

GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project, 2003-04



Austin Independent School District
Department of Program Evaluation
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GEAR UP Austin Impacting Lives Project Evaluation, 2003-2004**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY****Overview**

Each year, the *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* works to prepare an identified cohort of students for post secondary enrollment. The fourth year of project implementation was no exception. To maintain focus and continuity, *GEAR UP Austin* articulated an overarching theme, “Keeping Hope Alive”, whereby project staff prioritized the development of genuine relationships with students and their families that were focused on a continued decision to stay in school and engage in work designed to prepare the students for college.

To spread this climate of hope across *GEAR UP* high schools, project staff worked collaboratively with project partners and other district programs to not only improve and expand current services, but also to develop services that can be sustained after federal funding ends. *GEAR UP* cohort students were consistently provided with intensive academic support in conjunction with personalized college and career exploration activities. Professional development services focused on improving student achievement in the classroom as the *GEAR UP* project staff identified, developed, and implemented professional development opportunities for teachers working with the *GEAR UP* cohort. *GEAR UP* parent involvement services emphasized the importance of customer service and supplied families with frequent and personalized information concerning high school transition issues, course enrollment, college entrance requirements, and college financial aid.

Summary of Findings

The results of this fourth annual project evaluation continued to be overwhelmingly positive. The data analyses revealed the following:

- The *GEAR UP Austin* project staff developed significant relationships with *GEAR UP* students, positively impacting their attitudes, self-esteem, motivations, and educational expectations.

- *GEAR UP Austin* continued to expand the knowledge pertaining to preparation for post-secondary enrollment and financing for *GEAR UP* students and their families.
- *GEAR UP Austin* provided significant academic support for students, so that they may successfully complete coursework required for post-secondary enrollment.
- *GEAR UP Austin* provided substantial support for teacher professional development to improve student learning in the classroom, to prepare students for college admissions tests, and to expand students' knowledge of post-secondary options.

Recommendations

The *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* provided in-depth information and intensive support services necessary for students to enroll in college upon high school graduation and played a strong advocacy role for those students generally underrepresented in post-secondary institutions. The following recommendations are provided to support continued systemic change in such a way that all students in the district can benefit:

- *GEAR UP Austin* should continue to share its work with district decision-makers and to provide information about the needs of first generation and low-income youth and families as they pertain to higher education.
- *GEAR UP Austin* should continue to facilitate and improve collaborative efforts with other district programs to effectively prepare students for college in hopes that such practices will be sustained after federal funding ends.
- Austin Independent School District should institutionalize the *GEAR UP* college preparation role at all high schools, with emphasis on serving students from low socio-economic and potential first-generation college households.
- Austin Independent School District should create a college preparation culture in all high schools that is supported by all school faculty and staff.

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INTRODUCTION

GEAR UP Project Context

The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) was conceptualized in 1998 during the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Schools, districts, local colleges, universities, businesses, and community organizations were challenged to work collaboratively and provide intensive college preparation support for low-income, at-risk students beginning in their 7th grade year and continuing through high school graduation, with the expectation that those students would be able to enroll in college at the end of high school. Specifically, GEAR UP programs were expected to improve student academic performance; expand the educational expectations and knowledge of post-secondary options, preparation, and financing for participating students and their families; and increase the rate of high school graduation and enrollment in post-secondary education of participating students.

Currently, GEAR UP funding provides services for 1.2 million students in 47 states, the District of Columbia and three territories. Now in its seventh funding year, GEAR UP has received almost \$1.2 billion since its creation and has 280 partnership grants and 36 state grants. In Spring 2004, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor and Education authorized an additional \$318 million for Funding Year (FY) 2005, a \$20 million increase above the FY 2004 budget. This continued funding will enable GEAR UP programs to extend their work beyond their previously authorized 5 years of work and operate throughout a 6th year when many GEAR UP students will be entering their final year of high school (National Council for Community and Educational Partnerships, 2004).

In its 4th year, the *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* continued to be funded by the Department of Education at \$2,476,845. *GEAR UP Austin Project* partners, a group that includes local post-secondary institutions, businesses, and community organizations, also matched the federal funding with in-kind contributions. These contributions included the services of existing personnel for project implementation, equipment and supplies for project activities, and the use of institutional facilities to host activities and events. Project partners assisted the project in providing quality services throughout the grant year while also building capacity to sustain those

services after grant funding ends. A listing of the *GEAR UP Austin Project* partners is provided in Appendix B.

GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project Description

GEAR UP Austin provided a variety of academic support and enhanced guidance and counseling services, along with teacher professional development and parent involvement support services throughout the year. In the continued provision and development of these services, the project staff addressed recommendations for improvement provided in previous years' evaluation reports. Specifically, they extended selected project services to non-GEAR UP students; provided opportunities for students to become involved in leadership activities and student support groups; improved the quality of tutoring services by providing more training for tutors and using data to determine student academic needs; supplied students and increasing numbers of parents with detailed information regarding college entrance requirements, applications, and financial aid; and collaborated with district curriculum supervisors to offer content-related professional development opportunities aligned with campus improvement objectives. The following section of this report describes project service offerings.

Academic Intervention

In 2003-2004, *GEAR UP Austin* provided intensive support to improve academic performance of GEAR UP students and to ultimately improve the district's high school graduation and college-going rates (Appendix D). These services included tutoring related to core academic courses, test preparation workshops, summer enrichment and course credit-recovery courses, academically related field trips, cultural activities, student leadership seminars, and student recognition ceremonies.

The *GEAR UP Austin Tutoring Initiative* was designed to provide increased academic support to GEAR UP students with failing grades or not meeting minimum expectations on TAKS and to support students enrolled in Honors or Pre-AP courses (Appendix D). The initiative provided tutoring services within and outside of the classroom, in the form of small group or one-on-one instruction, and during or outside of the official school day. *GEAR UP Austin* worked collaboratively with higher education partners and district personnel to employ 120 tutors, many of whom were federal work-study students attending higher education partner campuses. To improve the

effectiveness of tutoring services, GEAR UP project staff used the district's student information system (SASI) containing the most current student enrollment, attendance, course grades, and the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores to identify students needing tutoring services and to determine their specific learning needs. This year, 1,889 cohort students were provided with tutoring services with an average of 25 hours of services per student (Source: GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, 2003-2004).

During the Spring 2004 semester, the staff began reviewing student academic records and communicating with the students and their parents about summer learning opportunities available to them. Specifically, project staff identified GEAR UP students needing course credit recovery assistance to stay on track to graduate. The staff made phone calls, scheduled conferences, and visited homes to provide GEAR UP students and their families with information regarding course credit recovery opportunities and assisted them in enrolling in AISD summer school courses. The project also awarded AISD summer school scholarships to GEAR UP students with economic need for a total of \$43,705 (Source: GEAR UP Budget Records, 2003-2004). As a result, 472 GEAR UP students enrolled in AISD summer courses during Summer 2004 with 439 of those students (93%) earning credits for the courses they completed (Source: AISD Course Enrollment, Summer 2004).

GEAR UP College and Career Centers (CCC's) were designed to provide a place for students to explore the most up-to-date college and career information, however the centers were also used at each high school for academic support purposes (Appendix D). GEAR UP students often used software programs provided in the CCC's for individualized tutoring purposes. Many GEAR UP students did not have the necessary technology to complete their academic assignments at home, so they often used the computers and software provided in the CCC's outside of class hours to complete their work. Project records revealed that 515 GEAR UP students consistently used the CCC's outside of class to complete academic assignments or use computer-assisted tutoring programs. Further, 193 teachers used the technology available to them in the CCC's for a total of 1,514 hours of instruction (GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, 2003-2004).

Enhanced Guidance and Counseling

GEAR UP Austin provided a variety of enhanced guidance and counseling services designed to increase the educational expectations of GEAR UP students; improve student and family knowledge regarding postsecondary education preparation and financing; and enable the GEAR UP students to successfully enroll in a post-secondary institution upon high school graduation (Appendix D). Project services were developed at both the project-wide and campus levels to meet the individual needs of GEAR UP cohort students. Counseling services included college and career exploration activities, college visits, college-financial aid seminars, mentoring opportunities, motivation seminars, community service events, and student recognition ceremonies.

GEAR UP project staff at five high school campuses developed student leadership and support organizations. The purpose of the student leadership groups sponsored by GEAR UP is to provide students with a place to belong that will confirm the positive impact of engaging in academic challenge, provide advisement within a supportive environment, and guide students through the post-secondary enrollment preparation process. Within these groups, students meet frequently outside of school hours to engage in college preparation activities, community service, personal development activities, and social activities. These organizations' titles also communicated GEAR UP's expectations and hopes for students. For example, two different student groups have titled themselves, "Young Women of Excellence" (YWE) and Men of Vision and Excellence (MOVE).

To support individualized college and career exploration needs, *GEAR UP* purchased eDISCOVER, a new web-based college and career awareness product developed by ACT. eDISCOVER enables students to complete interest and aptitude inventories and engage in college and career research related to their interests. Because it can be used in conjunction with AISD's *Individualized Academic Career Planning* (IACP) curriculum materials, *GEAR UP Austin* provided training to use the product for all counselors and interested teachers who were planning to use the program with their students in the College and Career Centers. Project records showed that 1,087 GEAR UP students completed an aptitude or interest inventory and online college/career exploration using eDISCOVER (Source: GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, 2003- 2004). Additionally, 887 GEAR UP students used the College and Career Centers for independent college and career exploration.

GEAR UP staff continued to advise students on the importance of the PSAT and SAT tests. Following the PSAT preparation camps conducted in Summer 2003, GEAR UP staff and teachers at GEAR UP high schools provided follow-up PSAT preparation seminars prior to the Fall 2003 PSAT test administration. As a result, 1,656 10th graders attending GEAR UP high schools took the PSAT in October 2003 (Source: District College Board Report, 2004). Because of the rise in student participation on the PSAT test, GEAR UP also assisted with the purchase of additional test materials at GEAR UP high schools for a total of \$6,500 (Source: GEAR UP Budget Records, 2003-2004).

GEAR UP Austin worked with Austin Community College (ACC) to supplement the services of the high schools' guidance counselors throughout the year. GEAR UP and ACC staff met with students and parents individually to counsel them on the value of advanced academic course participation. Staff helped students understand linkages between academically rigorous course selection and preparation for AP and dual course credit classes for which they would soon be eligible. Students were informed about the relationship between advanced academic courses reflected on their transcripts and college admission considerations. Students also were encouraged and recruited to take the admissions test (ASSET) for Austin Community College in preparation for participation in Early College Start (or dual credit classes). In this process, GEAR UP and ACC staff worked together to coordinate test administrations that would enable students with transportation needs or scheduling conflicts to take the ASSET. As a result, 235 GEAR UP students took the ASSET during Spring 2004 (GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, 2003- 2004). One hundred and fifty-eight GEAR UP students completed dual credit college courses during Summer 2004 with 91% of those students earning high marks (Source: ACC Early College Start Office, 2004).

The project staff continued to provide GEAR UP cohort students and others with the opportunity to visit at least one college during the school year. In contrast to previous years, most of the GEAR UP sponsored college visits during 2003-2004 were limited to small groups of students and tailored to meet their interests. The change in the college visit format meant that college visits were not limited to one-day trips as in past years. As a result, 794 GEAR UP students visited 31 colleges across Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana during the school year with some trips requiring an overnight stay (Source: GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, Spring 2004).

Sensitive to student aspirations and wanting to build on the success of the college visits that took place during the school year, the GEAR UP project staff provided additional college visits during the summer. Two college-visit, road trips were conducted in June 2003. To participate, GEAR UP students engaged in an application process that replicated college admissions procedures and were selected according to predetermined criteria. One group of 37 girls and another group of 24 boys were selected to visit Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, UT Pan American in Edinburg, and St. Mary's University School of Law and San Antonio College in San Antonio over four days (Source: GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, Spring 2004). Between college visits, the GEAR UP students also participated in other activities designed to increase their knowledge of postsecondary education preparation and financing.

As in previous years, Huston-Tillotson College and St. Edward's University hosted a week-long residential camp for additional GEAR UP students. The Camp College experience provided 24 students at Huston-Tillotson College and 24 students at St. Edward's University with rigorous academic enrichment along with a college residential experience (Source: GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, Spring 2004). The Camp College daily schedule focused on an in-depth study of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and *Brown v. Board of Education*. GEAR UP students also engaged in a literary study of *Gifted Hands* by Dr. Ben Carson, self-reflection exercises, community service projects, and dramatic interpretations of the Civil Rights era. The week culminated with a ceremony celebrating the students' learning and future aspirations.

Professional Development

In the project's fourth year, *GEAR UP Austin* continued to support teachers to improve student achievement in the classroom and provide students with knowledge relevant to college preparation (Appendix D). Project staff continued to identify, develop, and implement professional development opportunities for teachers working with the GEAR UP student cohort. The project provided funds to cover the costs of substitutes, stipends, and/or registration fees for professional development related to core curriculum.

In order to provide high quality academic support, *GEAR UP Austin* continued to provide training sessions for all 125 tutors employed by the grant. The tutor trainings

during 2003-2004 focused on questioning strategies, mentoring, and understanding student behaviors. Training attendance records showed that 92% of all GEAR UP tutors participated in professional development. Of these, 99% of the tutors attended at least one of three trainings on understanding student behaviors with 27% attending all three classroom sessions. Sixty-four percent of the tutors completed mentor training, and 59% completed training on questioning strategies (Source: *GEAR UP Austin* Professional Development Records, 2004).

In the development and implementation of project sponsored professional development opportunities, *GEAR UP Austin* often collaborated with other district departments in ways that would support both project-specific and district-wide goals. *GEAR UP Austin* collaborated with the district's Secondary Language Arts Department and provided opportunities for high school teachers to examine the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and develop the instructional expertise needed to enable students to achieve at high academic levels that meet or exceed state and national performance standards. In October 2003, *GEAR UP Austin* and AISD's curriculum department collaborated to provide a one-day workshop focused on student TAKS preparation in Language Arts for 42 teachers at GEAR UP high schools. In June 2004, *GEAR UP Austin* and AISD's curriculum department teamed up again to provide a four-day workshop focused on strategies to improve student outcomes on the writing and reading portions of the TAKS test for 69 high school teachers (*GEAR UP Austin* Professional Development Records, 2004).

For the fourth consecutive year, Learning Systems consultants conducted the highly rated, three-day PSAT/SAT preparation course for high school teachers (Alderete, 2003). The PSAT Preparation training focused on PSAT/SAT test format, scoring strategies for analyzing test items, and creative ways for using PSAT preparation strategies within existing school curriculum. During Summer 2004, 56 high school teachers were trained. To date, GEAR UP Austin has trained a total of 110 teachers from GEAR UP middle and high schools to provide PSAT preparation services to their students (*GEAR UP Austin* Professional Development Records, 2004).

In partnership with ACT, *GEAR UP Austin* also trained 47 AISD counselors and GEAR UP staff members on all 12 of AISD's high school campuses to use *eDiscover*, a comprehensive, computer-based guidance system for career exploration, planning and

preparation. *eDiscover* was used by AISD's Guidance and Counseling Department, Smaller Learning Communities, and Career and Technology Education Program (CATE) for admissions test preparation and college/career exploration. Because *eDiscover* can be used in conjunction with AISD's Individualized Academic Career Planning (IACP), the district has since committed to use the program in all schools.

To support the teachers of GEAR UP students, project staff continued to identify and recommend existing courses from AISD's Professional Development Academy (PDA). *GEAR UP Austin* also worked with PDA to provide electronic registration for GEAR UP sponsored trainings through PDA eCampus. This enabled 164 GEAR UP teachers to sign up for pertinent classes with ease and provided a central place for teachers and others to find information about professional development participation taking place throughout the district.

Parent Involvement

In 2003-2004, *GEAR UP Austin* continued to work towards improving its parent services to increase parent knowledge about preparation for post-secondary enrollment and college financial aid (Appendix D). Understanding that the development of relationships significantly aids learning (Payne, 1996), the GEAR UP parent support specialists focused on personalized outreach for GEAR UP students' families. Personalizing communication efforts, GEAR UP staff often conducted conversations with parents in Spanish. At parent meetings, they used translators and translation headsets purchased by the GEAR UP project or conducted meetings in Spanish.

GEAR UP parent support specialists made 884 home visits to 616 GEAR UP student households during the 2003-2004 school year. The parent support specialists also conducted parent conferences at the school campus with 1,567 parents of GEAR UP students providing personal information concerning their child's school progress and details concerning school events and preparation for college. The GEAR UP parent support specialists conferenced with 904 of these parents three or more times during the school year (GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, 2003-2004).

GEAR UP Austin not only held a variety of parent meetings throughout the school year, but also collaborated with other programs to coordinate parent meetings focused on high school course requirements, college entrance applications, and financial aid processes. This program collaboration became known as Austin Independent School

District's *Parent University*. *Parent University* classes provided information about high school issues, getting ready for college, dual course enrollment, financial aid and scholarships, immigrant issues, and other topics of interest to families. Parents were provided with a course catalog to select classes based upon the information that would be most valuable to them. All classes were provided at multiple locations and times enabling parents to attend a particular class at their child's school or another school of their choosing. Project records showed that a total of 2,038 GEAR UP student households were represented at these meetings with 58% of their parents attending at least one *Parent University* meeting on college entrance requirements and financial aid; 71% attending a meeting on the Recommended High School Plan and course scheduling; and 4% attending meetings addressing parenting skills. Both GEAR UP parents and others may have attended multiple *Parent University* meetings.

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Design

A mixed-methods approach was used for the evaluation of this project. Quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated to determine the effectiveness of the project's service implementation and outcomes for its participants. This approach provided a way to address the complexity of the project because it used data collection strategies appropriate for a variety of events that minimized the weaknesses associated with use of a single method. The data triangulation also allowed the evaluator to verify the consistency of data and clarify results, increasing the validity and reliability of the performance evaluation.

The following data were analyzed to evaluate *GEAR UP Austin's* project services:

- District information systems provided student demographic data, course enrollment, course grades, and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores.
- GEAR UP project database records provided data pertaining to academic support, enhanced guidance and counseling, and parent involvement services provided by GEAR UP and related participant contact hours.
- GEAR UP Student Surveys, adapted from the previous years' surveys and a template provided by the Department of Education, were made available to all GEAR UP students and provided information related to student college preparation needs, expectations for post-secondary education, and perceived educational outcomes. The student response rate was 72%. An examination of student survey respondents indicated that they were representative of the population of GEAR UP students; therefore, the data obtained from this survey could be generalized to the GEAR UP cohort. Results are provided in Appendix E.
- GEAR UP Parent Surveys, adapted from the previous years' surveys and a template provided by the Department of Education, were distributed to all parents who had been provided information related to student college preparation needs, expectations for post-secondary education, and perceived

educational outcomes. The parent response rate was 39%. An examination of parent survey respondents indicated that they were representative of the population of GEAR UP students; therefore, the data obtained from this survey could be generalized to the GEAR UP cohort. Results are provided in Appendix F.

- Eighty-one GEAR UP cohort students participated in focus-group discussions to provide in-depth information regarding implementation of the project's services and perceived participant outcomes. The GEAR UP students were selected according to articulated criteria to ensure that the participants were representative of GEAR UP students at each high school; therefore, the data obtained from the interviews could be generalized to the GEAR UP cohort.
- All project staff participated in interviews to provide in-depth information regarding implementation of project's services and perceived participant outcomes.
- Project surveys distributed to all GEAR UP tutors provided information about the implementation of GEAR UP project services and perceived participant outcomes. Ninety (75%) of the GEAR UP tutors completed project surveys. An examination of tutor survey respondents indicated that they were representative of the population of GEAR UP tutors; therefore, the data obtained from this survey could be generalized to the GEAR UP tutors.
- Project surveys distributed to all core curriculum teachers of GEAR UP students provided information about the implementation of project services and perceived participant outcomes. Eighty (29%) of the teachers completed project surveys. An examination of teacher survey respondents indicated that the distribution of those survey responses was uniform across the GEAR UP high schools. However, the response rate was low. Further examination of the survey responses indicated that the teachers who completed the survey had consistently worked with the GEAR UP project staff and accessed project support services. Therefore, the data obtained from this survey could be generalized to only those teachers that worked closely with GEAR UP staff and utilized project services. Responses may not represent teachers who

occasionally or infrequently interact with the project staff or access GEAR UP services.

- GEAR UP project budget records, participation sign-in sheets, and AISD information systems provided information related to professional development participation.

Assumptions of the Evaluation

1. The evaluator was impartial in collecting and analyzing the data.
2. Survey respondents were representative of the population; therefore, the data obtained from these surveys could be generalized.
3. Responses to surveys and interviews accurately indicated participant perceptions of the program.
4. The interpretation of the data collected accurately reflected that which was intended.

Limitations of the Evaluation

1. The scope of the evaluation was limited to *GEAR UP* cohort students and parents, teachers of *GEAR UP* students, and *GEAR UP* project staff.
2. Since completion of surveys and participation in focus groups was voluntary, generalizability is limited by the properties of those who volunteered.

MAJOR EVALUATION FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* expects to support student academic performance; expand the educational expectations and knowledge of post-secondary options, preparation, and financing for participating students and their families; and increase the rate of high school graduation and enrollment in post-secondary education of participating students. The following section of this report describes major findings related to the expectations of the grant.

1. The *GEAR UP Austin* project staff developed significant relationships with GEAR UP students, impacting their attitudes, self-esteem, motivations, and educational expectations.

GEAR UP Austin project personnel have worked consistently with the student cohort across multiple years, following the students from the 7th grade in 2000-2001 to the 10th grade in 2003-2004. Throughout the years, project staff built personal relationships with the GEAR UP students and their families, communicated high expectations, and provided individualized support to meet those expectations. Multiple data sources revealed that project staff, teachers, tutors, and most importantly, the students themselves identified the relationships between the GEAR UP students and project staff as the primary factor in the students' continued decision to not only stay in school but to participate in activities that will prepare them for college.

In every GEAR UP project staff interview, the most important factor identified by staff and thought to be directly related to student success was the development of personal relationships with students. The GEAR UP staff described that this nurturing role used to be a large part of a counselor's or a teacher's work. However, counselors and teachers were often considered overburdened with multiple tasks, infringing on the time that they had to connect personally with students. Thus, the GEAR UP staff believed that a primary function of their job was to provide services to students in a "*case management*" format requiring personal attention be given to individual students and their families. The GEAR UP staff emphasized the importance of providing consistent encouragement for individual students and recognizing their individual successes when teachers or parents may be unaware. As a staff member stated, "These relationships give our students a reason to continue coming and feel connected to others. It may be the only

reason they are here.” GEAR UP staff often stated that students’ lack of personal connection at the school resulted in poor student motivation and limited school success. The staff thought that they were uniquely qualified for this position in the school as they had worked to understand the issues related to poverty and how those issues impact the student’s high school performance and college-going rates. They described how this understanding of poverty, along with knowing the students individually, enabled them to be strong advocates for the GEAR UP students in their schools and provide meaningful project services and activities.

On the 2004 *GEAR UP* Student Survey (Appendix D), students were provided with an opportunity to share anything that they wished about the GEAR UP project. Students reported that their relationships with the GEAR UP project staff gave them a “sense of belonging” in their schools. Many students referred to the GEAR UP staff as “family” and reported that they sincerely cared about the students’ personal success. Students often reported that they did not feel that they could talk to their parents, teachers, or counseling staff about difficult or awkward problems. However, this sense of “family” enabled and encouraged many of them to turn to the GEAR UP staff for help with both personal and academic concerns.

“GEAR UP has become a family to me. They truly care about me, my future, and believe in my dreams.”

“GEAR UP is more than just a program to help us prepare for college. It is a lot more. We all know each other and are treated like family. I’m so glad I’m involved in GEAR UP, because it has showed me that I can do anything that I set my mind to.”

“GEAR UP is a family and is not just a job. GEAR UP has helped me through everything, not just school related stuff. My GEAR UP person is just like a parent to me. Every time I even think about feeling down, they pick me back up.”

Source: GEAR UP Student Survey, Spring 2004

During focus group discussions held at each GEAR UP high school campus, students also emphasized the importance of the personalized, family-style support they received as they dealt with both school and personal problems. The students were often unabashedly emotional as they described the encouragement and support that they were given by GEAR UP. They talked about their project facilitators with admiration and respect. Students shared many personal stories of triumph that they believed would not have been possible without the “unconditional” or “tough” love expressed by a caring

adult, that GEAR UP project staff person. They expressed overwhelming gratitude for the emotional support that they had received.

Student survey comments and focus group discussions revealed that these relationships between GEAR UP staff and students had a definite impact on student attitudes, self-esteem, motivation, and aspirations. The students reported that the staff consistently communicated high expectations for their success. Over and over again, GEAR UP students provided detailed testimonials illustrating the positive impact of these articulated high expectations on their attitudes, self-esteem, motivation, and educational aspirations. Many students indicated that they had made a profound change in the way they approached life overall and were expecting to enroll in and complete college. The students attributed their personal development and higher aspirations to the guidance and support that they had received from the GEAR UP staff.

“That one person (GEAR UP staff) really changed me around. I really did not care too much about school. I did not want to go to college, but that one person changed the way I look at my education and my attitude towards a lot of things.”

“GEAR UP helps students gain confidence in themselves, accomplish their dreams.”

“GEAR UP has helped me through my difficulties and made me better in them. They make me see that I am a star.”

“GEAR UP is a great program, and I feel it has helped me greatly in keeping me motivated and wanting to go to college.”

“I am so glad that the GEAR UP staff here is wonderful, and I am blessed to have them here. When I came here, I had plans of dropping out of high school but not anymore.”

“GEAR UP has opened up new roads for me and inspired me to keep on going with my education.”

Source: GEAR UP Student Survey and Focus Groups, Spring 2004

The GEAR UP Student Survey (2004) showed significant increases in student levels of expectations for education attainment (Appendix D). This year, 18% more GEAR UP students were planning to earn a bachelor’s degree from a 4-year post-secondary institution. Fourteen percent fewer GEAR UP students reported that they were unsure of their post-secondary education plans. The percentage of GEAR UP students planning to earn a graduate degree declined by 6%. During staff interviews, GEAR UP

project staff believed that this decline may indicate that students were more aware of their aspirations and related schooling requirements.

GEAR UP tutors and teachers also recognized the importance of the relationships between the GEAR UP project staff and their students. In May 2004, 29% of the teachers and 75% of the tutors working with GEAR UP students completed GEAR UP project surveys. On the surveys, teachers and tutors had multiple opportunities to share information they believed to be important about GEAR UP. Often, they specifically addressed the relationships that the GEAR UP students had with the project staff. They overwhelmingly reported that these relationships provided important mentorship for the students that seemed to increase their motivation towards achieving school success. Interestingly, the teachers and tutors also described these relationships in terms of “family” and “unconditional support”. Many teachers acknowledged that students could not often find this type of support elsewhere in the school.

“My students like to consult with the GEAR UP staff on all kinds of issues. The students who have participated come much better prepared with clearer focus on their future goals.”

“The GEAR UP students feel like a part of a greater extended family because they are a part of GEAR UP. It is a bonding process that huge urban schools so desperately need, yet are so rarely able to provide. The entire Gear Up faculty and staff are most responsive and encouraging to ALL. I LOVE THE FEELING OF FAMILY WITH GEAR UP.”

“GEAR UP has been the bestest support that I have ever had in over 30 years of teaching! GEAR UP offers to each child what schools need so desperately; that is a one-on-one connection. Such a program gives education the link missing in our modern society.”

“I think this is a fantastic program. I see the close relationship between the GEAR UP coordinators and the students, and I know that my students are getting help in ways that a single teacher can't accomplish. The resources are incredible and necessary for the development and success of these students. We should have more programs like this one!”

Source: GEAR UP Tutor and Teacher Surveys, Spring 2004

The emphasis on relationships within GEAR UP is aligned with the findings from other research studies on high school reform. These studies conducted in multiple states also found that high schools do not provide their students, especially those students from inner cities, rural areas, or low-socio economic backgrounds, with a sense of efficacy that could enable those students to pursue their dreams and interests (Allen, 2004). In this research, it was found that students desired that teachers express sincere care about their well-being and believed that their attitudes and academic achievement would improve as

a result. The researcher, Christopher Unger at Brown University's Education Alliance, recommended that school change begin with teachers articulating sincere concern for individual students daily. "Start with relationships as the basis for improving high schools," Unger says. "Even the highly touted smaller learning communities won't work by starting with curriculum and instruction. The change has to come from a real interest in kids. First change the relationship, then change teaching and learning."

Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform, a report published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, also asserts that high achievement for all students depends on personalization of the school environment. Students must develop a sense of belonging to the school, a sense of ownership over their learning, and an ability to make choices based on a fully developed understanding of choice options. Key recommendations for developing a student-centered, personalized environment requires that students have a "Personal Adult Advocate" to help personalize the school experience and that teachers convey a "sense of caring" to create a shared responsibility in student success.

2. GEAR UP Austin continues to expand the knowledge of preparation for post-secondary enrollment and financing for GEAR UP students and their families.

During focus group discussions, GEAR UP students generally described *GEAR UP Austin* as a program that focused on college preparation and confidently shared the in-depth information they had learned. They talked about how they once had a narrow view about what colleges could offer and who was eligible to attend. Expanding on this idea, the GEAR UP students fully discussed the different types of colleges suited for various personal educational needs and career choices. The students provided examples of the smaller class sizes often offered at the community college versus those at a larger 4-year university. The students described the different academic requirements that various colleges maintained and recognized that "straight A's" were not an absolute requirement to attend college. The GEAR UP students also reported that they were beginning to understand that there were many careers to choose from, and that they were not limited to the "traditional" doctor, lawyer, and teacher options.

GEAR UP student and parent surveys (Appendices D and E) revealed that *GEAR UP Austin's* enhanced guidance and counseling services continued to impact the

knowledge of post secondary preparation and financing for GEAR UP students and their families. On these surveys, 67% of the GEAR UP students and 57% of their parents reported that they had talked with someone about college entrance requirements and high school courses needed to prepare for college; and 80% of the GEAR UP students and 71% of their parents reported that they knew which classes students needed to complete to prepare for college. At least 50% of the GEAR UP students and their parents continued to report that GEAR UP project staff were their primary source of information regarding post-secondary preparation. GEAR UP students also identified project sponsored college visits, tutoring/mentoring, and college and career exploration in the College and Career Centers as being especially helpful in their preparation for college.

It is expected that student and parent knowledge pertaining to college entrance requirements will impact the rigor of coursework planned and completed by the GEAR UP students. Indeed, GEAR UP student and parent surveys did show significant changes in the percentages of GEAR UP students who had taken or were planning to take Honors, Pre-Advanced Placement, Advanced Placement, or Dual Enrollment courses (Table 1). Fewer students were undecided about taking advanced level courses, and more students declared that they would not be taking advanced level courses. These changes may indicate that students are increasingly informed about the importance of rigorous coursework and are making decisions about their preparation for college.

Table 1: Percent of Students Who Have Taken or Plan to Take Advanced Coursework

Course Type	Students 2003	Students 2004	% Change FY03 to FY 04	Parents 2003	Parents 2004	% Change FY03 to FY 04
Honors	30.4	48.4	+18% *	27.8	44.8	+17% *
Pre-AP or AP	25.8	43	+17.2% *	16.4	33.5	+ 17.1 *
Dual Enrollment	N/A	22.4	N/A	N/A	23.3	N/A
Undecided	37	23.8	- 13.2%*	37.1	29.7	-7.4%
Will Not Take Advanced Course	3.4	9	+ 5.6*	4.5	7	+2.5 % *

Source: GEAR UP Student and Parent Surveys, Spring 2003 and 2004. Note: * indicates statistically significant change.

Supporting the survey data, AISD course enrollment records indicated that GEAR UP student participation in advanced level courses remained relatively consistent between project years (Table 2). GEAR UP student participation in advanced level

courses continues to be above the original expectation of 18% articulated in the project objectives (Appendix C) and above the district-wide participation level of approximately 22% (Academic Excellence Indicator System, 2003).

Table 2: Percent of GEAR UP Students Enrolled in Advanced Level Courses

Advanced Level Course Type	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
English/ Language Arts	27%	34%	30%	27 %
Mathematics	28%	39%	27%	26%
Science	27%	35%	24%	26%

Source: GEAR UP Annual Performance Reports submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, 2001-2004. Note: Advance level courses during the 2001-2002 school year also included courses taken in the 8th grade that counted as a high school course credit.

Additionally, the GEAR UP staff believed that the PSAT preparation was one of the most valuable services offered to hundreds of students who could not otherwise afford the preparation. They described their ongoing efforts to provide teachers with PSAT training, enroll GEAR UP students in various levels of PSAT preparation workshops, facilitate the teacher-led PSAT preparation workshops, and recruit students to take the PSAT. The GEAR UP staff believed that the PSAT preparation process would ultimately increase the number of students taking the PSAT, improve student PSAT test scores, and play a large role in determining scholarship awards and future college acceptance.

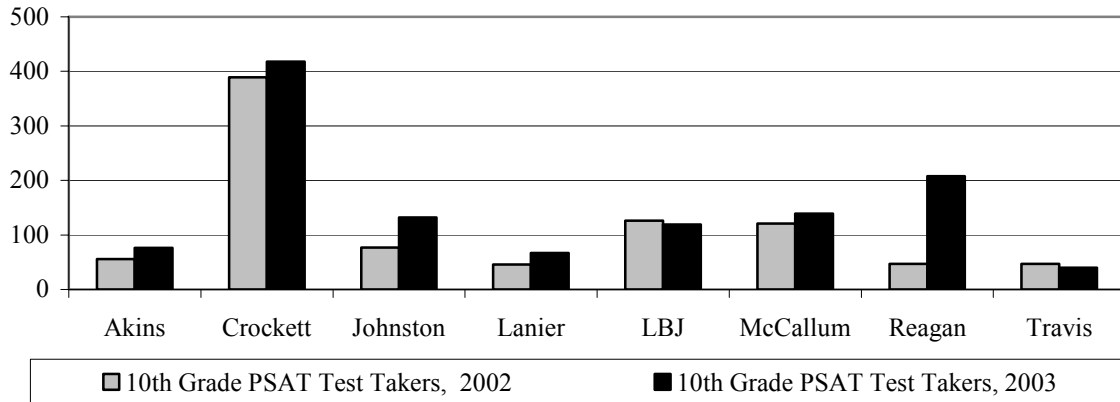
Supporting staff claims, GEAR UP student and parent surveys showed significant changes in the percentages of GEAR UP students who had taken or were planning to take college admissions tests (Table 3). There were also significant increases in the numbers of 10th graders at most GEAR UP high schools taking the Preliminary SAT and National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT), typically considered an 11th grade level test (Figure 1). Specifically, there was an 18% increase in PSAT test-takers from the previous year (Source: AISD Campus PSAT Test Reports, 2002 and 2003).

Table 3: Percent of Students Who Have Taken or Plan to Take
A College Admissions Test

Admissions Tests	Students 2003	Students 2004	% Change FY03 to FY 04	Parents 2003	Parents 2004	% Change FY03 to FY 04
PSAT	38.9 %	97.1 %	+58.2 % *	34.8%	45%	+ 10.2% *
SAT	46.5%	45.3%	- 1.2%	43.3%	41.8%	-1.5%
ACT	21.8%	19.8%	- 2%	21.5%	20.9%	- .6%
ASVAB	7.1%	2.8%	-4.3% *	5.3%	3%	-2.3%
Undecided	37%	22.5%	-14.5 % *	37.1%	27.9%	- 9.2% *
None of These	3.4%	13.9%	+ 10.5% *	4.5%	7.8%	+ 3.3% *

Source: GEAR UP Student and Parent Surveys, Spring 2003 and 2004. Note: * indicates statistically significant change.

Figure 1: Number of PSAT Test Takers at GEAR UP High Schools



Overall, the survey results and the increased PSAT participation seem to indicate that students and their parents are increasingly informed about the purposes of various college admission tests and are making decisions to prepare for those tests. Taking the PSAT provided the 10th grade students with an opportunity to practice for the SAT Reasoning Test. The test results also provided feedback on students' strengths and weaknesses on skills necessary for college study.

This year, GEAR UP student and parent surveys indicated that more GEAR UP students and their parents were addressing the financial aid issue. Significantly more students and their parents were talking to someone about obtaining financial aid to pay for college (Table 4). However, when they were asked if they knew how to get financial aid for college, significantly more students said that they did not know anything about it

(Table 5). There was not a significant change in parent responses about how to get financial aid for college.

Table 4: Percent of Students and Parents Who Have Talked with Someone About Getting Financial Aid

Admissions Tests	Students 2003	Students 2004	% Change FY03 to FY 04	Parents 2003	Parents 2004	% Change FY03 to FY 04
Frequently	9.6%	8.5%	-1.1%	7.2%	7%	-2%
Occasionally	38.6%	65.8%	+ 27.2% *	43.8%	55.5%	+11.7% *
Never	51.8%	25.5%	- 26.3% *	48.9%	37.3%	- 11.6% *

Source: GEAR UP Student and Parent Surveys, Spring 2003 and 2004. Note: * indicates statistically significant change.

Table 5: Percent of Students and Parents Who Know How to Get Financial Aid

Admissions Tests	Students 2003	Students 2004	% Change FY03 to FY 04	Parents 2003	Parents 2004	% Change FY03 to FY 04
Yes, I know a lot.	12.2%	12.2%	0	14.7%	15.6%	+9%
I know a few things about it.	50.3%	34.9%	- 15.9% *	52.4%	53.7%	+1.4%
No, I do not know anything about it.	37.5%	52.9%	+15.4% *	32.9%	30.6%	-2.3%

Source: GEAR UP Student and Parent Surveys, Spring 2003 and 2004. Note: * indicates statistically significant change.

Issues related to accessing financial aid for college were explored in-depth. On the open-ended portion of the GEAR UP student survey and during the focus groups discussions, students continued to report that having the money for college was their most pressing concern related to their college preparation and plans after high school. To alleviate these concerns, students reported that GEAR UP did provide an abundance of college financial aid information. The students were surprised to find out how many financial options were available to finance their college experience. They hoped to find as many financial resources as possible that would not require re-payment. While they were very interested in finding scholarships, students indicated they understood various other ways to defray the costs of college, such as having a part-time job or living at home to make ends meet while they were in school.

Even though students knew that scholarships and other financial aid were available, the processes related to accessing those resources still seemed challenging. Students were beginning to realize that there was a large amount of information that they

still needed to successfully access financial aid. They considered the scholarship application process especially confusing and competitive. Students talked about the great amount of time that they spent looking for scholarships only to become discouraged by thoughts that they would not actually be presented with an award. As a result, they wanted increasingly detailed information and assistance in exploring financial aid options. Even with the application assistance, they were worried that funds might not be available regardless of eligibility.

Overall, most students described the GEAR UP project as a valuable resource for learning about college entrance requirements, college admissions processes, and financial aid information. The GEAR UP students discussed how the education, guidance, and counseling services had provided information that they had not considered previously and would enable them to successfully enroll in college. GEAR UP students recognized the importance of the information and expressed concern for their peers, as they did not believe that other students in their high school had similar opportunities to obtain detailed information pertaining to post-secondary enrollment processes.

“GEAR UP is very helpful. They help you understand why you should go to college. They give you information about college and how you can get into it.”

“I would like to tell others that GEAR UP is the most IMPORTANT thing to have around all kids. We should extend this program to every kid in AISD. It has gotten me ready for college, and I believe that with the coming years I will be very prepared.”

“I think GEAR UP is very helpful to students who don’t know much about getting into college. They help inform you on how to get into college and what classes to take that you are interested in. They can help with financial aid and get you prepared to apply.”

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, Spring 2004

Results from GEAR UP surveys and focus groups are consistent with findings from national studies on college preparation. GEAR UP student plans for enrolling in college enrollment and completing financial aid applications seem to be related to their understanding of those processes. The National Center for Education Statistics (2003) also reports that student and parent knowledge and understanding of college preparation processes is a predictor of students’ post-secondary enrollment success. The NCES study reported that students and their parents are unnecessarily discouraged from seeking college degrees because of their limited understanding of college preparation and

affordability. Students were more likely to become enrolled in college if they have opportunities to take courses required for post-secondary enrollment, if they understand college admissions processes, and if their parents have more time to estimate the costs of college and engage in related financial planning.

3. GEAR UP Austin provides significant academic support for students, so that they may successfully complete coursework required for post-secondary enrollment.

One of the greatest barriers to college for students is the lack of strong academic preparation. Students must have a solid academic foundation to be considered for enrollment in many post-secondary institutions and to successfully complete post-secondary programs. Rigorous academic preparation in high school is also a key factor in narrowing the gap in post-secondary outcomes between first-generation students and their peers whose parents graduated from college. Understanding those concepts, GEAR UP staff provided academic advisement and tutoring services for students.

Throughout the school year, GEAR UP project staff provided personalized academic advisement to assist students in choosing courses needed to meet the Recommended High School Plan requirements, developing alternative credit recovery plans, and tracking student academic progress. As a major part of this academic advising, GEAR UP project facilitators stated that they encouraged students to take rigorous courses to prepare for college enrollment. The project staff consistently recommended that students take four years of science and math and enroll in advanced placement courses when possible, thereby increasing the chances that students would meet college entrance requirements. In the complex high school environment, the GEAR UP staff reported that academic advising was key to making sure that students successfully enrolled in and completed post-secondary programs.

“Academic advising is a major influence on whether these kids will make it through high school on time and be prepared to enroll in a post-secondary institution.”

“Kids not only need to know which courses they need to take, but that they can work through their mistakes should they have difficulties with those courses.”

“Students have to know that their goals are achievable and be encouraged not to give up. They need a step-by-step approach on how get through high school and enroll in college”.

Source: GEAR UP Staff Interviews, Summer 2004

On the GEAR UP Surveys and during focus group discussions, GEAR UP students expressed their worries about their overall academic preparation and course grades. Many reported that they had “gotten off track” during their freshman year and were still trying to make up for their past mistakes. They were concerned about their overall grade point average and whether it would be high enough to compete with other college applicants when applying to college and for scholarships. The students were concerned that, even with good grades, they would not be able to compete with their peers in college. They were worried about possible gaps in their learning and the low level of rigor in their current courses.

Because of these personal concerns, students reported that they highly valued the academic support that was provided through GEAR UP. They found the personalized academic advising to be most helpful. Students reported that they were often called in to review their academic records with the staff. In this process, the student reviewed their credits earned and identified courses that they still needed to complete. Many expressed a sincere appreciation for this service, as it helped them to “keep track of school” and make “good decisions” pertaining to their post secondary preparation.

As 10th graders, the GEAR UP students indicated that they had an increased awareness about the importance of course grades and often identified the GEAR UP tutoring as a helpful resource for them. Functioning primarily as teachers’ aides, tutors circulated throughout the classroom and offered assistance to students as they worked on assignments. Students appreciated this help as they encountered difficulty in the classroom. The students also appreciated the opportunity to seek help from tutors after school in the College and Career Centers, especially when library facilities had a limited availability. The GEAR UP students believed that the tutors had the expertise to help them and could explain the content in such a way that the students could understand more fully. They reported that their grades had improved with continued tutoring. One student said, “My grades were bad, and they have gone up.” Another stated, “I had gotten off track last year. GEAR UP has helped me get my grades back up where they need to be.”

“Gear-Up is a positive college-based program that helps push all students to do their best. If your scores are low coming into the program you can guarantee a major increase.”

“Thank you, GEAR UP. You have helped me to improve my grades and become more confident about my classes.”

“GEAR UP is really wonderful. I have done better about my grades and stuff as they stayed on me. I’ve made a big improvement since my 9th grade year. I thank Gear up for helping me out.”

“GEAR UP helps you a lot, and I suggest you not to take it for granted. They help you by checking up on you and your grades. They also have tutoring that not only helps you catch up with your grades but TAKS too.”

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, Spring 2004

Ninety (75%) tutors employed by GEAR UP responded to a survey designed to describe the GEAR UP tutoring services implemented in the high schools during the 2003-2004 school year. Of these respondents, 33% agreed and 66% strongly agreed that the *GEAR UP Tutoring Initiative* was of great benefit to the students it served. GEAR UP tutors identified the following program strengths: supplies individualized academic support, provides role models/mentors, uses variety of instructional methods to aid student learning, offers flexible access to tutoring support, and provides high quality tutors and instructional resources. The tutors also reported that students consistently participating in the GEAR UP tutoring program improved their grades and knowledge of subject matter, increased their motivation towards attaining higher levels of academic achievement, and developed a college perspective.

Teachers of 10th grade core courses and identified as “GEAR UP teachers” also highly valued the student academic support provided by *GEAR UP Austin*. Eighty (29%) GEAR UP teachers responded to a survey designed to obtain feedback on project services provided to GEAR UP students. Of these teachers, 84% believed that GEAR UP students benefited from their participation in GEAR UP Tutoring, and 88% of the teachers would recommend having a GEAR UP tutor to their colleagues. On open-ended portions of the survey, the teachers reported that having tutors in the classroom provided individualized and consistent support to students struggling within large classes. They believed that the tutors provided valuable moral support and encouragement to their students. Teachers also reported that students consistently participating in the GEAR UP tutoring improved their grades and knowledge of subject matter and developed increased

motivation to succeed academically in school. A few teachers reported frustration and difficulty in using tutors adequately in their classrooms and requested assistance to improve in this area.

“Tutoring helps open the door for students needing a little extra support to negotiate the work successfully. It enables students to enroll in and complete more rigorous coursework that they might not have been able to complete successfully before.”

“Tutoring is the key. It opens up those academic doors and brings up the students’ confidence level. This prepares them automatically for college.”

“My tutor was particularly personable and accessible to the students who identified with her. She shared my values and intent and supported what I was trying to do with my class.”

“The students who took advantage of the program benefited. They did better on quizzes and tests and tended to be more focused.”

Source: GEAR UP Teacher Survey, Spring 2004

While it is generally agreed that rigorous coursework and high levels of course content-mastery are key factors in the post-secondary enrollment and success of students, it should also be noted that many students may not achieve high levels of academic success without the articulation of high expectations and close monitoring of their progress (Marzano, 2003). Results from various surveys and student focus group interviews show that academic support provided through personalized advising and monitoring was highly valued by project staff, students, and their teachers. Content knowledge and instructional strategies were rarely named as key factors in student academic success. Rather, it was the relationship and communication between the GEAR UP project staff and tutors thought to enable students to assume responsibility for their own learning, thereby improving course grades and motivating students to strive towards higher levels of academic achievement.

Beyond the expectations articulated for students, other causes for academic achievement gaps between student groups have been identified in research literature. Researchers have shown that there is a correlation between a child’s socioeconomic status and their school performance, and they also have established that the “academic resources and curriculum” of students were more significant predictors of school achievement than was socio-economic status (Mano, 2003). Researchers also found that effective teachers of ethnically and culturally diverse students understood individual and

cultural differences and built positive relationships with their students (Burnette, 1999). Because of the numerous factors influencing student achievement, researchers emphasized the importance of closely examining the learning opportunities and instruction directly influencing student achievement within individual schools and accepting responsibility for closing the achievement gap by implementing deliberate action-strategies that focused on the particular needs of students.

GEAR UP project and tutoring staff responded to research recommendations and have worked towards closing achievement gaps in their respective schools. They have communicated a sense of urgency and agency towards the problem (Snell, 2003) by providing consistent and high quality academic support services focused on eliminating the academic achievement gap between student groups. The GEAR UP project and tutoring staff cultivated relationships with GEAR UP students and provided them with high quality academic support tailored towards individual student needs. They provided students with access to educational materials and technology meant to facilitate learning. The GEAR UP staff did not provide these services in isolation. They communicated on a regular basis with teachers, students, parents, and campus decision-makers.

Analyses of the Spring 2004 TAKS scores on the reading, math, science, and social studies tests indicated that the percentage of GEAR UP students meeting minimum expectation on the TAKS tests was about the same or higher than the overall percentage of 10th graders meeting minimum expectations on the TAKS tests for each high school, with the exceptions of Akins and Crockett high schools (Appendix C). Significantly more GEAR UP students failed to meet minimum expectations on all TAKS tests at Akins and the science and social studies tests at Crockett. When compared to all students across the district and state, significantly fewer GEAR UP students met minimum expectations on the TAKS tests.

Enrollment records showed students flagged as GEAR UP cohort students attending Anderson, Austin, and Bowie high schools, all of which do not offer GEAR UP Project services. In contrast to the schools offering GEAR UP support services, an analysis of TAKS scores showed that significantly more former GEAR UP students failed to meet minimum expectations on all TAKS tests at Anderson and Austin (Appendix C).

In previous years, achievement gaps also were found between African-American and Hispanic GEAR UP students and their White and Asian peers throughout the district (Alderete, 2003). The disaggregation of Spring 2004 TAKS scores for the Hispanic, African American, Economically Disadvantaged, and Limited English Proficient student groups showed that GEAR UP students within these groups performed as well as 10th graders across the district on all TAKS tests (Appendix C). However, the passing rates for these groups continued to be significantly less in Austin than for their peers across the state. Further, the disaggregation of Spring 2004 TAKS scores for White students showed that significantly fewer GEAR UP students met minimum expectations on the reading and math tests in comparison with 10th graders across the district. However, the TAKS passing rates for White GEAR UP students in Austin were not significantly less than those achieved by White students from across the state.

4. GEAR UP Austin provides significant support for teacher professional development to improve student learning in the classroom, prepare students for college admissions tests, and expand students' knowledge of post-secondary options.

So students may complete rigorous coursework, complete high school successfully, and enroll in post-secondary institutions, GEAR UP continued to stress the importance of providing students with high quality classroom instruction. GEAR UP sponsored and recommended professional development related to articulated district goals and objectives for teachers that focused on subject matter and provided hands-on learning opportunities.

A review of data showed that there was an increase in GEAR UP teacher participation in professional development opportunities. The project spent \$131,478 supporting teacher professional development during the 2003-2004 project year, an increase of 17.2% from the previous year. District information systems indicated that GEAR UP teachers completed an average of 19.2 hours of professional development, and 30.4 % of the GEAR UP teachers completed 20 or more hours of professional development during the project year (Table 6). There were statistically significant increases in the percentage of teachers participating in professional development relative to the previous year, and in the average number of continuing education hours that the GEAR UP teachers completed in the 2003-03 school year (Table 7).

Table 6: GEAR UP Austin: Professional Development Participation, 2003-2004

GEAR UP Campus	Number of GEAR UP Teachers	% Participating in AISD PDA Courses	AVG Hours of PD Completed	% Completing >20 Hours of PD
Akins	54	66.7%	22.7	37%
Crockett	29	72.4%	19.8	34.5%
LBJ	34	67.7%	16.9	20.6%
Johnston	22	59.1%	13.4	22.7%
Lanier	25	68%	24.4	44%
McCallum	41	48.8%	12.2	19.5%
Reagan	20	75%	23.1	30%
Travis	25	76%	22.7	36%
TOTAL	250	65.6%	19.2	30.4%

Source: Teacher CPE hours reported by AISD Professional Development Academy, 2003-2004.

Table 7: Multi-Year Comparison of GEAR UP Professional Development Participation

School Year	Number of GEAR UP Teachers Participating	Percent of GEAR UP Teachers Participating	Average Number of Hours Completed
2000-2001	127	52%	23.4
2001-2002	192	76%	30.8*
2002-2003	204	58.6%	5.8*
2003-2004	164	65.6%*	19.2*

Source: Teacher CPE hours reported by AISD Professional Development Academy, 2003-2004.

Note: * indicates statistically significant change.

On the GEAR UP teacher survey, teachers were appreciative of the professional development support that they had received from GEAR UP and discussed factors related to their participation. On the survey, 80.3% of the teachers responding reported that they had obtained professional development information from the GEAR UP project staff and 61.8% of the teachers reported that they were able to take advantage of more professional development opportunities during the 2003-2004 school year because of the availability of GEAR UP funds. The teachers reported that these funds were used to defray registration costs and provide classroom substitutes, the primary factor in making it possible for them to participate. While teachers appreciated the support, they frequently said that campus commitments prevented them from seeking and participating in professional development. Teachers requested more information about professional development related to specific content areas and effective instructional strategies, opportunities to engage in curriculum development, and training related to TAKS, PSAT, and SAT test preparation.

The purpose of GEAR UP teacher professional development support was to improve the instructional skills of teachers and to enable them to be well-informed advocates for their students' college preparation. The GEAR UP staff's ongoing effort to make increasingly relevant professional development opportunities available and their collaboration with the district's curriculum departments in this process resulted in an overall increase of teacher participation during the 2003-2004 school year. GEAR UP teachers reported that the funds provided by the program did enable them to participate in opportunities that would not have been available otherwise, and the teachers continued to request ongoing opportunities to participate.

5. *GEAR UP Austin* provides significant encouragement and support to parents as they prepare their children for post-secondary enrollment.

Fifty-two percent of GEAR UP students reported that they could be the first generation in their immediate family to enroll in college. Because these students cannot benefit from their families' experiences in preparing for and enrolling in college and applying for financial aid, they may be at a disadvantage in gaining access to postsecondary education. Thus, it is important to provide parents with a better understanding of how to support their children in the college preparation process to improve chances that they will successfully become enrolled.

During interviews, the GEAR UP staff stressed the importance of parent education and partnership in the process of preparing students to enroll in post-secondary education. They reported that parents provide important assistance to their children as they complete high school graduation requirements, navigate college admissions processes and apply for college financial aid. The GEAR UP staff stressed the importance of preparing parents to be a continuing source of encouragement and support for their children as they proceed through college when GEAR UP is no longer a support system. As one staff member stressed, "Parent education should not be taken lightly. Time and other commitments often keep them from the school, but most really want it (college) for their kids. They are just mostly uninformed. Once they have the info, they follow through at home. We can do it at school, but the best support comes from home."

The GEAR UP staff reported that they were beginning to realize a tangible partnership with parents towards enrolling their children in college. They described multiple instances where parents had communicated their thankfulness for their

commitment to their children. They also were observing active parent support for their children at home and ever increasing attendance at school events. Supporting staff claims of increasing parental involvement, parent meeting attendance records also showed a statistically significant increase in parent participation in meetings pertaining to parenting skills, academic advising, college entrance requirements, and financial aid (Table 8).

Table 8: GEAR UP Parent Meeting Participation

	Number of GEAR UP Students	Number of Parents Attending Meetings	Percent of Parents Attending Meetings	Percentage Point Change
2001-2002	3,670	942	25.7%	
2002-2003	2,880	1,448	50.2%	+24.5% *
2003-2004	2,484	2,038	82%	+31.8% *

Source: GEAR UP Project Database, Spring 2003 and 2004. Note: * indicates statistically significant change.

On project surveys, teachers noted that GEAR UP project staff had an established rapport with parents. Fifty-seven percent of teachers completing the project surveys reported that they worked through GEAR UP staff to contact and communicate with parents regarding student academic concerns. The teachers believed that communication between school and home was greatly improved as parents felt more comfortable talking about issues with someone whom they knew (*GEAR UP* staff) and conversations could be translated if necessary.

Importantly, communication about post-secondary enrollment was not isolated in the school setting. Significantly more GEAR UP students reported that they are talking to their parents more about continuing education after high school graduation (Figure 2). Significantly more students reported that they talked frequently with their parents about college and significantly fewer GEAR UP students reported that they never talked with their parents about college. GEAR UP parents reporting that they never talked to their children about college declined significantly by more than half (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Student Talked to Parent About College

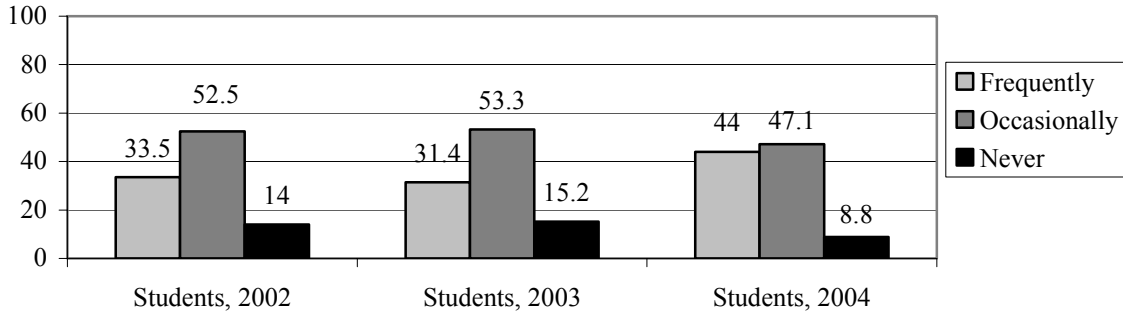
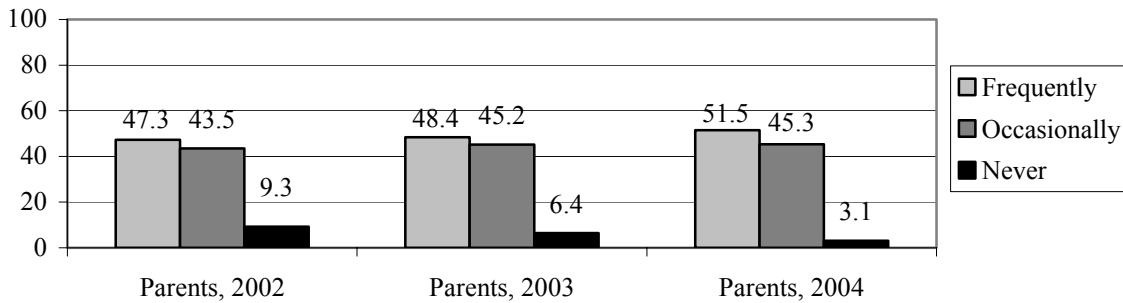


Figure 3: Parent Talked to Child About College



During focus groups, students discussed their parents' involvement in their college preparation. They reported that GEAR UP staff worked hard to include parents in the education and college preparation of all students. The students believed that their parents were well informed as GEAR UP staff consistently sent letters, invitations, and flyers to their homes. The staff also often made phone calls and visited their homes. The students believed that their parents were beginning to get excited about the educational opportunities for their children after they finish high school. They reported that the financial aid meetings were especially helpful to them and their parents. Many of the GEAR UP students said that their parents were thankful for the effort that GEAR UP made to provide the information in Spanish. As a result, they were feeling more comfortable at parent meetings. All of the students reported that their parents' support would be a determining factor in their overall success in enrolling in and completing college.

Notably, parent involvement in children's school experiences is associated with the likelihood of making plans for post-secondary enrollment (NCES, 2003). Research shows that those parents who are extremely or somewhat involved are more likely to assist with post-secondary enrollment processes and make financial plans for post-secondary education. Multiple data sources examined in the project evaluation indicated that parents of GEAR UP students continue to be encouraged to participate in their children's preparation for college and are increasing their participation in activities related to this process. The chances that GEAR UP students will be successfully enrolled in a post-secondary institution may be greatly improved as a result.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Throughout the year and across multiple data sources, *GEAR UP Austin* requested that students, parents, teachers, and project partners provide feedback on project services and identify areas for improvement. In this process, some recommendations for improvement were identified by project stakeholders. For example, a few students requested more tutors with advanced expertise in math and science and some teachers requested that *GEAR UP* continue to communicate more professional development opportunities. Most project stakeholders also were well aware that federal project funding will end in September 2006. Thus, they emphasized repeatedly two major recommendations for continuing the work of GEAR UP.

Recommendations

1. *Project stakeholders overwhelmingly recommended that the Austin Independent School District should institutionalize the GEAR UP college preparation role at all high schools with emphasis on serving students from low socio-economic and potentially first-generation college households.* This would require the district to fund locally or use other grant funds to employ at least two full-time college preparation personnel at each high school and for each grade level. The GEAR UP Project Facilitator and a Parent Support Specialist would continue to work with students and their families as the students transition from middle to high school and follow those students through graduation. GEAR UP staff would continue to be solely dedicated to college preparation providing consistent, in-depth services as the students move through high school. Working with an identified cohort of students in need of intensive services would enable the staff to continue the cultivation of a personal relationships with students from poverty, believed to be a predominant factor in *GEAR UP* student success.

2. *Project stakeholders also stressed the need for creating a college preparation culture in all high schools supported by all school faculty and staff.* While wanting intensive services for low socio-economic and at-risk students to be continued, stakeholders cautioned against abdicating the college preparation role strictly to GEAR UP staff, guidance counselors, or similar positions. They suggested that college preparation be embraced as an integral part of the high school culture with expectations

set forth that *all* students will enroll in some type of post-secondary education. This may necessitate that students be required to take increasingly rigorous coursework provided by a high quality teaching staff and that the high school embed college and career information within high school curricula and provide training for teachers, so they are able to provide accurate and in-depth college and career information to their students. This recommendation is consistent with challenges and recommendations provided to the district by the Southern Regional Education Board (2004).

While these major recommendations from project stakeholders extend beyond the jurisdiction of *GEAR UP Austin*, there are ways that the project director and staff can facilitate the district's incorporation of these ideas:

3. *GEAR UP Austin should continue to educate district decision-makers on the needs of first generation and low-income youth and families as they pertain to preparation for post-secondary enrollment.* Lessons learned through GEAR UP work should be formally provided to the Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Executive Director of Educational Support Services, and Executive Director of Curriculum. Structured conversations with campus administrators and other college and career preparation program directors should be facilitated. The focus of those conversations should address systemic, purposeful approaches to removing barriers to post-secondary enrollment for all students. The processes for creating a college preparation culture in all high schools, regardless of the geographical location or demographic make-up of the schools, should be emphasized.

4. *GEAR UP Austin should continue to facilitate and improve collaborative efforts with other district programs to effectively prepare students for college in hopes that effective college preparation practices will be sustained after federal funding ends.* Following recommendations from Katzenbach and Smith (1994), *GEAR UP Austin* should continue to articulate a sense of urgency and clear direction. Thus, GEAR UP should continue to provide updated project information to other institutions, district departments, and programs with similar goals and objectives. This will enable project partners to understand that the project has critical and worthwhile purposes and related expectations. To improve collaborative work efforts, *GEAR UP Austin* should also facilitate the articulation of guidelines and procedures related to communication and

conduct that will promote focus, commitment, and trust between project partners. These procedures and guidelines may address meeting attendance, expectations for communication, and constructive ways to address conflict. To help establish ongoing working relationships and motivation, *GEAR UP Austin* should identify a few performance-oriented tasks to be completed early within the collaboration. Additionally, *GEAR UP Austin* should spend more formal and informal time with collaborative partners to develop personal and working relationships necessary for project success and to provide time for sharing creative insights and problem-solving ideas. Finally, *GEAR UP Austin* should continue to provide positive feedback and recognition for collaborative partners to encourage continued motivation and commitment. This recognition and feedback may be as simple as communicating individual and project successes, both small and large, through e-mails, during meetings, and on certificates of participation.

Conclusion

In its fourth year, *GEAR UP Austin* continued to meet most project objectives and demonstrated progress towards meeting all articulated targets before the end of the grant period. All *GEAR UP* cohort students were provided with intensive and personalized support to improve their TAKS performance and complete course requirements successfully. All *GEAR UP* students were provided with multiple opportunities to engage in college and career exploration activities, attend college and career fairs, participate in college visits, interact with mentors, prepare for college admissions tests, complete financial aid applications, and apply to post-secondary institutions. *GEAR UP Austin* provided substantial professional development support to all teachers of *GEAR UP* students and strongly encouraged their participation. Parents of cohort students were provided with consistent and detailed information about their children's school progress and ways to assist their children in becoming enrolled in a post-secondary institution upon high school graduation. *GEAR UP Austin* included all stakeholders in the planning and implementation of project services and encouraged their collaboration.

In fact, *GEAR UP Austin* increased their collaboration with project partners during the fourth year of project implementation. Most of the work conducted last year was accomplished collaboratively with partners within and outside of the district. This collaboration expanded project capacity across the district and will increase chances that

project services can be sustained after federal funding commitments end. For example, the AISD *Parent University* initiative utilized the efforts and program offerings of *GEAR UP*, AISD's Guidance and Counseling department, and Project ADVANCE, a privately funded initiative designed to increase high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment rates. The *GEAR UP Austin Tutoring Initiative* worked with Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Small Learning Communities (SLC) to identify and serve students more efficiently and effectively. Finally, *GEAR UP Austin's* work with Austin Community College (ACC) on the Early College Start (ECS) initiative provided an example of two institutions working collaboratively to advocate for students who do not traditionally participate in dual enrollment courses.

Finally, *GEAR UP Austin* was highly rated by project staff, teachers, parents, and students. Over and over, the *GEAR UP* staff reported that the intensive nature of services provided by the project and the consistency of their outreach positively influenced student success. Nearly all of the teachers were excited about the work of *GEAR UP* and often described it as fantastic, wonderful, and important. Parents believed that the program had a significant impact on the improvement of their children's academic achievement and plans for post-secondary enrollment. Numerous students reported that *GEAR UP* had a profoundly positive impact on their personal lives and provided a variety of important services integral to their lifelong success.

In conclusion, the *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project* is considered a highly successful program. Not only has *GEAR UP* provided in-depth information and intensive support services necessary for students to become enrolled in college upon high school graduation, but they have also played a strong advocacy role for those students generally underrepresented in post-secondary institutions. This advocacy is increasing the awareness level of issues related to higher education preparation among a variety of constituents. Hopefully, this heightened awareness and concern will motivate real systemic change in such a way that all students will benefit, successfully enrolling in and completing post-secondary education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: GEAR UP DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY, 2003-2004

Table 9: Demographic Summary for All Students Attending GEAR UP High Schools, 2003- 2004

	African American	Hispanic	White	Native American	Asian/Pac. Islander	Econ DisAdv.	LEP
Austin Independent School District	13.6%	53.1%	30.3%	.2%	2.8%	55.6%	21.8%
Akins	12.5%	61.6%	23.4%	.4%	2.1%	48.3%	8.5%
Crockett	9.1%	53.3%	36%	.3%	1.4%	40.8%	8%
LBJ	32.5%	30%	31.5%	.2%	5.9%	39.9%	6%
Johnston	17.7%	79.7%	2.5%	0%	0%	73.6%	20.8%
Lanier	18.8%	66.7%	11.5%	.1%	3.7%	69.9%	29.5%
McCallum	19.3%	25.2%	54.4%	.1%	.9%	24.4%	4.5%
Reagan	37.4%	58.8%	3.3%	.1%	.4%	71.1%	25.5%
Travis	9.8%	81.1%	8.3%	.1%	.7%	74.7%	23.1%
Texas Empowerment Academy	88.8%	8%	3.2%	0%	0%	35.2%	0%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), Texas Education Agency, 2003-2004

Table 10: Percent of Economically Disadvantaged GEAR UP Students, 2003-2004

	Percent Qualifying for Free or Reduced Priced Lunches
Akins High School	57%
Crockett High School	57%
LBJ High School	44%
Johnston High School	83%
Lanier High School	73%
McCallum High School	38%
Reagan High School	73%
Travis High School	70%
Texas Empowerment Academy	42%

Source: Student Enrollment Records, Austin Independent School District, 2003-2004

Table 11: Student Mobility Rates for GEAR UP High Schools, 2002-2003

	Mobility Rate
Akins High School	26%
Crockett High School	24.6%
LBJ High School	20%
Johnston High School	33.4%
Lanier High School	33.8%
McCallum High School	19.9%
Reagan High School	37.6%
Travis High School	31.7%
Texas Empowerment Academy	28.5%

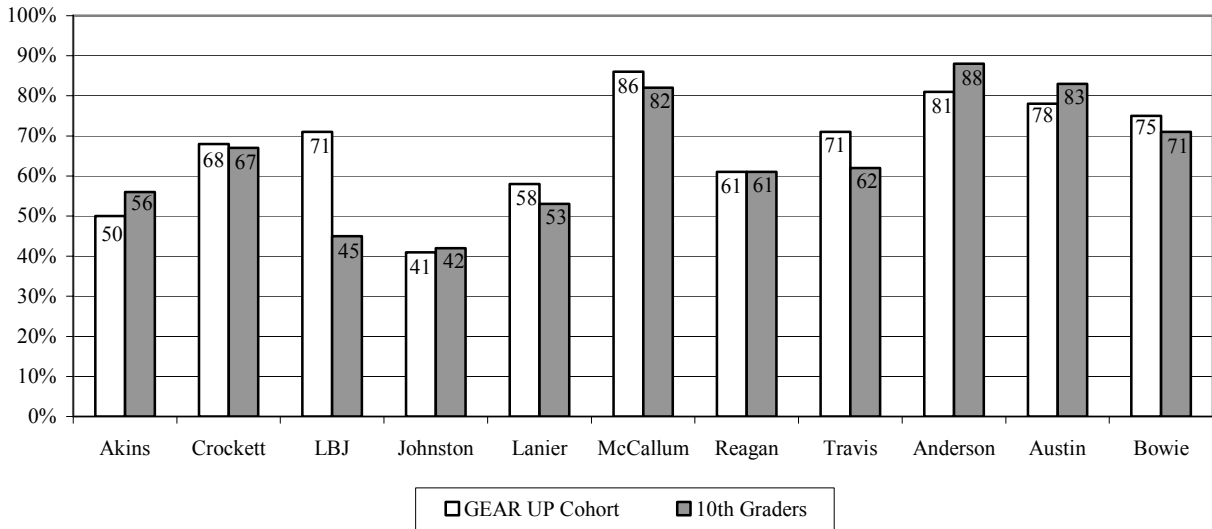
Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), Texas Education Agency, 2003-2004

APPENDIX B: GEAR UP PARTNERS, 2003-2004

ACT
Applied Materials, Inc.
Austin Coca Cola
Austin Community College
Austin Energy
Avance
Capital Area Training Foundation
Career Resources Development
Communities in Schools—Central Texas
DAAMARS International
Educational Resources Consulting
The Faulkner Group
Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce
HEB
Huston Tillotson College
Jr. Achievement of Central Texas
Learning Systems
Locke Lidell and Sapp
LULAC
St. Edward's University
Selectron-Texas
Texas Gas Service
Texas State University
The College Board
3 M
URS Radian
UT Austin

APPENDIX C: TAKS SUMMARY FOR GEAR UP STUDENTS, SPRING 2004

Figure 4: Percent of Students Meeting Minimum Standard, TAKS Reading Test 2004



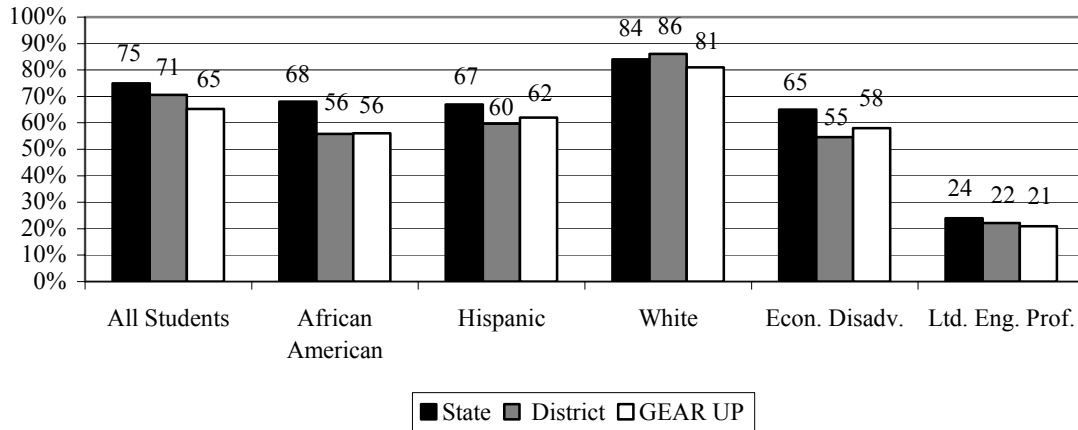
Source: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, Texas Education Agency, Spring 2004

Note: Results do not reflect those of the accountability subset and will not match AEIS reports.

Note: LBJ 10th Grader's data indicate performance of LBJ Comprehensive student subset. LBJ Magnet and overall 10th grade performance not reported in this figure.

Note: Student level TAKS data for GEAR UP students attending the Texas Empowerment Academy were unavailable.

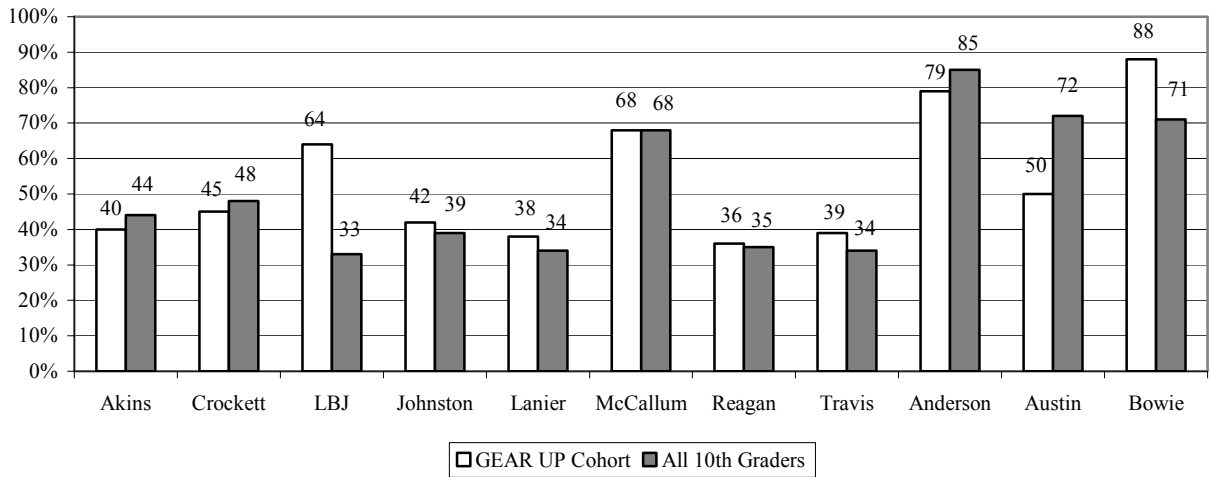
Figure 5: Percent of Student Groups Meeting Minimum Standard, TAKS Reading Test 2004



Source: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, Texas Education Agency, Spring 2004

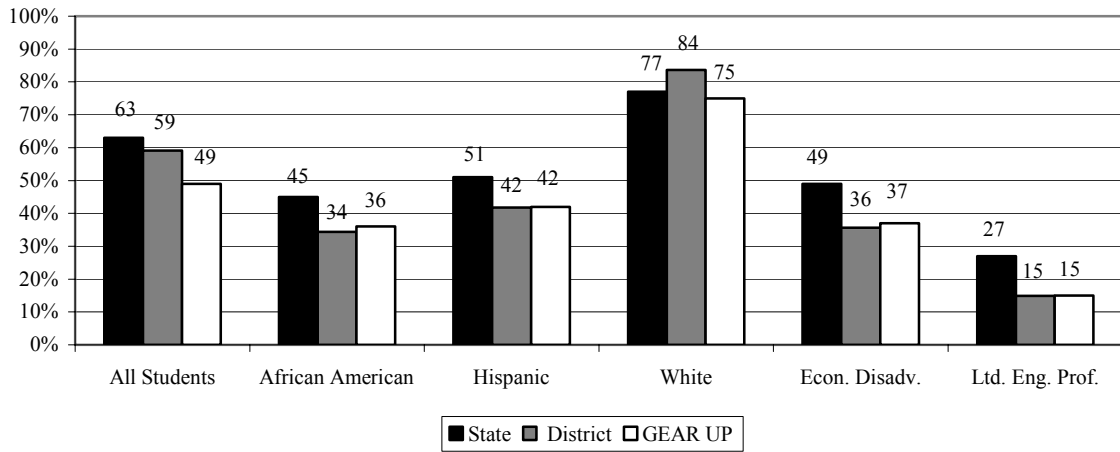
Note: Results do not reflect those of the accountability subset and will not match AEIS reports.

Figure 6: Percent of Students Meeting Minimum Standard, TAKS Math Test 2004



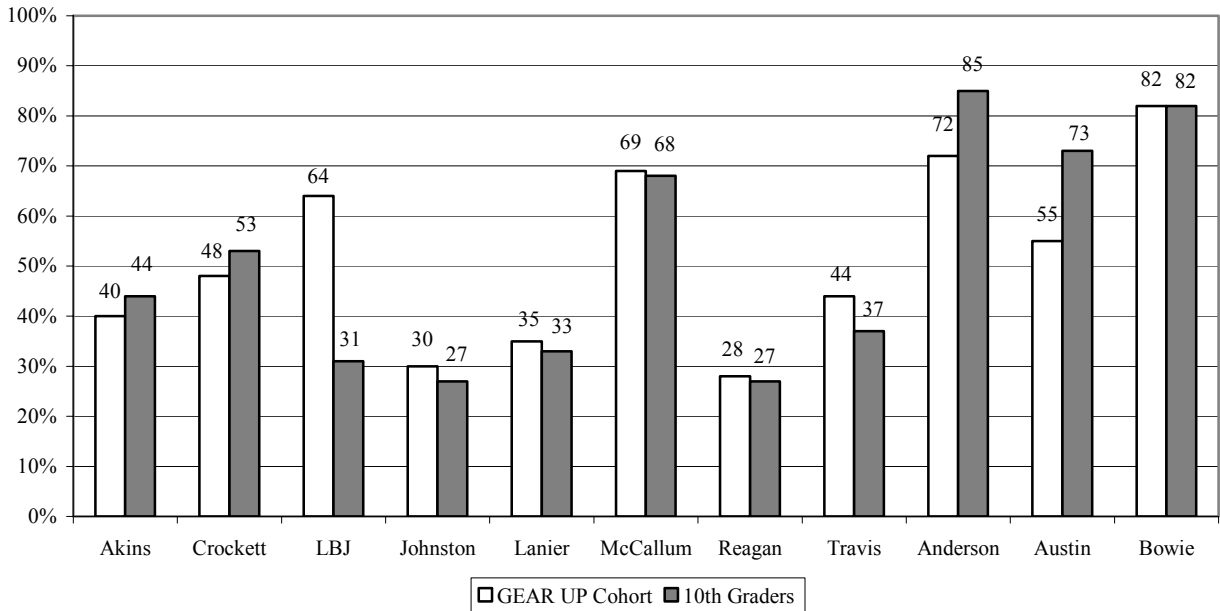
Source: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, Texas Education Agency, Spring 2004
 Note: Results do not reflect those of the accountability subset and will not match AEIS reports.
 Note: LBJ 10th Graders' data indicate performance of LBJ Comprehensive student subset. LBJ Magnet and overall 10th grade performance not reported in this figure.
 Note: Student level TAKS data for GEAR UP students attending the Texas Empowerment Academy were unavailable.

Figure 7: Percent of Student Groups Meeting Minimum Standard, TAKS Math Test 2004



Source: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, Texas Education Agency, Spring 2004
 Note: Results do not reflect those of the accountability subset and will not match AEIS reports.

Figure 8: Percent of Students Meeting Minimum Standard, TAKS Science Test 2004



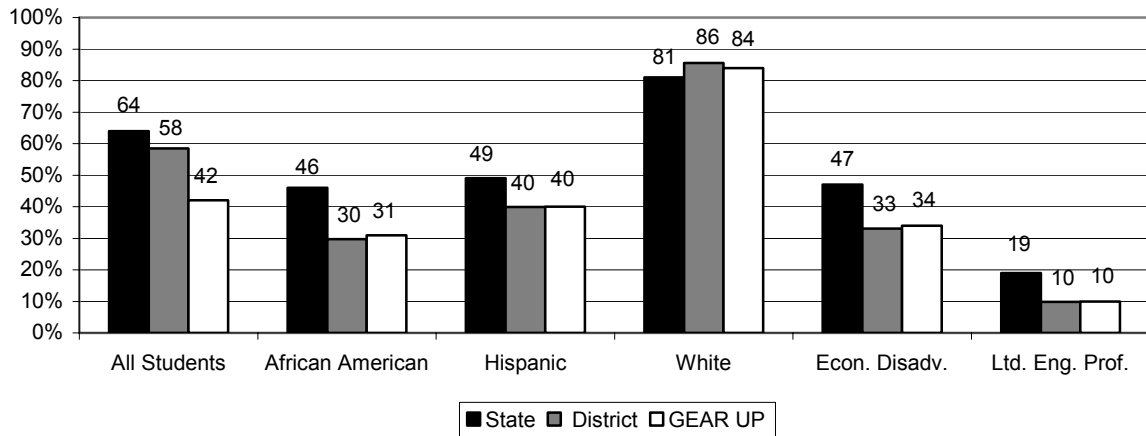
Source: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, Texas Education Agency, Spring 2004

Note: Results do not reflect those of the accountability subset and will not match AEIS reports.

Note: LBJ 10th Graders' data indicate performance of LBJ Comprehensive student subset. LBJ Magnet and overall 10th grade performance not reported in this figure.

Note: Student level TAKS data for GEAR UP students attending the Texas Empowerment Academy were unavailable.

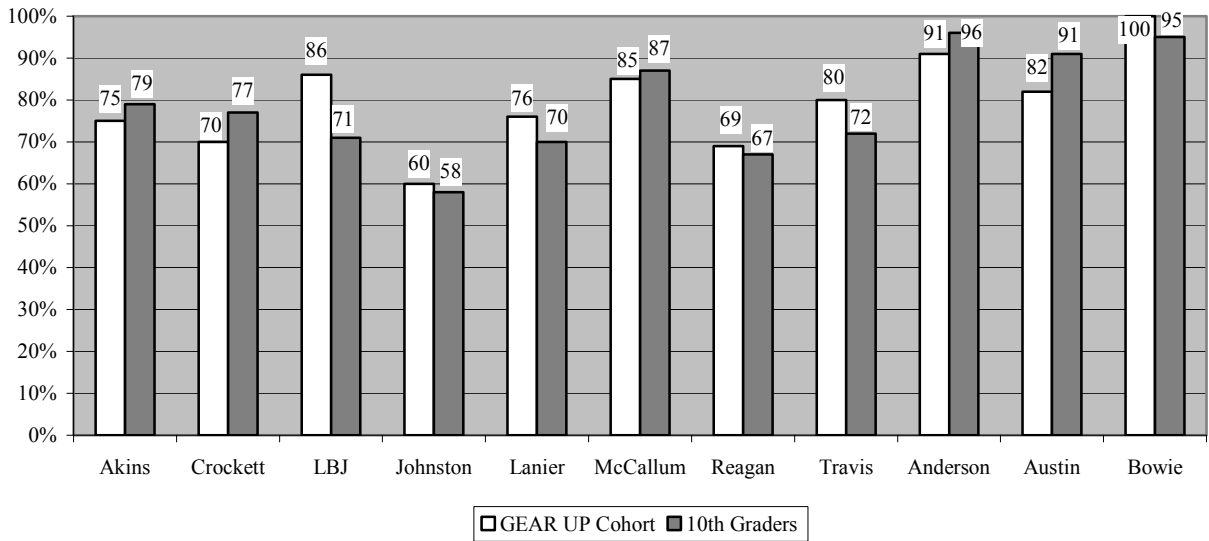
Figure 9: Percent of Student Groups Meeting Minimum Standard, TAKS Science Test 2004



Source: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, Texas Education Agency, Spring 2004

Note: Results do not reflect those of the accountability subset and will not match AEIS reports.

Figure 10: Percent of Students Meeting Minimum Standard, TAKS Social Studies Test 2004



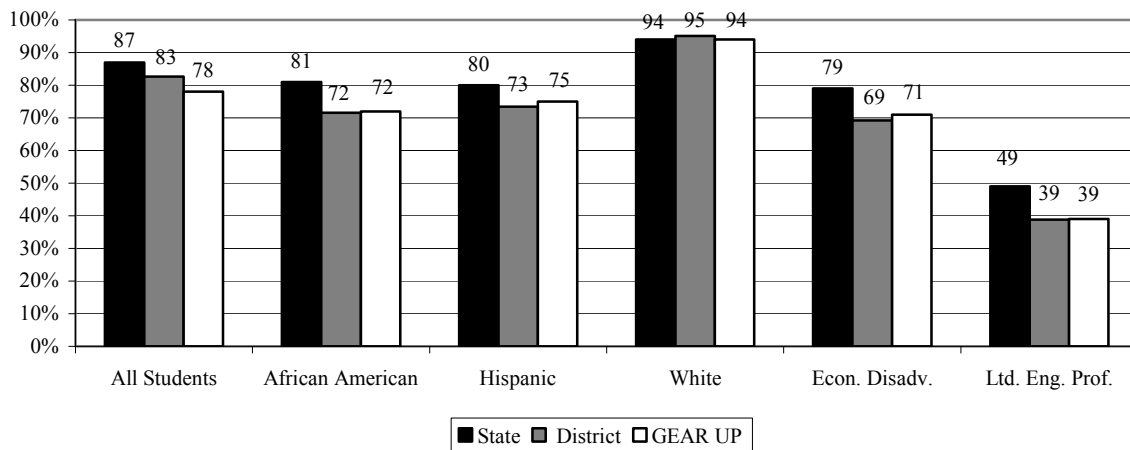
Source: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, Texas Education Agency, Spring 2004

Note: Results do not reflect those of the accountability subset and will not match AEIS reports.

Note: LBJ 10th Grader’s data indicate performance of LBJ Comprehensive student subset. LBJ Magnet and overall 10th grade performance not reported in this figure.

Note: Student level TAKS data for GEAR UP students attending the Texas Empowerment Academy were unavailable.

Figure 11: Percent of Student Groups Meeting Minimum Standard, TAKS Social Studies Test 2004



Source: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, Texas Education Agency, Spring 2004

Note: Results do not reflect those of the accountability subset and will not match AEIS reports.

APPENDIX D: GEAR UP PROJECT OBJECTIVES

I. Academic Intervention

- | |
|---|
| A. 80% of cohort students will meet minimum passing standards for all TAKS tests. |
| B. 100% of cohort students with course averages between 50-69 will participate in tutoring each weekly. |
| C. 18% of cohort students are enrolled in advanced courses. |
| D. 63% of cohort students complete the SAT and/or ACT test. |
| E. 27% of cohort students score at or above criterion on SAT/ACT tests. |
| F. 50% of cohort students enroll in post-secondary education. |

II. Enhanced Guidance & Counseling

- | |
|---|
| A. 100% of cohort students will complete the Individual Academic Career Plan (IACP), complete e-Discover interest inventory, create a portfolio; attend Centex College Fair; and attend a Career Exploration Day. |
| B. 100% of cohort students will receive an e-mail address, visit college internet site, and have an e-mail or one-on-one mentor. |
| C. 100% of cohort students will receive a 21 st Century Scholars certificate. |
| D. 100% of cohort students will visit a College and Career Center (CCC) twice per year, complete the PSAT/PLAN, complete the SAT/ACT; and identify 2 post-sec institutions for enrollment. |
| E. 90% of cohort students will complete financial aid applications. |

III. Professional Development

- | |
|--|
| A. 100% of project staff and cohort teachers will complete 20 hours of staff development per year. |
| B. 100% of project partners will engage in at least one project planning session each year. |
| C. 95% of school principals and project partners will meet annually to evaluate project's collaborative and intervention strategies. |
| D. 100% of project support staff and core team of teachers at each campus will complete IMPACT/GAIT team training. |

IV. Parent Involvement

- | |
|--|
| A. 100% of cohort parents will receive a GU brochure and attend a parent orientation. |
| B. 100% of cohort parents will sign a GU participation contract. |
| C. 50% of cohort parents will participate in Parent University classes annually. |
| D. Parents from each GEAR UP campus will serve in an advisory capacity to GEAR UP staff and to the school on parent issues. |
| E. 100% of students with more than 5 absences in one or more courses or failing more than one core course will receive a home visit. |

APPENDIX E: GEAR UP STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

GEAR UP Student Survey Questions	
How much do you know about the GEAR UP program?	
	Students, 2004
I know everything about it.	29.7
I know a few things about it.	66.2
I do not know anything about it.	4
How often do you interact with the GEAR UP teachers on your campus	
	Students, 2004
Frequently	22.9
Occasionally	36.2
Once or twice	28.8
Never	12
How well do the GEAR UP teachers provide you with information and help that you need to meet your college and career goals?	
	Students, 2004
Very well	63.8
Somewhat	28.3
Not well	7.8
Do you participate in GEAR UP tutoring services?	
	Students, 2004
Frequently	7.8
Occasionally	25.1
Once or twice	29.2
Never	37.7
Do you believe that the GEAR UP tutoring services are helpful?	
	Students, 2004
Very helpful	55.4
Somewhat helpful	21.2
Not very helpful	2
I do not know	21.3
How many hours per week do you spend studying or doing homework?	
	Students, 2004
None.	12.2
1-5 hours per week	55.1
6-10 hours per week	23.1
11-15 hours per week	6.2
16 or more hours per week	3.2

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.

Note: Surveys were revised and not all questions were asked of respondents each year.

* Denotes statistically significant change between 2004 and 2003 survey responses.

GEAR UP Student Survey Questions				
I participate in the following activities in school:				
	Students, 2004			
Music (Band, Choir, etc.)	17.9			
Theater/ Drama/ Dance	11.9			
Academic clubs	8.3			
GEAR UP Leadership clubs	14.3			
Journalism (Newspaper, Yearbook, etc.)	4			
Speech/Debate	3.9			
Student Council	4.2			
Sports	38.1			
Other	47.1			
I participate in the following activities outside of school:				
	Students, 2004			
Church-related activities	30.4			
Sports activities not related to school	35.5			
Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts	5.9			
Arts/Performance activities	10.9			
Community service activities	16.2			
Part-time work	16.7			
Helping my family by providing regular childcare or other help	36.1			
What level of school do you plan to complete?				
	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Does not plan to finish high school.	1.1	1.4	1.9	N/A
High School only	8.4	8.9	8.2	3.5
Certificate or Associates degree	11*	8	9.2	16
Bachelors degree (4 Year)	35.5*	17.4	23.4	21.5
Graduate or professional degree	30.2*	36.1	30.6	28.9
I do not know	13.8*	28.2	26.5	30
Why might you not continue your education after high school?				
	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
It costs too much.	22.1	22	19.4	35.8
Needs or wants to work.	8.3	7.8	6	13
Grades are not good enough.	14.4*	12	7.4	20.7
Wants to join the military service.	3.5	3.4	5.9	8
Wants or needs to take care of family.	1.6	2.2	2.4	7
Job/career will provide training.		2.5	2.8	9
Not interested.	3.2	3.1	4.1	6.6
This question does not apply, because he/she is going to college.	46.8	47	52.1	N/A

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.

Note: Surveys were revised and not all questions were asked of respondents each year.

* Denotes statistically significant change between 2004 and 2003 survey responses.

GEAR UP Student Survey Questions				
What level of school do you plan to complete?	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Does not plan to finish high school.	1.1	1.4	1.9	N/A
High School only	8.4	8.9	8.2	3.5
Certificate or Associates degree	11*	8	9.2	16
Bachelors degree (4 Year)	35.5*	17.4	23.4	21.5
Graduate or professional degree	30.2*	36.1	30.6	28.9
I do not know	13.8*	28.2	26.5	30
Why might you not continue your education after high school?	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
It costs too much.	22.1	22	19.4	35.8
Needs or wants to work.	8.3	7.8	6	13
Grades are not good enough.	14.4*	12	7.4	20.7
Wants to join the military service.	3.5	3.4	5.9	8
Wants or needs to take care of family.	1.6	2.2	2.4	7
Job/career will provide training.		2.5	2.8	9
Not interested.	3.2	3.1	4.1	6.6
This question does not apply, because he/she is going to college.	46.8	47	52.1	N/A
Someone in our immediate family has a college degree.	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Yes	47.5	49.6	51.2	N/A
No	52.4	30.8	27.4	N/A
I do not know.	N/A	19.6	21.4	N/A
Parent has talked with me about attending college.	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Frequently	44*	31.4	33.5	N/A
Occasionally	47.1*	53.3	52.5	N/A
Never	8.8*	15.2	14	N/A
Have you talked with someone about the college entrance requirements and the classes that you will need to take in high school in order to prepare for college?	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Yes	67.3	75.9	72.2	N/A
No	32.6	13.5	14.1	N/A
Do not know.	N/A	10.5	13.7	N/A

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.

Note: Surveys were revised and not all questions were asked of respondents each year.

* Denotes statistically significant change between 2004 and 2003 survey responses.

GEAR UP Student Survey Questions				
Who has helped you learn <u>the most</u> about preparing for college?	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Family member	23.1	21.4	30.1	N/A
GEAR UP project staff	50.9	54	38	N/A
Classroom teacher	3.9	5.3	11.1	N/A
School counselor	4.6	4.1	N/A	N/A
GEAR UP mentor	4.4	4.2	7.5	N/A
GEAR UP tutor	2.9	3.2	N/A	N/A
Classmate/friend	3*	2	2.8	N/A
No one has helped.	7	5.7	10.5	N/A
Do you know what classes you should take to prepare for college?	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Yes, I know a lot about them.	21.5	43.5	44	40.6
I know a few things about them.	58.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
No, I do not know anything about them	19.7	36.2	28.5	25.1
I do not know.	N/A	20.3	27.5	34.3
I have taken or will take the following types of classes:	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Honors classes	48.4*	30.4	N/A	N/A
Pre-AP or AP classes	43*	25.8	N/A	N/A
Dual Enrollment/ Early College Start classes	22.4	N/A	N/A	N/A
Career and Technology classes	21.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
AVID classes	9.3	N/A	N/A	N/A
None of these.	9*	3.4	N/A	N/A
I do not know.	23.8*	37	N/A	N/A
I have taken or will take the following tests:	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
PSAT	97.1*	38.9	N/A	N/A
SAT	45.3	46.5	36.8	N/A
ACT	19.8	21.8	18.5	N/A
ASVAB	2.8*	7.1	N/A	N/A
None of these	13.9*	3.4	4	N/A
I do not know	22.5*	37	40.6	N/A
Due to GEAR UP, my academic performance is	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Better	44.8*	41.1	34.6	20.4
About the same	26.2*	39	37.9	4.8
Worse	0.01*	1.8	2.2	41
I don't know.	12.4*	17.9	25.3	33.8
I do not participate.	16	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.

Note: Surveys were revised and not all questions were asked of respondents each year.

* Denotes statistically significant change between 2004 and 2003 survey responses.

GEAR UP Student Survey Questions				
Which GEAR UP services have helped you to prepare for college?	Students, 2004			
Tutoring/ Mentoring	38.5			
College Visits (during school year)	63.4			
Time in the College and Career Center	31.6			
GEAR UP student leadership clubs	20.1			
Algebra or Geometry Readiness Camp	15.7			
PSAT Preparation Camp or workshops	24.5			
Camp College (Summer)	10.9			
Other GEAR UP sponsored activities	16.6			
I do not know	23.5			
My participation in GEAR UP has changed my plans about attending college.	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Yes	29.8*	40	34.5	31.4
No	51.4*	31.7	33.1	33.2
I do not know	18.6*	28.3	32.4	35.4
I have talked with someone about getting financial aid to help pay for college.	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Frequently	8.5	9.6	8.4	N/A
Occasionally	40*	38.6	34.2	N/A
Once	25.8	N/A	N/A	N/A
Never	25.5*	51.8	57.4	N/A
Do you know how to get financial aid for college?	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Yes, I know a lot about it.	12.2	12.2	8.6	12.3
No, I do not know anything about it.	52.9*	37.5	49.1	59.5
I know a few things about it.	34.9*	50.3	42.3	28.2
Can you afford to attend a public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Definitely/ Probably/ Yes	55.2*	23.3	53.6	23.3
Not Sure	33.2*	55.5	1.1	64.4
Definitely Not/Probably Not/ No	11.5*	21.2	45.3	12.3
Are you planning to get financial aid for college?	Students, 2004	Students, 2003	Students, 2002	Students, 2001
Yes	48.7*	44.5	76.2	21.1
No	7.2*	9.4	23.2	8.7
I am not sure	44	46.1	0.6	70.1

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.

Note: Surveys were revised and not all questions were asked of respondents each year.

* Denotes statistically significant change between 2004 and 2003 survey responses.

GEAR UP Student Survey Questions	
What might prevent you from seeking financial aid for college?	Students, 2004
Nothing, will seek financial aid.	37.5
Not planning to go to college.	10.6
May not meet college requirements.	0.09
Do not have enough information about it.	47.4
The process is too difficult.	11.2
The process is too time consuming.	5.3
My family has money to pay for college.	11.5
Other	21.5

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.

Note: Surveys were revised and not all questions were asked of respondents each year.

* Denotes statistically significant change between 2004 and 2003 survey responses.

APPENDIX F: GEAR UP PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

GEAR UP Parent Survey Questions	
How much do you know about the GEAR UP program?	Parents, 2004
I know everything about it.	15.1
I know a few things about it.	73.3
I do not know anything about it.	11.5
How many hours per week does your child spend studying or doing homework?	Parents, 2004
None.	10.8
1-5 hours per week	59.3
6-10 hours per week	27.6
11-15 hours per week	2.1
16 or more hours per week	0
My child participates in the following activities in school:	Parents, 2004
Music (Band, Choir, etc.)	14.8
Theater/ Drama/ Dance	10.3
Academic clubs	6.8
GEAR UP Leadership clubs	14.9
Journalism	2.5
Speech/Debate	1.9
Student Council	3.4
Sports	31.2
Other	52.3
My child participates in the following activities outside of school:	Parents, 2004
Church-related activities	32
Sports activities not related to school	22.9
Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts	2.7
Arts/Performance activities	7.8
Community service activities	13.5
Part-time work	9.8
Helping my family by providing regular childcare or other help	57.2

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.

Note: Surveys were revised and not all questions were asked of respondents each year.

* Denotes statistically significant change between 2004 and 2003 survey responses.

GEAR UP Parent Survey Questions				
What level of school does your child plan to complete?	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002	Parents, 2001
Does not plan to finish high school.	0.01*	2	2.1	0
High School only	12.1	10.3	7.3	7.3
Certificate or Associates Degree	16.1*	9.8	13.2	20.9
Bachelors degree (4 Yr)	37.7*	23.7	35	40.9
Graduate or professional degree	20*	29.5	28.8	31
I do not know	13.8*	24.6	13.6	0
Why might your child not continue his/her education after high school?	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002	Parents, 2001
It costs too much.	24	29.9	30.7	41.5
Needs or wants to work.	5.9	4.8	4.4	6.5
Grades are not good enough.	13.7*	8.8	4.2	4.7
Wants to join the military service.	2.9	3.2	1.7	0
Needs to take care of family.	1.8*	0.6	1	1.4
Job/career will provide training.	2.3	3.4	1	3.9
Not interested.	3	5	2.6	3
Question does not apply, because he/she is going to college.	46.1*	44.1	54.5	39.1
Someone in our immediate family has a college degree.	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002	
Yes	41.1	49.4	53.3	
No	58.8	37.1	39.2	
Parent has talked with child about attending college.	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002	Parents, 2001
Frequently	51.5	48.4	47.3	55.1
Occasionally	45.3	45.2	43.5	40.6
Never	3.1*	6.4	9.3	4.4
Have you talked with someone about the college entrance requirements and the classes that your child will need to take in high school in order to prepare for college?	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002	Parents, 2001
Yes	57.8	53.8	37.7	5.1
No	42.2*	32	40.6	59.5
I do not know.	N/A	14.1	21.7	35.4

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.

Note: Surveys were revised and not all questions were asked of respondents each year. * Denotes statistically significant change between 2004 and 2003 survey responses.

GEAR UP Parent Survey Questions			
Who has helped your family learn the most about preparing for college?	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002
A classmate or friend	3*	0.7	2.5
Myself or another family member	20.6	22	31.9
A classroom teacher	1.9	3	10.3
A school counselor	2.5	2.8	N/A
A mentor	1*	2.8	4.7
GEAR UP project staff	55.7	55.6	12.7
A GEAR UP tutor	2.5	1.8	N/A
No one has helped.	12.8	11	38
Do you know what classes your child should take to prepare for college?	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002
Yes, I know a lot about them.	15.2	40.3	42.6
I know a few things about them.	56.2	N/A	N/A
No, I do not know anything about them	28.5	34.5	32.6
I do not know.	N/A	25.2	24.8
My child has taken or will take the following types of classes:	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002
Honors classes	44.8*	27.8	N/A
Pre-AP or AP classes	33.5*	16.4	N/A
Dual Enrollment/ Early College Start classes	23.3	N/A	N/A
Career and Technology classes	12	N/A	N/A
AVID classes	10.8	N/A	N/A
None of these.	7*	4.5	15.8
I do not know.	29.7*	37.1	25
My child has taken or will take the following tests:	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002
PSAT	45*	34.8	
SAT	41.8	43.3	18.2
ACT	20.9	21.5	37.8
ASVAB	3*	5.3	
None of these	7.8*	4.5	15.8
I do not know	27.9*	37.1	25

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.

Note: Surveys were revised and not all questions were asked of respondents each year. * Denotes statistically significant change between 2004 and 2003 survey responses.

GEAR UP Parent Survey Questions				
Which GEAR UP services have helped your child to prepare for college?				
	Parents, 2004			
Tutoring/ Mentoring	44.6			
College Visits (during school year)	58.5			
Time in the College and Career Center	17.7			
GEAR UP Student Leadership Clubs	11.5			
Algebra or Geometry Readiness Camp	8.2			
PSAT Preparation Camp or workshops	17.3			
Camp College (Summer)	14			
Other GEAR UP sponsored activities	28.5			
I do not know	18.9			
Due to GEAR UP, my child's academic performance is				
	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002	Parents, 2001
Better	51.4	50.2	56.1	67.5
About the same	32.4	33.4	22.6	2.2
Worse	1.5	1	2	13.1
I don't know.	14.7	15.4	19.3	17.2
My child's participation in GEAR UP has changed his/her plans about attending college.				
	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002	
Yes	47.3*	42.3	41.2	
No	25.4	24.3	27.9	
I do not know	27.2*	33.4	30.9	
I have talked with someone about getting financial aid to help pay for college.				
	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002	Parents, 2001
Frequently	7	7.2	5.3	6
Occasionally	34.6*	24.5	35.7	43.7
Once	20.9	19.3	N/A	N/A
Never	37.3*	48.9	59	50.3
Do you know how to get financial aid for college?				
	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002	Parents, 2001
Yes, I know a lot about it.	15.6	14.7	11.3	14.6
No, I do not know anything about it.	30.6	32.9	35.3	44.2
I know a few things about it.	53.7	52.4	53.5	41.1

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.

Note: Surveys were revised and not all questions were asked of respondents each year. * Denotes statistically significant change between 2004 and 2003 survey responses.

GEAR UP Parent Survey Questions				
Can your child afford to attend a public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002	Parents, 2001
Definitely/Probably/ Yes	59*	23.4	40.3	42
Not Sure	24*	52.3	0.3	47.6
Definitely Not/ Probably Not/ No	16.9*	24.3	59.3	10.4
Are you planning to help your child get financial aid for college?	Parents, 2004	Parents, 2003	Parents, 2002	
Yes	70.4	70	95	
No	3.8	4.8	4.8	
I am not sure	25.7	25.2	0.2	
What might prevent your child from seeking financial aid for college?	Parents, 2004			
Nothing, my child will seek financial aid.	44.7			
My child is not planning to go to college.	11.2			
My child may not meet college requirements.	34			
I do not have enough information about it.	42.6			
The process is too difficult.	12.5			
The process is too time consuming.	6			
My family has money to pay for college.	6.4			
Other	23.3			

Source: GEAR UP Student Surveys, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004.

Note: Surveys were revised and not all questions were asked of respondents each year. * Denotes statistically significant change between 2004 and 2003 survey responses.

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