015–16 school year. We anticipate 2-3 teacher focus groups per school to accommodate teacher schedules and minimize classroom disruptions. Teachers of students in the target grade are the primary focus for participation. Groupings might include one for content area teacher and one for teachers in non-tested subjects, although the group can be mixed. If appropriate given GEAR UP planning at the school, a focus group may be held with a vertical team of teachers. (NOTE: Facilitator will be trained to probe/check for differences in group particularly when group is mixed.)*

### Materials

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

### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. **Please tell me your first name, how long you have been working at this school, and how long you have been a teacher (3 min).**

- a. *What grade(s)/subjects do you primarily teach? (Facilitator: Note # of core content teachers – math, science, English, social studies, # teach AP courses)*
- b. *Have you participated in one of our focus groups previously? [Ask in particular if session includes teachers of GEAR UP students from 2014–15.]*

**2. Have you heard of GEAR UP before today? What do you know about it, about GEAR UP goals? (5-8 min.) (Have the GEAR UP goal sheet to share.)**

*If knowledge, probe using these questions:*

- a. *How ready do you feel that students and families are for reaching the goals of GEAR UP (to succeed in schools and be college ready)? What do you perceive to be the major challenges with regard to the students and families you serve in reaching goals of the program? [Probe for student support services, and student/family activities/events.]*
- b. *Many of the Grade 10 students have been participating in GEAR UP for the past three years. Given what you know about the goals, have you noticed any differences in this year's Grade 10 students compared to Grade 10 students in previous years?*
- c. *To what extent, if any, have you interacted with the GEAR UP coordinator or College Preparation Advisor in your school/district? What kind of information does this person provide? What expectations do you have of GEAR UP staff in helping the school/district meet these college readiness goals? For Grade 9 teachers, in what ways, if any, do you continue to interact with GEAR UP staff this year as you work with Grade 9 students who are not the primary recipients of the program, but rather, may benefit from sustained GEAR UP strategies?*
- d. *What do you know about GEAR UP goals of teacher professional development (PD)?*
- e. *If little or no knowledge at all, provide brief description of program (2 min.)*
- f. *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 over the past three years? What about during summer 2015? So far during this school year? (10 min.)**

- a. *If Yes, what programs/workshops/events do you recall? [Probe for participation in pre-AP/AP training, increasing academic rigor in general, differentiation strategies, vertical alignment, college admission requirements, project-based learning, professional learning communities, and data-driven instruction offered by GEAR UP and financial literacy curriculum PD provided by TG. Ask them to recall details on the sessions including length of training and delivery format.]*
- b. *If No, were you invited to participate? If yes, why did you not participate?*
- c. *[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, when did you participate (last year, summer, this year) and what did you think of the PD? To what extent has it been pertinent to your work? (8-10 min.)**

- a. *Were any of the PD sessions particularly successful (i.e., you would recommend that new teachers take the same PD)? Why/why not? Why were some sessions less successful and how might you improve less successful sessions? [Probe for successes/issues with delivery, make up of group, content, timing, etc. Probe for any that participated in prior year that continue to be of value (sustainability).]*
- b. *What strategies have you taken away from these PD sessions? (List on Chart Paper if available.) Did you incorporate them into your instruction? If Yes, how? If No, why not?*

*[Probe again for differentiated instruction, project based learning, improving academic rigor if appropriate.]*

- c. *For those receiving PD through TG, have you utilized any of these financial literacy curriculum materials? If so, what is your perception of these materials and their usefulness in the classroom?*
- d. *How familiar are you with college entrance and application processes? Financial aid for students? Is this something you have had training in? Are these issues you discuss with students (discussion can include classroom activities). How do you see that changing?*
- e. *Are there factors at school that have helped you implement strategies/content learned at PD? Were there barriers that prevented you from using the PD? How did you overcome these barriers? Will you be able to sustain implementation in the future or might additional training be needed?*
- f. *[Probe for areas of agreement/disagreement and differences based on subjects taught.]*

**5. Looking to the future, what other professional development subjects or workshops would be most helpful to you in supporting student achievement and/or supporting students/families to be ready for college? (5 min.) (Facilitator list and group responses on Chart Paper if available.) Probe for college admissions and financial aid training.**

- a. *Do you see a need to have any PD that builds on PD you participated in so far?*
- b. *If not already clear, what PD might teachers new to the school need to participate in to be ready to support GEAR UP goals?*
- c. *Are there any ways that GEAR UP has influenced your practice outside of specific PD? If so, do you think you will continue those practices going forward?*

**6. GEAR UP seeks to improve the readiness of students to succeed in rigorous high school courses (e.g., advanced courses, college credit courses) and, later, attend college. What more do you think your school or GEAR UP could be doing to prepare more students for such a future? (5 min.)**

- a. *How/to what extent have PD opportunities supported you as a teacher in improving rigor? (NOTE: this may have already been addressed in earlier responses.)*
- b. *Overall, how challenging would you say courses are for students at your school? To what extent do they/don't they challenge students at a level that will prepare them for college? Are there some students who consistently receive content in a manner that is not challenging enough (e.g., ELL students)? [Probe for AP and honors classes and ask whether participants teach any honors/advanced (AP) classes, college credit courses and future plans for such classes.]*  
*[Grade 9 probe: Have you had to adjust how to challenge Grade 9 students this year relative to last year's GEAR UP cohort?]*
- c. *One specific goal is to increase the number of advanced courses offered and to increase enrollment in advanced courses. Have you met with colleagues, the GEAR UP coordinator or the College Preparation Advisor around these issues? [Probe for understanding the role of these staff as compared to teachers and for being introduced to resources (Graduation Toolkit). Probe for use of GEAR UP website, and if using how.] What steps might you suggest to help the school to succeed at these goals? To what extent do you think you might sustain this goal beyond the GEAR UP cohort of students? [Grade 9 Probe: Have you been able to maintain or introduced increased number of advanced courses for Grade 9 students?]*
- d. *What has been your role with helping students understand the requirements/options for their chosen endorsement path and Foundation High School Program (graduation plan) more generally? How prepared do you feel to help students on these? What about*

- helping students graduate with a distinguished level of achievement? How successful have students been at meeting endorsement requirements?*
- e. *Discuss any facilitators or barriers to improving academic rigor at your school (e.g., teacher enthusiasm/resistance, student skill levels). [GRADE 9 sustainability probe: any changes since last year when worked with GEAR UP cohort?]*
  - f. *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? For Grade 9 teachers, in what ways, if any, have you continued instructional practices or student support services that you offered to GEAR UP students last year to the current cohort of Grade 9 students?*
  - g. *For math teachers, how would you assess the school's effort to prepare more Grade 10 students to enroll and succeed in Geometry or Algebra II and beyond? In advanced/AP math courses? What successes or challenges have you found with Grade 10 students so far this school year? [Probe: are there fewer Grade 10 students still needing to complete Algebra I?] [Grade 9 Probe: Any change this year in the number of Grade 9 students who had already successfully completed Algebra I?]*
  - h. *Overall, to what extent would you say that your students are academically prepared for college? What about their knowledge of college requirements?*
- 7. This GEAR UP grant has a performance measure that schools will participate in vertical alignment trainings and meetings. In vertical alignment, teachers across different grades work together to promote student transition and curriculum alignment. This includes alignment with middle school teachers/curriculum as well as across high school grade levels. What can you tell us about vertical alignment activities at your school? (7 min.) (NOTE: If a vertical alignment team is identified for their own focus group, this group will focus on a deeper discussion related to this item.)**
- a. *To your knowledge what activities occurred at your school focused on facilitating vertical alignment in the past three years? Going on now? If not, why do you think this is? Are there plans to begin working on vertical alignment? [Probe for vertical alignment across high school grades as well as between the middle and high school level. Probe for distinction between training and implementation of vertical alignment.]*
  - b. *Have you participated in vertical alignment activities? [If Yes, probe for number of days engaged in vertical alignment preparation/implementation, 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 their vertical team. Probe to see whether they know if activities are GEAR UP-funded. If No, probe for reasons for not participating (time, scheduling, teaching non-core content area).]*
  - c. *What are your perceptions of the value of vertical alignment? How will it contribute to student academic achievement and college readiness? [Probe for the role of vertical alignment in helping prepare teachers and students to handle the transition of students from middle to high school.]*
  - 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? (Probe for future oriented planning around graduating college ready (distinguished/endorsements), college entrance requirement knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation). Discuss any facilitators and barriers to vertical alignment with regard to each issue.*
- 8. In what other GEAR UP activities/events have you been involved (outside of PD and vertical alignment) this past summer or so far this school year?**

- a. *What are your perceptions of these activities/events? [Probe for involvement in student activities, college visits, parent/family events, etc.]*
- 9. (If not already discussed) GEAR UP is also interested in helping students to successfully navigate the transitions to and within high school (i.e., from middle school to high school as well as from one grade to the next). What if anything would you say about students' transitions this school year?**
- a. *In what ways, if any, have you collaborated with teachers in other grades [for Grade 9 teachers, collaboration with Grade 10 teachers; for Grade 10 teachers, collaboration with Grade 9 teachers] about student transitions to/within high school? For Grade 9 teachers, have you continued any efforts that you began through GEAR UP related to collaborating with teachers at the middle school level to support student transition from middle school to high school? Are there any opportunities to collaborate more, and if so, what suggestions do you have?*
  - b. *What do you think you/your school does well to help students with on-time promotion?*
  - c. *What more do you think you/your school could do to support students in successfully transitioning to and within high school? [Probe for any involvement in summer activities that addressed transition.]*
  - d. *In general, what indicators of successful transition have you seen? Challenges?*
- 10. What is your perception about the college-going culture at this school? What might GEAR UP do to improve college-going culture? [Probe for any changes in attitudes/perceptions since the inception of GEAR UP at the school.]**
- 11. Is there anything else you would like to share related to GEAR UP and GEAR UP goals at this school?**

*That concludes the focus group. Thanks so much for your ideas and your time.*

## D.16 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2016: 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 2014–15 or 2015–16 school year. We anticipate 2-3 teacher focus groups per school to accommodate teacher schedules and minimize classroom disruptions. Teachers of students in the target grade are the primary focus for participation. Groupings might include one for content area teacher and one for teachers in non-tested subjects, although the group can be mixed. If appropriate given GEAR UP planning at the school, a focus group may be held with a vertical team of teachers. (NOTE: Facilitator will be trained to probe/check for differences in group particularly when group is mixed.)*

### Materials

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

### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. **Please tell me your first name, how long you have been working at this school, and how long you have been a teacher (3 min).**

- a. *What grade(s)/subjects do you primarily teach? (Facilitator: Note # of core content teachers – math, science, English, social studies, # teach AP courses/dual credit courses)*
- b. *Have you participated in one of our focus groups previously? [Ask in particular if session includes teachers of GEAR UP students from 2014–15.] Note: Teachers who participated in fall do not need to be asked probes regarding prior years or Summer 2015, focus will be on since fall site visit).*

**2. Have you heard of GEAR UP before today? When did you first hear about GEAR UP and what it might mean to you as a teacher? What do you know about it, about GEAR UP goals? (5-8 min.) (Have the GEAR UP goal sheet to share.)**

*If little or no knowledge at all, provide brief description of program (2 min.)*

*If knowledge, probe using these questions:*

- a. *At this point, how ready do you feel that students and families are for reaching the goals of GEAR UP (to succeed in schools and be college ready)? Tell us how you might have answered the same or differently last semester/last year? What do you perceive to be the major challenges with regard to the students and families you serve in reaching goals of the program? [Probe for student support services, and student/family activities/events.]*
- b. *Many of the Grade 10 students have been participating in GEAR UP for the past three years. Given what you know about the goals, have you noticed any differences in this year's Grade 10 students compared to Grade 10 students in previous years?*
- c. *To what extent, if any, have you interacted with the GEAR UP team in your school/district (coordinator, the IPSI educator outreach coach, College Preparation Advisor(s), family liaison, data) to understand your role in helping to meet GEAR UP goals? When did you first interact with them and how often since then? What kind of information do these people provide? What expectations do you have of GEAR UP staff in helping the school/district meet these college readiness goals? What expectation do you perceive GEAR UP staff have of you?*
- d. *If any Grade 9 teachers: In what ways, if any, do you continue to interact with GEAR UP staff this year as you work with Grade 9 students who are not the primary recipients of the program, but rather, may benefit from sustained GEAR UP strategies?*
- e. *What do you know about GEAR UP goals of teacher professional development (PD)? 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. For those of you who have not participated in a GEAR UP focus group, to your knowledge, have you participated in any GEAR UP-sponsored professional development over the past three years? What about during summer 2015? So far during this school year? For those of you who participated in the fall focus group, have you participated in any GEAR UP-sponsored professional development since we last spoke? (10 min.)**

- a. *If yes, what programs/workshops/events do you recall? [Probe for participation in pre-AP/AP training, increasing academic rigor in general, differentiation strategies, vertical alignment, college admission requirements, project-based learning, professional learning communities, and data-driven instruction offered by GEAR UP and financial literacy curriculum PD provided by TG. Ask them to recall details on the sessions including length of training and delivery format.]*
- b. *If No, were you invited to participate? If yes, why did you not participate? [Probe for scheduling conflicts, inability for others to cover classes, status as non-core content teacher, other factors. Also probe for recent non-GEAR UP funded PD to better understand PD goals for the school.]*

- c. *Have you worked with the IPSI educator outreach coach this year? How have you found working with the coach? In what ways has the coach's work and support of PD been helpful to you? What if anything might be more helpful to you with respect to having a coach?*
- 4. For teachers who participated in GEAR UP-sponsored professional development, when did you participate (last year, summer, this fall, and this spring) and what did you think of the PD? To what extent has it been pertinent to your work? (8-10 min.)**
- a. *Were any of the PD sessions particularly successful (i.e., you would recommend that new teachers take the same PD)? Why/why not? Why were some sessions less successful and suggestions for improving less successful sessions? [Probe for successes/issues with delivery, make up of group, content, timing, etc. Probe for any that participated in prior year that continue to be of value (sustainability).]*
- b. *What strategies have you taken away from these PD sessions? (List on Chart Paper if available.) Did you incorporate them into your instruction? If yes, how? If no, why not? [Probe again for differentiated instruction, project based learning, improving academic rigor if appropriate.]*
- c. *For those receiving PD through TG, have you utilized any of these financial literacy curriculum materials? If so, what is your perception of these materials and their usefulness in the classroom? Have you used any other financial literacy curricula in your classroom? Is this material well-received by students?*
- d. *How familiar are you with college entrance and application processes? Financial aid for students? Is this something you have had training in? Are these issues you discuss with students (discussion can include classroom activities). How do you see that changing? Do you discuss these issues at an individual level, with an entire class, or both?*
- e. *Are there factors at school that have helped you implement strategies/content learned at PD? Were there barriers that prevented you from using the PD or resources obtained through 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. How involved/knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events? [Probe for GEAR UP website ([www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)), Project Share Gateway and TEA's iTunes U page, GEAR UP activities/events (e.g., GEAR UP conference)?]<sup>175</sup>**
- a. *What statewide activities/events have you participated in this school year?*
- b. *Did you utilize statewide resources this school year? If yes, how did you use them? If not, why not? Did you find them useful? Why or why not?*
- c. *What facilitators and barriers are there to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*
- d. *To what extent do you use these resources with students in other grades other than the GEAR UP (current grade)?*
- 6. 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.) Probe for college admissions and financial aid training.**
- a. *Do you see a need to have any PD that builds on PD you participated in so far?*

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<sup>175</sup> Project Share has since been renamed to Texas Gateway.



- b. *If not already clear, what PD might teachers new to the school need to participate in to be ready to support GEAR UP goals?*
- c. *Are there any ways that GEAR UP has influenced your practice outside of specific PD? If so, do you think you will continue those practices going forward?*
- d. *Is there any additional PD that you would like to have that would help you better prepare your students for college?*

**7. GEAR UP seeks to improve the readiness of students to succeed in rigorous high school courses (e.g., advanced courses, college credit courses) and, later, attend college. What more do you think your school or GEAR UP could be doing to prepare more students for such a future? (5 min.)**

- a. *How/to what extent have PD opportunities supported you as a teacher in improving rigor? (NOTE: this may have already been addressed in earlier responses.)*
- b. *Overall, how challenging would you say courses are for students at your school? For students in your classes? 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 AP and honors classes and ask whether participants teach any honors/advanced (AP) classes, college credit courses and future plans for such classes.] [Grade 9 probe: Have you had to adjust how to challenge Grade 9 students this year relative to last year's GEAR UP cohort?]*
- c. *One specific goal is to increase the number of advanced courses offered and to increase enrollment in advanced courses. This includes AP courses and dual credit courses more broadly. Have you met with colleagues, the GEAR UP coordinator or the College Preparation Advisor around these issues? [Probe for understanding the role of these staff as compared to teachers and for being introduced to resources (Graduation Toolkit). Probe for use of GEAR UP website, and if using how.] What steps might you suggest to help the school to succeed at these goals? To what extent do you think you might sustain this goal beyond the GEAR UP cohort of students? [Grade 9 Probe: Have you been able to maintain or introduced increased number of advanced courses for Grade 9 students?]*
- d. *Discuss any facilitators or barriers to improving academic rigor at your school (e.g., teacher enthusiasm/resistance, student skill levels). [GRADE 9 sustainability probe: any changes since when worked with GEAR UP cohort in 2013–14?] What steps do you take when students are struggling in classes to help them get needed supports to be more successful? How aware are you of supports for students and how to connect students with needed supports?*
- e. *To what extent do you believe that any increases in academic rigor will be able to be sustained over time? What factors might influence sustainability? For Grade 9 teachers, in what ways, if any, have you continued instructional practices or student support services that you offered to GEAR UP students last year to the current cohort of Grade 9 students?*
- f. *How would you assess the school's effort to prepare more Grade 10 students to enroll and succeed in advanced/AP math courses? What successes or challenges have you found with Grade 10 students so far this school year? [Probe: are there fewer Grade 10 students still needing to complete Algebra I?] [Grade 9 Probe: Any change this year in the number of Grade 9 students who had already successfully completed Algebra I?]*
- g. *Students at your school may have taken the TSI, PSAT 10, or ACT Aspire and will soon be taking the SAT and/or ACT. To what extent do you see yourself as playing a role in preparing students for success on these college entrance exams? What successes/challenges have you seen associated with student performance on college entrance exams?*

- h. Overall, to what extent would you say that your students are academically prepared for college? What about their knowledge of college requirements?
- 8. What has been your role with helping students understand the requirements/options for their chosen endorsement path and Foundation High School Program (graduation plan) more generally?**
- How prepared do you feel to help students on these? How successful have students been at meeting endorsement requirements?
  - What about helping students graduate with a distinguished level of achievement? [If mathematics teacher: Algebra II is one of the requirements for distinguished level of achievement and GEAR UP set a goal that 85% of students would have completed Algebra I by Grade 9. How prepared have students been this year or will be by next year to complete Algebra II at a college ready level? What supports might students need to achieve in Algebra II at this level? What role do you play in helping students to get any needed support to be successful?]
- 9. This GEAR UP grant has a performance measure that schools will participate in vertical alignment trainings and meetings. In vertical alignment, teachers across different grades work together to promote student transition and curriculum alignment. This includes alignment with middle school teachers/curriculum as well as across high school grade levels. What can you tell us about vertical alignment activities at your school? (7 min.) (NOTE: If a vertical alignment team is identified for their own focus group, this group will focus on a deeper discussion related to this item.)**
- To your knowledge what activities occurred at your school focused on facilitating vertical alignment in the past three years? Going on now? If not, why do you think this is? Are there plans to begin working on vertical alignment? [Probe for vertical alignment across high school grades as well as between the middle and high school level. Probe for distinction between training and implementation of vertical alignment.]
  - Have you participated in vertical alignment activities? [If Yes, probe for number of days engaged in vertical alignment preparation/implementation, 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 their vertical team. Probe to see whether they know if activities are GEAR UP-funded. If No, probe for reasons for not participating (time, scheduling, teaching non-core content area).]
  - What are your perceptions of the value of vertical alignment? How does it contribute to student academic achievement and college readiness? [Probe for the role of vertical alignment in helping prepare teachers and students to handle the transition of students.]
  - How successful has your school been at integrating strategies across grade levels to improve academic rigor (i.e., how challenging the course is to students)? To increase the number of advanced courses offered by the schools? (Probe for future oriented planning around graduating college ready (distinguished/endorsements), college entrance requirement knowledge, financial aid knowledge, 18 hours of college credit by graduation). Discuss any facilitators and barriers to vertical alignment with regard to each issue.
- 10. In what other GEAR UP activities/events have you been involved (outside of PD and vertical alignment) this past summer or so far this school year?**
- What are your perceptions of these activities/events? [Probe for involvement in student activities, college visits, job site visits/job shadowing, parent/family events, etc.]

- 11. (If not already discussed) GEAR UP is also interested in helping students to successfully navigate taking advanced courses and being prepared for the expectations associated with being successful in college level coursework and to be promoted each year on time). How prepared do you perceive Grade 10 students' to be? What are the skills they may need to work on further to be more successful in advanced courses? Have this year's Grade 10 students been better prepared with these skills than students you have worked with in prior years?**
- What more do you think you/your school could do to support students in successfully transitioning to taking high school courses, advanced courses and dual credit courses? How might you/the school/GEAR UP help students to better meet teacher's expectations for what the student will need to do to succeed in coursework?*
  - What do you think you/your school does well to help students with on-time promotion? To what extent has this changed from prior years?*
  - In general, what indicators of successful transition have you seen? Challenges? Are the GEAR UP students prepared to transition into Grade 11? Prepared to transition into dual credit courses?*
- 12. 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.*]**
- What other activities (outside of GEAR UP) are promoting a college going culture at your school?*
- 13. Is there anything else you would like to share related to GEAR UP and GEAR UP goals at this school?**

*That concludes the focus group. Thanks so much for your ideas and your time.*

## D.17 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Fall 2015: Community Partner Interview/Focus Group Protocol

### Facilitator Guidelines:

- Introduce yourself and/or leaders of the focus group as representatives of ICF International and describe your roles in supporting the meeting (i.e., facilitator, note taker). If needed, a given community partner can be interviewed individually.
- Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group/interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The initial purpose of this focus group/interview is to better understand how partners role in the GEAR UP program. Your contribution to the evaluation effort is extremely valuable and will give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the successes, benefits, and challenges associated with GEAR UP. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. We expect this focus group/interview to take approximately 30-40 minutes.*
- Convey to interview participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the focus group/interview is voluntary and data collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop participation at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; (4) focus group/interview data will be maintained in secure areas; and 5) please respect others' privacy by not sharing any information outside of the focus group.*
- Ask permission to record the interview: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. If you choose not to have the focus group/interview recorded, we will be taking notes but will not include your name in reporting. Any transcripts of the conversation shared with TEA will have all identifying information removed.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *Please review and sign the consent form.*
- Each focus group should have up to 8 participants. *The focus group is open to any local partner of a GEAR UP grantee. More than one focus group may need to be conducted if there are a large number of local partners. If a partner identified as very important to the grantee as far as their role with GEAR UP cannot attend a focus group, a one on one interview (during site visit or after via telephone) may be conducted. Ideally at least some partners will have participated in GEAR UP activities/events/services but this is not required for participation in the focus group.*
- Note to interviewer: *Italicized questions are to be used as probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses. Consider prior responses to customize the inclusion, order, and language of questions as appropriate.*

### QUESTIONS

*Thank you for agreeing to meet with us about GEAR UP. First, we would like some background on you and your organization.*

1. **Conduct introductions. Tell us about your organization(s). Probe for organizational background and context; role in the community; expertise in education, career services, mentoring, etc.**
  - a. *Tell us a little about how your partnership with the school came about and to what extent you work collaboratively as partners? What school officials or other partners have you met with this year regarding GEAR UP? How did you collaborate with these individuals?*
  - b. *What is the frequency/format of contact / meetings?*

- c. *Discuss current status of MOU (APR will have snapshot of MOU)*
  - d. *Is the level of collaboration appropriate from your perspective (e.g., with the school and/or with other partners)?*
  - e. *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?*
- 2. 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. *Also probe for: Career exploration; College visits – where and when; College workshops – format and content; Parent outreach activities*
  - 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.*
- 3. In your view, how successful were these activities/events/resources with regard to supporting the goals of GEAR UP (success in school/college readiness) or other goals of your partnership?**
- a. *Impact (e.g., be clear impact on what and to what extent felt impact; if appropriate probe for impact relative to cost)*
  - b. *Attendance if an event– did it meet expectations?*
  - c. *Support from GEAR UP / school -- did it meet expectations/needs?*
  - d. *What factors facilitated success? Any barriers and challenges (e.g., scheduling, access to students, etc.)? What might you do differently next time or how did you handle any challenges?*
- 4. 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?*
- 5. Based on what you learned this year, what would you change for next year in order to help the program be more successful (at helping students to succeed in school and prepare for college)?**
- a. *Ideas for future workshops / courses*
  - b. *Ideas for scheduling / outreach*
  - c. *Gaps in services*
  - d. *In what ways, if at all, do you anticipate continuing this collaboration after the Texas GEAR UP SG grant ends?*
  - e. *Have you continued any collaborations with middle school staff?*
- 6. What factors do you see as facilitating or hindering sustainability?**
- 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 2016: Community Partner Interview/Focus Group Protocol

### Facilitator Guidelines:

- Introduce yourself and/or leaders of the focus group as representatives of ICF International and describe your roles in supporting the meeting (i.e., facilitator, note taker). If needed, a given community partner can be interviewed individually.
- Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group/interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The initial purpose of this focus group/interview is to better understand how partners role in the GEAR UP program. Your contribution to the evaluation effort is extremely valuable and will give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the successes, benefits, and challenges associated with GEAR UP. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. We expect this focus group/interview to take approximately 30-40 minutes.*
- Convey to interview participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the focus group/interview is voluntary and data collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop participation at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; (4) focus group/interview data will be maintained in secure areas; and 5) please respect others' privacy by not sharing any information outside of the focus group.*
- Ask permission to record the interview: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. If you choose not to have the focus group/interview recorded, we will be taking notes but will not include your name in reporting. Any transcripts of the conversation shared with TEA will have all identifying information removed.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *Please review and sign the consent form.*
- Each focus group should have up to 8 participants. The focus group is open to any local partner of a GEAR UP grantee. More than one focus group may need to be conducted if there are a large number of local partners. If a partner identified as very important to the grantee as far as their role with GEAR UP cannot attend a focus group, a one on one interview (during site visit or after via telephone) may be conducted. Ideally at least some partners will have participated in GEAR UP activities/events/services but this is not required for participation in the focus group.
- Note to interviewer: *Italicized questions are to be used as probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses. Consider prior responses to customize the inclusion, order, and language of questions as appropriate.*

### QUESTIONS

1. **Thank you for agreeing to meet with us about GEAR UP. First, we would like some background on you and your organization. Conduct introductions. Tell us about your organization(s).**  
**Probe for organizational background and context; role in the community; expertise in education, career services, mentoring, etc.**
2. **Tell us a little about how your partnership with the school came about and to what extent you work collaboratively as partners? What school officials or other partners**

**have you met with this year regarding GEAR UP? How did you collaborate with these individuals? What are your goals for this partnership?**

- a. *What is the frequency/format of contact/meetings? What school or GEAR UP staff do you usually interact/work with?*
- b. *Discuss current status of MOU (APR will have snapshot of MOU)*
- c. *Is the level of collaboration appropriate from your perspective (e.g., with the school and/or with other partners)?*
- d. *What factors facilitate successful partnerships/collaborations? What are the barriers, if any, you have faced regarding engaging in a successful partnership? How have/will you overcome them?*

**3. Please tell us about your role in the GEAR UP program with regard to activities/events/resources? If you were the sponsor or lead of the activity/event/resource, please let us know that.**

- a. *How are the students you work with identified to receive your services or resources? Do you have a role in identifying those in need of your resources or services?*
- b. *Have you provided support in college preparation and awareness, including financial aid?*
- c. *Have you provided supplemental academic assistance (mentoring/tutoring or other services to students, including summer programs)*
- d. *Also probe for: Career exploration (job site visits, job shadowing, internships, etc.); College visits – where and when; College workshops – format and content; Parent outreach 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 if appropriate.*

**4. In your view, how successful were these activities/events/resources with regard to supporting the goals of GEAR UP (success in school/college readiness) or other goals of your partnership?**

- a. *Impact/Outcomes (e.g., be clear impact on what and to what extent felt impact; if appropriate probe for impact relative to cost)*
- b. *Attendance if an event– did it meet expectations?*
- c. *Support from GEAR UP / school -- did it meet expectations/needs?*
- d. *What factors facilitated success? Any barriers and challenges (e.g., scheduling, access to students, etc.)? What might you do differently next time or how did you handle any challenges?*

**5. Are you aware of statewide Texas GEAR UP activities/events/resources?**

- a. *If Yes: What are you aware of? Have you/will you participate/utilize? What factors are facilitators or barriers to participating/using?*
- b. *If No: What activities/events/resources from the state might you find useful or want to participate in?*
- c. *Are there any resources that you would like to have that would enhance your partnership with GEAR UP that you currently do not have?*

**6. Based on what you learned this year, what would you change for next year in order to help the program be more successful (at helping students to succeed in school and prepare for college)?**

- a. *Ideas for future workshops/courses*
- b. *Ideas for scheduling/outreach*

- c. *Gaps in services*
- d. *In what ways, if at all, do you anticipate continuing this collaboration after the Texas GEAR UP SG grant ends?*
- e. *Have you continued any collaborations with middle school staff?*

**7. What factors do you see as facilitating or hindering sustainability?**

- a. *What other final thoughts do you have about GEAR UP that you would like to share?*



## D.19 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2016: 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

**Where appropriate describe anything that has changed over the time since you have been in this role when responding to questions.**

1. **Please briefly describe your role at TEA more broadly and then specifically with Texas GEAR UP.**
  - a. *Is your workload solely on GEAR UP or is your time also allocated to other projects?*
2. **First, I'd like to talk about your role in working with GEAR UP schools, districts, and collaborators. 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? Is your time evenly distributed among the schools and districts?*
  - c. *How would you describe the level of buy-in from district leadership? Teachers? Administrators? Students? Parents? What, if anything, has your role been in influencing buy-in with each of these people?*
  - d. *How frequently do you interact with district grantees? Schools? IPSI? Collaborators? Who initiates that contact? In what ways do you interact with each of these groups? In what ways, if any, are there differences in those interactions with high schools?*

- e. *How do you interact with GEAR UP staff who are in the districts/schools (e.g., College Preparation Advisors, Texas GEAR UP Coordinators, What is the necessary skill set for staff in these positions? To what extent are those skills evident in the current staff? Any interaction with new GEAR UP SG staff: family engagement or data entry? How do you see each role contributing or not to helping Texas GEAR UP SG to succeed?*
- f. *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 within schools/districts this year?**

- a. *What do you consider to be some of the primary implementation successes? Implementation challenges? How do you see your organization's role contributing or not to helping Texas GEAR UP SG to succeed?*
- b. *To what extent are district grantees and collaborators adhering to their action plans as they implement GEAR UP? What is the process for modification if it is necessary?*
- c. *How is TEA assessing progress by grantees on goals? Is APR/GUIDES the only format or are you assessing/tracking progress in other ways? How satisfied is TEA with grantee progress on short-term goals to date (e.g., student support services, Algebra I, promotion, knowledge about college enrollment and financing college, academic rigor, ACT Aspire/PSAT 10)? How satisfied is TEA with grantee progress toward long term goals to date (e.g., graduating on Foundation High School Plan with an endorsement or with Distinguished Level of Achievement, pre-AP/AP course offerings/course taking, opportunities to complete college credit; ACT/SAT; college application and enrollment)? Any key successes or challenges to date? To what extent does the APR/GUIDES system continue to be a useful tool for progress monitoring?*
- d. *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 this year? How satisfied are you with this role?*
- e. *To what extent does GEAR UP address service gaps at the district level? School level?*
- f. *Based on APR/GUIDES 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 staff at TEA? Disappointed staff at TEA?*
- 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?*
- h. *Are there any additional GEAR UP activities or events you would like to see schools engaging in?*

**4. With regard to Texas GEAR UP, who are the key players that you have worked with regularly this year and in what ways did you engage with them? (NOTE: This may include non-formal collaborators.)**

- a. *Who are the major (non-school) Texas GEAR UP collaborators this year? [probe for TG, AMS, CTK, T-STEM Centers, Raise Achievement, and GeoForce] What roles do / will they play in program implementation? Do they have a formal relationship with TEA or the IPSI Support Center? Are there particular collaborators you work closely with? Who? How? Has this changed from previous years? If IPSI is primary, how does IPSI keep you up to date on the work of the other collaborators?*
- b. *In what ways do you/IPSI Support Center involve collaborators in GEAR UP activities? Has this changed from previous years? This may include involvement with grantees*

*and/or with the statewide initiatives? Any collaborators you would like to see more/less involved?*

- c. *What factors facilitate your relationship with GEAR UP collaborators this year? Have you faced any barriers? If so, have you been able to overcome those barriers or do you have plans to try to overcome?*
- d. *To what extent have districts continued to work with the College Board by procuring services directly this year? How are you updated on this type of work? Are there any program gaps you'd like to see filled by a collaborator? Are you currently seeking any organization(s) to fill that gap?*

**5. How would you describe the current status of the statewide initiative?**

- a. *What has been the primary focus of the statewide initiative this year? Is the focus shifting at all for the upcoming school year?*
- b. *How much progress has been made? How satisfied are you with the progress?*
- c. *Are there any new/revised topics that have been made available relevant to college readiness on the website? Are there any new 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.)*
- d. *What components of the statewide initiative have been rolled out so far this year? How? To who? Which of these components are new this year? How? To who? What steps, if any, has been taken to communicate to schools and families about information/resources available through the statewide initiative this year? If not, what are plans/next steps to make progress towards statewide initiative roll out?*
- e. *Have any new GEAR UP professional learning opportunities been made available to educators (e.g., Project Share Gateway, face-to-face) this year? How are such opportunities communicated statewide?<sup>176</sup>*
- f. *If opportunities are available, how many educators, including those not at current GEAR UP campuses, are participating in such opportunities and what are some of the opportunities this year? Any challenges in tracking participation statewide? Plans to overcome those challenges? If opportunities not yet available, what are plans/next steps to make progress on making these available? Are there any additional opportunities you would like to offer?*
- g. *What factors facilitate working on the GEAR UP statewide initiative this year? 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?**

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

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<sup>176</sup> Project Share has since been renamed to Texas Gateway.

## D.20 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2016: IPSI Interview Protocol

### Interviewer Guidelines:

- Briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. Your contribution to the evaluation effort is extremely valuable and will give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the successes, benefits, and challenges in implementing GEAR UP. As an independent, external evaluator, ICF is seeking input that will help in describing the program and the vision for GEAR UP held by TEA. We expect this interview will last 45-60 minutes.*
- Convey to interview participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the interview is voluntary and all data collected will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop the interview at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; and (4) interview data will be maintained in secure areas.*
- Ask permission to record the interview: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording. If you choose not to have the interview recorded, we will be taking notes but will not include your name in reporting. Any transcripts of the conversation shared with TEA will have all identifying information removed.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *You will indicate your consent to participate by answering the questions.*

**Note to interviewer:** *Italicized questions are to be used as probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses. Consider prior responses to customize the inclusion, order, and language of questions as appropriate.*

### Interview Questions

**Where appropriate describe anything that has changed over the time since you have been in this role when responding to questions.**

- 1. Please briefly describe your role at TEA more broadly and then specifically with Texas GEAR UP.**
  - a. *Is your workload solely on GEAR UP or is your time also allocated to other projects?*
- 2. First, I'd like to talk about your role in working with GEAR UP schools, districts, and collaborators. 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? Is your time evenly distributed among the schools and districts?*
  - c. *How would you describe the level of buy-in from district leadership? Teachers? Administrators? Students? Parents? What, if anything, has your role been in influencing buy-in with each of these people?*

- d. *How frequently do you interact with district grantees? Schools? IPSI? Collaborators? Who initiates that contact? In what ways do you interact with each of these groups? In what ways, if any, are there differences in those interactions with high schools?*
- e. *How do you interact with GEAR UP staff who are in the districts/schools (e.g., College Preparation Advisors, Texas GEAR UP Coordinators, What is the necessary skill set for staff in these positions? To what extent are those skills evident in the current staff? Any interaction with new GEAR UP SG staff: family engagement or data entry? How do you see each role contributing or not to helping Texas GEAR UP SG to succeed?*
- f. *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 within schools/districts this year?**

- a. *What do you consider to be some of the primary implementation successes? Implementation challenges? How do you see your organization's role contributing or not to helping Texas GEAR UP SG to succeed?*
- b. *To what extent are district grantees and collaborators adhering to their action plans as they implement GEAR UP? What is the process for modification if it is necessary?*
- c. *How is TEA assessing progress by grantees on goals? Is APR/GUIDES the only format or are you assessing/tracking progress in other ways? How satisfied is TEA with grantee progress on short-term goals to date (e.g., student support services, Algebra I, promotion, knowledge about college enrollment and financing college, academic rigor, ACT Aspire/PSAT 10)? How satisfied is TEA with grantee progress toward long term goals to date (e.g., graduating on Foundation High School Plan with an endorsement or with Distinguished Level of Achievement, pre-AP/AP course offerings/course taking, opportunities to complete college credit; ACT/SAT; college application and enrollment)? Any key successes or challenges to date? To what extent does the APR/GUIDES system continue to be a useful tool for progress monitoring?*
- d. *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 this year? How satisfied are you with this role?*
- e. *To what extent does GEAR UP address service gaps at the district level? School level?*
- f. *Based on APR/GUIDES 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 staff at TEA? Disappointed staff at TEA?*
- 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?*
- h. *Are there any additional GEAR UP activities or events you would like to see schools engaging in?*

**4. With regard to Texas GEAR UP, who are the key players that you have worked with regularly this year and in what ways did you engage with them? (NOTE: This may include non-formal collaborators.)**

- a. *Who are the major (non-school) Texas GEAR UP collaborators this year? [probe for TG, AMS, CTK, T-STEM Centers, Raise Achievement, and GeoForce] What roles do / will they play in program implementation? Do they have a formal relationship with TEA or the IPSI Support Center? Are there particular collaborators you work closely with?*

*Who? How? Has this changed from previous years? If IPSI is primary, how does IPSI keep you up to date on the work of the other collaborators?*

- b. *In what ways do you/IPSI Support Center involve collaborators in GEAR UP activities? Has this changed from previous years? This may include involvement with grantees and/or with the statewide initiatives? Any collaborators you would like to see more/less involved?*
- c. *What factors facilitate your relationship with GEAR UP collaborators this year? Have you faced any barriers? If so, have you been able to overcome those barriers or do you have plans to try to overcome?*
- d. *To what extent have districts continued to work with the College Board by procuring services directly this year? How are you updated on this type of work? Are there any program gaps you'd like to see filled by a collaborator? Are you currently seeking any organization(s) to fill that gap?*

**5. How would you describe the current status of the statewide initiative?**

- a. *What has been the primary focus of the statewide initiative this year? Is the focus shifting at all for the upcoming school year?*
- b. *How much progress has been made? How satisfied are you with the progress?*
- c. *Are there any new/revised topics that have been made available relevant to college readiness on the website? Are there any new 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.)*
- d. *What components of the statewide initiative have been rolled out so far this year? How? To who? Which of these components are new this year? How? To who? What steps, if any, has been taken to communicate to schools and families about information/resources available through the statewide initiative this year? If not, what are plans/next steps to make progress towards statewide initiative roll out?*
- e. *Have any new GEAR UP professional learning opportunities been made available to educators (e.g., Project Share, face-to-face) this year? How are such opportunities communicated statewide?<sup>177</sup>*
- f. *If opportunities are available, how many educators, including those not at current GEAR UP campuses, are participating in such opportunities and what are some of the opportunities this year? Any challenges in tracking participation statewide? Plans to overcome those challenges? If opportunities not yet available, what are plans/next steps to make progress on making these available? Are there any additional opportunities you would like to offer?*
- g. *What factors facilitate working on the GEAR UP statewide initiative this year? 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?**

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

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<sup>177</sup> Project Share has since been renamed to Texas Gateway.

## D.21 Texas GEAR UP State Grant Spring 2015: State Collaborator Interview Protocol

### Interviewer Guidelines:

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

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

### Interview Questions

1. **In 2-3 sentences, please briefly describe your organization and your role in the organization.**
2. **Please describe your organization's role in supporting TEA/IPSI and specifically Texas GEAR UP.**
  - a. *Are there other individuals at your organization that I should interview to offer additional insight regarding your collaboration with Texas GEAR UP?*
  - b. *What, if any, work has your organization been involved in with Texas Education Agency/IPSI Support Center other than GEAR UP?*
  - c. *How, if at all, has this relationship changed over time? What changes do you hope to see in this relationship going forward?*
  - d. *How would you describe the level of communication with TEA/IPSI Support Center? Who do you usually communicate with? How has this changed from previous years?*

- e. *In what ways, if at all, do you interact with GEAR UP coordinators, College Preparation Advisors, Family Engagement Lead/Parent Liaisons, and/or Data Clerks? How has this changed from previous years?*
  - f. *What types of supports/services does your organization provide to TX GEAR UP? How has this changed from previous years?*
  - g. *What is the current status of the work? What is your organization's current level of involvement? How actively engaged is your organization? How do you see this changing going forward?*
  - h. *Does your organization serve similar roles in other state or local GEAR UP initiatives? Has this changed from previous years?*
- 3. What, if any, is the extent of your organization's involvement related to statewide GEAR UP initiatives and at each GEAR UP school (in the 4 districts, 6 high schools)? Statewide Initiative School Programs [Note: Only ask if direct services to schools have begun. Some TEA collaborator may not work as directly with schools.]**
- 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? GEAR UP staff?*
  - c. *How frequently are these services provided? Who initiates/requests these services?*
  - d. *How has your involvement changed from previous years?*
  - e. *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? Who makes that sort of decision?*
  - f. *How frequently are these services provided? Who initiates/requests these services?*
  - g. *Has your organization's role changed as GEAR UP students progress through high school? How?*
  - h. *How has your involvement changed from previous years?*
  - i. *What, if any, progress do you see short-term and long-term GEAR UP goals (e.g., on-time promotion, student support services, knowledge about college enrollment and financing college, academic rigor, graduating on Foundation High School Plan or with Distinguished Level of Achievement, pre-AP/AP course offerings/course taking, opportunities to complete college credit; ACT Aspire/PSAT 10)?*
  - j. *What progress have you made this year in the goals you shared during the last site visit:*
  - k. *TG: 2 financial literacy modules per year?*
  - l. *AMS: 40% of GEAR UP students using the website; work on development of statewide teacher resources on Project Share?<sup>178</sup>*
  - m. *GEOFORCE: Ongoing activities with students who first participated in the program in the summer following Grade 7 (2013); activities with new students?*
  - n. *T-STEM Centers: Project based learning training continue? Mobile labs?*
  - o. *CTK: data goals? Need for additional training? More/less technical support?*
  - p. *What are your goals for the coming year?*
- 4. What, if any, are benefits you see in your organization's role as a GEAR UP collaborator?**
- a. *[If new collaborator] What prompted your organization's interest in becoming a GEAR UP collaborator? What are the perceived benefits to TEA? districts? schools? students? parents? state?*

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<sup>178</sup> Project Share has since been renamed to Texas Gateway.



- b. *What factors (facilitators) have helped the collaboration to succeed this year? Have you faced any barriers to a successful collaboration? If yes, have you been able to overcome the barriers and how? What could make it even better?*
- 5. In what ways, if any, does your organization collaborate with other Texas GEAR UP collaborators?**
  - a. *What, if any, formal/informal opportunities are there to interact with other collaborators?*
  - b. *Are there particular collaborators you work closely with? Who? How? Is there any other collaborator that you'd like to work more closely with?*
  - c. *What supports or resources does TEA/IPSI provide to you with regard to working with one another? Clarify any facilitators or barriers to collaboration. Are there any additional supports or resources you'd like to have from TEA/IPSI Support Center?*
- 6. Do you have an agreement in place (MOU)? To what extent is your organization's current role aligned with the collaboration agreements initially established?**
  - a. *If different, why is it different than intended?*
  - b. *What factors have facilitated being able to fulfill this plan? What factors have hindered being able to fulfill this plan? Have you been able to overcome any barriers? To what extent do you anticipate being able to overcome these barriers?*
- 7. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your work with Texas GEAR UP, TEA and/or other collaborators?**

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



## Appendix E: Case Studies

The following are case studies on the programs operating in each of the four districts as part of the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) State Grant (SG) during the 2015–16 year. Findings are based on site visits to all six participating schools across four districts during fall 2015 and spring 2016. During Year 4 of the grant, students in the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort were in Grade 10 in high school; so all site visits occurred in this setting. The purpose of presenting these case studies is to provide an overview of local perceptions of the implementation of grant activities during the 2015–16 school year. 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. The majority of site visit data was obtained during in-person site visits. A small number of interviews at some sites were conducted via telephone when a key person was unavailable during the in-person visit.

These case studies provide important information for understanding grant implementation over time (longitudinally). 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 Texas GEAR UP SG staff members; school principals, assistant principals, or other similar school leadership positions will be referred to as school administrators.

These case studies examine perceptions of how grant implementation in each district is helping Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students become more postsecondary education aware and ready. The case studies include descriptions of activities and initiatives implemented during Year 4 as perceived by site visit participants. It should be noted that final site visits for the year occurred in April 2016 and therefore these case studies contain only planning for implementation during the remainder of the school year and summer 2016. Before discussing findings from individual districts, a brief overview of findings associated across all districts is provided.

### E.1 Overview of Findings from All Districts

#### E.1.1 Postsecondary Education Readiness

Student postsecondary education readiness was assessed in a variety of ways, including the Preliminary SAT for Grade 10 students (PSAT ) and Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) as well as through Advanced Placement (AP) course enrollment.<sup>179</sup> Most cohort students participating in site visits that took the PSAT and/or the TSIA exams reported they received time and/or materials to prepare, but did not find this preparation exceptionally useful in many cases. Texas GEAR UP SG staff said most students had not yet passed the TSIA, a test which determines eligibility for dual credit courses. Across districts, several students relayed that they received their PSAT scores and information on how to interpret their scores, but were still unsure of the meaning of their score and how to use their results.

School staff, including administrators and teachers, said AP and pre-AP enrollment among Grade 10 students increased during the 2015–16 school year. However, some participating teachers and Texas GEAR UP SG staff expressed concerns that some students were inappropriately placed in advanced courses, which disrupted the rigor of the courses that existed in previous years.

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<sup>179</sup> The TSIA is a standardized test used to determine readiness for college coursework and identifies needs for any developmental coursework. For more information see <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=C92F1DAA-D49E-03F0-0750060AA756E807>.

## E.1.2 Collaboration and Sustainability

High turnover among school staff in districts, particularly among school administrators and teachers during Year 4, created barriers to grant implementation related to staff buy-in, acceptance, and acknowledgement of the grant value. As staff leave the district and new staff are hired, Texas GEAR UP SG staff must reintroduce themselves and the grant to gain buy-in—losing valuable time to plan for and provide direct services to students. After working in schools for two years in the high school setting, Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school counselors acknowledged that there seems to be overlap in their respective work with students and they have had limited communication to clearly define their roles. Texas GEAR UP SG staff expressed further frustration that in some instances counselors did not include them in activities, such as distributing PSAT scores, in which they could have potentially increased the educational impact of these activities on students. One potential challenge of turnover and lack of collaboration between Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school staff is that it may be difficult for districts to sustain some practices going forward. For example, in one district, the Texas GEAR UP SG staff provided a presentation to students on the PSAT to help them better understand their scores and the implications of those scores, but the counselors did not collaborate on this presentation. Had the counselors been more involved in the presentation, they would be more prepared to sustain similar practices with future cohorts.

## E.1.3 Parental Engagement

Parental engagement with Texas GEAR UP SG continued to be low in Year 4 in most districts, but with the help of parent liaisons and The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives (IPSI) Family Engagement Trainer, Texas GEAR UP SG staff report planning new strategies for upcoming years to foster relationships with more parents in the cohort.<sup>180</sup> Home visits, suggested by the IPSI trainer, were discussed often by site visit participants to reach parents and families who face transportation barriers. Discussing the parent events held during Year 4, both parents and Texas GEAR UP staff said parents prefer and respond better in small groups where they feel more comfortable and less intimidated asking questions. One challenge may be balancing this need to support parent preferences while engaging in practices that are time and cost effective and therefore sustainable.

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<sup>180</sup> The IPSI Family Engagement Trainer was hired by IPSI to work with all four Texas GEAR UP SG districts on strategies to engage parents.

## E.2 Case Study: District 1

### E.2.1 Summary of Site Visit Findings

#### Overview

As part of the Year 4 Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation, ICF evaluators visited one District 1 high school in both fall 2015 and spring 2016. This case study provides a detailed description of the Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in this district during this time (cohort in Grade 10). During both the fall and the spring site visits, the evaluation team conducted interviews and focus group discussions with Texas GEAR UP SG staff, teachers, parents, students, and school administrators (see Figure E.1 for a detailed participant list). This section of the report provides information about the Texas GEAR UP SG activities occurring in District 1 during summer 2015 and during the 2015–16 school year, themes that emerged during the site visits in this district, challenges encountered, and future plans for the Texas GEAR UP SG within the district.

#### Changes Since Year 3

District 1 hired two new Texas GEAR UP SG staff members during the school year to help support implementation activities. The Counselor was hired by the district shortly before the fall site visit. During the fall site visit, school staff noted a lack of communication between school administrators and the Texas GEAR UP District Coordinator. ICF later learned that a new Coordinator was in place. A school administrator stated, “I think this has probably been *the best year* since we got [the new Coordinator] in place... We had to do some changing. We needed to do some necessary changing and since we made the changes, we've seen a lot of improvement and gains.” In addition to the District Coordinator, District 1 also hired a new staff member to support data collection and parent engagement Texas GEAR UP SG activities.

In terms of other changes, site visit participants agreed that the cohort participated in more out-of-classroom activities this year, including more college and educational field trips, than in previous years. Texas GEAR UP SG staff were satisfied with the opportunities students received and said that they would like to offer even more out-of-classroom opportunities to students so that they are exposed to a variety of careers, fields of study, and schools.

#### Description of Year 3 Implementation (2014–15)

**College Visits.** School administrators said that the college visits are the most important Texas GEAR UP SG initiative to develop postsecondary education awareness. Staff said more visits were taken this school year and more students were able to attend than in previous years. Students commented that they have been on several college trips since their time in Texas GEAR UP SG began and that most college visits involved visiting dorms, classes, the library, and other administrative buildings. Students also commented that the college trips helped them to narrow down the list of colleges and universities that they are interested in attending. Parents

#### Figure E.1. District 1 Focus Group and Interview Participants

- Fall 2015 focus groups included:
  - 5 students
  - 2 parents
  - 4 school counselors
- Fall 2015 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor
  - 2 school administrators
  - Texas GEAR UP SG staff member
- Spring 2016 focus groups included:
  - 8 students
  - 6 parents
  - 5 teachers
  - 2 counselors
- Spring 2016 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor
  - 2 school administrators
  - Texas GEAR UP SG staff member

commented that the college visits were a great opportunity for students to experience college life and explore the different majors and programs available at the schools.

**Endorsements and Progress Towards High School Graduation.** A small handful of students in the spring focus group expressed that they would like to change their endorsements, citing reasons such as a lack of interest in the topic that they selected in Grade 8 and declining grades in endorsement classes. According to Texas GEAR UP SG staff and students, however, the school administration will not allow students to do so. School administration and staff reported there has been no significant increase in enrollment in advanced courses—including AP and pre-AP courses—for Grade 10 Texas GEAR UP SG students compared to Grade 10 students in previous years. One school administrator said she does not expect an increase in AP enrollment once Texas GEAR UP SG students enroll in their Grade 11 courses; she was not aware that this increase was “part of the vision for [Texas] GEAR UP [SG].”

**Community Alliances.** District 1 worked with two non-profit postsecondary education financing organizations to provide financial aid information to parents and students. District 1 also worked with two local colleges to improve postsecondary education readiness for cohort students. On campus, Texas GEAR UP SG also collaborated with other grant programs in the district, for tutoring and mentoring services. Texas GEAR UP SG staff said they would like to develop relationships with more community organizations that could potentially help them reach more parents and provide more career exploration activities. They explained that it has been difficult to establish alliances because of their location; most businesses are located on the other side of the county near other districts and schools, providing those schools and districts with better opportunities to develop community alliances.

**Postsecondary Education Readiness Assessment.** Texas GEAR UP SG students took the PSAT during the 2015–16 school year and received their scores shortly before ICF’s spring site visit. School counselors were initially designated as distributors of the students’ results, but Texas GEAR UP SG staff asked to take on this task and facilitate a more in-depth discussion with students about the results and their implications. Along with their individual results, students received a handout that highlighted national rankings and a breakdown of postsecondary education readiness based on scores, all of which was described as “easy to interpret” by the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator and parents.<sup>181</sup> The District Coordinator explained how students were impacted by the additional information: “...so all this information [regarding their scores, such as national rankings and a readiness breakdown] is provided but you could choose to give it to them or not. I don't think the counselors were going to give it to them, from my understanding! ...it's like *no*, this is vital information, because you should've seen their face. They [the students] reacted like...if they didn't [receive] a great score...it was like, I need to do better.” As part of the discussion on scores, Texas GEAR UP SG staff also helped students set up Khan Academy accounts where students can access customized SAT tutorials and preparation based on students’ PSAT scores. The College Preparation Advisor said account use has not been monitored and was likely low to none at time of visit. The average PSAT score of the Grade 10 students in District 1 was between 700 and 800, though a small number did score over 1,000. Those who scored over 1,000 were invited by the superintendent to participate in a summer camp to continue to study for the PSAT/NMSQT

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<sup>181</sup> When student focus group participants at District 1 were asked for feedback about the handout with national rankings and the breakdown of postsecondary education readiness based on PSAT scores, only one student responded, noting that she not yet received her scores or handout. Other student participants responded by teasing one another about their own scores and the scores of their peers, rather than about the handout with national rankings. It is possible that students did not want to respond directly to this question if the handout noted that they had a low level of postsecondary readiness because it would be embarrassing to acknowledge this in front of their peers. Alternatively, it is possible that the students may not have easily understood the handout or found it to be useful or relevant to them.

in the hopes of becoming National Merit Scholars. No interventions were noted for students who scored below 1,000.

Students also took the TSIA in the spring semester of Grade 10. Texas GEAR UP SG staff and staff from other grants led lunchtime workshops to help prepare students for the test, but Texas GEAR UP SG staff said that usually the same fifteen students took advantage of the opportunity. Despite low attendance, school staff said the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort was more “TSI[A]-compliant” than students in previous years.<sup>182</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG staff said they have been informed that the Grade 10 students were scoring better than some Grade 11 students, which they attributed to the support the cohort received while in middle school. Other school staff said compliance rates will need to improve among Texas GEAR UP SG students so that the workshops and dual credit courses can be offered in upcoming years; according to these staff, the current TSIA passing rates will not enroll enough students to validate offering the dual credit courses.

**Parental Engagement.** As described by Texas GEAR UP SG staff, when they call parents for routine purposes, such as to verbally obtain permission for student attendance at a Texas GEAR UP SG activity, they use the call as an opportunity to foster parent engagement by facilitating discussion with parents regarding Texas GEAR UP SG programs, student involvement, engagement, and their progress towards postsecondary education preparedness. Texas GEAR UP SG staff also expressed that they have found it helpful to inform parents who indicate their students reported they were not involved in the program by using data provided by IPSI to demonstrate to parents their student’s involvement in Texas GEAR UP SG.

Parents reported that they would like more information from Texas GEAR UP SG on college campus safety to better inform decisions about colleges, suggesting this is a concern that may need to be addressed. School staff reported that the school and Texas GEAR UP SG could do more to help parents understand the long-term benefits of postsecondary education, as according to staff, some parents do not consider postsecondary education to be an investment and do not believe that better opportunities can arise with postsecondary education than those which only require a high school diploma. As one staff member explained,

...Somehow we need to teach the true benefit of going to college. There is a good outcome, and I just think the population we're working with, they don't see that. They don't understand the career options and opportunities that come from furthering your education because nobody has furthered their education so far and they've done fine.

Texas GEAR UP SG staff also expressed their belief that this view of postsecondary education also prevents many families from submitting a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and from considering education financing loans—which ultimately causes college tuition to be an insurmountable expense for families and prevents many students from enrolling. Staff suggested that exposing parents and students to opportunities that they will have after receiving a postsecondary education may help families develop a more favorable view of postsecondary education enrollment and ultimately lead to greater college enrollment and persistence among students in District 1.

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<sup>182</sup> TSIA compliance refers to students who have either passed the TSIA and/or sufficiently meet the academic standards set forth by Texas colleges and universities for enrollment.

**Teacher Support, Professional Development, and Vertical Teaming.** Site visit participants provided various insights regarding teacher supports and professional development (PD) at District 1. Some Texas GEAR UP SG staff said that no Texas GEAR UP SG PD was offered this year to teachers, but teachers were provided tangible items for classrooms, such as novels and dictionaries. Other staff said that while Texas GEAR UP SG has taken students on more educational field trips this year than in previous years, teachers still do not take advantage of the trips as often as they potentially can, by incorporating the trips available through Texas GEAR UP SG into their curriculum or lesson plans. In contrast to comments provided by Texas GEAR UP SG staff regarding the lack of PD provided to teachers, school staff discussed their experience working with the Texas GEAR UP SG Educator Outreach Coach as a form of PD.<sup>183</sup> The coach worked directly with teachers who found her work helpful, particularly the walk-throughs and instruction on Google Classroom.<sup>184</sup> The school has not, however, tracked the degree to which teachers have implemented strategies provided by the Texas GEAR UP SG Educator Outreach Coach. School staff also said that a project-based learning (PBL) PD session was planned for after the ICF spring site visit.

**Collaboration with School Staff.** Texas GEAR UP SG staff said school administration involvement in the grant has improved over the school year, but they would like school administrators to be even more engaged and have a better understanding of the grant process. One Texas GEAR UP staff member attributed the increased buy-in among school administrators to the realization that Texas GEAR UP SG staff attended the same advising and counseling workshops as school administrators, which helped to validate the work of Texas GEAR UP SG. Some school staff said they expected the collaboration to increase as the cohort begins to apply for postsecondary education and grows closer to graduation. Several site visit participants also suggested there was overlap in the work of Texas GEAR UP SG and the counseling office and that better communication could help both teams work more efficiently. Both school and Texas GEAR UP SG staff believed that the lack of buy-in from teachers prevented them from using grant resources, such as educational field trips, to the fullest capacity. Buy-in among teachers has increased, though, as a result of Texas GEAR UP SG staff efforts this year. Specifically, Texas GEAR UP SG staff presented additional information to teachers via email and at staff meetings regarding some of the activities outside of the classroom offered through the program.

## CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

**Turnover and Sustainability.** A school administrator explained that extensive district turnover has made it very difficult to maintain initiatives started or enhanced by Texas GEAR UP SG at the middle school level:

...Just because of our turnover, you think you identified 3–4 teachers [who can help implement the grant] and...you're re-staffing and trying to figure out who is leaving, and [then] you get resignations daily, so it's... that's a tough deal to do because we just want to make sure we have people that are going to be working with the students.

This school administrator went on to explain his opinion that because of the “physical and emotional challenges” that staff may experience when working with a marginalized student population, many teachers and school administrators move on to new locations when

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<sup>183</sup> The Educator Outreach Coach was hired by IPSI to service all four Texas GEAR UP SG districts with professional development.

<sup>184</sup> Google Classroom is a platform used by schools to encourage a paperless educational system.



possible.<sup>185</sup> The most substantial turnover has been at Middle School D where the principal left, along with most of the staff, after the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort moved to high school.

**Parent Engagement.** In an effort to overcome minimal parent engagement, District 1 hired a Texas GEAR UP SG staff member during the fall 2016 semester to support these activities and collect data to be submitted to the Support Center. While this new staff member said she is well-supported by the district, additional training on data definitions and compliance would increase her capacity even further. Although much more data have been captured this school year, particularly during the spring 2016 semester, this staff member also expressed concern that the data are not measuring the level of impact from each student activity, such as college visits, on students. She believes that the data document student involvement, but not the long-term effect of their involvement in the activities. Because this new staff member has had to focus more on compiling and reporting data, she was left with little time to strategize on parent engagement. The district is hoping to hire a separate staff member in the upcoming school year to fulfill the Parent Liaison role.

**Soft Skills.** Teachers discussed frustration at students' lack of soft skills and the impact that this lack of skills has had on preparing them for their education and career beyond high school. To help address this issue, a different grant program in the district—Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID)—has helped students enhance their notetaking skills and brought a representative from a local college to the high school campus to help students develop résumés.<sup>186</sup> Teachers identified other soft skills needed by the students that Texas GEAR UP SG may be able to play a role in developing, including self-motivation and realistic goal-setting, both before and after high school graduation. School administrators attributed a lack of appropriate time management and study skills to low persistence rates in postsecondary education enrollment among previous graduates from this district, as well, along with lack of reliable transportation and family support. School administrators attributed a high postsecondary education acceptance rate among previous graduates from this district to the extended support and “hand holding” from counselors during the application process, highlighting both limited application knowledge and student motivation to apply for postsecondary education. Teachers elaborated on issues with student motivation by suggesting that any lack of student success is not due to lack of resources from the school. Counselors believe that while perhaps not to the same extent, students in the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort will still require the same amount of support in the college application process as previous cohorts because they lack the same soft skills that have limited previous cohorts.

## FUTURE PLANS

**Parent Engagement.** Both school administrators and Texas GEAR UP SG staff agreed that parent engagement has decreased this school year. Texas GEAR UP SG staff said they do plan parent activities, but they have not managed to increase attendance. To address this low level of parent engagement, the grant team plans to join the CIS team in conducting home visits during the 2016–17 school year.

**Early College High School.** In addition, in the upcoming years, District 1 is planning to open an early college high school, which will provide even more opportunities for students to earn college credit before high school graduation. This new initiative will benefit follow-on cohorts to the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort and will promote sustainability of postsecondary education

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<sup>185</sup> While the school administrator did not elaborate with examples of physical and emotional challenges, one possible challenge might be compassion fatigue. More information about the impact of compassion fatigue on teachers may be found at <http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol11/1118-sizemore.aspx>.

<sup>186</sup> AVID provides schools and educators of underrepresented students with tools to develop learning, study, academic, and behavioral skills. More information can be found at [www.avid.org](http://www.avid.org).

readiness and awareness in the district. In addition, the district plans to weight dual credit courses for the first time next year.<sup>187</sup> School staff explained that students currently often choose between earning college credit with dual credit courses or taking AP courses that are weighted in an effort to boost their GPAs. By weighting dual credit courses, they explained that students will be able to take college level courses and boost their GPA.

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<sup>187</sup> Weighted courses allow for grades that have a numerical advantage when calculating grade point averages.

## E.3 Case Study: District 2

### E.3.1 Summary of Site Visit Findings

#### OVERVIEW

As part of the Year 4 Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation, ICF evaluators visited two District 2 high schools in both fall 2015 and spring 2016. This case study provides a detailed description of the Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in this district during this time. During both the fall and the spring site visits, the evaluation team conducted interviews and focus groups with Texas GEAR UP SG staff, teachers, parents, cohort (Grade 10) students, school administrators, and campus alliances (see Figure E.2 for detailed participant list). This section of the report provides information about the Texas GEAR UP SG activities occurring in District 2 during summer 2015 and during the 2015–16 school year, themes that emerged during the site visits in this district, challenges encountered, and plans for the Texas GEAR UP SG within the district.

#### Figure E.2. District 2 Focus Group and Interview Participants

- Fall 2015 focus groups included:
  - 5 students
  - 9 teachers
  - 2 college access staff
  - 2 College Preparation Advisors
- Fall 2015 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
  - 1 parent
  - 1 district administrator
- Spring 2016 focus groups included:
  - 9 teachers
  - 7 students
- Spring 2016 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
  - Texas GEAR UP SG staff member
  - 2 College Preparation Advisors
  - 2 school administrators

#### CHANGES SINCE YEAR 3

District 2 put into place a new Texas GEAR UP SG staff member, during the spring 2016 semester who oversees many grants and programs within the district. This staff member said Texas GEAR UP SG is the most supported grant due to the work and efforts of IPSI and TEA: “We have several grants in [District 2] and by far this [the Texas GEAR UP SG] is the most supported grant from an outside entity, [including] TEA and IPSI... We don't get that kind of support for any of our other grants.” Most communication between the Director and Texas GEAR UP SG staff is now done through the District Coordinator. As such, the new Director has less interaction with the other grant staff than the previous Director. Additionally, District 2 acquired an additional College Preparation Advisor in spring 2016 to serve more cohort students more often.

#### DESCRIPTION OF YEAR 3 IMPLEMENTATION (2014–15)

**College Visits.** It was noted by both Texas GEAR UP SG staff and students that it was difficult for those in advanced programs to participate in college visits during the regular school day. In addition, one student focus group participant said that she believed that student participation in college visits had declined in Year 4 due to competing priorities, such as participation in sports. As an alternative, Texas GEAR UP SG staff offered these students the opportunity to attend college visits on Saturdays; the students lamented, however, that they did not experience college campuses in the same way on Saturdays as during weekdays, particularly with regards to academics.

**Endorsements and Progress Towards High School Graduation.** Most students participating in the site visits indicated satisfaction with their endorsements and had no plans to change them. Some of the students did say that they would like to change their endorsements,

however, as they were no longer interested in the topic and were not planning to study the same field once in college. These same students reported finding their school counselor—who serves the entire school—consistently unavailable to discuss making an endorsement change, which has left them apathetic in their endorsement courses.

A teacher commented that the Texas GEAR UP SG students will be the most postsecondary education-ready students in the school because the grant provides interesting ways to engage students in learning, particularly during the summer programs. Several focus group participants raised concerns, though, about the placement of students in and the availability of AP courses. A College Preparation Advisor said that many students in the cohort who were capable of doing well in AP courses were not enrolled in them, while other students in the cohort who were enrolled in AP courses were not academically ready for the level of rigor of the courses. The College Preparation Advisor went on to say that while many students were enrolled in courses that are considered to be honors-level courses, the advanced-level of the courses will not be reflected in course transcripts—which presents a challenge for students needing to demonstrate advanced coursework on their transcripts. School administrators said that due to encouragement of Texas GEAR UP SG staff, the school plans to offer more AP courses in the upcoming years so that students' transcripts will more accurately reflect the completion of advanced coursework. School administrators further explained that while they believe that their students ultimately become postsecondary education-ready through PBL and mastering 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills, they have come to understand that postsecondary educational institutions rely on transcripts as evidence that applicants are postsecondary education-ready—even though transcripts do not typically include skills mastered in these courses.<sup>188</sup>

**Postsecondary Education Readiness Assessment.** Many students participating in focus groups said that the PSAT was very difficult and they did not feel prepared to take it. Once PSAT scores were available, school counselors made short presentations to classes in which they distributed students' scores and provided minimal information on how to interpret the scores. Students expressed frustration that the presentations did not provide them with a greater understanding regarding their scores. Texas GEAR UP SG staff felt that they could have provided more in-depth information and discussion about the PSAT scores and their meaning had they known about the presentations and been able to participate.

At the time of the Spring 2016 site visit, students in District 2 had not yet taken the TSIA, but were preparing to do so later in the year. One teacher in the district who has been administering TSIA test preparation for many years, including for the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort during the 2015–16 school year, developed her own curriculum to prepare students for the test during workshops offered twice weekly over the course of a month. Between 15–20 students attended this year, but many more students expressed interest. The workshops were not designed to host more than 15–20 students, however the teacher who developed the test preparation curriculum expressed that hoped to expand the availability of the workshops in upcoming years so that more students will have the opportunity to participate. Commenting on the readiness of most students in the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort, the teacher said, “They have the heart, but not the academic skills to pass.” District 2 personnel have found the test preparation workshops to be successful in preparing students for the TSIA and have plans to incentivize students to attend workshops in the future by decreasing the cost of the assessment for the students incrementally as they attend workshop sessions.

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<sup>188</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills refer to a set of competencies broadly accepted as needed by students to thrive in the workplace—critical thinking, collaboration, digital literacy, and problem solving. For more information, please see Rich, E. (2010). How do you define 21st-Century Learning. *Education Week*, 4(1), 32-35. Retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.edweek.org/tsb/articles/2010/10/12/01panel.h04.html>

**Teacher Professional Development and Vertical Teaming.** Grade 10 teachers expressed that they felt most supported by Texas GEAR UP SG during the 2015–16 school year through the access to “consumables,” such as paper, markers, novels, tape, and other supplies that were useful for PBL assignments and which they did not have before. Teachers also expressed disappointment that as the school year progressed, the district limited the capability of the grant to fund such supplies as well as the educational field trips—both of which they said were a great asset to their classroom units.<sup>189</sup>

A district administrator explained in the fall that all Texas GEAR UP SG PD for teachers was facilitated using the College Board PD curriculum. However, teachers participating in the site visit were unaware of any PD provided by Texas GEAR UP SG during the school year and were not familiar with the IPSI Educator Outreach Coach, who also offered PD. While some school administrators were also unfamiliar with the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator due to recent turnover, those who were familiar with this individual were appreciative of her services. The coach helped school administrators identify teachers in need of support and develop strategies to build their classroom skills. One school administrator noted that while the district already provided PD supports for teachers, direct, in-class assistance for students to better understand and learn material was still needed. The administrator went on to say that she preferred teachers to be supported, instead, with more people in their classrooms to assist students, like Texas GEAR UP SG tutors.

**Community Alliances.** Texas GEAR UP SG in District 2 partnered with several local community organizations, including an organization to help foster interest in STEM careers among the cohort, an educational services organization that provides test-taking workshops for students and teachers, and a bank that provides financial literacy information to families. While alliances were created with the community organizations, the district did not hold an advisory board meeting during Year 4. Grant staff said they did not believe that the advisory board meetings were necessary because they continued to have strong relationships and consistent communication with their alliances. Specifically, the District Coordinator said,

...Administrators know what's going on with [Texas GEAR UP SG] so I try to check in with [them]...once a week or bi-weekly... So I check with them [as well as] students. We're always checking in. We have a big group of parents that are committed to [Texas GEAR UP SG] so they're aware and they pass the word out. And our partners, any time we have an event. Or [if] they want to do a presentation, we communicate. So the communication is there individually but [just] not as a group.

District 2's college access staff—staff members promoting postsecondary education access through school programs—participated in a focus group and were complimentary of Texas GEAR UP SG's work and strategies. They expressed that the early intervention provided by Texas GEAR UP SG will serve to greatly benefit the cohort. As the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort becomes more engaged in the college selection and application process, Texas GEAR UP SG staff said they will begin working more closely with the other college access staff in the district.

## CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

**Turnover and Enrollment Tracking.** District 2 experienced considerable turnover during Year 4 among district and school administrators which, as Texas GEAR UP SG staff commented, has impacted buy-in and engagement with the grant from these stakeholders. School administrators expressed excitement for the grant, but more time was devoted to responsibilities in their new positions instead of work to support the grant. This disengagement also led to challenges in tracking student enrollment this school year. According to the District Coordinator, although

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<sup>189</sup> For external reasons, District 2 had to limit spending on a variety of initiatives, not just those related to the Texas GEAR UP SG.

students have been moving between schools (including charter schools) and districts, the records accessible to Texas GEAR UP SG staff do not always contain up-to-date enrollment information—which has led to difficulties in correctly tracking student enrollment data.

**Parent Engagement.** Most Texas GEAR UP SG staff explained that parent engagement in the grant have been very low this school year and that staff are not likely to reach their goal regarding parent and family engagement. Texas GEAR UP SG staff said, due to time constraints, they prioritized student-focused initiatives and goals over parent engagement initiatives. To better engage parents moving forward, the District Coordinator has asked that the district hire a Parent Liaison who can solely focus on connecting with families. Staff went on to suggest that because school administrators were highly visible to parents, increased school administrator engagement in the grant may also increase parent engagement. ICF received minimal parent feedback about the grant during both fall and spring site visits due to lack of parent participation. College Preparation Advisors said that when parents do attend events or speak with Texas GEAR UP SG staff directly, they are able to recognize relevancy in the information provided. In addition, staff clarified that parents connect to the information more easily when the information is presented visually instead of through only text and numbers.

## FUTURE PLANS

**Campus Split.** The district is planning to divide one of the current high school campuses into two separate campuses according to grade level. Students in Grades 9 and 10 will remain in the same building, while those in Grades 11 and 12, including the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort, will move to the new campus.

**Tutoring.** School and district administrators have started to consider the sustainability of the Texas GEAR UP SG components shown to have made a positive impact on students' postsecondary education and career access and readiness. When the cohort was in Grade 8, nearly every single student successfully completed Algebra I and passed the Algebra I state exam. Since then, the district has used funding from other grants to fund a “push-in support system” for middle school students, similar to the tutoring system implemented by Texas GEAR UP SG. Site visit participants said they plan to continue this initiative in the future due to the sizeable and measurable impact it has had on student performance.

**Soft Skills.** In a discussion regarding ways to promote the development of soft skills among students, a College Preparation Advisor suggested developing a soft skills instructional component on identity. She suggested that students should be encouraged to explore their identity (e.g., gender, race, family background) while Texas GEAR UP SG provides opportunities to discover the implications, potential barriers, and positive aspects associated with different components of one's identity.

## E.4 Case Study: District 3

### E.4.1 Summary of Site Visit Findings

#### OVERVIEW

ICF evaluators visited one District 3 high school in fall 2015 and spring 2016 as part of the Year 4 Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation. This case study provides a detailed description of the Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in this district during this time. During each of these site visits, the evaluation team conducted interviews and focus groups with Texas GEAR UP SG staff, teachers, parents, students, and a school administrator (see Figure E.3 for detailed participant list). This section of the report provides information about the Texas GEAR UP SG activities occurring in District 3 during summer 2015 and during the 2015–16 school year, themes that emerged during the site visits in this district, challenges encountered, and future plans for the Texas GEAR UP SG in the district.

#### CHANGES SINCE YEAR 3

As the previous Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator transitioned back into a district position, the new District Coordinator took over this role in Year 4. Texas GEAR UP SG

staff and the school administration were very pleased with the work of the new District Coordinator and commented that she is very organized and responsive. A Texas GEAR UP SG staff member said, “[The District Coordinator] seems to be pretty organized. And, yes, that’s one of the many features that I like...she’s well organized. She accepts a lot of feedback and follows through.” Texas GEAR UP SG staff felt the weekly meetings implemented by the District Coordinator—which included positive updates, challenges, and upcoming events or work from every attendee—have been valuable in keeping the work of the team streamlined.

#### DESCRIPTION OF YEAR 3 IMPLEMENTATION (2014–15)

**College Visits.** Some students participating in the site visits indicated that the summer camps and college visits were the most insightful postsecondary education awareness activities offered by Texas GEAR UP SG as the activities helped them better understand college life and academic requirements for postsecondary education enrollment. Other students said they did not find the college visits during the school year interesting because they were often unorganized and led by uninterested tour guides. One school administrator described the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort as a “guinea pig group” to help the district develop a postsecondary education readiness and awareness culture for all students in the district. According to a school administrator, district funding and personnel have already been adjusted to implement initiatives initially executed by Texas GEAR UP SG, including college visits for all students, which she described as “non-negotiable” due to the positive impact on the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort.

#### Figure E.3. District 3 Focus Group and Interview Participants

- Fall 2015 focus groups included:
  - 10 students
  - 6 parents
  - 5 teachers
  - 3 Texas GEAR UP SG staff members
  - 5 community alliances
- Fall 2015 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor
  - School administrator
- Spring 2016 focus groups included:
  - 9 students
  - 4 parents
  - 12 teachers
  - 4 Texas GEAR UP SG staff members
  - 4 community alliances
- Spring 2016 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator
  - College Preparation Advisor
  - School administrator

College visits for every student have been made available over the past two years and according to the school administrator, every student has been on at least two visits.

**Endorsements and Progress Towards High School Graduation.** School staff participating in site visits said enrollment in AP courses is the highest it has ever been for students in Grade 10, which raised concerns for some school staff. Participating teachers said that the expectations for the quality of work in advanced courses is unclear to both them and students; as a result, many courses have been taught less rigorously than in the past. Participating students and teachers also said that more students in the cohort were forced into AP or pre-AP courses without the necessary preparation. Teachers went on to explain that having unprepared students in their advanced courses often becomes disruptive and requires material to be “watered down.” Students who were properly placed in the advanced courses were described by teachers as better prepared; a school administrator attributed this preparation to rigorous instruction and a PBL curriculum. On the contrary, Grade 10 students in the cohort taking general education courses were described as lagging, much more so than students in previous years. Overall, students in the focus groups said they found their course loads, including the advanced courses, manageable.

To streamline course scheduling, the district placed all students in the Foundation High School Program which has allowed students before the class of 2018 to complete high school with endorsements.<sup>190</sup> Several participating students said they could not remember which endorsement they chose while other students indicated they have changed their endorsement and/or pathway. In addition, students said that the sequence of courses that they are required to take within their respective endorsements was very unclear to them and has not been explained in great detail. The school administrator commented that the district’s requirement for every student under the Foundation High School Plan to have a minor creates a built-in safety net for students to study a different topic should they lose interest in their major selected while in Grade 8. That is, all students have two endorsements with one considered their major and the other their minor.

**Postsecondary Education Readiness Assessment.** Texas GEAR UP SG staff purchased EduGuide and Naviance software to help students develop better test taking skills for the PSAT 10 and AP tests during the 2015–16 school year and plan to continue using Naviance in Year 5—the 2016–17 school year—to prepare students for the SAT.<sup>191192</sup> The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator said the Texas GEAR UP SG team hopes to monitor students’ use of the software to identify the elements students find most beneficial. Students added that they were also given a PSAT test prep book by their school to help prepare, but no student who participated in the spring focus group said they used the book. After they received their scores, students said they were unsure how to interpret them; they had little context to determine if their score was “good or bad.”

School administration signed all Texas GEAR UP SG students up to take the TSIA as early as possible with ample time to retest as needed throughout the school year. Approximately 35–45% of students had taken the assessment at the time of ICF’s spring site visit, but a school administrator said many students have yet to pass. The district offered a TSIA preparation

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<sup>190</sup> The Foundation High School Program became the default graduation program for all students entering Grade 9 beginning with the 2014–15 school year. Additional information about the Foundation High School Program may be found at <http://tea.texas.gov/graduation-requirements/hb5.aspx>.

<sup>191</sup> According to <http://www.eduguide.org/>, EduGuide provides tools to schools, colleges, and groups developed to raise student achievement.

<sup>192</sup> Naviance provides consulting services, professional development, and a curriculum meant to help students develop soft skills and critical thinking skills to help prepare them for college. See <http://www.naviance.com/> for additional information.



module for students during the summer, but those who attended said it was not helpful because the facilitator was unengaged and only instructed students to “read a TSIA prep book.” The District Coordinator said teachers were trained to use strategies to prepare students for the TSIA during classroom time, but was unsure how often and to what extent teachers implemented the strategies. During the spring focus group, students expressed that they were unsure whether to take AP classes or dual-enrollment classes—or of the benefits of each type of class—so many were unsure about whether to devote the time to prepare for the TSIA, a requirement for dual-enrollment courses.

Those who passed the TSIA scored higher than those in previous years, according to one school administrator, and the district expects to experience an increase in dual-enrollment among Grade 11 students during the 2016–17 school year. More students have also qualified for STEM-based academies, which have much higher entrance requirements than dual-enrollment courses. These academies are offered at a network of local community colleges and will provide passing students with an accredited certification in their field of study.<sup>193</sup>

**Parent Engagement.** Overall, parent engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG activities increased in Year 4. Texas GEAR UP SG staff conducted home visits to families that had not yet participated in a parent event, which enabled engagement for parents who might otherwise face barriers to attending parent events due to a lack of transportation. In addition, the district once again held a successful parent symposium to provide families with information on a variety of topics related to postsecondary education which were most relevant to parent needs. Since engagement has increased through these efforts, Texas GEAR UP SG staff and the school administrator said they need to do more to differentiate information for parents—including consistent participators and those that have only recently become engaged. Parents suggested outreach and activities available in Spanish would increase participation even more.

**Teacher Support, PD, and Vertical Teaming Activities.** Teachers said they have received PD facilitated through the Texas GEAR UP SG grant during Year 4 for PBL techniques and vertical alignment and have additionally received opportunities to work with the IPSI Educator Outreach Coach and a behavior management coach. Additional PD sessions were scheduled for teachers later in the spring 2016 semester and early summer. The district also partnered with a local university to provide literacy support. The university provided a coach, curriculum development assistance, and support to create literature study “inquiry kits,” tubs full of fiction and non-fiction books, poems, jokes, and other pieces of literature organized by various topics determined to be of interest to students.

A team of teachers that participated in a focus group to specifically discuss their vertical alignment activities said that while they have benefitted from the PD provided through Texas GEAR UP SG, the time they have spent planning and working together has been the most beneficial.<sup>194</sup> The teachers explained that their team was able to determine how to best conduct vertical alignment on their own, with minimal guidance from district or school administration. During the 2015–16 school year, they met formally once each week, but spoke informally many times throughout each school day. They often discussed common deficiencies among students, potential causes for the deficiencies, and resolutions to overcome the deficiencies. When planning for upcoming school years, state and district curriculum standards, AP exams, and progress within the team during the current year were all used to guide decisions. The district recently started to provide opportunities to vertically align across elementary, middle, and high

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<sup>193</sup> The academies offer students the opportunity to earn a certificate while taking courses at the participating community college, whereas dual credit courses only offer college credit.

<sup>194</sup> <sup>194</sup> Vertical teaming (also referred to as vertical alignment) refers to teachers from a given subject area participating in collaborative meetings in which they coordinate instruction and learning objectives across grade levels.

schools. Those in the focus group said they often lead during these times by demonstrating the skills students need to have mastered by the time they arrive in high school and the role teachers in each grade level play in ensuring students master those skills.

**Soft Skills.** Teachers expressed the concern that Texas GEAR UP SG students lacked soft skills during the fall 2015 focus group. They linked some of the skill deficiency to the significant increase in “helicopter parenting,” a style of parenting characterized by excessive interest and involvement in a child’s experiences (school and academic experiences in this instance), among parents in the cohort. Because the Texas GEAR UP SG program emphasizes the importance of good grades and class ranking, parents have repetitively reached out to teachers about their students’ grades and opportunities for improving them. Describing the parents, one teacher said, “I taught one of the classes last year that had Texas GEAR UP SG kids in it. And so, the emails that I would get are, what was I doing wrong [to cause] their child [to get] a C?” At the same time, teachers expressed frustration at students’ lack of motivation, organization, and time management skills—all of which impacted their completion of work. The District Coordinator provided similar thoughts and said that a disconnect exists for parents and students between what they want to do (e.g., go to college) and what they need to do to get there (e.g., be motivated to work hard in class).

Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school administration discussed steps to take to help students develop and improve their soft skills throughout Year 4. While EduGuide and Naviance were purchased for Texas GEAR UP SG students to help with test preparation, the software applications were also used for developing soft skills. Although student use of EduGuide was difficult for teachers and Texas GEAR UP SG staff to monitor, Naviance was much more successful according to Texas GEAR UP SG staff. The application provided a place for students to track their coursework and postsecondary education exploration activities as well as to build their résumés. In addition, Naviance also enabled parents to monitor student progress. Naviance software was considered to be so helpful for the cohort students that the software was purchased for all students in the district in Grades 6–12.

## CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

**Technology Barriers.** Teachers said the IPSI Educator Outreach Coach introduced them to many tools that could be greatly beneficial in their classrooms, but they were unable to use most of them. The coordinator mostly worked with the school’s master teachers who then provided the same training on how to use the technology-based tools to the teachers in their respective subject areas. Due to lack of bandwidth, weak Wi-Fi, and sites blocked by the district’s IT department, teachers said they could not implement most of the tools. Discussing her frustration, a teacher said, “There were a lot of tools that I know I tried to implement in my classroom, but we have issues with our technology where I can’t implement them.” She said she continually made requests to the school and district to gain the proper access to these tools, but the process to do so is very time consuming and not often fruitful.

**Meeting the Needs of All Students.** The Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator raised concerns that Texas GEAR UP SG staff focused more on the students who demonstrate a likelihood for success instead of those who continue to struggle—which inhibits all students from successfully benefiting from the grant. In addition, some Texas GEAR UP staff expressed discouragement over other Texas GEAR UP SG staff who are also staff for other programs, and dedicate minimal time to their Texas GEAR UP SG responsibilities. Other staff felt that students suffered because they did not receive the appropriate services available from the Texas GEAR UP SG grant. As a result, some Texas GEAR UP SG staff said they were left to take on the additional work to try to meet the needs of students.

## FUTURE PLANS

**Middle School Sustainability.** Many of the initiatives implemented by Texas GEAR UP SG were said to be working well in the district and school administrators have made efforts to sustain those activities which are making strong positive impacts on students. A high school administrator was concerned, though, that the middle school has not continued any initiatives implemented when the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort was in Grades 7 and 8. The high school administrator met with middle school administrators to discuss how Texas GEAR UP SG activities conducted in middle school, such as college visits, had impacted students and asked the middle school administration to consider implementing those activities and programs again. The high school administrators also requested that the district hire a college counselor for the middle school students to facilitate conversations about postsecondary education and careers as early as possible.

**Postsecondary Education Selection Visits.** Looking forward, the Texas GEAR UP SG District Coordinator said she would like to emphasize “best fit” when Texas GEAR UP SG staff discuss postsecondary education selection with students and parents. The District Coordinator would like to expose students to more schools outside those often visited in the local area to encourage students and their families to consider other opportunities and plans and to acquaint students with schools of a variety of sizes, locations, programs, and resources. By showing a multitude of options for postsecondary education, the District Coordinator hopes that students initially intimidated by or uncomfortable with the education options typically shown will be more likely to seek out options that are a better fit for them. In addition to introducing new schools, Texas GEAR UP SG staff will also need to help students and their families determine the combination of size, location, program, and resources that best fit the needs of the student and how to locate the schools that offer the best fit. Texas GEAR UP SG school-based community alliances who also provide guidance on postsecondary education options also commented that they would like to see Texas GEAR UP SG expose students to more options outside of four-year universities.

## E.5 Case Study: District 4

### E.5.1 Summary of Site Visit Findings

#### OVERVIEW

As part of the Year 4 Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation, ICF evaluators visited two District 4 high schools in both fall 2015 and spring 2016. This case study provides a detailed description of the Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in this district during this time. The evaluation team conducted interviews with the Texas GEAR UP SG staff, teachers, community alliances, parents, students, and school administrators (see Figure E.4 for detailed participant list). This section of the report provides information about the Texas GEAR UP SG activities occurring in District 4 during summer 2015 and during the 2015–16 school year, themes that emerged during the site visits in this district, challenges encountered, and future plans for the Texas GEAR UP SG in the district.

#### CHANGES SINCE YEAR 3

District 4 hired a new Texas GEAR UP SG staff member in Year 4 to relieve College Preparation Advisors of grant management duties and provide a streamlined channel of communication between the district administration and campus-based Texas GEAR UP SG staff. This staff member worked at the schools to support the District Coordinator in managing the grant and to foster relationships with school administrators in an effort to develop buy-in for the Texas GEAR UP SG program. In addition, they developed relationships and alliances in the local community to help support the grant. Because of this work, District 4 conducted its first three advisory board meetings during Year 4.

#### DESCRIPTION OF YEAR 3 IMPLEMENTATION (2014–15)

**Endorsements and Progress Towards High School Graduation.** The district was able to easily offer more AP and pre-AP classes and enroll more students during Year 4 according to a Texas GEAR UP SG staff member. More Grade 10 students were enrolled in advanced courses during the 2015–16 school year than ever before; a Texas GEAR UP SG staff member even said that a school administrator was under the impression that every student in the cohort was to be enrolled in pre-AP and AP courses. However, participating teachers expressed concern that many of the advanced courses have had to be “watered down” to accommodate students with varying levels of readiness. Teachers additionally explained that several students who were academically prepared for advanced courses—and their parents—were disappointed by the decreased course rigor and that some students were regularly bored in class. Teachers also said that they were frustrated at their district’s and school’s lack of planning to accommodate the increase in the number of students in advanced classes. Teachers and other site visit participants expressed concern that most students in District 4 will not be academically

**Figure E.4. District 4 Focus Group and Interview Participants**

- Fall 2015 focus groups included:
  - 13 students
  - 14 parents
  - 17 teachers
- Fall 2015 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG Coordinator
  - Texas GEAR UP SG staff member
  - 2 College Preparation Advisors
  - 5 school administrators
  - 2 community alliances
- Spring 2016 focus groups included:
  - 13 students
  - 20 parents
  - 14 teachers
- Spring 2016 interviews were conducted with:
  - Texas GEAR UP SG Coordinator
  - Texas GEAR UP SG staff member
  - 2 College Preparation Advisors
  - 6 school administrators
  - 1 community alliance
  - 1 middle school administrator

prepared for postsecondary education due to the low expectations, level of rigor, and curriculum set by school and district administrators.

Many participating students said that they were no longer interested in the endorsement that they initially selected in Grade 8, but reported that school counselors would not allow students to change their endorsements during Grade 10. One school administrator expressed, however, that students should not be forced into studying an endorsement in which they are no longer interested. Lack of interest in a particular endorsement was not the only reason cited for wanting to change endorsements; some students who were able to change their endorsements prior to Grade 10 did so because they did not wish to take courses off campus (a requirement of some endorsements and pathways) or because pathways were capped and would no longer allow students to enroll.

**Postsecondary Education Readiness Assessments.** Students who achieved top scores on the Grade 8 STAAR exam were enrolled in a PSAT course that started in Grade 9 and was facilitated through a district-wide program partially funded with Texas GEAR UP SG monies. The purpose of this course, according to site visit participants, is to develop strong test-taking skills and to review material covered on exams such as the PSAT, SAT, AP, and TSIA. Teachers said using STAAR scores as an indicator for placement in this course “misses and misplaces a lot of students.” Though encouraged by Texas GEAR UP SG staff to incorporate test preparation and college-level skills into their core curricula, teachers across a variety of subjects said they did not have the time to do so.

Some students in the PSAT course said they felt prepared to take the PSAT, while others did not because they found the course lacking any teaching strategy or standard curriculum. The College Preparation Advisors felt that most students in the cohort did not take the PSAT seriously and their scores reflected their low level of effort. Once students received scores, Texas GEAR UP SG staff worked with them to set up accounts in Khan Academy to take official College Board SAT preparation that is customized according to students’ PSAT scores.<sup>195</sup> However, Texas GEAR UP SG staff conducted minimal follow-up throughout the year, though, to determine students’ engagement with the program. Texas GEAR UP SG staff also hosted evening sessions to review PSAT scores with parents and students, but parents participating in focus groups said they did not understand the scores and implications and would have preferred a 1-on-1 conversation instead.

The PSAT course included time to review and prepare for the TSIA and according to a school administrator, all Grade 10 students received three days of in-class tutoring in mathematics, reading, and writing as part of this preparation. College Preparation Advisors said they received TSIA preparation books, but were given no guidance from the district on how or when to distribute them; as a result, Texas GEAR UP SG students did not receive them. While one school administrator said that the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort “tested better” on the TSIA in comparison to Grade 10 students in previous years, a different school administrator explained that she does not anticipate that the cohort will have an increase in dual-enrollment courses over students in previous years.

In addition to traditional dual-enrollment courses, District 4 students who are TSIA-compliant also have the opportunity to enroll in STEM-based academies. These academies are offered at a network of local community colleges and will provide passing students with an accredited certification in their field of study. Students said they were confused about the purpose of the

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<sup>195</sup> Khan Academy offers free College Board approved study tools to all students to help prepare for the SAT.

academies and the difference between them and dual credit courses.<sup>196</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG staff agreed that enrolling in an academy was not a great fit for students on a 4-year degree path and were concerned that school staff were promoting the academies for all students. Also, due to scheduling conflicts between required academy and high school courses, some students who enrolled in an academy for the 2016–17 school year will not be able to graduate with an endorsement.

**Soft Skills.** Teachers expressed frustration at the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort's lack of soft skills and motivation to academically succeed. Both a teacher and school administrator commented that previous students involved in the district's AVID program had very strong study and time management skills; they hoped Texas GEAR UP SG would be able to foster similar skills. In addition, a College Preparation Advisor expressed concern that the cohort will struggle with the diversity they will likely face in postsecondary education:

I feel like everybody here is... we're all brown, but we're not necessarily Mexican...like a lot of [students] don't really relate to their heritage... But when you go to different campuses and you see people that don't look like you or have different ethnic backgrounds, [they are] just seeing different things...like stereotypes. They don't understand that's not right, but the way they grew up or what they see on TV, kind of like makes them say that... Sexuality is a big thing... [like] homophobia... Just understanding that people are different, being accepting of people's differences [are important skills for the students to learn]. And that's a bigger deal with some students than it is with the majority, but it's still an issue I think.

**Parent Engagement.** School administrators said they felt that Texas GEAR UP SG staff did not do enough to engage parents in Texas GEAR UP SG activities. Parents expressed similar frustration, but complained that both Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school counselors were uncommunicative and very difficult to get in touch with. Texas GEAR UP SG staff mentioned incidences in which they had one-on-one conversations with parents, but they were often initiated due to parental concerns regarding academics, overnight trips, or out-of-town trips. College Preparation Advisors reported that they continued to hold parent events each semester, but only the same 15–20 parents attended—despite efforts to recruit a broader base of parents by offering food, door prizes, and gift cards. College Preparation Advisors said that they were unsure why most parents did not attend these events.

**Teacher Professional Development and Vertical Teaming.** The IPSI Educator Outreach Coach visited the district each month. She was well-liked by the teachers who worked with her and was complimented for the innovative tools she provided teachers to use in the classroom. Teachers went on to say, however, that it can be difficult incorporating the technology-based resources in their classrooms because the channels needed to access them are often blocked by the district. In addition, teachers said they find it difficult to receive support to resolve network issues and restrictions because the privacy network on campus is set up by a third-party.

Teachers also discussed PD sessions they attended that were funded through Texas GEAR UP SG. One teacher said he appreciated the monetary incentive to attend these sessions. Texas GEAR UP SG staff said they struggled with attendance during these sessions, however, as some sessions were held on Saturdays because school administration preferred not to pull teachers away from their classrooms during the school day.

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<sup>196</sup> As explained by school staff, the academies offer students the opportunity to earn a certificate while taking courses at the participating community college, whereas dual credit courses only offer college credit. Texas GEAR UP SG staff explained that the certifications available through the academies are mostly appropriate for students not planning to pursue postsecondary education.

**Sustainability.** ICF staff interviewed a middle school administrator from a District 4 Texas GEAR UP SG middle school during Years 1 and 2 to discuss activities and initiatives sustained during Year 4. She said the middle school has been able to maintain some resources provided by the grant to maintain advanced and rigorous preparation for high school coursework. The middle school has been able to consistently maintain approximately a 30% enrollment among Grade 8 students in Algebra with a success rate over 90%. Support for students in Algebra is also still available, only now through different funding sources than originally offered through the grant. Pre-AP and AP courses are still also offered to students in Grade 8, however the school has expanded the opportunity to those in Grade 7 to broaden the focus of postsecondary education readiness even further than only Grade 8. Teachers also still receive PD training for AP vertical alignment.

The middle school administrator also discussed activities the middle school has maintained to foster postsecondary education awareness. Grade 8 students attended 2–3 local college visits each during the spring semester each year. The administrator felt that opportunities for more out-of-town visits, such as those funded through Texas GEAR UP SG, would be more ideal, particularly for those in Algebra I, pre-AP courses, or AP courses. The administrator explained that exposure to out-of-town postsecondary education options would offer additional options to students than the local colleges which are typically the only options considered by most students. Staff at the middle school discussed bringing out-of-town college and university staff to the school instead in future years, according to the school administrator, to circumvent this barrier.

As Grade 8 students select endorsements, middle school counselors aim to provide counseling and advising services to students and parents similar to the level received by the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort. The school administrator said such counseling has allowed the district and school to identify students with no expectation of graduating from high school and provide needed intervention much earlier than in previous years. Providing a platform for discussing career pathways has given counselors the opportunity to present these high-risk students with alternatives, such as certificate programs that can be earned while completing their high school diploma.

At the high school level, teachers and Texas GEAR UP SG staff raised concerns about the district's regard for sustainability of grant activities. Similar to previous years, Texas GEAR UP SG staff, teachers, and some school administrators described district and other school administrators as more concerned with compliance than sustainability or district-wide impact of the grant. While district and school administrators suggested sustainability initiatives, they explained that new funding would need to be identified to continue to pay for them.

## CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

**School Administrator Engagement.** For most of Year 4, interim school administrators were in place due to previous school administrator turnover. While the interim school administrators were long-time school staff, they and much of the rest of the school administration had a very heavy workload as they were tasked with school administrator duties as well as the duties of their initial position. Because of the lengthy amount of time without permanent school administrators, the Texas GEAR UP SG program was not a focus for much of the school administration. According to Texas GEAR UP SG staff, this lack of focus led to marginal buy-in and sometimes a lack of understanding of the purpose and goals of the grant and, ultimately, difficulty in successfully implementing many activities (e.g., extended approval process and limited engagement from school administrators).

**Texas GEAR UP SG Staff Roles.** Continued frustrations regarding communication and unclear definitions of roles and responsibilities of Texas GEAR UP SG staff in the district also led to challenges in implementation during Year 4. The structure of Texas GEAR UP SG staff within

the district and at the school-level was described as “cumbersome and unnecessary” by a Texas GEAR UP SG staff member. As a result, important information and deadlines were not always communicated or disseminated in a timely fashion, which caused delays in planning and implementation. Some Texas GEAR UP SG staff felt that not all members of their team provided appropriate input on all aspects of grant implementation and so were hesitant to collaborate in a group setting. While some school staff expressed confusion about the role of each Texas GEAR UP SG staff member in the district, many also expressed gratitude for the increased effort to engage new members of school staff in the grant during Year 4.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

**Year 5 Planning.** The Texas GEAR UP SG staff noted that they intended to start planning for the 2016–17 school year implementation before the end of the current school year, which is earlier than planning conducted in previous years. Texas GEAR UP SG staff said that they were sometimes told that students could not participate in certain program activities because of scheduling conflicts, such as state testing. The Texas GEAR UP SG staff said they hope to be more pro-active in the upcoming year in their planning and approval from school administrators for activities, particularly those which will pull students away from class time, so they are not faced with this challenge in upcoming years.

**School Counselor Engagement.** School counselors who have worked with the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort since Grade 9 said they do not anticipate working with the grant beyond Year 4. One of the counselors anticipated transitioning full time into the district-wide Parent Engagement Coordinator. At the time of the spring site visit, this counselor said that the school had yet to identify a replacement counselor as the existing counselors did not wish to take on the additional roles necessary of working with the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort. A different school counselor said that the lead counselor requested that she only focus on traditional counseling duties instead of working with the Texas GEAR UP SG staff during Year 5. Because many duties of Texas GEAR UP SG staff and counselors overlap, this counselor is unsure how the separation between the counseling office and Texas GEAR UP SG staff will work in favor of the students.



## Appendix F: Implementation Analyses Technical Detail

### F.1 Characteristics of Students Participating in Texas GEAR UP State Grant, 2015–16

**Table F.1. Primary Cohort Student Demographic Characteristics by School, 2015–16 (Grade 10)**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Number of Students	Hispanic/Latino Students	Limited English Proficient
High School H	402	97.3%	10.9%
High School I	375	98.9%	6.9%
High School J	210	50.5%	1.05
High School K	474	62.7%	14.8%
High School L	107	48.6%	3.7%
High School M	306	88.2%	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>79.3%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

### F.2 Advanced Course Taking, 2012–13, 2013–14, 2014–15, 2015–16

**Table F.2. Enrollment of Primary Cohort Students in Advanced Courses, by Grade Level and Number of Advanced Courses: 2012–13 (Grade 7), 2013–14 (Grade 8), 2014–15 (Grade 9), 2015–16 (Grade 10)**

Advanced Course Enrollment Status	Grade 7, 2012–13		Grade 8, 2013–14		Grade 9, 2014–15		Grade 10, 2015–16	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Not enrolled in any advanced course	1,370	68.2%	885	46.0%	957	44.4%	850	45.4%
Enrolled in 1 advanced course	234	11.6%	583	30.3%	271	12.6%	158	8.4%
Enrolled in 2 advanced courses	190	9.5%	131	6.8%	191	8.9%	154	8.2%
Enrolled in 3 advanced courses	216	10.7%	141	7.3%	229	10.6%	207	11.0%
Enrolled in 4 advanced courses	n/a	n/a	184	9.6%	507	23.5%	505	26.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,010</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1,924</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,155</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

Note: There were no social studies advanced courses offered in Grade 7.

**Table F.3. Enrollment of Primary Cohort Students in Advanced Courses, by Content Area, Grade Level, and School: 2012–13 (Grade 7) and 2013–14 (Grade 8)**

Grade and Content Area	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G	Total
<b>n (Grade 7, 2012–13)</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>2,010</b>
Mathematics (Pre-Algebra and Other)	18.8%	22.9%	19.8%	28.4%	21.9%	26.0%	19.6%	22.2%
English Language Arts	15.6%	26.3%	14.4%	37.8%	0.4%	31.3%	14.6%	19.6%
Science	19.1%	26.6%	18.7%	41.3%	0.7%	26.3%	18.3%	20.9%
<b>n (Grade 8, 2013–14)</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>1,924</b>
Mathematics (Algebra I and Other)*	27.7%	26.8%	27.8%	27.0%	98.2%	31.3%	54.6%	42.5%
English Language Arts*	20.4%	32.3%	20.9%	36.2%	0.0%	37.5%	0.6%	20.7%
Science*	20.8%	29.1%	20.4%	38.8%	0.0%	38.7%	0.6%	20.7%
Social Studies*	16.4%	36.1%	19.1%	33.7%	0.0%	36.5%	1.0%	20.2%

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

\* Grade 8, Between School Differences by Content Area: Mathematics:  $\chi^2(6) = 477.0$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(6) = 257.8$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(6) = 264.8$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Social Studies:  $\chi^2(6) = 268.5$ ,  $p < 0.001$

Note: Percentages are slightly different than the percentages of students enrolled in Algebra I or equivalent that were reported in the Annual Performance Report. These percentages include mathematics courses that are considered advanced although not equivalent to Algebra I.

**Table F.4. Enrollment of Primary Cohort Students in Advanced Courses, by Content Area, Grade Level, and School, 2014–15 (Grade 9) and 2015–16 (Grade 10)**

Grade and Content Area	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M	Total
<b>n (Grade 9, 2014–15)</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>2,155</b>
Mathematics (Algebra I and Other)*	50.1%	37.1%	19.3%	29.2%	96.6%	31.3%	44.6%
English Language Arts*	59.4%	46.2%	35.5%	26.6%	100.0%	38.1%	38.6%
Science*	46.1%	38.2%	21.8%	26.7%	100.0%	35.9%	38.4%
Social Studies*	42.9%	25.9%	18.8%	26.6%	100.0%	35.3%	34.6%
<b>n (Grade 10, 2015–16)</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>1,874</b>
Mathematics**	60.0%	36.5%	15.7%	25.9%	90.7%	58.8%	43.3%
English Language Arts**	66.2%	42.4%	21.9%	31.2%	97.2%	40.2%	45.1%
Science**	54.5%	34.9%	20.5%	28.9%	98.1%	45.8%	41.4%
Social Studies**	49.3%	35.5%	18.1%	28.5%	96.3%	22.2%	36.0%

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

\* Grade 9, Percentage of enrollment was significantly different across schools for each subject area. Mathematics:  $\chi^2(5) = 252.5$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(5) = 274.9$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(5) = 256.1$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Social Studies  $\chi^2(5) = 289.5$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

\*\* Grade 10, Percentage of enrollment was significantly different across schools for each subject area. Mathematics:  $\chi^2(5) = 303.4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(5) = 275.9$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(5) = 247.6$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Social Studies  $\chi^2(5) = 265.3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table F.5. Pre-Advanced Placement (AP) and AP Course Completion Rate by School, 2015–16 (Grade 10)**

	n	Completed Pre-AP/AP Course Prior to Grade 10	Currently Enrolled in First Pre-AP/AP Course	Currently Enrolled in Pre-AP/AP Course Grade 10	Not Enrolled
School H	402	67.9%	9.0%	72.1%	23.1%
School I	375	61.3%	5.6%	48.0%	33.1%
School J	210	53.3%	2.4%	31.9%	44.3%
School K	474	50.8%	3.8%	36.9%	45.4%
School L	107	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
School M	306	51.6%	13.7%	52.3%	34.6%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>59.6%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>52.2%</b>	<b>33.9%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

## F.3 Endorsements, 2015–16

**Table F.6. Percentages of Primary Cohort Students by Endorsements and by School, 2015–16 (Grade 10)**

Grade and Content Area	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M	Total
<b>n(Grade 10, 2015–16)</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>1,874</b>
Arts and Humanities	9.7%	73.9%	7.1%	30.4%	16.8%	8.5%	27.7%
Business and Industry	17.7%	4.8%	25.7%	31.4%	19.6%	43.8%	23.9%
Multidisciplinary Studies	0.0%	0.0%	11.0%	0.4%	1.9%	0.3%	1.5%
Public Service	35.1%	6.1%	40.5%	28.9%	8.4%	16.7%	23.8%
STEM	21.1%	0.0%	7.6%	8.6%	53.3%	30.4%	15.6%
Not on Foundation	16.4%	15.2%	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	7.4%
No Endorsements	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

## F.4 PSAT Completion and Mean Scores, 2015–16

**Table F.7. PSAT Taken, 2015–16 (Grade 10)**

	n	Took PSAT	Did not take PSAT
School H	402	77.9%	22.1%
School I	375	71.5%	28.5%
School J	210	66.2%	33.8%
School K	474	71.5%	28.5%
School L	107	88.8%	11.2%
School M	306	76.8%	23.2%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>74.1%</b>	<b>25.9%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

**Table F.8. PSAT Mean Scores of Primary Cohort Students by School, 2015–16 (Grade 10)**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	n	PSAT Mean Score
School H	313	783.7
School I	268	765.0
School J	139	814.5
School K	339	796.3
School L	95	864.2
School M	235	744.0
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,389</b>	<b>785.0</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

## F.5 Student Support Services: Tutoring (Implementation Year 4)

**Table F.9. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Mathematics Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in Mathematics by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade 10 (Start of School Year- March 31, 2016)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring
High School H	402	22.9%	3.3
High School I	375	25.9%	2.0
High School J	210	40.0%	3.6
High School K	474	39.5%	5.3
High School L	107	12.1%	10.0
High School M	306	31.4%	11.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>30.4%</b>	<b>5.4</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

**Table F.10. Primary Cohort Students Receiving English Language Arts Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in English Language Arts by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade 10 (Start of School Year- March 31, 2016)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring
High School H	402	7.5%	3.4
High School I	375	3.5%	2.9
High School J	210	27.6%	4.7
High School K	474	46.2%	3.5
High School L	107	20.6%	2.6
High School M	306	82.7%	12.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>31.8%</b>	<b>7.2</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

**Table F.11. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Science Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in Science by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade 10 (Start of School Year- March 31, 2016)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring
High School H	402	12.7%	2.0
High School I	375	0.3%	1.5
High School J	210	33.3%	3.1
High School K	474	6.3%	2.3
High School L	107	0.0%	-
High School M	306	34.6%	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>13.8%</b>	<b>4.0</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

**Table F.12. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Social Studies Tutoring and Average Number of Hours Tutored in Social Studies by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade 10 (Start of School Year to March 31, 2016)		
	n	% of Students Received Tutoring	Average Hours of Tutoring
High School H	402	5.5%	1.7
High School I	375	0.3%	7.5
High School J	210	3.8%	7.4
High School K	474	0.0%	-
High School L	107	3.7%	13.5
High School M	306	18.3%	8.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>7.0</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

## F.6 Student Support Services: Mentoring (Implementation Year 4)

**Table F.13. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Mentoring and Average Number of Hours Mentored, by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade10 (Start of School to March 31, 2016)		
	n	% of Students Received Mentoring	Average Hours of Mentoring
High School H	402	27.1%	4.3
High School I	375	14.1%	4.8
High School J	210	23.3%	5.4
High School K	474	8.0%	2.8
High School L	107	42.1%	22.6
High School M	306	99.0%	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>31.9%</b>	<b>5.1</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

## F.7 Student Support Services: Counseling (Implementation Year 4)

**Table F.14. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Counseling and Average Number of Hours COUNSELED, by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade10 (Start of School to March 31, 2016)		
	n	% of Students Received Counseling	Average Hours of Counseling
High School H	402	91.8%	3.1
High School I	375	84.3%	3.4
High School J	210	90.0%	2.9
High School K	474	79.5%	1.3
High School L	107	64.5%	2.1
High School M	306	99.3%	6.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>86.7%</b>	<b>3.3</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

## F.8 Student Support Services: Financial Aid Services (Implementation Year 4)

**Table F.15. Primary Cohort Students Receiving Services Related to Financial Aid and Average Number of Hours Served, by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Grade10 (Start of School to March 31, 2016)		
	n	% of Students Received Counseling	Average Hours of Counseling
High School H	402	74.9%	1.3
High School I	375	45.9%	1.5
High School J	210	89.0%	2.5
High School K	474	78.3%	0.8
High School L	107	62.6%	1.2
High School M	306	98.4%	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>74.7%</b>	<b>1.4</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

## F.9 College Visits

**Table F.16. Primary Cohort Students Participating in College Visits, by School, 2015–16  
(Grade 10)**

School	n	% of students participated 1 college tour	% of students participated 2 college tours	% of students participated 3 college tours	% of students participated 4 college tours	% of students participated in any college tour (total)
School H	402	28.4%	6.0%	0.7%	0.0%	35.1%
School I	375	22.9%	10.7%	4.5%	0.0%	38.1%
School J	210	52.4%	20.0%	7.6%	1.9%	81.9%
School K	474	6.8%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	7.6%
School L	107	6.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5%
School M	306	58.2%	10.8%	0.0%	0.0%	69.0%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>7.6%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>37.9%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

## F.10 Job Site Visits/Job Shadowing (Implementation Year 4)

**Table F.17. Primary Cohort Students Participating in Job Site Visits and/or Job  
Shadowing, by School, 2015–16 (Grade 10)**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	n	% Students Participating in Job Site Visits/Job Shadowing
School H	402	18.9%
School I	375	16.0%
School J	210	50.5%
School K	474	7.8%
School L	107	23.4%
School M	306	31.4%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>21.3%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

## F.10 Summer Programs (Implementation Year 4)

**Table F.18. Primary Cohort Students Participating in Summer Student Events, by School, 2015–16 (Grade 10)**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School		College Tour	Family Event	Job Shadowing	Job/ Site Visit	Parent Family Workshop	Science Educational Field Trip	Student Workshop	Total
High School H	Number of Event	1	3	0	0	0	1	12	17
	Average Number of Student Participants	16	49.7	0	0	0	5	16	21.7
	Total number of Participating Students	16	142	0	0	0	5	139	302
	% (n=475)	3.4%	29.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	29.3%	63.6%
High School I	Number of Event	0	2	0	0	0	1	14	17
	Average Number of Student Participants	0	35	0	0	0	4	12.6	17.2
	Total number of Participating Students	0	70	0	0	0	4	139	213
	% (n=474)	0.0%	14.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	29.3%	44.9%
High School J	Number of Event	6	0	2	3	5	1	23	40
	Average Number of Student Participants	5.5	0	3.5	3.3	15	2	8.1	6.2
	Total number of Participating Students	29	0	7	8	48	2	86	180
	% (n=197)	14.7%	0.0%	3.6%	4.1%	24.4%	1.0%	43.7%	91.4%
High School K	Number of Event	1	2	0	0	0	1	14	18
	Average Number of Student Participants	18	28.5	0	0	0	16	22.9	21.4
	Total number of Participating Students	18	55	0	0	0	16	212	301
	% (n=572)	3.1%	9.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	37.1%	52.6%
High School L	Number of Event	1	1	0	0	0	1	9	12
	Average Number of Student Participants	12	6	0	0	0	11	7.4	9.1
	Total number of Participating Students	12	6	0	0	0	11	46	75
	% (n=117)	10.3%	5.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.4%	39.3%	64.1%
High School M	Number of Event	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	27
	Average Number of Student Participants	0	0	0	0	0	0	29.7	29.7
	Total number of Participating Students	0	0	0	0	0	0	287	287
	% (n=320)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	89.7%	89.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>Number of Events</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>131</b>
	<b>Average Number of Student Participants</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>13.1</b>
	<b>Total number of Participating Students</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>909</b>	<b>1,358</b>
	<b>% (n=2155)</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>42.2%</b>	<b>63.0%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

Note: Percentages were calculated based on Grade 9 enrollment rates.



## F.11 Student Participation in Workshops/Events (Implementation Year 4)

**Table F.19. Primary Cohort Students Participating in Student Workshops/Events, by School, 2015–16 (Grade 10)**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Number of GEAR UP Students	Participated at least one student event	No participation
High School H	402	87.3%	12.7%
High School I	375	93.3%	6.7%
High School J	210	98.1%	1.9%
High School K	474	90.5%	9.5%
High School L	107	100.0%	0.0%
High School M	306	99.3%	0.7%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>93.2%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

**Table F.20. Primary Cohort Students Participating in Parent and/or Family Workshops/Events, by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Number of GEAR UP Students	Participated at least one parent and/or family event	No participation
High School H	402	18.4%	81.6%
High School I	375	2.4%	97.6%
High School J	210	24.8%	75.2%
High School K	474	3.2%	96.8%
High School L	107	19.6%	80.4%
High School M	306	34.3%	65.7%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>14.7%</b>	<b>85.3%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

## F.12 Parent Events

**Table F.21. Number of Parent Events/Workshops, Average Number of Participants, and Average Event Length, by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Number of GEAR UP Students	Number of Events	Average Number of Participants (range)	Average Event Length (in hours)
High School H	402	16	12 (1-69)	3.3
High School I	375	11	14 (2-69)	2.8
High School J	210	19	6 (1-20)	3.2
High School K	474	8	11 (1-38)	5.3
High School L	107	10	5 (1-16)	4.5
High School M	306	26	27 (1-99)	3.5
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3.6</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

**Table F.22. Parent Participation in Parent Events/Workshops, by School, 2015–16 (Grade 10)**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Number of GEAR UP Students	No Participation	Participated in at least one parent event	Participated in at least 3 parent events
High School H	402	71.1%	28.9%	4.5%
High School I	375	74.7%	25.3%	4.3%
High School J	210	80.5%	19.5%	6.7%
High School K	474	87.1%	12.9%	1.3%
High School L	107	79.4%	20.6%	5.6%
High School M	306	40.2%	59.8%	32.7%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,874</b>	<b>72.3%</b>	<b>27.7%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through March 31, 2016.

## F.13 Teacher Professional Development

**Table F.23. Number of PD Events Available to Texas GEAR UP SG Teachers, by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Differentiated Instruction	Advanced Instructional Strategies	PBL	Vertical Teaming	Total PD Events
High School H	28	28	6	1	41
High School I	26	29	5	2	45
High School J	3	3	3	2	10
High School K	4	7	3	14	22
High School L	2	3	1	5	9
High School M	19	31	15	37	80
<b>Overall</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>207</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report Data, March 31, 2016.

**Table F.24. Number of Texas GEAR UP SG Teachers Receiving PD, by PD Type and by School, 2015–16**

Texas GEAR UP SG High School	Differentiated Instruction	Advanced Instructional Strategies	PBL	Vertical Teaming	Total Participating Teachers
High School H	66	74	12	8	74
High School I	77	73	15	15	90
High School J	50	50	22	11	115
High School K	24	108	5	129	130
High School L	2	4	2	5	11
High School M	87	88	49	87	97
<b>Overall</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>517</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System Data through March 31, 2016.

## Appendix G: Student and Parent Outcomes Analyses

### Technical Detail

To facilitate ease of reading, much of the data provided in Chapter 3 have 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, 2015–16

##### G.1.1 Survey Administration

A total of 1,551 students submitted the Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2016 student survey. In order to ensure data integrity to the extent possible, analyses included only surveys in which respondents completed at least 50% of the survey, or for odd number denominators, the next highest possible response rate (e.g., 73 total possible questions answered with 36 actually answered; 49%). Due to the nature of the skip logic used in programming the survey, there were four possible pathways for completing the survey, as shown in Table G.1. Each pathway included a different total number of possible questions as well as a different number of questions required for completion to meet the requirement that 50% of the questions would be completed. This was taken into consideration when cleaning data, as a student may have been considered as completing fewer questions than the designated cut-off point of the survey in one pathway, but may have completed above a cut-off point or the next highest possible response rate in another.

**Table G.1. Survey Pathway Exclusion Process**

Reason for Exclusion	Total Possible Questions	Required
Student <u>never</u> planned to attend college* AND met with College Prep Advisor**	73	36
Student <u>never</u> planned to attend college* AND did NOT meet with College Prep Advisor**	71	35
Student <u>changed mind or already planned*</u> to attend college AND did NOT meet with College Prep Advisor**	75	37
Student <u>changed mind or already planned*</u> to attend college AND met with College Prep Advisor**	76	38

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

\*"Has participating in GEAR UP activities at your school helped you to decide to go to college after graduation?" –Yes –No, I was already planning on going –No, I still don't plan to go to college –Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP at my school BUT I do plan to go to college –Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP at my school AND I do not plan to go to college

\*\*"Have you ever met with the College Prep Advisor at your school?" –Yes –No –I did not know that my school has a college Prep Advisor

In addition to excluding surveys in which respondents did not answer 50% of the questions, the evaluation team also excluded surveys based on analysis of APR item completion. APR items refer to those survey items that TEA is required to report to ED.<sup>197</sup> Following analysis of the APR item completion rate in the survey, the evaluation team decided to exclude cases that only

<sup>197</sup> APR items in the survey included the following: "What is the highest level of education that you expect to complete?"; "Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?"; "Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?"; "Do you think you will be able to afford to attend a public 4-year college using financial aid?" and "5) What is your current grade level?"

completed one of the four selected APR items used in the analysis.<sup>198</sup> Of the 1,135 cases, 3 cases were excluded for only completing one APR item, as documented in Table G.2.

**Table G.2. APR Item Completion**

APR Item Exclusion	# of Cases
Completed four APR items	1,077
Completed three APR items	47
Completed two APR items	8
Completed one APR item	3
Total	1,135

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Table G.3 documents all of the reasons why surveys were excluded, including the aforementioned reasons, along with the number of excluded surveys for each reason. These surveys were excluded from the response rates reported in Table 3.2. Improved practices in survey administration and student oversight will help to address the most frequent reasons for exclusion (e.g., reiterating the need to complete the consent page of the survey, completing less than 50% or other cut-off point of the survey, and indicating a different grade from survey primary cohort) to minimize the need for exclusion in the future. After data cleaning (a standard practice to prepare data for analysis by removing invalid responses), 1,132 student surveys (73% of the surveys received) remained for analyses.<sup>199</sup>

All of the analyses in this report are based on the cleaned survey data. Spring 2016 is the first year that all students completed the survey online, as paper versions of the survey were not requested by any of the schools. 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. With the exception of one question that required an answer to determine the next section of the survey, 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 included the percentages of responses based on the number of respondents who selected options other than N/A.

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<sup>198</sup> Fifth APR item asks current grade level, however, because this item is in the background section of the survey, this question along with the other background section questions are not subject to the cleaning process and do not count towards the total number of questions when calculating at least a 50% of the survey.

<sup>199</sup> Reasons for exclusion included the following: dissenting to taking the survey or simply not answering the question, indicating the student is in a grade other than Grade 10, and completing less than 50%, or other cut-off point, of the survey items, or completing only one of the four APR items. Excluding surveys based on lack of data is a generally accepted practice within an evaluation, given the perception that the lack of completeness of a high number of items may indicate disinterest or a lack of focus on the part of the respondent. The surveys are voluntary for the students and some students responded by indicating that they did not wish to complete the survey.

**Table G.3. Excluded Student Surveys, Spring 2016**

Reason for Exclusion	Number of Student Surveys Excluded
Dissented to take the survey or did not answer	159
Declared that they already took surveys in the other format (online or paper)	0
Indicated grade other than Grade 10	43
Completed less than 50% of survey (50% of survey items missing)	214
Completed only one of the four APR items in survey	3
Total Excluded	419
Total Received	1,551
Total Remaining for Analysis	1,132

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

## G.2 Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

All surveys were collected anonymously; respondents were directed to not put their name on the survey. However, they were asked to complete background items; see Table G.2 below for student responses to items about ethnicity/race, gender, free- or reduced-price lunch participation, language spoken, and parent education level.

The majority of the students (70% of respondents) identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino in spring 2016, which aligns with data from spring 2015. In addition, the majority of students reported speaking English at home (61%) and with their friends (80%), which is also similar to previously reported data. While students reported participation in free- or reduced-price lunch in similar percentages over time from 2013 through 2014, this question was not included in the survey in spring 2016.

**Table G.4. Student Survey Respondent Demographic Characteristics: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, Spring 2016\***

	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Spring 2016
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>				
Asian	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	<1%	2%	3%	1%
Black or African American	11%	7%	8%	10%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	79%	81%	67%	70%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	0%	<1%
White	4%	3%	8%	6%
Two or more races	2%	2%	2%	0%
Race unknown/Do not wish to share	2%	4%	12%	2%
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	49%	48%	42%	49%
Male	51%	52%	43%	51%
<b>Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation</b>				
Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation	62%	67%	66%	--
<b>Language Spoken at Home</b>				
English	66%	56%	55%	61%
Spanish	27%	13%	13%	12%
Both English and Spanish	7%	30%	31%	26%
Other or Multiple	<1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Language Spoken with Friends</b>				
English	90%	78%	78%	80%
Spanish	3%	3%	3%	1%
Both English and Spanish	6%	19%	18%	19%
Other	<1%	1%	1%	1%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2015; Spring 2016); Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Fall 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation item not included in the Spring 2016 survey; Language spoken with friends not included in the Fall 2015 parent survey.

**Table G.5. Parent Survey Respondent Demographic Characteristics: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, Spring 2016\***

	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Fall 2015
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>				
Asian	0%	<1%	1%	2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	<1%	1%	<1%
Black or African American	3%	5%	8%	13%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	88%	86%	57%	71%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%	2%	1%
White	6%	5%	8%	12%
Two or more races	<1%	<1%	1%	1%
Race unknown/Do not wish to share	2%	3%	21%	22%
<b>Child Gender</b>				
Female	58%	56%	51%	50%
Male	42%	44%	49%	50%
<b>Parent Gender</b>				
Female	86%	85%	86%	--
Male	14%	15%	14%	--
<b>Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation</b>				
Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation	86%	85%	78%	75%
<b>Language Spoken at Home</b>				
English	--	56%	63%	66%
Spanish	--	21%	16%	14%
Both English and Spanish	--	23%	21%	20%
Other or Multiple	--	0%	1%	<1%
<b>Parent's Highest Level of Education</b>				
Less than high school		14%	15%	10%
High school	57%	36%	29%	31%
Some college	26%	29%	29%	26%
2-year college	7%	9%	10%	10%
4-year college	8%	8%	11%	8%
More than a 4-year college	3%	4%	7%	4%
I do not wish to answer this question	--	--	--	12%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2015; Spring 2016)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Parent Gender item not included in the Spring 2016 survey; Language spoken at home not included in the Spring 2013 parent survey; The option "I do not wish to answer this question" when asking Parent's Highest Level of Education is only available in the Spring 2016 survey.

### G.3 Educational Expectations and Aspirations

**Table G.6. Students' and Parents' Educational Aspirations and Expectations: Spring 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, Fall 2015, and Spring 2016**

	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%
Parent Aspirations (Fall 2015)	729	4.8%	5.8%	13.6%	32.5%	43.3%
Parent Expectations (Fall 2015)	735	3.6%	5.6%	11.4%	37.6%	41.9%
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%
Student Aspirations (Spring 2015)	1,326	9.0%	6.8%	12.4%	39.7%	32.1%
Student Expectations (Spring 2015)	1,324	11.3%	11.0%	18.7%	37.3%	21.6%
Student Aspirations (Spring 2016)	1,129	9.9%	6.6%	11.6%	41.5%	30.4%
Student Expectations (Spring 2016)	1,128	11.6%	9.2%	18.8%	41.6%	18.8%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Fall 2013; Spring 2014; Spring 2015; Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Spring 2013 surveys only asked about four-year degree or higher whereas fall 2013 and spring 2014 surveys asked about four-year degree and more than a four-year degree separately.



**Table G.7. Parent Educational Aspirations by Expectations, Fall 2015\***

	n	Expect Some High School	Expect High School	Expect Some College	Expect Two-Year College Degree	Expect Four-Year College Degree	Expect More than Four-Year College Degree
Aspire for Less than High School	9	22.2%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%
Aspire for High School or Less	26	0.0%	42.3%	7.7%	3.8%	26.9%	19.2%
Aspire for Some College	41	0.0%	12.2%	36.6%	24.4%	22.0%	4.9%
Aspire for Two-Year College Degree	99	0.0%	5.1%	9.1%	31.3%	40.4%	14.1%
Aspire for Four-Year College Degree	236	0.0%	1.3%	3.8%	11.9%	59.3%	23.7%
Aspire for More than Four-Year College Degree	313	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	3.5%	24.0%	71.6%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Fall 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Parent aspirations did not significantly differ from parent expectations between a “4-year or more college degree” category and “other” category:  $\chi^2(1) = 2.7, p > .05$ .

**Table G.8. Students' Educational Aspirations by Expectations, Spring 2016\***

	n	Expect Some 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 Some High School*	23	8.7%	21.7%	0.0%	21.7%	21.7%	26.1%
Aspire for High School*	89	2.2%	60.7%	10.1%	6.7%	10.1%	10.1%
Aspire for Some College	75	1.3%	32.0%	52.0%	12.0%	2.7%	0.0%
Aspire for Two-Year College Degree	130	0.0%	13.1%	16.9%	51.5%	16.9%	1.5%
Aspire for Four-Year College Degree	465	0.4%	3.7%	5.2%	22.2%	65.4%	3.2%
Aspire for More than Four-Year College Degree	343	0.0%	2.0%	2.9%	6.4%	36.4%	52.2%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Student aspirations significantly differed from student expectations between a “4-year or more college degree” category and “other” category:  $\chi^2(1) = 33.1, p < .001$ ; rewording of previous options “Aspire for Less than High School” and “Aspire for High School or Less”

### G.3.1 Comparisons by School: Aspirations, Expectations, and College Plans

**Table G.9. Students' Educational Aspirations by School, Spring 2016\***

School	n	Some High School	High School	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree	More than Four-Year College Degree
High School H	253	0.8%	7.9%	10.3%	13.4%	40.3%	27.3%
High School I	179	2.8%	12.8%	4.5%	15.1%	38.4%	26.3%
High School J	149	4.0%	6.0%	7.4%	12.1%	41.6%	28.9%
High School K	280	1.4%	7.5%	6.4%	12.9%	45.7%	26.1%
High School L	83	1.2%	4.8%	4.8%	7.2%	39.8%	42.2%
High School M	185	2.7%	6.5%	4.3%	5.4%	40.0%	41.1%
Overall	1,129	2.0%	7.9%	6.6%	11.6%	41.5%	30.4%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Students' educational aspirations differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(25) = 49.4, p < .01$

**Table G.10. Students' Educational Expectations by School, Spring 2016\***

School	n	Some High School	High School	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree	More than Four-Year College Degree
High School H	251	0.8%	12.0%	11.2%	20.3%	40.6%	15.1%
High School I	179	1.1%	16.2%	10.6%	23.5%	30.7%	17.9%
High School J	149	1.3%	12.1%	10.7%	20.1%	38.9%	16.8%
High School K	282	0.0%	9.9%	9.6%	18.4%	45.4%	16.7%
High School L	83	0.0%	7.2%	4.8%	12.0%	48.2%	27.7%
High School M	184	0.5%	7.1%	5.4%	14.7%	46.7%	25.5%
Overall	1,128	0.6%	11.0%	9.2%	18.8%	41.6%	18.8%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Students' educational expectations differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(25) = 45.0, p < .01$

**Table G.11. Parents' Educational Expectations by School, Fall 2015\***

School	n	Less than High School	High School	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree	More than Four-Year College Degree
High School H	174	1.1%	6.3%	9.8%	12.1%	32.8%	37.9%
High School I	117	0.0%	3.4%	6.0%	14.5%	36.8%	39.3%
High School J	79	0.0%	2.5%	8.9%	15.2%	46.8%	26.6%
High School K	187	0.0%	2.1%	1.1%	12.3%	41.7%	42.8%
High School L	44	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	36.4%	63.6%
High School M	134	0.0%	2.2%	6.0%	8.2%	33.6%	50.0%
Overall	735	0.3%	3.3%	5.6%	11.4%	37.6%	41.9%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Fall 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Parents' educational expectations differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(25) = 49.6, p < .01$

**Table G.12. Student Differences by School: Attending College is Important for My Career Goals and Future, Spring 2016\***

School	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
High School H	239	3.3%	4.6%	38.1%	54.0%
High School I	145	5.5%	8.3%	37.2%	49.0%
High School J	136	2.2%	4.4%	30.1%	63.2%
High School K	262	4.6%	11.8%	36.3%	47.3%
High School L	72	2.8%	6.9%	45.8%	44.4%
High School M	174	3.4%	6.3%	28.7%	61.5%
Overall	1,028	3.8%	7.4%	35.4%	53.4%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Student levels of agreement differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 28.6, p < .05$ .

**Table G.13. Percentages of Students Who Do and Do Not Credit Texas GEAR UP SG in Helping Them Determine Their Postsecondary Plans, Spring 2016\***

School	n	Yes, GEAR UP helped me decide to go to college	No, I was already planning on going to college	No, I still don't plan to go to college	Does not apply; I do plan to go to college	Does not apply; I do not plan to go to college
High School H	254	60.6%	24.8%	5.1%	7.5%	2.0%
High School I	179	61.5%	24.6%	5.6%	6.1%	2.2%
High School J	149	72.5%	22.1%	1.3%	2.7%	1.3%
High School K	282	37.6%	42.6%	5.7%	11.7%	2.5%
High School L	83	34.9%	51.8%	6.0%	7.2%	0.0%
High School M	185	68.6%	23.2%	4.3%	3.2%	0.5%
Overall	1,132	56.0%	30.6%	4.8%	7.0%	1.7%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Percentages in Table G.13 reflect the response rates prior to removing respondents that selected the following response option: "Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP at my school but I do plan to go to college," or "Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP at my school and I do not plan to go to college." In corresponding Figure 3.4, however, when including the "Does not apply" options, the following percentages of total responses for these two options are as follows: Spring 2013: 10.8% (n=1,363), Spring 2014: 6.2% (n=1,287), Spring 2015: 7.2% (n=1,313), and Spring 2016: 8.7% (n=1,132). Due to anonymity, responses are not linked to an individual respondent, thus comparisons over time are based on aggregate responses.

\* Student responses differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(15) = 101.4, p < .001$ .

**Table G.14. Students' Reported Reasons For Not Planning on Continuing Education After High School, Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016\***

If you do not continue your education after high school, what would be the reason(s)? (Select all that apply)	Spring 2013 (n= 680)	Spring 2014 (n= 689)	Spring 2015 (n= 810)	Spring 2016 (n=27)
Family commitments	16.0% n=109	15.8% n=109	16.8% n=136	11.1% n=3
I need to work after HS	17.8% n=121	21.8% n=150	22.0% n=178	37.0% n=10
I want to work after HS	33.4% n=227	37.9% n=261	30.0% n=243	55.6% n=15
I will not need more than HS to succeed	6.0% n=41	6.2% n=43	4.4% n=36	14.8% n=4
I want to join the military service after HS	23.1% n=157	18.1% n=125	18.3% n=148	22.2% n=6
It costs too much/I cannot afford it	47.5% n=323	38.9% n=268	45.6% n=369	40.7% n=11
My grades are not good enough	21.8% n=148	19.3% n=133	24.0% n=194	37.0% n=19
My performance on college entrance exams	-- --	-- --	-- --	22.0% n=6
Other	7.4% n=50	5.2% n=36	6.4% n=52	22.0% n=6

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016)

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Due to the skip logic used in question 5 (see Table G.10) and question 6, as shown in section D.2 of this report, a small percentage of students had the background needed to be asked this question. As a result, the number of students who answered the items in Table G.11 was significantly lower than in previous years.

## G.4 Discussions and Knowledge about College

**Table G.15. Students' Reported College Information Sources: Percentages by Source, Spring 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016**

Select the sources of information that have helped you to think about your future college education. (Select all that apply)	Spring 2013 (n=1,339)	Fall 2013 (n=1,143)	Spring 2014 (n= 1,146)	Spring 2015 (n= 1,308)	Spring 2016 (n=1,119)
Research on GEAR UP website	15.0%	13.6%	14.7%	18.2%	22.2%
Information from GEAR UP staff/events	28.8%	37.6%	46.2%*	33.6%	37.6%
Information from or discussions with parents/family members	60.8%	50.2%	48.7%*	41.8%	44.8%
Information from or discussions with friends or other people my age	33.2%	32.0%	38.3%*	39.7%	40.7%
Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors	50.3%	31.5%	37.4%*	35.9%	39.0%
Research that I have done on my own	34.0%	29.1%	29.2%*	35.9%	39.6%
College field trip	--	--	--	51.7%	--
College fair	--	--	--	26.2%	30.3%
Program other than GEAR UP (e.g., AVID, Breakthrough)	1.3%	19.2%	21.6%	20.9%	23.0%
Watching sports	.5%	23.0%	21.1%	20.1%	20.0%
Television		19.9%	21.0%	21.7%	23.1%
Information from a class activity or assignment	0.4%	41.3%	45.1%	47.3%	38.5%
Other (please specify other sources)	5.2%	3.3%	1.8%*	2.1%	4.2%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013; Spring 2014; Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

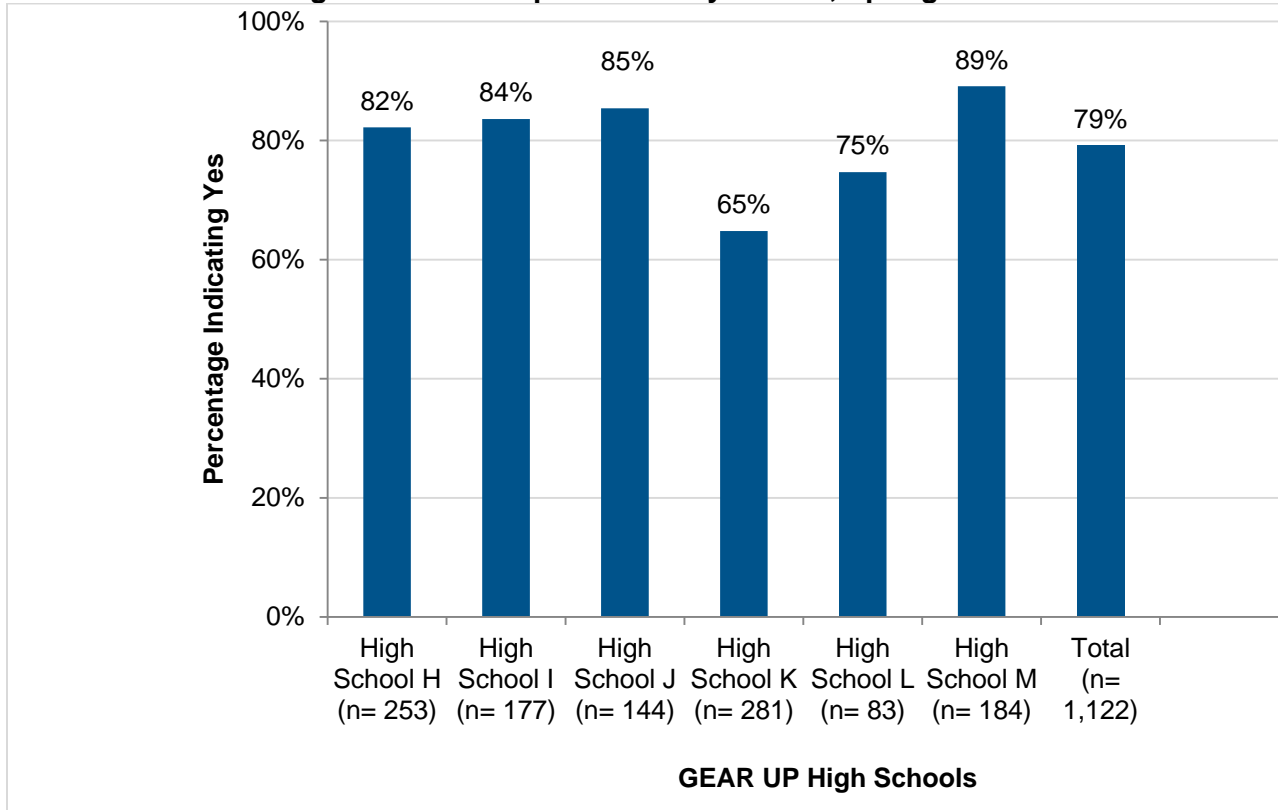
**Table G.16. Students' Reported College Information Sources by School, Spring 2016\***

School	n	GEAR UP Website	Discussions with GEAR UP staff/ Information at GEAR UP events
High School H	254	22.0%	40.9%
High School I	179	19.0%	37.4%
High School J	149	29.5%	46.3%
High School K	282	12.8%	22.0%
High School L	83	16.9%	25.3%
High School M	185	36.2%	55.7%
Overall	1,132	22.2%	37.6%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

\* Student responses differed significantly across schools: GEAR UP Website:  $\chi^2(5) = 42.7, p < .01$ ; Staff/events:  $\chi^2(5) = 66.4, p < .01$ .

**Figure G.1. Percentage of Students Reporting “Yes” to GEAR UP Discussions about College Entrance Requirements by School, Spring 2016\***

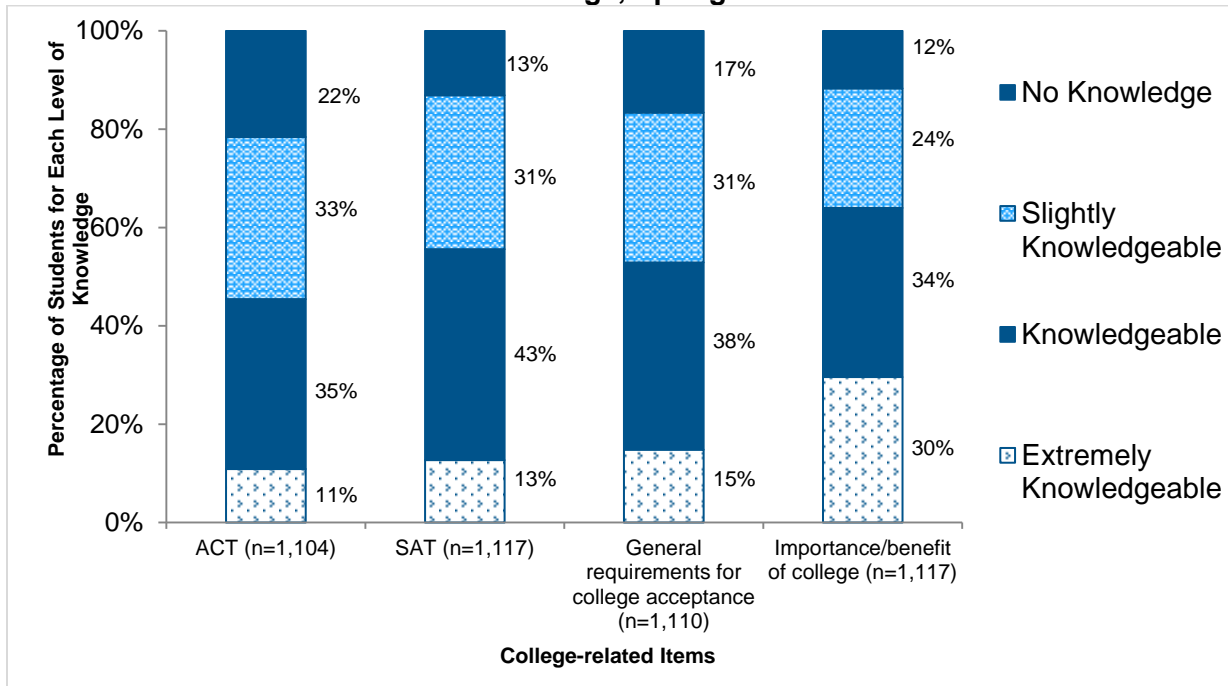


Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: These data include responses to the following item: “Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?”

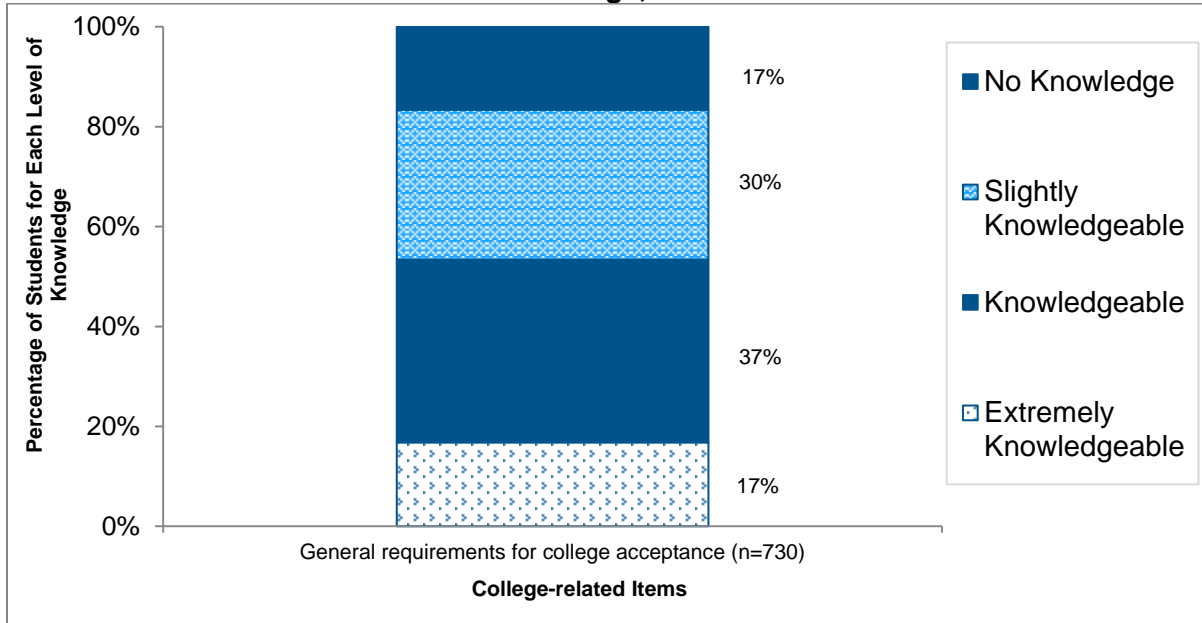
\* Student responses differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 54.1, p < .01$ .

**Figure G.2. Students' Perceived Knowledge about College: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Spring 2016**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).  
 Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Figure G.3. Parents' Perceived Knowledge about College: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Fall 2015**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Survey (Fall 2015).  
 Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Table G.17. Students' Average Knowledge of College Terms and Concepts: Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016**

College Term/Concept	Spring 2013	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Spring 2016
Importance/Benefit of College	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8
General Requirements for College Acceptance	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.5
ACT	1.8	1.9	2.2	2.4
SAT	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.6

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, Spring 2016).

Note: Response options to the question "How much do you know about each of the following?" are scaled as follows: 1 – No Knowledge; 2 – Slightly Knowledgeable; 3 – Knowledgeable; 4 – Extremely Knowledgeable.

**Table G.18. Average Student Knowledge of College Terms, By School, Spring 2016\***

School	n	SAT*	n	ACT*	n	General Requirements for College Entrance	n	Importance / Benefit of College
High School H	251	2.5	249	2.3	249	2.6	252	2.8
High School I	176	2.4	173	2.2	176	2.4	175	2.6
High School J	148	2.8	147	2.6	145	2.7	148	3.0
High School K	276	2.3	275	2.1	279	2.4	280	2.6
High School L	83	2.7	82	2.4	82	2.6	83	2.9
High School M	183	2.9	178	2.7	179	2.8	179	3.2
Overall	1,117	2.6	1,104	2.4	1,110	2.5	1,117	2.8

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

\* Students' self-reported knowledge differed significantly across schools each item: Importance/benefit of college-  $F(5, 1,111) = 11.5, p < .01$ ; General requirements for college acceptance-  $F(5, 1,104) = 9.5, p < .01$ ; SAT-  $F(5, 1,111) = 15.6, p < .01$ ; ACT-  $F(5, 1,098) = 12.2, p < .01$ .



**Table G.19. Students' Plans to Take Advanced Courses:  
Percentages by Level of Agreement and Content Area, Comparisons Across Spring 2013,  
Fall 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016\***

How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	Year	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%
	Spring 2014	1,235	10.1%	20.4%	39.8%	29.7%
	Spring 2015	1,131	7.3%	24.6%	42.7%	25.5%
	Spring 2016	1,021	8.7%	26.2%	37.8%	27.2%
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%
	Spring 2014	1,240	8.1%	20.8%	39.7%	31.4%
	Spring 2015	1,131	5.0%	21.7%	45.8%	27.5%
	Spring 2016	1,024	6.9%	25.5%	37.6%	30.0%
I am planning to take an advanced course in science next year.	Spring 2013	1,210	11.4%	21.0%	36.3%	31.3%
	Spring 2014	1,243	8.8%	22.3%	38.2%	30.7%
	Spring 2015	1,127	5.9%	24.4%	41.7%	28.0%
	Spring 2016	1,029	8.0%	28.0%	36.5%	27.5%
I am planning to take an advanced course in social studies next year.	Spring 2013	--	--	--	--	--
	Spring 2014	--	--	--	--	--
	Spring 2015	--	--	--	--	--
	Spring 2016	1,028	8.5%	30.5%	34.7%	26.3%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages of those who responded with some level of agreement may not total exactly 100% due to rounding.

\* Student perceptions differed significantly from spring 2013 to spring 2016 on *strongly agreeing* to plans to take an advanced course for only one subject area: Mathematics:  $\chi^2(3) = 9.7, p < .05$ ; English Language Arts:  $\chi^2(3) = 6.7, p > .05$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(3) = 5.2, p > .05$ .

**Table G.20. Student Differences by School: Student Plans for Taking Advanced Mathematics, English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies, Spring 2016\***

School	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Mathematics</b>					
High School H	236	3.4%	18.6%	47.5%	30.5%
High School I	146	11.6%	18.5%	39.7%	30.1%
High School J	133	10.5%	30.1%	33.1%	26.3%
High School K	261	12.6%	37.9%	27.2%	22.2%
High School L	72	6.9%	25.0%	48.6%	19.4%
High School M	173	6.9%	23.1%	38.2%	31.8%
Overall	1,021	8.7%	26.2%	37.8%	27.2%
<b>English Language Arts</b>					
High School H	239	4.2%	17.6%	46.0%	32.2%
High School I	143	10.5%	20.3%	38.5%	30.8%
High School J	135	4.4%	31.1%	34.8%	29.6%
High School K	262	10.7%	36.6%	28.6%	24.0%
High School L	72	5.6%	26.4%	43.1%	25.0%
High School M	173	4.6%	19.1%	38.7%	37.6%
Overall	1,024	6.9%	25.5%	37.6%	30.0%
<b>Science</b>					
High School H	239	4.2%	23.8%	43.5%	28.5%
High School I	143	11.2%	23.1%	37.1%	28.7%
High School J	136	8.8%	41.2%	25.7%	24.3%
High School K	264	11.7%	35.2%	29.2%	23.9%
High School L	73	4.1%	26.0%	46.6%	23.3%
High School M	174	5.7%	17.2%	42.0%	35.1%
Overall	1,029	8.0%	28.0%	36.5%	27.5%
<b>Social Studies</b>					
High School H	238	4.2%	24.8%	42.0%	29.0%
High School I	144	11.8%	24.3%	36.8%	27.1%
High School J	136	5.9%	41.2%	25.0%	27.9%
High School K	263	12.5%	38.8%	26.6%	22.1%
High School L	73	5.5%	26.0%	47.9%	20.5%
High School M	174	8.6%	24.7%	37.4%	29.3%
Overall	1,028	8.5%	30.5%	34.7%	26.3%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages of those who responded with some level of agreement may not total exactly 100% due to rounding.

\* Student responses differed significantly across schools: Mathematics:  $\chi^2(15) = 62.2, p < .01$ ; English Language Arts:  $\chi^2(15) = 56.4, p < .01$ ; Science-  $\chi^2(15) = 57.7, p < .01$ ; Social Studies-  $\chi^2(15) = 52.4, p < .01$ .

**Table G.21. Students' Participation in Advanced Courses: Percentages by Participation Rate and Content Area, Comparisons Across Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, and Spring 2016**

Have you participated in this activity during this school year	Year	n	Yes	%	No	%
Taking a pre-AP or AP mathematics course.*	Spring 2013	1,364	1,085	79.5%	279	20.5%
	Spring 2014	1,237	194	15.7%	1,043	84.3%
	Spring 2015	1,126	590	52.4%	536	47.6%
	Spring 2016	1,080	593	54.9%	487	45.1%
Taking a pre-AP or AP English/language arts course.*	Spring 2013	1,362	1,063	78.0%	299	22.0%
	Spring 2014	1,256	464	36.9%	792	63.1%
	Spring 2015	1,170	755	64.5%	415	35.5%
	Spring 2016	1,078	664	61.6%	414	38.4%
Taking a pre-AP or AP science courses.*	Spring 2013	1,355	1,041	76.8%	314	23.2%
	Spring 2014	1,255	440	35.1%	815	64.9%
	Spring 2015	1,168	666	57.0%	502	43.0%
	Spring 2016	1,070	583	54.5%	487	45.5%
Taking a pre-AP or AP social studies course.*	Spring 2013	-	-	-	-	-
	Spring 2014	1,264	601	47.5%	663	52.5%
	Spring 2015	1,155	644	55.8%	511	44.2%
	Spring 2016	1,074	531	49.4%	543	50.6%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages of those who responded with some level of agreement may not total exactly 100% due to rounding.

\* Student response differed across years (since spring 2013, with the exception of social studies as the item was not asked until spring 2014): Mathematics:  $\chi^2(3) = 1,068.5$ ,  $p < .001$ ; ELA:  $\chi^2(3) = 472.4$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Science:  $\chi^2(3) = 463.3$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Social studies:  $\chi^2(2) = 12.1$ ,  $p < .001$ .

## G.5 Understanding of Financial Aspects Related to Postsecondary Education

In addition to the narrative in chapter 3 that includes in depth discussions about parent and student understanding of aspects about financing college, the tables and figures that follow provide additional data about this topic.

**Table G.22. Percentage of Students Who Reported Engaging in Discussions with GEAR UP Staff about Financial Aid, By School, Spring 2016\***

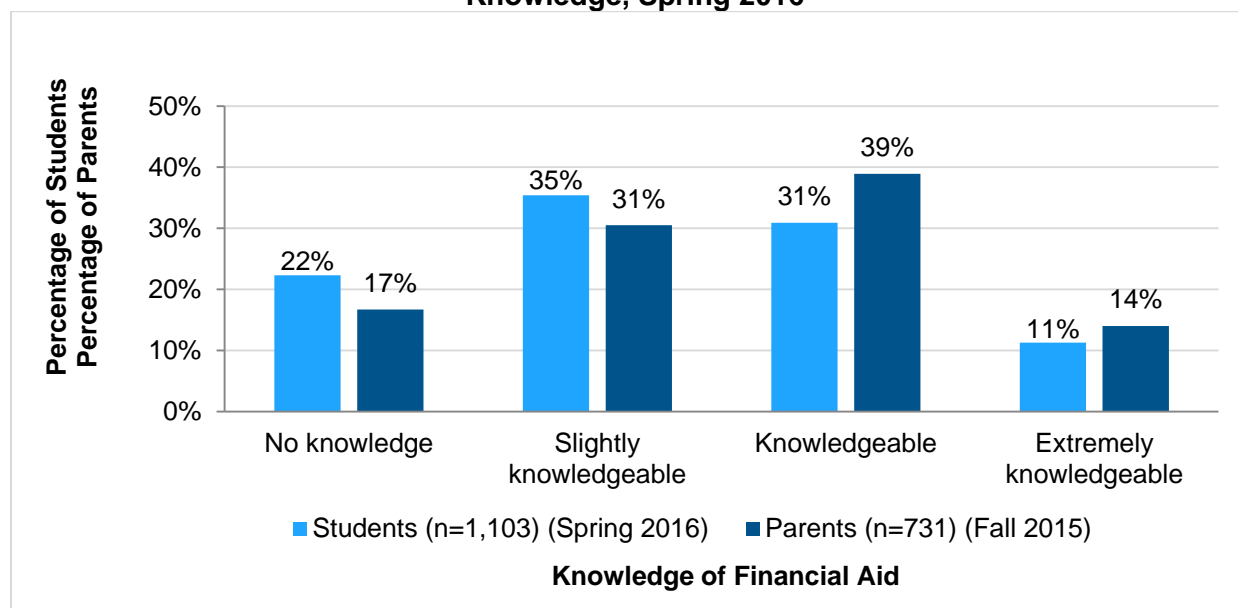
School	n	Yes
High School H	246	69.5%
High School I	169	66.9%
High School J	143	83.2%
High School K	280	51.4%
High School L	82	76.8%
High School M	184	82.1%
Overall	1,104	68.9%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Data are responses to the following question: "Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about the availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?"

\* Student-reported engagement in discussions about the availability of financial aid differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(5) = 71.3$ ,  $p < .01$ .

**Figure G.4. Parents' and Students' Knowledge Regarding Financial Aid and the Costs/Benefits of Pursuing Postsecondary Education: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, Spring 2016**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016); Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Fall 2015).

**Table G.23. Student Knowledge about Financial Aid Terms, Spring 2016\***

How much do you know about each of the following?	n	No Knowledge	Slightly Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
FAFSA <sup>a</sup>	1,113	43.4%	34.5%	17.8%	4.3%
Federal Pell Grants	1,088	54.0%	28.4%	13.0%	4.6%
Federal student loans	1,108	25.5%	37.4%	29.6%	7.6%
Federal work-study	1,092	45.1%	30.6%	18.5%	5.8%
Scholarships	1,105	5.9%	23.4%	42.6%	28.1%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup> FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid. However, the survey items used only the acronym.

\* Students' indication of being either *Knowledgeable* or *Extremely Knowledgeable* about the following financial aid terms significantly differed from spring 2013 to spring 2016: FAFSA:  $\chi^2(3) = 33.4, p < .01$ ; Federal student loans: Scholarships:  $\chi^2(3) = 15.0, p < .01$ .

**Table G.24. Parents' (Fall 2015) and Students' Perceptions of Affordability, Spring 2016\***

Type of Postsecondary School	n	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Not Sure	Probably	Definitely
Student						
Local public community college	1,112	3.6%	8.5%	28.6%	38.9%	20.4%
Public 4-year college	1,111	6.4%	14.1%	36.0%	30.3%	13.1%
Parent						
Local public community college	722	5.1%	13.6%	--	46.7%	34.6%
Public 4-year college	716	3.4%	11.3%	--	42.6%	42.7%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016) and Parent Surveys (Fall 2015).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* *Not Sure* option not included in Parent Survey. Students that reported themselves as either *Definitely* or *Probably* able to afford the following types of higher education significantly differed from spring 2013 to spring 2016: Local public community college:  $\chi^2(3) = 54.4, p < .01$ ; Public 4-year college:  $\chi^2(3) = 31.5, p < .001$ .

**Table G.25. Student Differences by School: Perceived Affordability of College, Spring 2016\***

School	n	Definitely Not	Probably Not	Not Sure	Probably	Definitely
<b>Community College</b>						
High School H	252	3.2%	10.3%	33.3%	39.3%	13.9%
High School I	174	3.4%	12.6%	29.3%	36.2%	18.4%
High School J	147	7.5%	12.9%	37.4%	27.2%	15.0%
High School K	277	4.0%	9.4%	27.4%	42.4%	17.0%
High School L	81	2.5%	3.7%	25.9%	39.5%	28.4%
High School M	183	3.8%	2.7%	23.0%	36.1%	34.4%
Overall	1,112	3.6%	8.5%	28.6%	38.9%	20.4%
<b>Four-Year College</b>						
High School H	252	7.9%	11.5%	42.9%	27.4%	10.3%
High School I	172	5.2%	22.1%	33.1%	27.9%	11.6%
High School J	147	7.5%	12.9%	37.4%	27.2%	15.0%
High School K	276	6.5%	16.3%	35.1%	33.7%	8.3%
High School L	81	4.9%	16.0%	30.9%	30.0%	17.3%
High School M	183	4.9%	7.1%	31.7%	33.9%	22.4%
Overall	1,111	6.4%	14.1%	36.0%	30.3%	13.1%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

\* Student-reported perceived affordability of college differed significantly across schools: Local community college:  $\chi^2(20) = 48.5, p < .001$ ;  $\chi^2(20) = 47.8, p < .001$ .

## G.6 Perceptions of Texas GEAR UP State Grant

**Table G.26. Student Perceptions of Effectiveness, Spring 2016**

Activity	n	Not Effective	Slightly Effective	Mostly Effective	Very Effective
Taking Algebra I	515	9.5%	27.2%	42.9%	20.4%
Taking a pre-AP or AP mathematics course	532	6.6%	26.7%	43.2%	23.5%
Taking an advanced English/writing course	598	5.4%	21.6%	45.0%	28.1%
Taking an advanced science course	526	8.6%	26.6%	42.2%	22.6%
Taking other advanced courses (history, Spanish)	470	9.4%	26.2%	40.0%	24.5%
Tutoring/homework assistance in math	429	7.2%	26.3%	38.0%	28.4%
Tutoring/homework assistance in English	342	6.7%	26.6%	41.2%	25.4%
Tutoring/homework assistance in science	320	10.0%	28.8%	35.3%	25.9%
Tutoring/homework assistance in social science	239	7.1%	29.7%	34.3%	28.9%
Mentoring	249	4.4%	27.7%	36.9%	30.9%
2015 GEAR UP summer program	294	6.1%	19.4%	35.0%	39.5%
Academic or career counseling/advising	316	4.7%	25.3%	39.9%	30.1%
Financial aid counseling/advising	189	5.8%	24.3%	41.3%	28.6%
College visits/college student shadowing	436	5.3%	21.8%	37.2%	35.8%
Job site visit/job shadowing	238	6.7%	22.3%	44.1%	26.9%
Educational field trips	471	3.6%	22.9%	40.8%	32.7%
Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	291	6.2%	27.1%	41.2%	25.4%
Family/cultural events	283	6.4%	26.9%	39.2%	27.6%
Met with College Preparation Advisor	594	4.4%	24.9%	43.3%	27.4%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Survey (Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages for all activities except "Met with College Preparation Advisor" exclude "No" responses to the initial question of "Have you participated in this activity during this school year?", and only students reporting having met their College Preparation Advisor were included in determining percentages for the activity "Have you ever met with the College Preparation Advisor at your school?" N value includes total responding that they participated in activity, percentages are based on that number. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Table G.27. Student Differences by School: Average Perceptions of Effectiveness, Spring 2016\***

School	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M	Overall
n	66	39	40	52	15	82	294
<b>GEAR UP Summer Program</b>	3.1	3	3	3	3.1	3.2	3.1
n	105	67	78	74	32	115	471
<b>Educational Trips</b>	3.1	3.1	3.1	2.6	2.9	3.2	3
n	93	65	73	72	20	113	436
<b>College Visits</b>	3.0	3.0	3.2	2.6	3.2	3.2	3.0
n	137	109	100	68	29	151	594
<b>Meeting With College Preparation Advisors</b>	2.9	3.0	3.1	2.5	2.7	3.1	2.9
n	81	41	53	49	12	80	316
<b>Academic or Career Counseling/ Advising*</b>	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.7	3.0	3.2	3.0
n	54	40	37	36	13	69	249
<b>Mentoring</b>	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.6	3.0	3.1	2.9
n	49	26	45	49	14	55	238
<b>Job Site Visit/Shadowing</b>	2.7	2.9	3.1	2.8	2.9	3.1	2.9
n	69	34	48	49	18	73	291
<b>School Workshops</b>	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.9	3.1	2.9
n	64	28	45	65	17	64	283
<b>My Participation in Family/Cultural Events</b>	2.8	2.8	3.0	2.8	2.7	3.2	2.9
n	60	20	43	62	12	68	265
<b>My Parents' Participation in Family/Cultural Events</b>	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.8	3.0	2.8
n	191	117	94	159	56	124	741
<b>Tutoring, Any Subject</b>	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.1	2.6	2.3	2.3

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

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

**Table G.28. Student Differences by School: Participation in Select GEAR UP Activities, Spring 2016\***

School	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M	Overall
Tutoring, Any subject	n=246 96.9%	n=171 95.5%	n=139 93.3%	n=265 94.0%	n=79 95.2%	n=174 94.1%	n=1,074 94.9%
Mentoring	n=241 26.1%	n=169 28.4%	n=134 32.1%	n=260 18.5%	n=76 18.4%	n=171 44.4%	n=1,051 27.8%
College Preparation Advisor	n=253 56.9%	n=177 65.0%	n=146 69.2%	n=275 25.5%	n=83 26.6%	n=180 85.6%	n=1,114 54.25%
GEAR UP Summer Program	n=244 30.7%	n=168 26.8%	n=137 35.8%	n=261 24.9%	n=79 26.6%	n=173 54.9%	n=1,062 33.0%
Academic Advising	n=232 41.8%	n=143 39.2%	n=127 52.8%	n=250 28.4%	n=66 22.7%	n=160 59.4%	n=978 41.0%
Financial Aid Counseling	n=231 23.8%	n=139 23.0%	n=126 39.7%	n=245 15.5%	n=66 19.7%	n=159 37.1%	n=966 25.6%
Job Site Visiting/Shadowing	n=233 26.6%	n=138 24.6%	n=127 45.7%	n=244 29.1%	n=66 25.8%	n=159 43.4%	n=967 32.2%
College Visits	n=231 49.4%	n=138 57.2%	n=128 77.3%	n=245 41.6%	n=65 35.4%	n=161 82.6%	n=968 56.8%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

Note: Percentages include those who responded yes to the following item: "Have you participated in this activity in this school year (2015–2016)?"

\* Students had four separate items, each item asking about a topic of tutoring (Math, ELA, Science, and History). The information in this table merges these variables. The degree to which average student responses differed across schools varied: GEAR UP Summer Program:  $\chi^2(5) = 50.8, p < .01$ ; Educational trips:  $\chi^2(5) = 99.2, p < .01$ ; College visit:  $\chi^2(5) = 106.1, p < .01$ ; Meeting with the College Preparation Advisor:  $\chi^2(10) = 200.7, p < .01$ ; Academic or Career Counseling/Advising:  $\chi^2(5) = 55.4, p < .01$ . Average responses by school are displayed in Table G.26, Appendix G.

**Table G.29. Student-Reported Reasons for Attending Summer Programs, Fall 2015**

Select the reasons that you attended the GEAR UP summer program.	n=402
I wanted to participate in a summer program(s).	73.4%
The summer program(s) provided an opportunity for me to spend time with friends.	46.0%
Someone from GEAR UP strongly encouraged me to attend the summer program(s).	43.8%
I thought it would help me to do well in my Grade 10 classes.	42.8%
The academic content focus of a summer program(s) was of interest to me.	39.3%
My parents wanted me to participate in a summer program(s).	38.1%
The school strongly encouraged me to attend the summer program(s).	35.8%
The summer program(s) was scheduled on days that I could attend.	35.1%
I thought it would help me to do well in my AP, Pre-AP, or college credit classes.	32.6%
The summer program(s) was scheduled at a time of day that I could attend.	30.6%
Other*	8.5%

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

Note: Response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.

**Table G.30. Student-Reported Reasons for NOT Attending Summer Programs, Fall 2015**

If you did NOT attend the GEAR UP summer program, select the reasons that you were NOT able to attend.	n=796
I did not want to participate in a summer program.	38.9%
I had family responsibilities and could not attend (e.g., watching siblings).	19.1%
Our family was not in the area during the time that summer programs I was aware of were scheduled (e.g., on vacation).	18.2%
The school did not inform me about any summer programs I might attend.	14.4%
I had a job and could not miss work to attend.	12.8%
The summer programs I was aware of were scheduled at a time of day that did not work for me.	12.6%
None of my friends were attending a summer program.	7.3%
The school did not encourage me to attend any summer programs.	6.9%
The academic content focus of the summer programs I was aware of were not of interest to me.	5.3%
My parents did not want me to participate in a summer program.	3.8%
The summer programs I was aware of were related to careers/jobs that I am not interested in learning more about.	3.0%
Other*	13.5%

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

Note: Response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.

**Table G.31. Student Endorsements, Spring 2016**

Select the reasons that you attended the GEAR UP summer program.	Year	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand how my endorsement(s) (major/minor) will help me to prepare for college and career.	Spring 2015	1,201	6.4%	14.5%	54.5%	24.6%
	Spring 2016	1,119	5.7%	11.4%	59.8%	23.1%
I found it easy to select my endorsement (s) (major/minor).	Spring 2015	1,167	8.5%	30.2%	45.1%	16.2%
	Spring 2016	1,117	6.2%	25.4%	52.7%	15.7%
I understand what I need to do if I decide to change my endorsement(s) (major/minor).	Spring 2015	1,206	7.5%	22.2%	52.4%	17.8%
	Spring 2016	1,117	9.5%	25.2%	51.5%	13.9%
I plan on dropping my endorsement(s) (major/minor) as soon as I am able to after my sophomore (Grade 10) year.	Spring 2015	1,191	30.0%	44.0%	19.8%	6.2%
	Spring 2016	1,115	25.5%	44.8%	23.0%	6.8%

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

Note: Response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses. Students who either agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements reported a significant difference since spring 2015: "I understand what I need to do if I decide to change my endorsement,"  $\chi^2(1) = 6.3, p < .05$ ; "I understand how my endorsement(s) will help me prepare for college/career,"  $\chi^2(1) = 5.3, p < .05$ ; "I found it easy to select an endorsement,"  $\chi^2(1) = 12.7, p < .001$ ; "I plan on dropping my endorsement as soon as I am able to after my sophomore (Grade 10) year,"  $\chi^2(1) = 4.0, p < .05$ .



## G.7 Overall Perceptions of and Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP State Grant

**Table G.32. Students' Overall Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG: Percentages by Level of Satisfaction By School, Spring 2016\***

School	n	Does Not Apply	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
High School H	223	5.8%	2.7%	7.2%	55.2%	29.1%
High School I	140	5.0%	4.3%	7.1%	52.9%	30.7%
High School J	131	3.1%	0.8%	1.5%	41.2%	53.4%
High School K	219	11.9%	3.7%	14.6%	54.3%	15.5%
High School L	83	6.5%	8.1%	9.7%	59.7%	16.1%
High School M	172	2.9%	3.5%	8.1%	41.3%	44.2%
Overall	947	6.2%	3.4%	8.5%	50.5%	31.5%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).

\* Student-reported satisfaction with GEAR UP differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(20) = 101.9, p < .01$ .

**Table G.33. Parents' Overall Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG: Percentages by Level of Satisfaction By School, Fall 2015\***

School	n	Does Not Apply	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
High School H	171	29.2%	1.8%	0.6%	46.8%	21.6%
High School I	116	25.0%	0.9%	5.2%	45.7%	23.3%
High School J	76	30.3%	0%	0%	38.2%	31.6%
High School K	184	69.0%	1.1%	0.5%	13.0%	16.3%
High School L	41	39.0%	0%	7.3%	17.1%	36.6%
High School M	115	7.0%	3.5%	0%	40.0%	49.6%
Overall	703	36.0%	1.4%	1.6%	34.0%	27.0%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Fall 2015).

\* Parent-reported satisfaction with GEAR UP differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(20) = 194.5, p < .01$ .

**Table G.34. Variables Used in Correlation, Spring 2016**

Variable 1	Response Option 1	Variable 2	Response Option 2	r Test Result
How much do you know about the following? <i>General requirements for college acceptance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not knowledgeable</li> <li>○ Slightly knowledgeable</li> <li>○ Knowledgeable</li> <li>○ Extremely knowledgeable</li> </ul>	<i>What is the highest level of education that you expect to complete?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Some high school</i></li> <li>○ <i>High school</i></li> <li>○ <i>Some college</i></li> <li>○ <i>2-year college degree</i></li> <li>○ <i>4-year college degree</i></li> <li>○ <i>More than a 4-year college degree</i></li> </ul>	$r(1,106) = .20, p < .01$
How much do you know about the following? (Aggregated mean across the following items) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>FAFSA</i></li> <li>○ <i>Federal Pell grants</i></li> <li>○ <i>Federal student loans</i></li> <li>○ <i>Federal work-study</i></li> <li>○ <i>Scholarships</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not knowledgeable</li> <li>○ Slightly knowledgeable</li> <li>○ Knowledgeable</li> <li>○ Extremely knowledgeable</li> </ul>	<i>What is the highest level of education that you expect to complete?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Some high school</i></li> <li>○ <i>High school</i></li> <li>○ <i>Some college</i></li> <li>○ <i>2-year college degree</i></li> <li>○ <i>4-year college degree</i></li> <li>○ <i>More than a 4-year college degree</i></li> </ul>	$R(1,125) = .22, p < .001$
<i>Someone from Texas GEAR UP or my school has discussed graduation requirements with me.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Strongly disagree</i></li> <li>○ <i>Disagree</i></li> <li>○ <i>Agree</i></li> <li>○ <i>Strongly agree</i></li> </ul>	<i>I plan to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Strongly disagree</i></li> <li>○ <i>Disagree</i></li> <li>○ <i>Agree</i></li> <li>○ <i>Strongly agree</i></li> </ul>	$r(1,107) = .35, p < .001$

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2016).