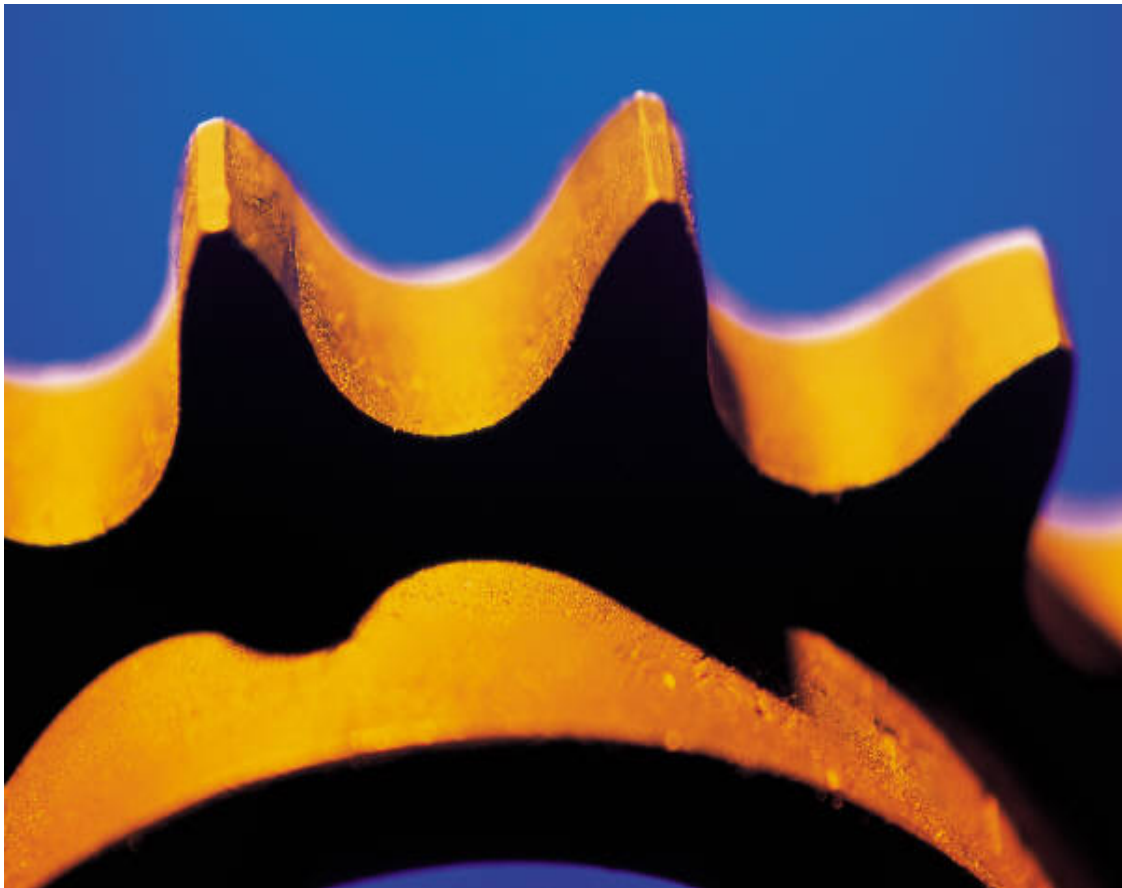


GEAR UP AUSTIN:  
IMPACTING LIVES PROJECT, 2005-2006  
A SUMMATIVE EVALUATION REPORT



Austin Independent School District  
Department of Program Evaluation

March 2007



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From fall 2000 to spring 2006, the federally funded Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) initiative operated within the Austin Independent School District (AISD). The mission of the GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project was to provide intensive college preparation support to students who were identified as being economically disadvantaged and/or who would be the first in their families to attend college, with the ultimate goal of helping those students enroll in a postsecondary institution. Students entered the program in 2000 as 7<sup>th</sup> graders, or in 2001 as 8<sup>th</sup> graders, by virtue of being enrolled in one of 11 AISD middle schools where more than 50% of the students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches. By the end of the 2005-2006 school year, just over 50% of the original cohort of more than 4,000 AISD GEAR UP students were still enrolled in AISD schools.

To serve the GEAR UP cohort students, the Department of Education appropriated approximately \$2 million each school year to the GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project, while local program partners provided matching funds each year. In its sixth and final year of implementation, GEAR UP Austin provided student services within Akins, Crockett, Johnson (LBJ), Johnston, Lanier, McCallum, Reagan, and Travis high schools, and was funded for \$1,749,401 by the Department of Education. GEAR UP Austin support services included academic interventions, enhanced guidance and counseling, teacher professional development opportunities, and parent involvement.

The results of the 2005-2006 program evaluation revealed that GEAR UP made a substantial contribution to its participants' level of college preparation. In spite of the fact that GEAR UP students were twice as likely as non-GEAR UP students to come from low-income homes and to be the first in their families to attend college, GEAR UP seniors had rates of participation higher than or similar to those of non-GEAR UP seniors in terms of applying to and enrolling in postsecondary institutions. These steps included completing college preparation courses (AP); taking college entrance exams (i.e., SAT, ACT, or AP tests); applying to colleges; submitting transcripts; and seeking information about financial aid. Moreover, GEAR UP students who were moderately to highly engaged in the program consistently outperformed GEAR UP students who had low program engagement on all measures.

However, academic achievement gaps remained between GEAR UP seniors and their non-GEAR UP peers. The achievement gaps became evident when comparing student achievement levels on the SAT, ACT, and AP tests. Although GEAR UP Austin provided many opportunities for student academic support and teacher professional development, the

program could not replace the academic preparation that needed to occur in the classroom over a period of years to ensure all students performed well on the tests often used to determine college readiness and to make college admissions decisions.

Although the GEAR UP program's federal funding ended at the end of the 2005-2006 school year, recommendations based on program evaluation results are provided to help guide the district's ongoing college and career preparation efforts. First, the school district should utilize a case management approach to provide individualized academic and college preparatory advising for economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students. Second, the district should continue to explore areas of student academic need and provide related academic support, especially for economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students. Third, the school district should provide intensive, embedded professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their instructional practices and to better meet student academic needs. Finally, the district should continue to develop and maintain collaborative partnerships with community businesses and organizations to provide enhanced academic and college preparation support for at-risk students. The incorporation of these recommendations may require examination and redefinition of staff roles and responsibilities, greater collaboration between programs, and reallocation of existing funding.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Executive Summary.....	i
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Figures.....	iv
List of Tables.....	v
Introduction.....	1
National GEAR UP Context.....	1
Need for the Program.....	1
GEAR UP Austin Funding.....	2
GEAR UP Austin Participants.....	2
GEAR UP Austin Project Description.....	3
Academic Intervention.....	3
Enhanced Guidance and Counseling.....	4
Professional Development Opportunities.....	5
Parent Involvement.....	6
Trends in GEAR UP Project Outcomes.....	6
Methodology.....	7
Purpose.....	7
Evaluation Plan.....	7
Data Collection.....	8
Data Analysis.....	9
Limitations.....	9
Results.....	10
Student Backgrounds.....	10
Advanced Placement Course Participation.....	12
SAT Test Participation and Results.....	15
ACT Test Participation And Results.....	18
Graduation Rates and Diploma Types.....	21
Financial Aid for College.....	22
Postsecondary Enrollment.....	23
Discussion.....	30
Conclusion and Recommendations.....	33
Recommendations.....	33
Appendices.....	36
References.....	42

### LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Seniors by GEAR UP School and Non-GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006 .....	10
Figure 2. Percentage of Seniors Whose Mothers Graduated from High School, by GEAR UP School and Non-GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006 .....	11
Figure 3. Percentage of Seniors Whose Mothers Graduated from a Four-Year College, by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006 .....	11
Figure 4. Percentage of Seniors Who Would Be First in Their Family to Attend College, by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006 .....	12
Figure 5. Percentage of Seniors Who Completed and Passed an AP Course by School, GEAR UP Student Status, and AVID Participation, 2005-2006 .....	13
Figure 6. Percentage of Seniors Who Completed and Passed an AP Course by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006 .....	13
Figure 7. Percentage of Seniors Who Ever Took an AP Test by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006 .....	14
Figure 8. Percentage of Seniors Who Took AP Test by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006 .....	14
Figure 9. Percentage of AP Test-Takers Who Met Criterion by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006 .....	15
Figure 10. Percentage of GEAR UP AP Test-Takers Who Met Criterion by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006 .....	15
Figure 11. Percentage of Seniors Who Participated in the SAT Test by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006 .....	16
Figure 12. Percentage of Seniors Who Participated in the SAT Test by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006 .....	17
Figure 13. Percentage of Seniors Who Met College Readiness Standard on SAT Math Test by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Status, 2005-2006.....	17
Figure 14. Percent of Seniors Who Met College Readiness Standard on SAT Verbal Test by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Status, 2005-2006.....	18
Figure 15. Percentage of Seniors Who Took the ACT by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006 .....	19
Figure 16. Percentage of GEAR UP Seniors Who Took the ACT by Level of Engagement, 2005-2006 .....	19
Figure 17. Percentage of ACT Test-Taking Seniors Who Attained College Readiness on ACT Math by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Status, 2005-2006 .....	20
Figure 18. Percent of ACT Test-Taking Seniors Who Attained College Readiness on ACT English by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Status, 2005-2006 .....	20
Figure 19. Percentage of Seniors Graduating by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006 .....	21
Figure 20. Percentage of GEAR UP Graduates, by Graduation Plan and Level of Engagement, 2005-2006 .....	22
Figure 21. Percentage of Seniors Who Felt “Very Well Informed” About Obtaining Financial Aid For College by GEAR UP School and Student Status, 2005-2006 ..	22
Figure 22. Percentage of Seniors Who Felt “Very Well Informed” About Obtaining Financial Aid For College by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006.....	23

Figure 23. Percentage of Seniors Planning to Attend Postsecondary Institution, by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2004-2006 .....	24
Figure 24. Percentage of Seniors Planning to Attend Postsecondary School by GEAR UP Status and Postsecondary School Type, 2005-2006 .....	24
Figure 25. Percentage of Seniors Intending to Pursue Postsecondary Education by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006.....	25
Figure 26. Percentage of Seniors Who Applied to Postsecondary Institutions by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006 .....	26
Figure 27. Percentage of Seniors Who Applied to Postsecondary Institutions by High School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006 .....	26
Figure 32. Percentage of Seniors Who Applied to Postsecondary Institutions by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006.....	27
Figure 33. Percentage of Seniors Who Had Transcripts Sent to Postsecondary Institutions by GEAR UP Student Status and GEAR UP School, 2005-2006 .....	28
Figure 34. Percentage of Seniors Who Had Transcripts Sent to Postsecondary Institutions by Level of Engagement, 2005-2006.....	28

#### LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Summary of Graduates by GEAR UP Student Status and Diploma Type, 2005-2006 .....	21
Table 2: Summary of Verified Postsecondary Applications by GEAR UP Student Status and Postsecondary Institution Type, 2005-2006.....	25
Table A1: Summary of Student Achievement and College Preparation .....	37
Table C1: Demographic Summary for All Students Enrolled in Austin ISD High Schools, 2005-2006 .....	39
Table C2: Demographic Summary for GEAR UP Students Enrolled in Austin ISD High Schools, 2005-2006 .....	39
Table D1: GEAR UP Project Objectives, 2004-2005.....	40
Table E1. Senior Ratings of GEAR UP Staff Helpfulness .....	41

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **NATIONAL GEAR UP CONTEXT**

The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) initiative was conceptualized in 1998 during the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965. This federal program provides 6-year grants for the development of partnerships between schools, local colleges, universities, businesses, and community organizations for the provision of intensive college preparation support for low-income, at-risk students, who are often underrepresented in postsecondary institutions. Student support begins early in the middle school years and continues through high school graduation. GEAR UP programs are expected to improve student academic performance; to expand the educational expectations for and knowledge about postsecondary options, preparation, and financing for participating students and their families; and to increase the rate of high school graduation and enrollment in postsecondary education by participating students. During the 2005-2006 school year, the Department of Education provided funding for GEAR UP programs. Approximately \$306,488,320 was appropriated for 245 state and partnership programs across the United States, the District of Columbia, and three territories—serving a total of 1,108,342 students (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

### **NEED FOR THE PROGRAM**

In recent decades, the population of Texas has grown considerably, bringing forth a host of new challenges for the state. According to the U.S. Census, from 1990 to 2000, the overall population in Texas increased by 22.8%. This growth rate was among the highest in the United States. Additionally, the racial and ethnic composition of the state continued to diversify, and non-White population groups experienced the greatest percentages of increase. This pattern of population growth has contributed to the economic disparities that have long existed between the White, Hispanic, and African American ethnic groups, and between adults with differing levels of education. The U.S. Census Bureau (2002) also reported that the median household income for Whites in Texas was \$17,500, which was greater than that for African Americans and Hispanics, and that 49% of Texas residents 25 years and older had no postsecondary education. Considering these disparities and current population growth patterns, demographers anticipate that fewer individuals will attain the levels of education necessary to be prepared for future labor force demands. This could result in the decline of average household incomes and in increasing poverty rates in Texas (Murdock et al., 2006).

Within this statewide context, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) has been exploring different ways to meet the needs of students who are at risk of dropping out of school and/or not going to college. During the 1999-2000 school year, 46.8% of all AISD



students were identified as having an economic disadvantage (i.e., qualifying for free or reduced-price school meals). At 11 middle schools that year, almost 60% of the students were identified as having an economic disadvantage. Additionally, multiple academic performance and college preparation gaps were found between student groups. Compared with White students or with those who were not categorized as economically disadvantaged, lower percentages of minority and economically disadvantaged students passed the state reading and math assessments, took advanced level courses, participated in college admissions tests, graduated from high school, and enrolled in a postsecondary institution (Appendix A).

### **GEAR UP AUSTIN FUNDING**

To address the academic achievement and college preparation gaps between student groups, the district created an early intervention program for students enrolled in 11 AISD middle schools where almost 60% of the students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches, and applied for federal GEAR UP funding to support the initiative in spring 2000. The district received a GEAR UP grant award to serve cohort students from 7<sup>th</sup> grade until they graduated from high school, a period of 6 school years. Across the 6 program years, the Department of Education appropriated \$13,475,284 to the GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project, and \$13,554,059 of matching funds were provided by local GEAR UP partners.

In its 6<sup>th</sup> and final year of implementation, the GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project operated within Akins, Crockett, Johnson (LBJ), Johnston, Lanier, McCallum, Reagan, and Travis high schools. The program was funded for \$1,749,401 by the Department of Education. GEAR UP Austin garnered another \$1,862,233 in matching funds and services from project partners (Appendix B).

### **GEAR UP AUSTIN PARTICIPANTS**

The GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project was developed using a single cohort model. The GEAR UP cohort included those 7<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2000-2001 and those 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2001-2002 who were enrolled in 11 AISD middle schools where 50% or more of the students were identified as having an economic disadvantage. At the end of the 2001-2002 school year, when GEAR UP students had completed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 4,398 cohort students were eligible for GEAR UP services until they graduated from high school. These services included a variety of intensive academic, enhanced guidance and counseling, and parent support services.

In 2005-2006, 2,038 of the GEAR UP cohort students were still enrolled across all AISD high schools. Eighty-six percent of those GEAR UP students attended 8 high schools providing GEAR UP support services, where the majority of students qualified for free and/or reduced-price lunches. A total of 281 GEAR UP cohort students were enrolled in 4 high

schools with lower percentages of students qualifying for free and/or reduced-price lunches. As a result, the cohort students enrolled in the non-GEAR UP schools were not targeted to receive GEAR UP services. However, some of the students may have accessed district-wide services offered by the program. A summary of GEAR UP student enrollment by campus is provided in Appendix C.

Although all GEAR UP cohort students and their parents were eligible to participate in GEAR UP-sponsored services, additional non-GEAR UP students and parents also could participate in GEAR UP project services. During the 2005-2006 school year, 1,892 GEAR UP students participated in program services, with an average of 37 contact hours per student (Alderete, K., Coneway, C. & Waxler, S., 2006). GEAR UP staff extended select project services to 6,083 students in the 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades who were not originally included in the GEAR UP cohort. The non-GEAR UP students were provided an average of 28 hours of service per student.

#### **GEAR UP AUSTIN PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

In the last year of the project, GEAR UP staff provided services designed to prepare students for postsecondary enrollment, with an emphasis on taking the necessary steps toward making college enrollment a reality. An individualized outreach approach characterized these services throughout the school year. GEAR UP Austin project objectives are provided in Appendix D.

#### **Academic Intervention**

GEAR UP staff continued to support the academic achievement of cohort students in the last year of the program. The GEAR UP Austin Tutoring Initiative provided focused academic support throughout the school year to GEAR UP students with failing grades or to those who had not met minimum expectations on the exit-level Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). For those not passing TAKS in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, specialized tutoring sessions were conducted to prepare them to retake the tests. In addition, tutoring support was provided to students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) or Pre-AP courses. In 2005-2006, 808 (43%) GEAR UP students were provided with an average of 11 hours of tutoring services per student (GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, 2005-2006). In May 2006, the GEAR UP staff identified GEAR UP students needing course credit recovery assistance to graduate. As a result, 39 GEAR UP seniors enrolled in AISD summer courses during summer 2006 to recover course credits needed for high school graduation.

To engage students in rigorous academic preparation for college, cohort students were encouraged to participate in the Early College Start program. GEAR UP staff assisted students in dual credit course enrollment at Austin Community College (ACC), a GEAR UP project

partner. ACC provided GEAR UP students with tuition and fee waivers. In cases of additional financial need, GEAR UP staff also assisted students in purchasing or acquiring textbooks for these college courses. District course enrollment records indicated that 231 GEAR UP students completed at least one dual credit course through the Early College Start initiative (*GEAR UP Annual Performance Report, 2006*).

GEAR UP College and Career Centers (CCCs) also were used at each high school for academic support purposes. GEAR UP students used software programs provided in the CCCs for individualized tutoring purposes. Many GEAR UP students did not have the necessary technology to complete academic assignments at home, so they often used the computers and software provided in the CCCs to complete their work outside of class hours. A total of 309 GEAR UP students used the CCCs for academic support purposes during the 2005-2006 school year. Fifty-nine teachers also used the CCCs to support their instruction for a total of 431 instructional hours (*GEAR UP Annual Performance Report, 2006*).

### **Enhanced Guidance and Counseling**

In 2005-2006, student leadership organizations sponsored by GEAR UP continued to meet and expand. These student leadership groups provided students with a place to belong that confirmed the positive impact of engaging in academic challenges, offered advisement within a supportive environment, and guided students through the postsecondary enrollment preparation process. Within these groups, students met frequently outside of school hours to engage in college preparation activities, community service, personal development activities, and social activities.

In the students' senior year, GEAR UP staff provided college and career exploration opportunities with a focus on helping students make postsecondary enrollment decisions. GEAR UP students used eDISCOVER, a web-based college and career awareness product developed by ACT, to explore college and career options. GEAR UP staff also provided individualized college and career advising services for students. Overall, 1,372 (67.3%) GEAR UP students were engaged in individualized college and career exploration and advising services during the 2005-2006 school year (*GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, 2005-2006*).

As a part of increasing educational expectations, GEAR UP staff communicated the importance of participating in college admissions testing and assisted students to register and prepare for the tests. SAT and ACT test preparation seminars were conducted on the high school campuses for 529 GEAR UP students prior to the fall 2005 test administration (*GEAR UP Annual Performance Report, 2006*). The district received 887 SAT score reports and 501 ACT test score reports for GEAR UP students. A total of 992 (48.7%) GEAR UP students,

who were enrolled across all of the high school campuses, took one or both of the exams. The cohort's average for SAT verbal and math test scores was 940, compared with the district's average score of 1022, with the state's average score of 997, and with the national average score of 1021. The cohort's average ACT Composite score was 17.9, compared with the district's average score of 20.6, with the state's average ACT Composite score of 20.3, and with the national average ACT Composite score of 21.1 (*District Summary of ACT High School Profile Report, 2006; District Summary of College Board Profile Report, 2006*).

The project staff provided GEAR UP cohort students and others with the opportunity to visit colleges and/or attend a college fair during the school year. The college visits during the last year of the project were tailored to meet the needs of students who were planning to attend the institution after graduation. Students had the opportunity to visit key service providers and places of interest on the college campus (e.g., the financial aid, student services, residential, and transportation offices). Overall, 716 GEAR UP students who were enrolled in GEAR UP schools participated in at least one college visit and/or college fair during the school year (GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, 2005-2006).

GEAR UP staff assisted students to complete applications for postsecondary enrollment. At the end of the school year, 890 GEAR UP students were documented as having completed an application for postsecondary enrollment (GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, 2005-2006). GEAR UP students completed 1,930 different applications. On the district's high school exit survey, 82% of the GEAR UP students reported that they were planning to attend a postsecondary institution within a year of high school graduation (Schmitt, 2006).

To address student and parent concerns about obtaining financial aid for college, GEAR UP conducted financial aid workshops and provided personalized assistance geared toward completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Overall, 692 cohort students received personalized information assistance pertaining to financial aid issues, and 835 cohort students and/or parents attended meetings or workshops or received personal assistance for college financial aid. Students could not be required to disclose information regarding FAFSA completions; however, 241 GEAR UP students voluntarily provided documentation that showed they had completed the FAFSA.

### **Professional Development Opportunities**

GEAR UP staff sponsored and recommended professional development opportunities for teachers that were related to articulated district goals and to project objectives that focused on improving instruction in core course areas. Approximately \$10,640 of the GEAR UP project budget supported teacher professional development opportunities during the last project

year. District information systems indicated that 281 (99%) of GEAR UP teachers completed an overall average of 48.7 hours of professional development opportunities through the district's Professional Development Academy. Of these GEAR UP teachers, 90.8% completed an average of 20 or more hours (*GEAR UP Annual Performance Report, 2006*).

### **Parent Involvement**

GEAR UP Austin continued to work toward increasing parent knowledge about postsecondary preparation and college financial aid. GEAR UP parent support specialists focused on personalized outreach for GEAR UP students' families and provided outreach in the form of home visits, conferences, and Parent University workshops for parents or guardians of 1,614 (79.2%) GEAR UP students, with an average of 6.3 hours per household (GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database, 2005-2006). Of these parents, 1,457 (71.5%) participated in personalized counseling or advising services conducted by GEAR UP staff; 628 (30.8%) attended a college preparation and/or financial aid workshop offered through Parent University; and 122 (6%) were visited in their homes.

### **TRENDS IN GEAR UP PROJECT OUTCOMES**

The results of the 2004-2005 GEAR UP Austin evaluation revealed consistently positive outcomes for GEAR UP cohort students (Alderete, Coneway, & Vaughan, 2006). Across school years, and compared with their grade-level peers within the same schools, GEAR UP students earned higher ratios of advanced course credits to regular course credits. GEAR UP students performed as well as or better than their peers on the TAKS English/language arts and social studies tests, and the rate of gain in TAKS scale scores for GEAR UP students was similar to that of non-GEAR UP students. Most GEAR UP students and their parents understood the college preparation processes and were making plans for postsecondary enrollment. GEAR UP students who were identified as moderately or highly engaged with the program consistently outperformed their GEAR UP peers who had lower engagement ratings in the areas of advanced course enrollment, TAKS performance, grade-level promotion, and avoiding significant discipline issues.

The relationship between the GEAR UP students and project staff was found to be an important factor in student academic and college preparation success. Students valued these relationships highly. GEAR UP staff, teachers, school counselors, and assistant principals also stressed the importance of these relationships.

## METHODOLOGY

### PURPOSE

Each year, the GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project was comprehensively evaluated to (a) comply with the federal law requiring an annual evaluation of the program, and (b) provide project and district decision makers with formative and summative information about program effectiveness and participant outcomes and to support ongoing college preparation implementation decisions.

### EVALUATION PLAN

Although the results from previous years' evaluation studies found that GEAR UP students were experiencing positive outcomes as a result of their participation in the program, the intent for the final year of the longitudinal evaluation was focused on summative outcomes that would describe students' postsecondary readiness and subsequent enrollment in a postsecondary institution. The hypotheses explored in this evaluation were as follows:

1. **Hypotheses I.** Students served by GEAR UP who have higher-rated levels of engagement in GEAR UP activities will have better outcomes than did students with lower-rated levels of engagement.
2. **Hypothesis II.** Compared with their grade-level peers not served by GEAR UP, a greater percentage of GEAR UP students will indicate expectations for postsecondary enrollment and report knowledge about financial aid options on the high school senior exit survey.
3. **Hypothesis III.** Compared with their grade-level peers not served by GEAR UP, a greater percentage of GEAR UP students will graduate from high school on time, earning the Recommended or Distinguished Achievement diploma.
4. **Hypothesis IV.** Compared with their grade-level peers not served by GEAR UP, a greater percentage of GEAR UP students will participate in AP courses, take the AP tests, and score at criterion level.
5. **Hypothesis VI.** Compared with their grade-level peers not served by GEAR UP, a greater percentage of GEAR UP students will participate in college entrance examinations (SAT, ACT).

6. **Hypothesis VII.** Compared with their grade-level peers not served by GEAR UP, a greater percentage of GEAR UP students will complete applications for postsecondary enrollment.
7. **Hypothesis VIII.** Compared with their peers not served by GEAR UP, a greater percentage of the GEAR UP cohort of students will attend a college or university within a year of high school graduation.

#### **DATA COLLECTION**

Project evaluators collected quantitative data from multiple sources. The Department of Program Evaluation obtained much of the student-level data from the district's student information system. Data included student identification numbers, student demographic descriptors, high school of enrollment, course enrollment and completion information, TAKS test scores, SAT and ACT test scores, graduation dates, diploma types, and transcripts sent. GEAR UP project participation data were obtained from the GEAR UP Austin Student Services Database. The GEAR UP Project database provided information related to project service participation, contact hours for students and their parents, and postsecondary applications completed by GEAR UP students. Teacher professional development opportunity data were obtained from AISD's Professional Development Academy database and the GEAR UP Austin's professional development records.

GEAR UP project staff also rated the program engagement level of GEAR UP students. Each GEAR UP project facilitator was responsible for rating each GEAR UP student on a scale of 1 to 5. A "1" rating meant that the student had little or no interest and little active participation in the program activities and goals. On the other hand, a "5" rating meant that the student was an exceptionally active participant, encouraged other students to be involved, and exhibited great interest in GEAR UP goals. In previous years, these program engagement ratings were compared with GEAR UP student responses to questions on the GEAR UP student survey, which indicated levels of student engagement in school and/or the program. The staff ratings were found to be reliable indicators of program engagement for most students.

The AISD high school exit survey was administered to seniors in every AISD high school during the spring of 2006. Eighty-six percent (3,712) of the seniors across the district responded to the survey (Schmitt, 2006). The respondents were found to be representative of the ethnic and gender distribution of the district's senior class. The survey was organized into five general topics: postsecondary intentions, postsecondary preparation, campus climate and high school experiences, technology usage, and parent involvement. At the end of the survey,

respondents were able to write in comments regarding their high school experience. (Survey questions and response summaries may be found on the AISD website.)

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

A concurrent mixed-methods approach was used for the evaluation of the GEAR UP Austin project. A variety of quantitative and qualitative data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Results were triangulated to determine program effectiveness and outcomes for participants. The data triangulation allowed the evaluators to verify the consistency of data and to clarify results, increasing the validity and reliability of the performance evaluation.

Within the evaluation, varied data analysis techniques were used. Simple descriptive statistics were used to represent the characteristics of GEAR UP participants, to describe program participation, and to summarize outcomes for tests and/or surveys. These data were then compared with those for non-GEAR UP students, at both GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP schools. Graphical and tabular presentations were used to communicate these descriptive statistics. Content analysis techniques were used to identify important details, themes, and patterns within open-ended survey data. Patterns or themes emerging from the analyses were summarized to explain GEAR UP student outcomes.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This evaluation study does not provide an in-depth examination of outcomes for GEAR UP students still classified as 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders during the 2005-2006 school year, nor does it provide a description of factors influencing their grade level promotion. In the 2004-2005 GEAR UP Austin evaluation study, GEAR UP students were found to have higher promotion rates than non-GEAR UP students between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade levels (Alderete et al., 2006). The promotion rates for GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students did not differ significantly at other grade levels.

Although GEAR UP Austin staff provided support for struggling GEAR UP students, the program had an enhanced guidance and counseling focus that emphasized postsecondary preparation. Therefore, this evaluation focused on determining the extent to which GEAR UP students were prepared for postsecondary enrollment. To do so, data analyses only included the 12<sup>th</sup> grade GEAR UP students and their peers who were eligible to graduate during the 2005-2006 school year.



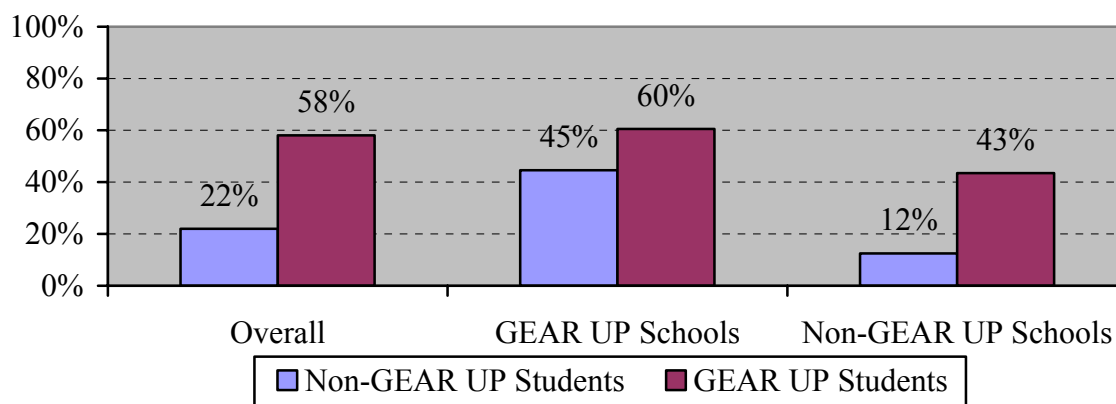
## RESULTS

### STUDENT BACKGROUNDS

Before examining the outcomes for 2005-2006 GEAR UP seniors compared with those for other seniors, it is necessary to understand how GEAR UP seniors differed from the other students in terms of their families' income and education levels. This comparison provides some insight about the likelihood that GEAR UP students would pursue postsecondary enrollment had they never participated in the program. In examining these criteria, one must also differentiate between GEAR UP students who remained in GEAR UP schools through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and GEAR UP students who transferred to non-GEAR UP schools, effectively ending their exposure to the program.

Differences between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students were examined in terms of household income. Overall, 58% of the GEAR UP seniors were identified as economically disadvantaged, compared with 22% of non-GEAR UP seniors. GEAR UP students who remained in GEAR UP schools through 12<sup>th</sup> grade were more likely to be economically disadvantaged than were GEAR UP students who transferred to non-GEAR UP schools before 12<sup>th</sup> grade (Figure 1).

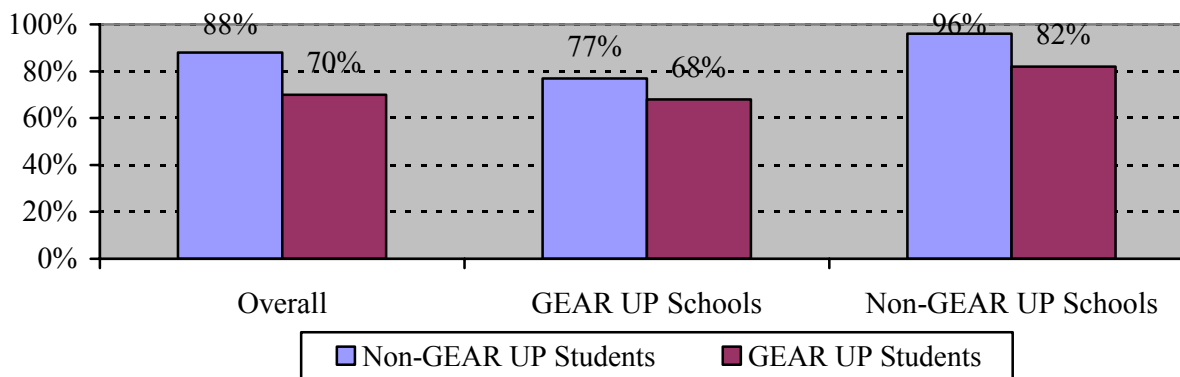
Figure 1. Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Seniors by GEAR UP School and Non-GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



Source: District enrollment records, prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation October 2006

The family education levels of GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students also were examined. According to the district's 2006 high school exit survey, a lesser percentage of GEAR UP seniors had mothers who graduated from high school than did non-GEAR UP seniors (Figure 2). GEAR UP seniors who transferred out of GEAR UP schools by 12<sup>th</sup> grade were more likely to have mothers who graduated from high school than those who remained in GEAR UP high schools.

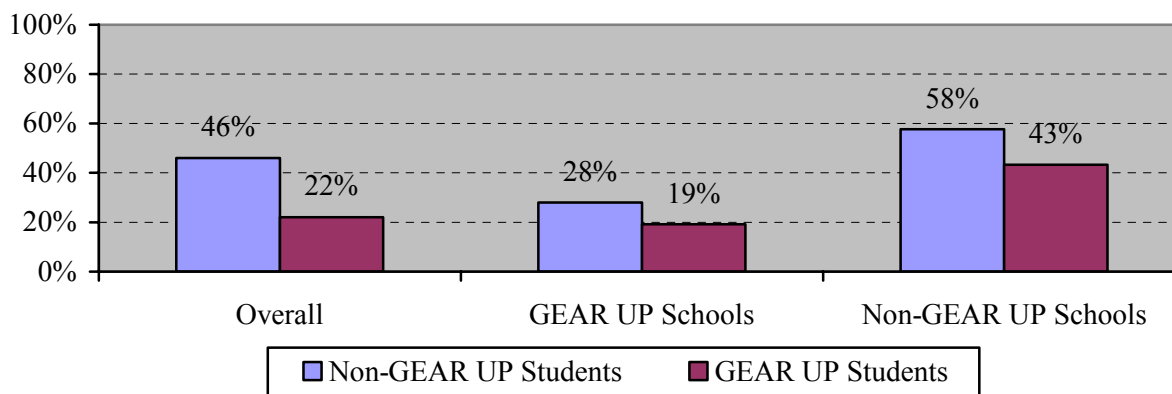
Figure 2. Percentage of Seniors Whose Mothers Graduated from High School, by GEAR UP School and Non-GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



Source: District high school exit survey prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Compared with non-GEAR UP seniors, a lower percentage of GEAR UP seniors had mothers who graduated from a 4-year college (Figure 3). Seniors who were part of the original GEAR UP cohort and then transferred to non-GEAR UP high schools were twice as likely as were GEAR UP seniors who remained at GEAR UP schools to have mothers with 4-year college degrees.

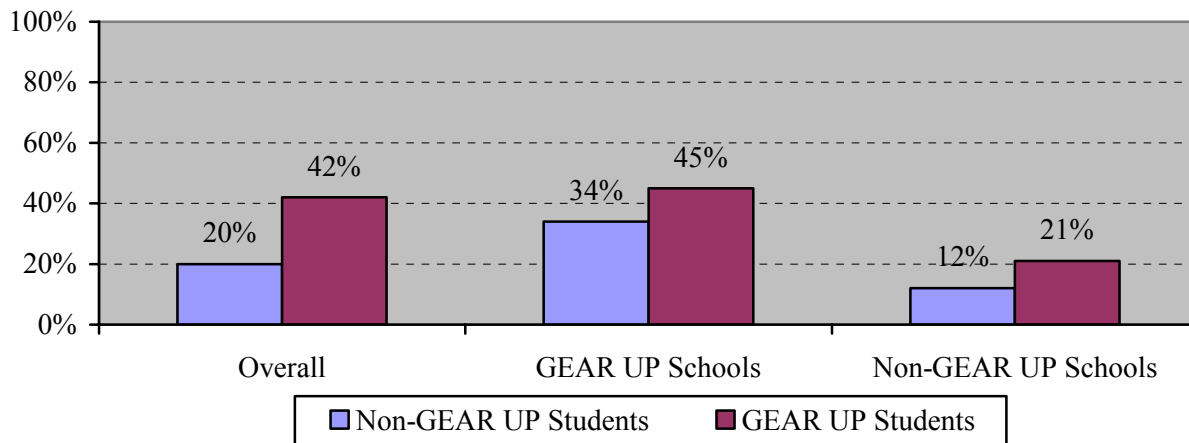
Figure 3. Percentage of Seniors Whose Mothers Graduated from a 4-Year College, by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



Source: District high school exit survey results, prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Additionally, a higher percentage of GEAR UP seniors reported that they would be the first person in their family to attend college compared with non-GEAR UP seniors (Figure 4). GEAR UP seniors who remained at GEAR UP schools were twice as likely to report being the first in their family to attend college as those who transferred to non-GEAR UP schools.

Figure 4. Percentage of Seniors Who Would Be First in Their Family to Attend College, by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



*Source: District high school exit survey results prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006*

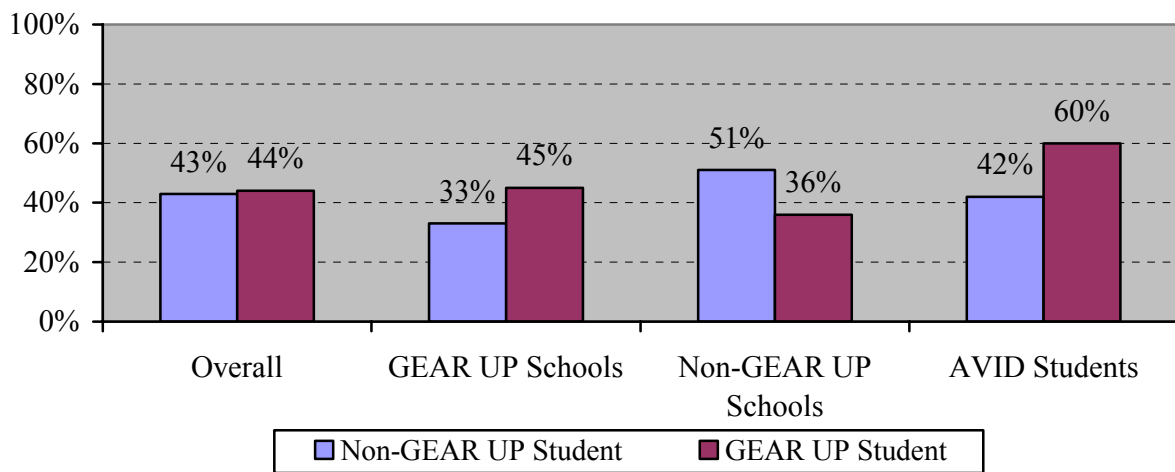
Researchers have found household income and parent education level to be highly correlated with college enrollment rates of children (Eccles, Vida, & Barber, 2004; Horn & Nuñez, 2000; Hunsaker, Frasier, King, Watts-Warren, Cramond, & Krisel, 1995). Students who come from households with higher incomes and/or who have parents with higher levels of education are generally more likely to enroll in postsecondary institutions than are students from households with lower incomes and/or who have parents with lower levels of education. In Austin, many GEAR UP students came from low-income households and had mothers and other family members with lower education levels, compared with the backgrounds of their non-GEAR UP peers. Thus, many of the GEAR UP students might be less likely to enroll in a postsecondary institution compared with their non-GEAR UP peers across the district.

#### **ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSE PARTICIPATION**

GEAR UP students were encouraged to complete Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and their AP course enrollment and successful completion of AP courses was compared with that of non-GEAR UP students. Across all high schools, similar percentages of GEAR UP seniors and non-GEAR UP seniors completed and passed an AP course (Figure 5). However, at GEAR UP schools, higher percentages of GEAR UP seniors passed their AP courses, compared with non-GEAR UP seniors. At non-GEAR UP campuses, lower percentages of GEAR UP seniors passed AP courses, compared with non-GEAR UP seniors within the same school. Additionally, a higher percentage of GEAR UP seniors who participated in Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) passed AP courses, compared with non-GEAR UP seniors who participated in AVID. GEAR UP seniors who were rated as having an

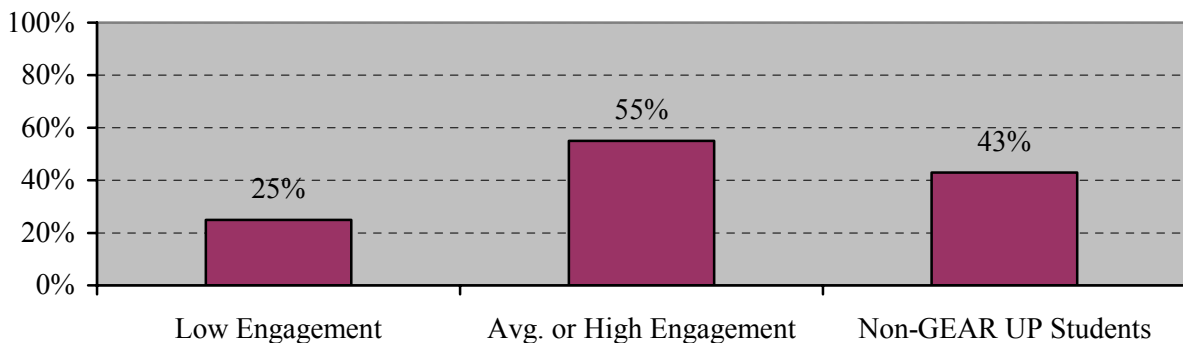
average or high engagement in the program were more than twice as likely to take AP courses than were GEAR UP seniors who were rated as having a low level of program engagement (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Percentage of Seniors Who Completed and Passed an AP Course by School, GEAR UP Student Status, and AVID Participation, 2005-2006



Source: District enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Figure 6. Percentage of Seniors Who Completed and Passed an AP Course by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006

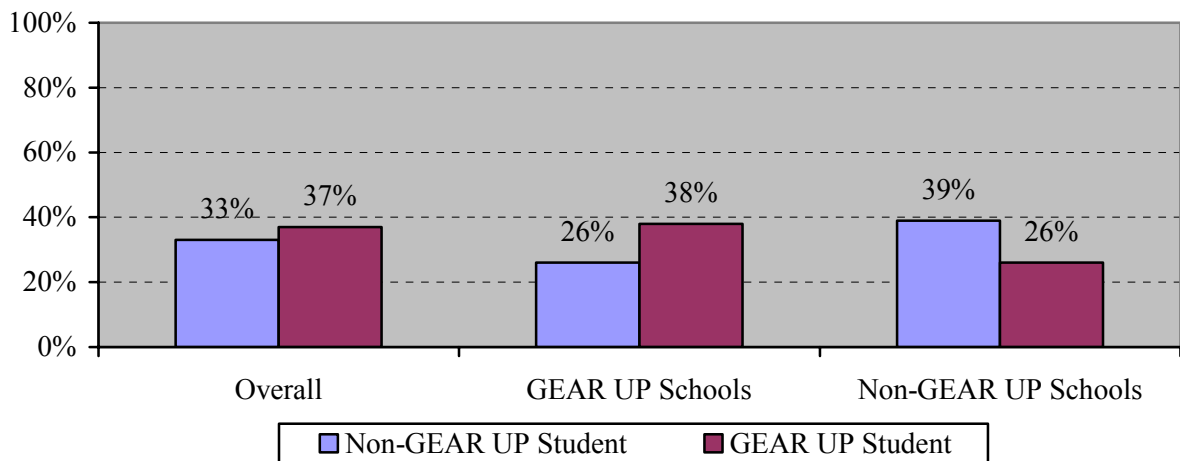


Source: District enrollment records prepared by Dept. of Program Evaluation, October 2006

The percentage of GEAR UP students taking and passing AP course exams also was compared with that of non-GEAR UP students. Overall, the percentage of GEAR UP seniors who took an AP exam exceeded that of non-GEAR UP seniors (Figure 7). At GEAR UP schools, GEAR UP seniors' AP test-taking rate was significantly higher than that of non-GEAR UP seniors, whereas at non-GEAR UP schools this relationship was reversed. At non-

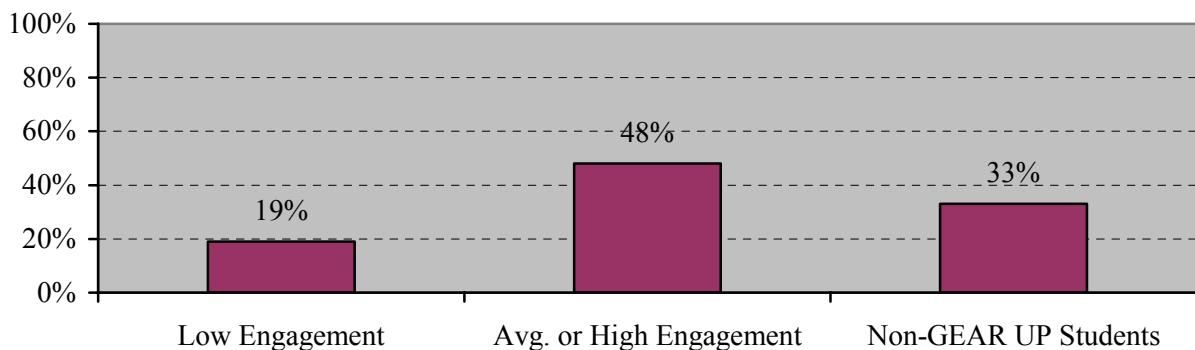
GEAR UP schools, GEAR UP seniors' AP test-taking rate was significantly lower than that of non-GEAR UP seniors. The level of GEAR UP program engagement seemed to influence AP exam taking. A greater percentage of GEAR UP seniors with average or high program engagement levels took an AP exam, compared with GEAR UP seniors with low program engagement (Figure 8).

Figure 7. Percentage of Seniors Who Ever Took an AP Test by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



Source: College Board AP test results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Figure 8. Percentage of Seniors Who Took AP Test by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006

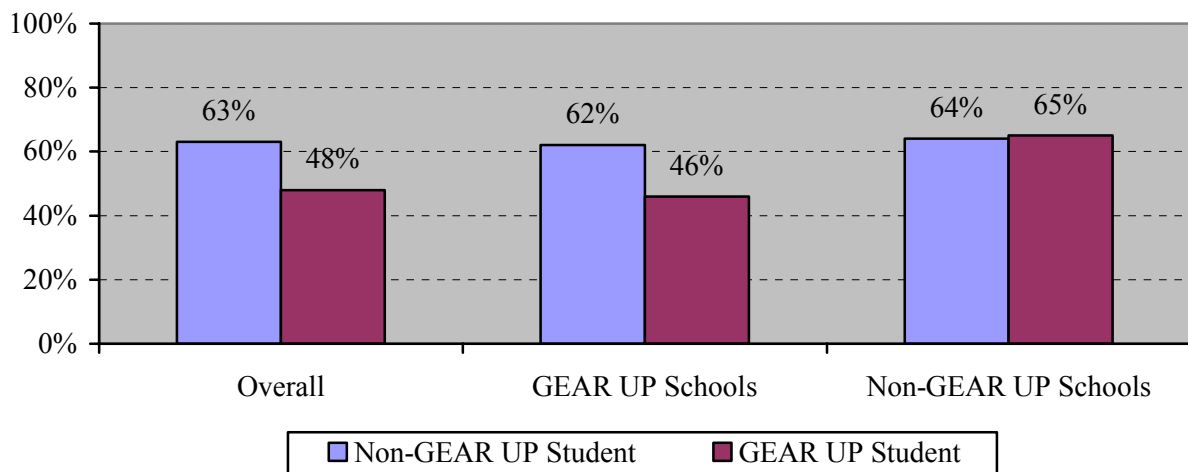


Source: College Board AP test results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

An analysis of AP course exam results revealed a difference in test performance between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP seniors (Figure 9). Across all seniors who took AP exams, a significantly higher percentage of non-GEAR UP seniors met criterion (scored 3 or higher), compared with GEAR UP seniors. At GEAR UP schools, a lower percentage of

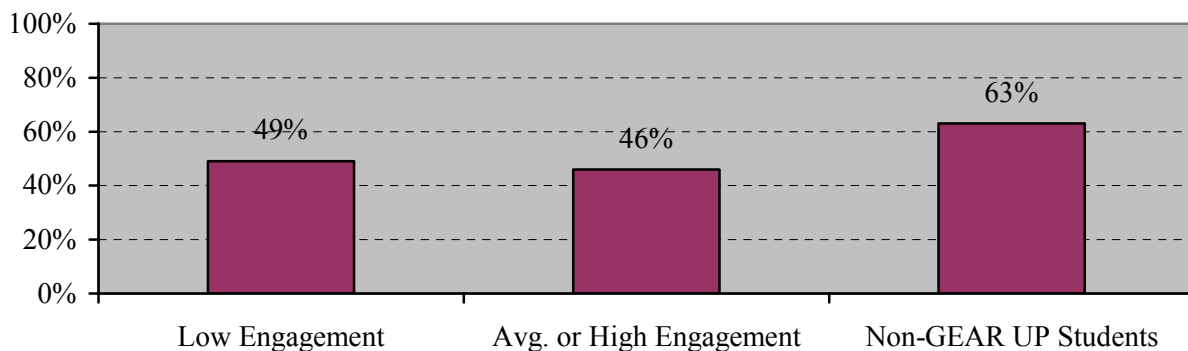
GEAR UP seniors met criterion compared with their non-GEAR UP peers. At non-GEAR UP schools, GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students met criterion at similar rates. The level of GEAR UP program engagement did not seem to influence student outcomes on the AP exams (Figure 10).

Figure 9. Percentage of AP Test-Takers Who Met Criterion by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



Source: College Board AP test results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Figure 10. Percentage of GEAR UP AP Test-Takers Who Met Criterion by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006



Source: College Board AP test results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

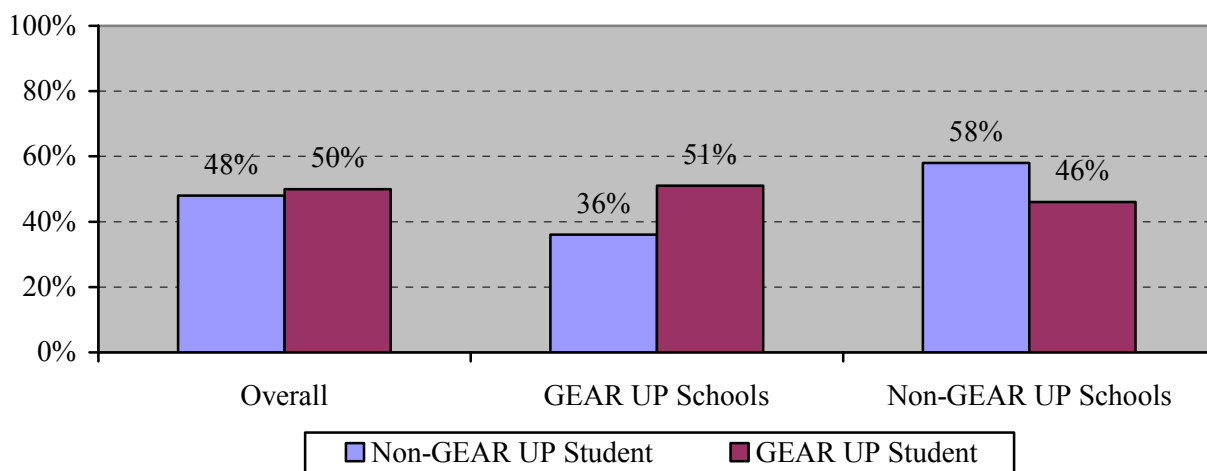
Outcomes for students taking AP courses and AP exams are important indicators related to college readiness. High school students who take and pass their AP courses and exams demonstrate their ability to complete college-level work, and these student behaviors

are strong predictors for college graduation (Dougherty, Mellor, & Shuling, 2006). The successful completion of AP and honors courses alone did not predict college completion, especially for low-income and minority students. AP exams indicate whether the student has the level of academic preparation necessary for college success. Thus, the AP exam results may indicate that many GEAR UP students need better academic preparation to ensure college success.

### SAT TEST PARTICIPATION AND RESULTS

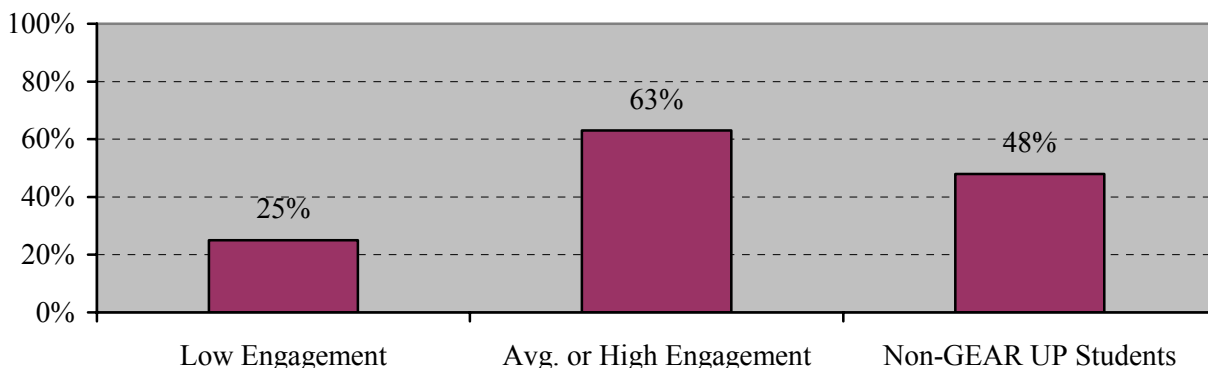
GEAR UP students were encouraged to participate in college admissions tests, and their SAT test participation was compared with that of non-GEAR UP students. Across all high schools, approximately the same percentages of GEAR UP students and non-GEAR UP students took the SAT test (Figure 11). At GEAR UP schools, a significantly greater percentage of GEAR UP seniors took the SAT, compared with non-GEAR UP seniors. Conversely, at non-GEAR UP schools, a lower percentage of GEAR UP seniors took the SAT test, compared with non-GEAR UP seniors. GEAR UP program engagement seemed to influence SAT test participation because GEAR UP seniors with average or high program engagement levels had higher rates of SAT test participation, compared with both low engagement GEAR UP seniors and non-GEAR UP students (Figure 12).

Figure 11. Percentage of Seniors Who Participated in the SAT Test by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



Source: College Board/SAT results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

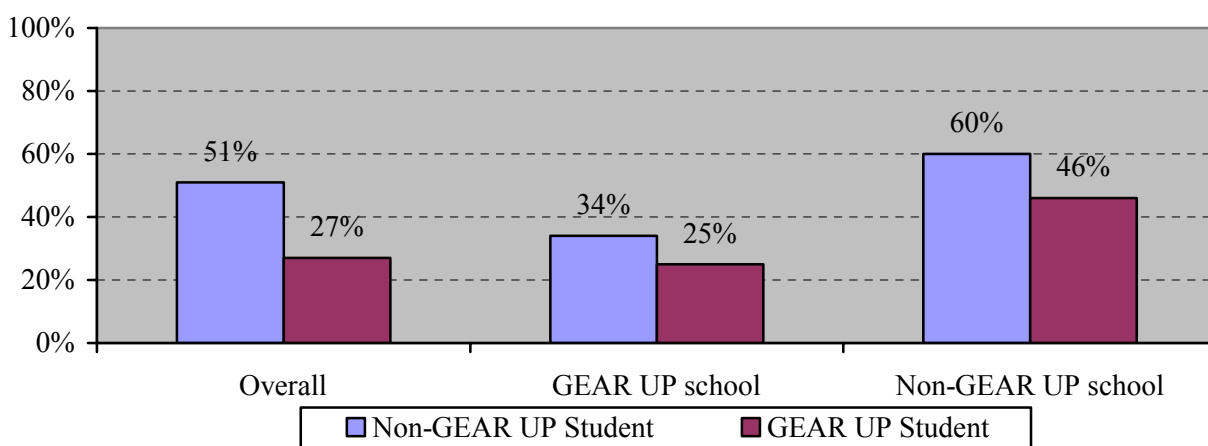
Figure 12. Percentage of Seniors Who Participated in the SAT Test by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006



Source: College Board/SAT results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

An analysis of SAT test results revealed a difference in test performance between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP seniors. Overall, a significantly lower percentage of GEAR UP seniors met the college readiness standard on the SAT math test, compared with non-GEAR UP seniors, regardless of whether they were attending a GEAR UP or non-GEAR UP school (Figure 13). This trend also was found between the student groups for the SAT verbal test results (Figure 14). The level of GEAR UP program engagement did not seem to influence student outcomes on the SAT exams.

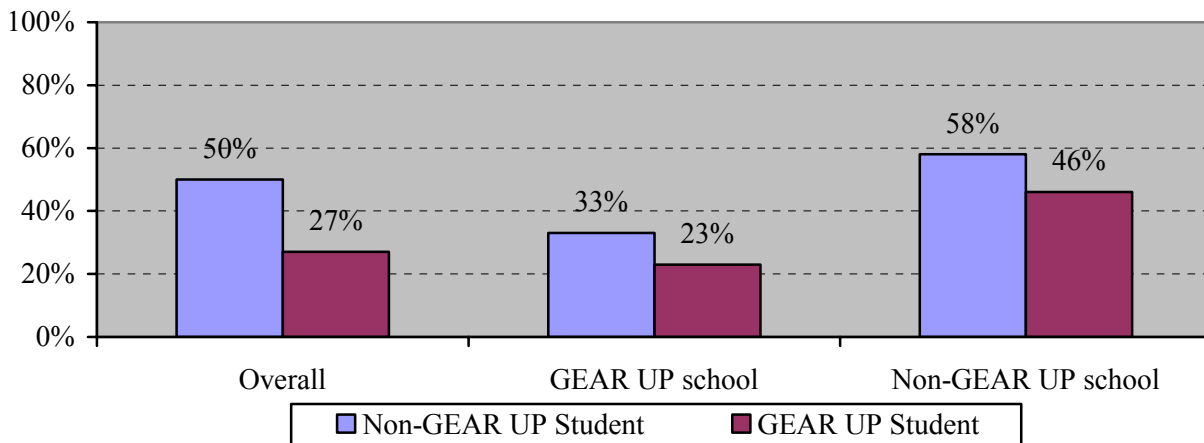
Figure 13. Percentage of Seniors Who Met College Readiness Standard on SAT Math Test by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Status, 2005-2006



Source: College Board/SAT results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006



Figure 14. Percent of Seniors Who Met College Readiness Standard on SAT Verbal Test by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Status, 2005-2006



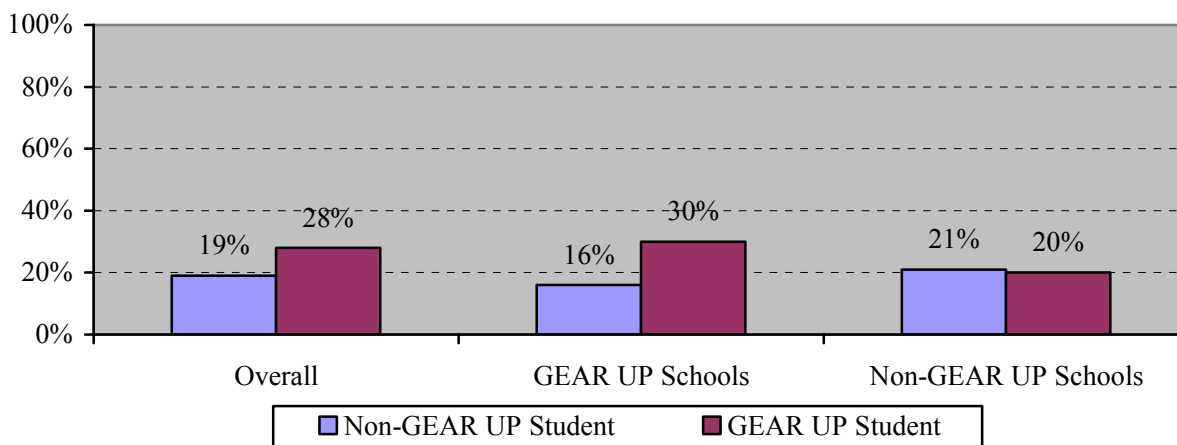
*Source: College Board/SAT results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006*

SAT test results also are important indicators related to college readiness and success. Research studies show that the SAT II can be a strong predictor for college success, measured by grade point average and college enrollment for at least two years (Dougherty, Mellor, & Shuling, 2006). Again, the SAT exam results indicate that many GEAR UP students still have academic preparation needs to ensure college success.

#### **ACT TEST PARTICIPATION AND RESULTS**

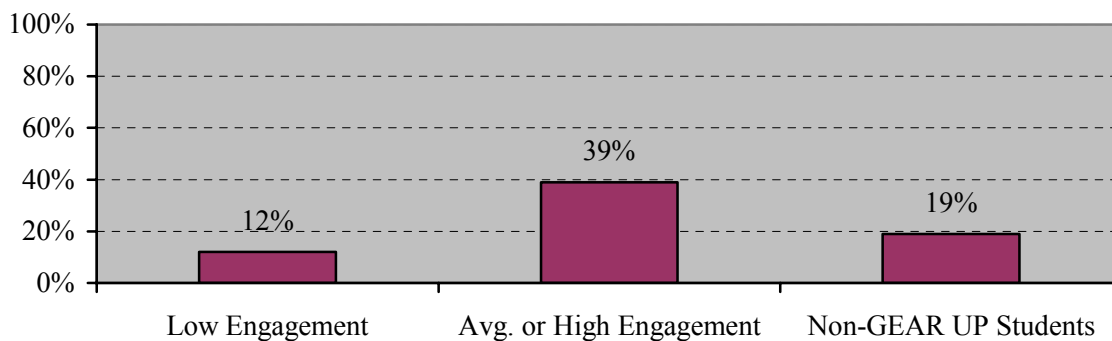
Student participation in ACT testing was examined for GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students. Overall, a greater percentage of GEAR UP students participated in the ACT test compared with non-GEAR UP students. Most of this difference was found between the students enrolled in GEAR UP schools, where GEAR UP seniors took the ACT at nearly twice the rate of non-GEAR UP seniors (Figure 15). At non-GEAR UP schools, the percentages of GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP seniors who participated in the ACT test were about the same. GEAR UP seniors who were rated as having average or high levels of program engagement were more likely to take the ACT than were either low engagement seniors or non-GEAR UP seniors (Figure 16).

Figure 15. Percentage of Seniors Who Took the ACT by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



Source: ACT test results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

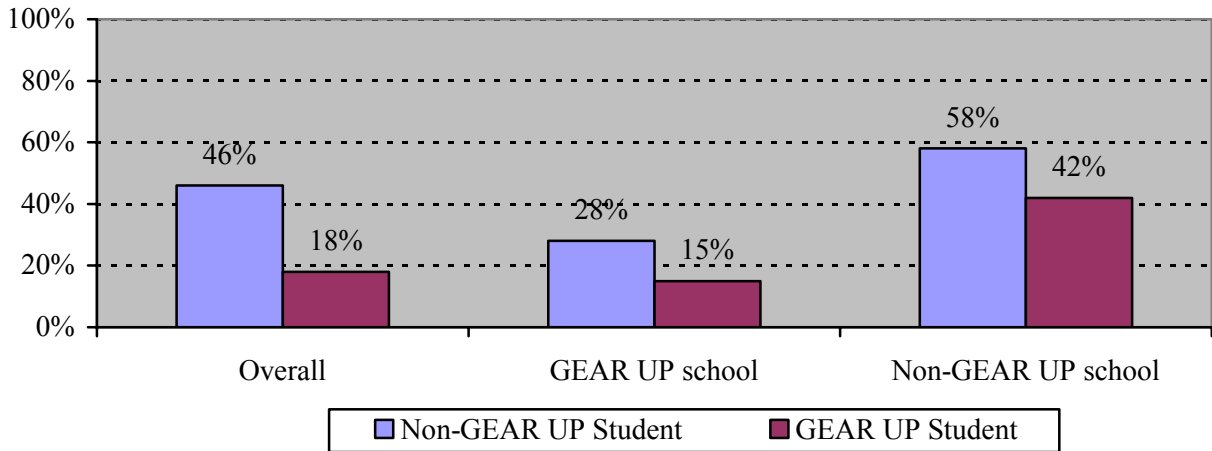
Figure 16. Percentage of GEAR UP Seniors Who Took the ACT by Level of Engagement, 2005-2006



Source: ACT test results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

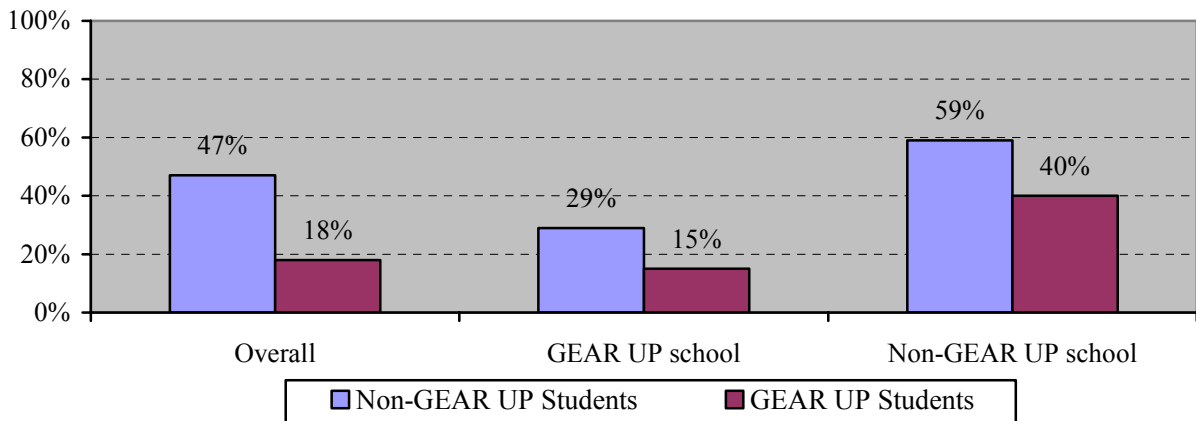
The analysis of ACT test results revealed a difference in test performance between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP seniors. Across all schools, a significantly lower percentage of GEAR UP seniors met the college readiness standard on the math section of the ACT test, compared with non-GEAR UP seniors (Figure 17). A similar achievement gap was found between these student groups on the English section of the test (Figure 18). The level of GEAR UP program engagement did not seem to influence student outcomes on the ACT test because similar percentages of GEAR UP students with low, average, and high participation levels met the college readiness standard on the ACT.

Figure 17. Percentage of ACT Test-Taking Seniors Who Attained College Readiness on ACT Math by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Status, 2005-2006



Source: ACT test results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Figure 18. Percent of ACT Test-Taking Seniors Who Attained College Readiness on ACT English by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Status, 2005-2006



Source: ACT test results and district enrollment records prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Much like the AP and SAT tests, ACT test results have been found to be strong indicators for college readiness and success. Additionally, research studies suggest that the math and reading skills needed to be ready for success in workforce training programs are comparable to those needed for success in the first year of college (ACT, 2006). Again, the ACT exam results mirror the AP and SAT test results and indicate that many GEAR UP students have academic preparation needs to ensure college success.

## GRADUATION RATES AND DIPLOMA TYPES

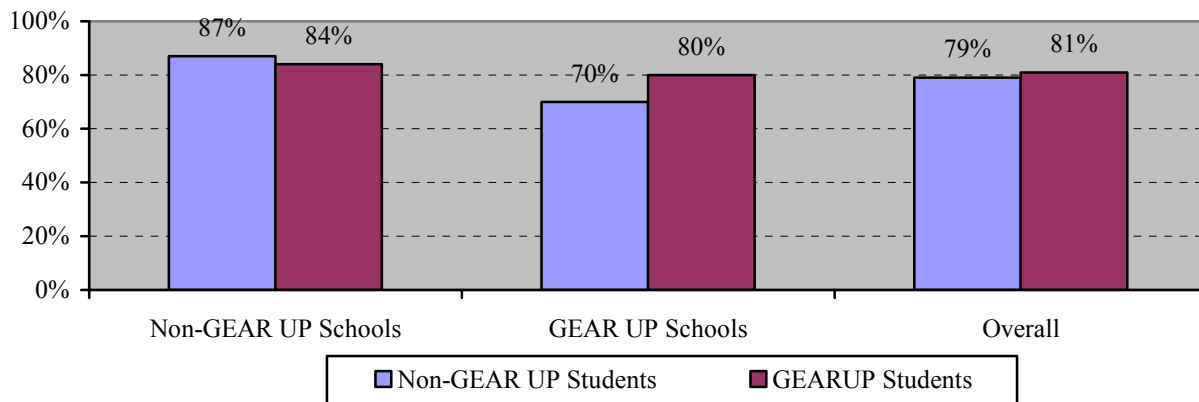
For the 2005-2006 senior class, graduation rates and diploma plans were compared for GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students. According to this comparison, GEAR UP seniors graduated at rates similar to those of non-GEAR UP seniors (Table 1). Two-thirds of the GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP seniors graduated on the recommended plan. Compared with non-GEAR UP seniors, a slightly greater percentage of GEAR UP seniors graduated on the distinguished plan. Although the graduation rates for GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP seniors did not differ greatly across all of the high schools, GEAR UP seniors who went to GEAR UP high schools had a significantly higher graduation rate than did non-GEAR UP seniors at those schools (Figure 19). At non-GEAR UP schools, little difference was found between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP student graduation rates. Among GEAR UP seniors who graduated, a significantly greater percentage of seniors rated with average and high levels of program engagement, compared with those with low involvement, graduated on the recommended or distinguished plan (Figure 20).

Table 1. Summary of Graduates by GEAR UP Student Status and Diploma Type, 2005-2006

	Non-GEAR UP Seniors	GEAR UP Seniors	Overall
<b>Total Graduates (Class of 2006)</b>	2,447 (79%)	1,428 (81%)	3,875 (100%)
<b>Percentage of Graduates by Diploma Type:</b>			
<b>Minimum</b>	22%	20%	21%
<b>Recommended</b>	66%	66%	66%
<b>Distinguished</b>	12%	14%	13%

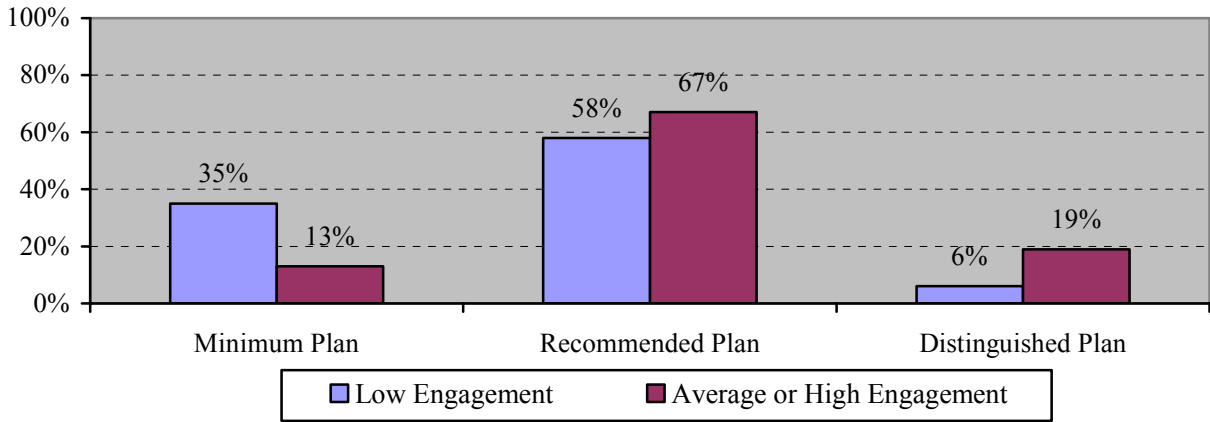
Source: District enrollment files prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Figure 19. Percentage of Seniors Graduating by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



Source: District enrollment files prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Figure 20. Percentage of GEAR UP Graduates, by Graduation Plan and Level of Engagement, 2005-2006

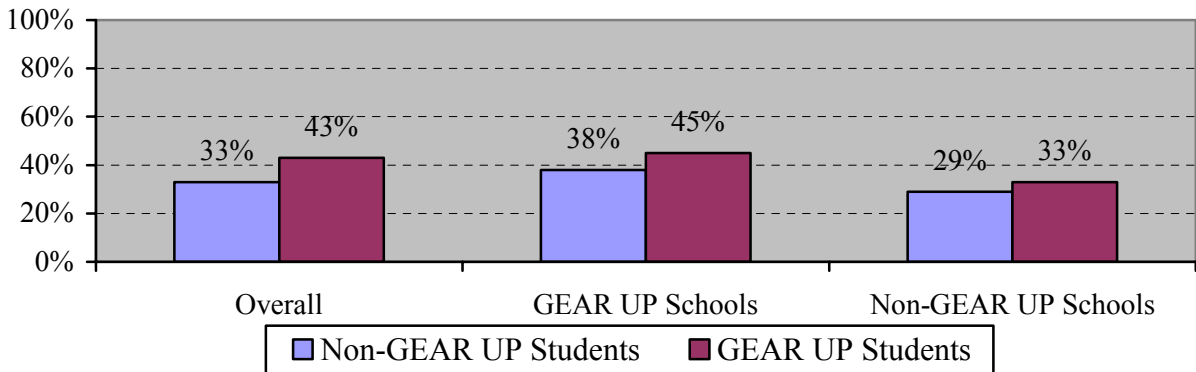


Source: District enrollment files prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

**FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE**

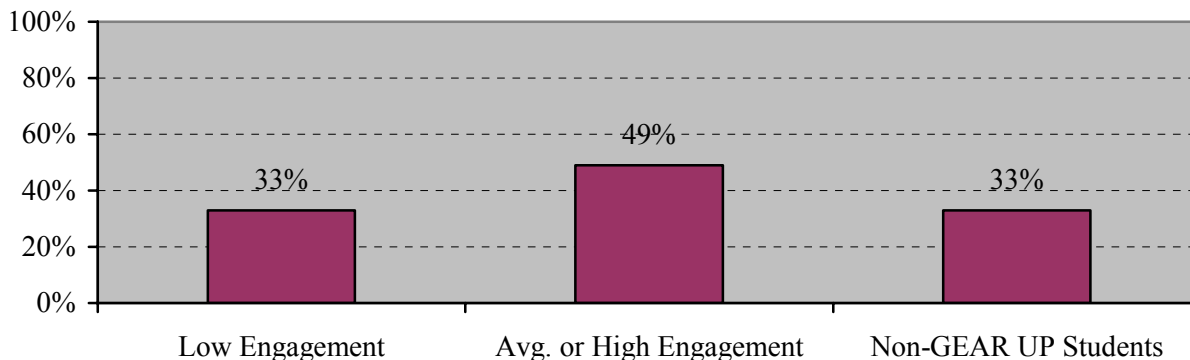
Financial concerns often influence postsecondary enrollment plans (NCES, 2003); thus, seniors were asked how informed they thought they were about obtaining financial aid for postsecondary education. On the 2006 AISD high school exit survey, a significantly greater percentage of GEAR UP seniors, compared with non-GEAR UP seniors, indicated they were “very well informed” about obtaining financial aid (Figure 21). Compared by program engagement levels, a significantly higher percentage of GEAR UP seniors who were rated as having average or high levels of program engagement reported feeling “very well informed” about obtaining financial aid (Figure 22).

Figure 21. Percentage of Seniors Who Felt “Very Well Informed” About Obtaining Financial Aid For College by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



Source: District high school exit survey and district enrollment files prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Figure 22. Percentage of Seniors Who Felt “Very Well Informed” About Obtaining Financial Aid For College by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006



*Source: District high school exit survey and district enrollment files prepared by the Dept. of Program Evaluation, October 2006*

On the 2006 AISD high school exit survey, seniors identified GEAR UP staff as the most helpful source of information about obtaining financial aid. Among GEAR UP seniors, 48% cited GEAR UP staff as being the most helpful. Among the seniors who said they relied the most on GEAR UP staff for financial aid information, 50% said they were “very well informed,” whereas 33% of seniors who relied on another source reported being “very well informed.”

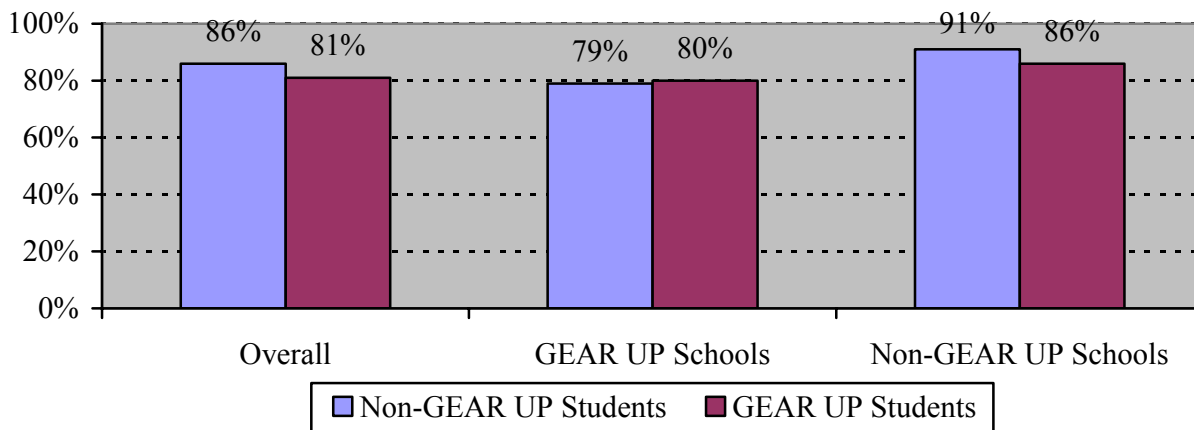
### POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT

To determine the postsecondary aspirations of high school seniors, student responses from the 2006 AISD high school exit survey were analyzed. According to the survey, 84% of all seniors reported that they planned to pursue postsecondary education after graduation. At GEAR UP schools, the percentages of GEAR UP seniors and of non-GEAR UP seniors who reported plans for postsecondary enrollment were similar. At the non-GEAR UP schools, the percentage of non-GEAR UP seniors planning on postsecondary education was slightly higher than that of GEAR UP seniors (Figure 23).

Seniors planning to enroll in a postsecondary institution also indicated the types of schools that they were planning to attend. Compared with non-GEAR UP seniors, greater percentages of GEAR UP seniors reported intentions to attend vocational or trade schools and 2-year Texas colleges (Figure 24). Similar percentages of GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students planned to enroll in 4-year Texas colleges; however, a lesser percentage of GEAR UP seniors indicated they were planning to attend a 4-year out-of-state college. GEAR UP seniors who were rated as having average or high levels of program engagement were significantly

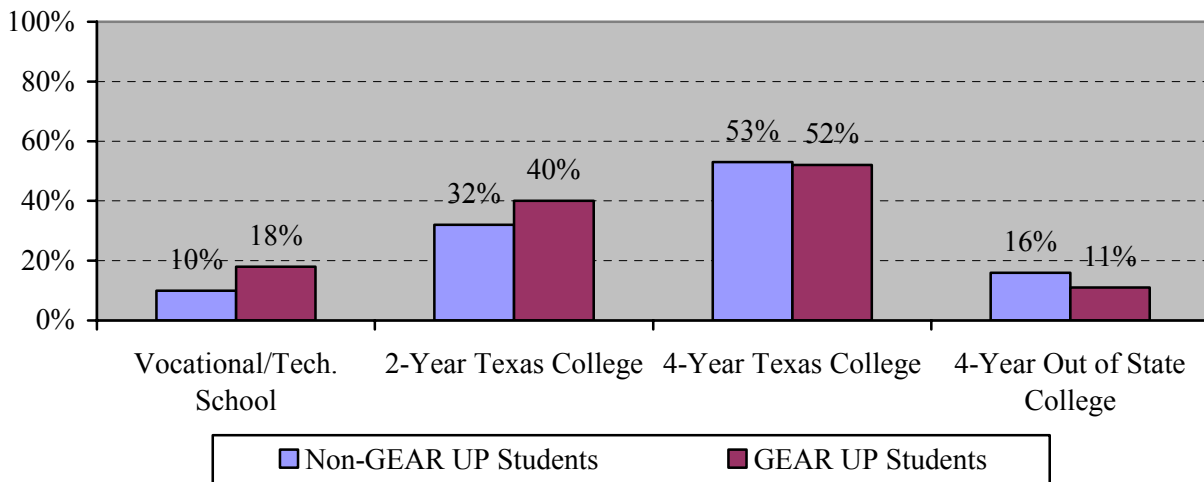
more likely to report an intention to pursue postsecondary education than were seniors rated with low levels of program engagement (Figure 25).

Figure 23. Percentage of Seniors Planning to Attend Postsecondary Institutions, by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



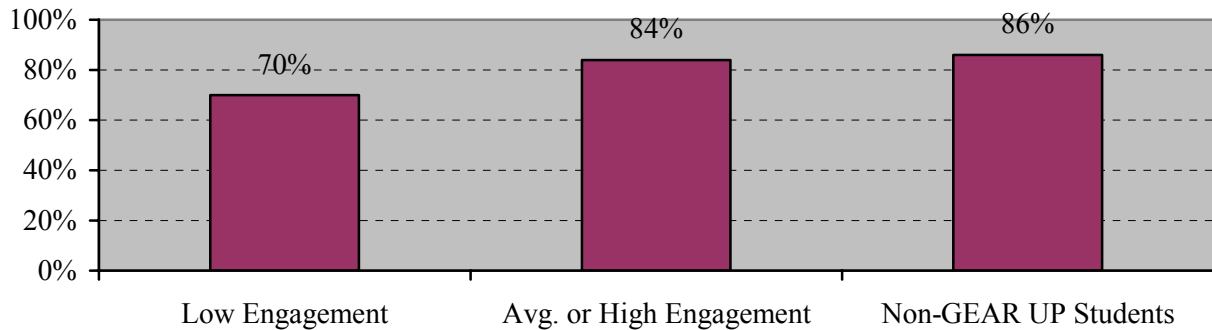
Source: District high school exit survey and district enrollment files prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Figure 24. Percentage of Seniors Planning to Attend Postsecondary School by GEAR UP Status and Postsecondary School Type, 2005-2006



Source: District high school exit survey and district enrollment files prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Figure 25. Percentage of Seniors Intending to Pursue Postsecondary Education by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006



Source: District high school exit survey and district enrollment files prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, October 2006

Beyond examining student intentions for postsecondary enrollment, completed applications to postsecondary institutions were examined. Overall, similar percentages of GEAR UP seniors and non-GEAR UP seniors applied to 2-year colleges, 4-year colleges, and vocational/technical schools. However, GEAR UP seniors completed more applications to postsecondary institutions than did non-GEAR UP seniors (Table 2). Significantly higher percentages of GEAR UP seniors at GEAR UP schools completed college applications, compared with non-GEAR UP seniors at the same schools (Figure 26). At every GEAR UP high school except Crockett, GEAR UP seniors applied to postsecondary institutions at higher rates than did non-GEAR UP seniors, with some schools showing pronounced differences between the student groups (Figure 27). At the non-GEAR UP schools, similar percentages of the GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students completed college applications.

Table 2: Summary of Verified Postsecondary Applications by GEAR UP Student Status and Postsecondary Institution Type, 2005-2006

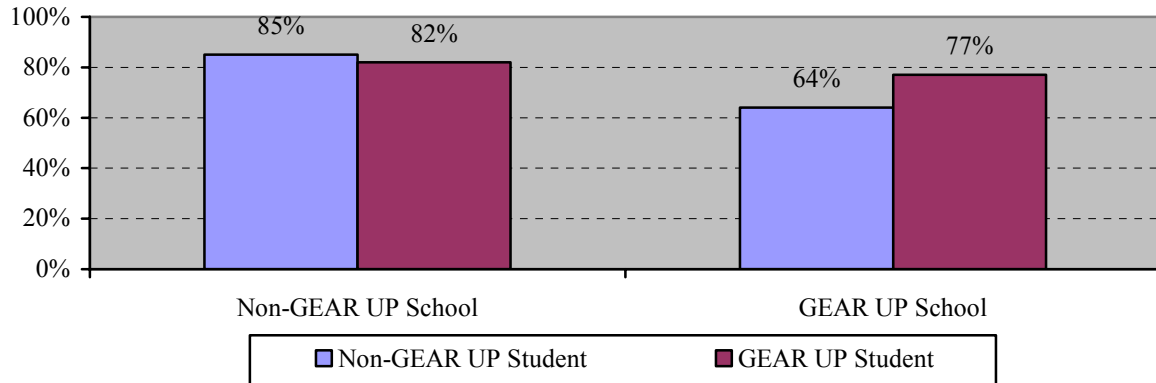
	Non-GEAR UP Seniors (n = 3,074)	GEAR UP Seniors (n = 1,756)	Total (n = 4,830)
Any Postsecondary Institution	75%	78%	76%
2-year Postsecondary Institution	70%	69%	69%
4-year Postsecondary Institution	49%	48%	48%
Vocational/Trade/Technical School	<1%	1%	1%
Average Number of Applications per Student	2.75	3.85	3.16

Sources: GEAR UP Austin and Project ADVANCE database files prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, September 2006

Note. Applications were verified and not based on student self-report.

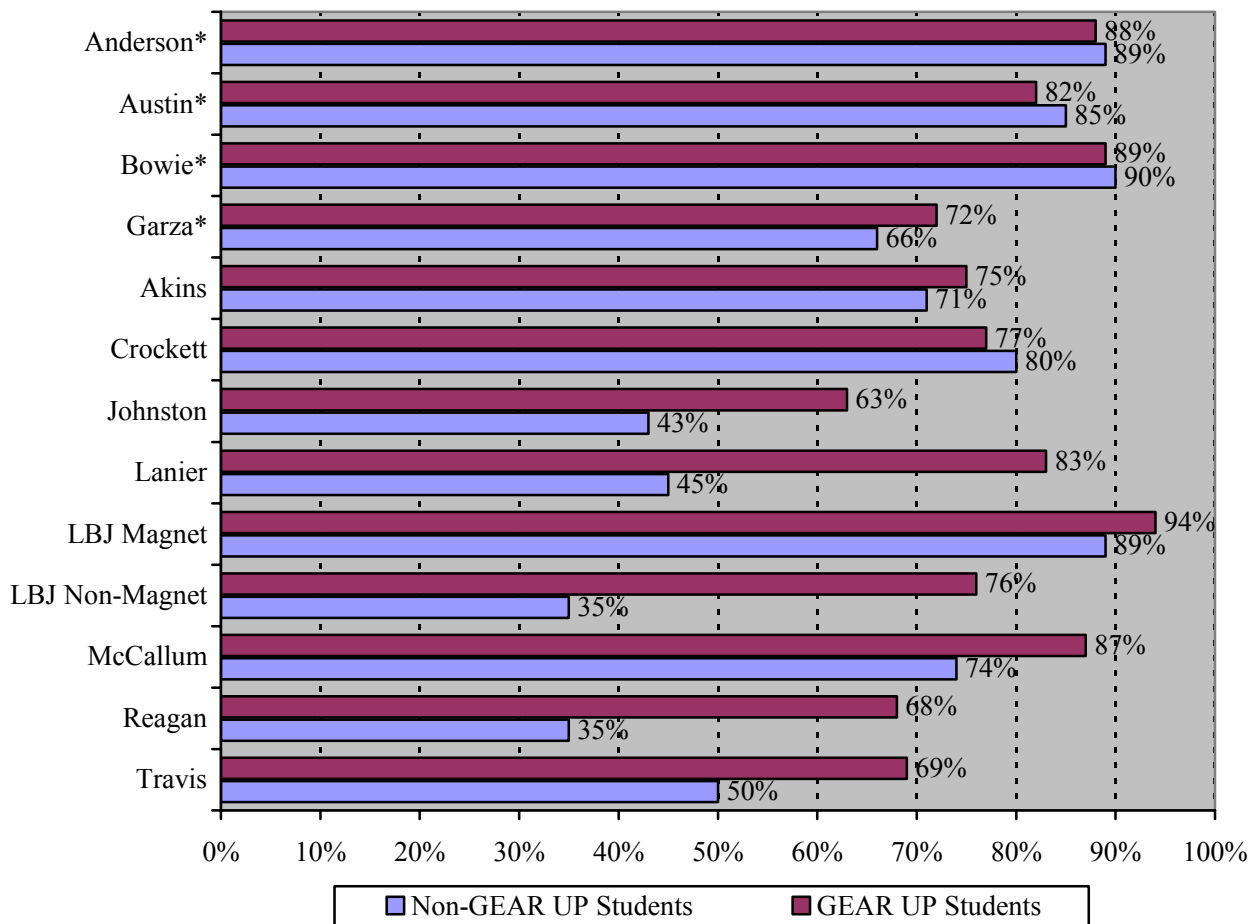


Figure 26. Percentage of Seniors Who Applied to Postsecondary Institutions by GEAR UP School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



Sources: GEAR UP Austin and Project ADVANCE databases prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, September 2006

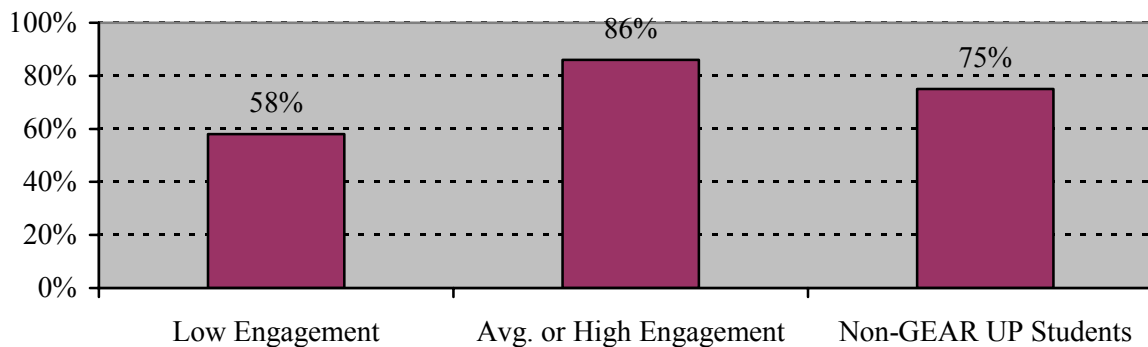
Figure 27. Percentage of Seniors Who Applied to Postsecondary Institutions by High School and GEAR UP Student Status, 2005-2006



Sources: GEAR UP Austin and Project ADVANCE databases, September 2006  
 Note. \* Indicates Non-GEAR UP school

Additionally, the level of GEAR UP participation seemed to have influenced whether students were completing applications to postsecondary institutions. Significantly greater percentages of GEAR UP seniors rated as having average or high levels of program engagement applied to postsecondary schools, compared with students with low levels of engagement and non-GEAR UP seniors (Figure 28).

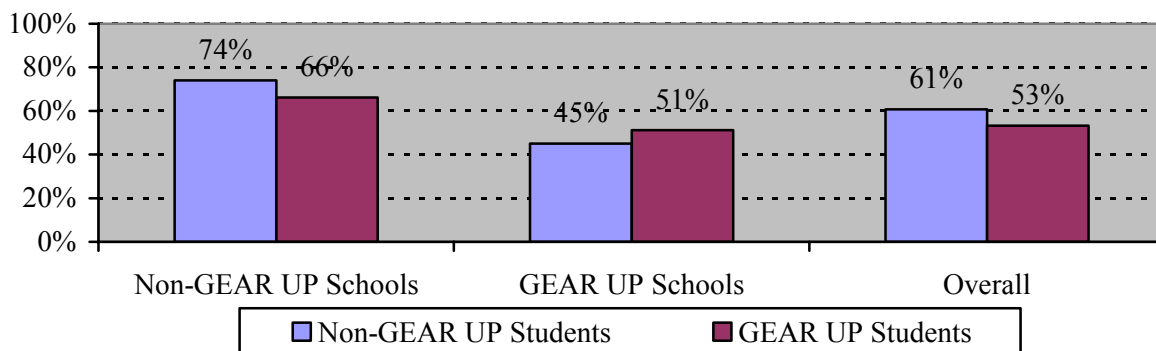
Figure 32. Percentage of Seniors Who Applied to Postsecondary Institutions by Level of GEAR UP Engagement, 2005-2006



Sources: GEAR UP Austin and Project ADVANCE databases as of September 21, 2006

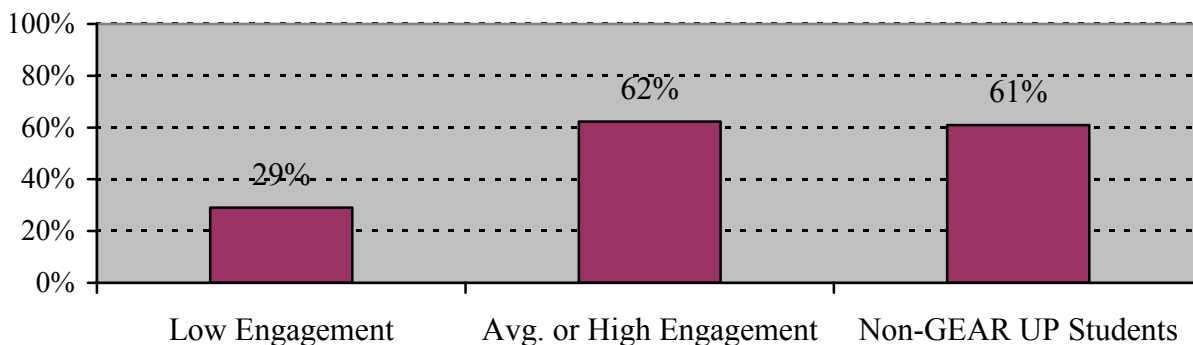
To complete the application and enrollment process, students requested that a high school course transcript be sent to the postsecondary institutions that they were planning to attend. Across all high schools, a significantly greater percentage of non-GEAR UP seniors had transcripts sent to postsecondary institutions, compared with GEAR UP students. However, at GEAR UP schools, a greater percentage of GEAR UP seniors requested that their transcripts be sent to postsecondary institutions, compared with non-GEAR UP seniors (Figure 33). GEAR UP seniors with average or high levels of program engagement had transcripts sent to postsecondary schools at twice the rate as did seniors with low levels of program engagement seniors, and at a similar rate compared to their non-GEAR UP peers.

Figure 33. Percentage of Seniors Who Had Transcripts Sent to Postsecondary Institutions by GEAR UP Student Status and GEAR UP School, 2005-2006



Sources: 2006 AISD graduates prepared by the Office of Accountability, September 2006; AISD transcript files prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, September 2006

Figure 34. Percentage of Seniors Who Had Transcripts Sent to Postsecondary Institutions by Level of Engagement, 2005-2006



Sources: 2006 AISD graduates prepared by the Office of Accountability, September 2006; AISD transcript files prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation, September 2006

GEAR UP students' postsecondary enrollment in the fall 2006 semester was examined in comparison with their grade-level peers not served by GEAR UP. As of December 2006, the district only had postsecondary enrollment data reported by the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). During the fall 2006 semester, 50% of all AISD graduates were found to be enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Forty-two percent of all GEAR UP graduates and 54% of all non-GEAR UP students were found to be enrolled in a postsecondary institution during that semester.

The postsecondary enrollment data for 2006 graduates was incomplete in December of 2006. The NSC data did not include enrollment data for the University of Texas at Austin, Trinity University, and the University of North Texas. The Texas Higher Education

Coordinating Board usually provides the postsecondary enrollment data for these universities; however, the data were not available for district use at the time of this report.

If the 2006 postsecondary enrollment trend mirrors those of prior years, it is predicted that the district will have a higher percentage of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions by spring 2007. In fall 2005, approximately 7% of the class of 2005 attended the University of Texas at Austin, Trinity University, or the University of North Texas. Furthermore, approximately 5% of AISD graduates did not enroll in a postsecondary institution until the spring semester after their graduation.

## **DISCUSSION**

Multiple research studies have indicated that low-income students are often less likely to finish high school, enroll in college, and be accepted to that college than are high-income students. In many cases, it was determined that economically disadvantaged and minority students did not have support structures for academic success and college preparation similar to those of their more affluent peers. To address this issue, the GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project provided intensive support services for students who otherwise might not have considered college enrollment as an option for themselves.

Unlike any other district program, GEAR UP support services were provided through a case management approach and through the development of relationships between program staff and the GEAR UP students and their families over a period of 6 years. For as long as a GEAR UP student remained at a GEAR UP school, he or she had a GEAR UP facilitator and a parent specialist helping that student and his/her family prepare for and navigate through the entire college preparation process. The relationships built between the GEAR UP staff, the students, and their families were determined to be a key factor in the students' level of program engagement and overall success (Alderete et al., 2006). Furthermore, GEAR UP students who were moderately to highly engaged in the program consistently outperformed GEAR UP students with low program engagement on all measures.

The GEAR UP students benefited academically from their participation in the program. Compared with their non-GEAR UP peers, a higher percentage of GEAR UP students enrolled in and passed AP courses. At GEAR UP high schools, GEAR UP students also had significantly higher graduation rates than their peers. Overall, GEAR UP students were just as likely as were their non-GEAR UP peers to graduate from high school, doing so on the Recommended or Distinguished Achievement high school graduation plan to ensure they had the courses needed for college success. This was another major finding, given that a significantly lower percentage of GEAR UP students reported that their mothers had graduated from high school when compared with their peers.

GEAR UP made a discernible contribution to its participants' level of college preparation. The "college preparation gap" between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students appeared to be diminished. Compared with their non-GEAR UP peers, GEAR UP students were as likely or even more likely to take rigorous academic courses, to complete college readiness/admissions exams, to submit college applications, to be knowledgeable about and to seek financial aid information, and to request that transcripts be sent to postsecondary institutions. This is a key finding, given that the cohort of GEAR UP seniors were twice as likely to come from low-income homes and to be the first in their families to attend college,

compared with their non-GEAR UP peers. Additionally, less than 20% of the GEAR UP seniors had mothers who graduated from a 4-year college.

GEAR UP Austin also contributed to the creation of district systems that will sustain important college preparation services for students who may be at-risk for dropping out of school or not considering postsecondary enrollment after high school graduation. Over the years, many GEAR UP staff used their expertise in providing postsecondary preparation for students and played important advisory roles on their respective campuses. GEAR UP staff communicated the importance of rigor, relevance, and relationships to ensure academic and college preparatory success for at-risk students to their campus colleagues and leaders. The lessons learned through GEAR UP's work set the stage for much of the high school redesign effort across the district, whereby schools are building smaller learning communities, along with intensive student advisory and family advocacy systems, to improve student academic achievement, educational expectations, knowledge regarding postsecondary enrollment, and college-going rates.

Originally conceptualized by GEAR UP staff, AISD's Parent University has become a district standard of service. Parent University classes continue to provide information for parents about postsecondary preparation issues, including academic course selection, AP and dual course enrollment, financial aid, and other topics of interest to families. The district's Guidance and Counseling Department has assumed responsibility for collaborating with other programs to publish and distribute the course catalog twice a year. The implementation of Parent University has increased parent participation across the district over the past 6 years.

GEAR UP Austin expanded partnerships between the district and community stakeholders that will sustain important college preparation services for students. For example, Austin Community College (ACC) will continue to encourage students to engage in rigorous academic preparation for college by offering dual credit courses through the Early College Start (ECS) program and assist students to become enrolled in ACC upon high school graduation through ACC's College Connections program. Austin Partners in Education (APIE) is committed to the continuance of the GEAR UP tutoring model and will assist other campus-based programs to establish collaborative tutoring models and recruit dedicated, high-quality tutors. Furthermore, APIE has committed to providing college preparation tutoring at high school campuses, with the goal of raising student scores on the SAT and ACT exams.

Even though the GEAR UP program had a positive impact on student outcomes and district practices, an academic achievement gap remained between GEAR UP seniors and their non-GEAR UP peers. This achievement gap was evident when comparing student achievement levels on AP, SAT, and ACT tests. GEAR UP Austin provided many opportunities for student academic support and teacher professional development opportunities, yet the program support

could not replace the academic preparation that needed to occur in the classroom over a period of years to ensure that all students experienced high levels of academic achievement.

It is important to consider the balance between the postsecondary preparation knowledge and high levels of academic achievement needed for student success. Students may have high expectations, be fully aware of college preparation steps, and proceed through those steps of applying to college. However, without high levels of academic achievement, students will have a more difficult time gaining admittance to and graduating from college.

Insufficient academic preparation for college also has a high price tag for students and financial institutions. Approximately half of the students who enter college take remedial coursework (Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003). In addition to costing students time and money, students who required remediation graduate from college at significantly lower rates. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2002) reported that the state allocated \$185 million to cover the cost of providing remedial courses in postsecondary institutions.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The GEAR UP Austin: Impacting Lives Project was determined to be a highly successful program. GEAR UP staff provided consistent, individualized academic support and enhanced guidance and counseling services for students and their families. Overall, program goals and objectives were met. As a result, GEAR UP students experienced positive outcomes across a variety of measures, with the exception of GEAR UP student achievement on college admissions tests. Furthermore, a college preparatory culture, characterized by collaborative partnerships, was established, increasing the chances that best practices identified by the GEAR UP program can be sustained by the district.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Even though the GEAR UP program is no longer supported by federal funding, the program evaluation results can help direct future district efforts to provide intensive college preparation support for low-income, at-risk students, who are often underrepresented in postsecondary institutions. The following recommendations are provided:

1. The school district should utilize a case management approach to provide individualized academic and college preparatory advising for economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students and related information and support for their families. GEAR UP evaluation results indicated that students who were not traditionally considered as candidates for postsecondary enrollment experienced positive outcomes related to college preparation. These positive outcomes were often attributed to the personalized support for students and their parents across 6 years. Therefore, it is recommended that the district continue to identify and provide ongoing, intensive support to those who are categorized as economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students. This support should be provided by the same individuals across school years to establish a relationship with the student and his or her family and in addition to the regular student advisory services provided by the school.

This recommendation does not necessarily require additional staffing or funding. Presently, the district is developing a student advisory system and redefining the roles and responsibilities of various campus staff to address student college preparation needs. During this process, district and campus staff should develop a plan to ensure that economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students are provided with the specialized support necessary for their success. With advisory classes facilitated by classroom teachers, counselors and other campus-level program staff



could allocate their time in such a way that would allow them to provide economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students with specialized counseling services, to address individual financial aid concerns, and to organize college visits designed to assist them in selecting a college that meets their needs.

In addition to the communication provided through the student advisory system, parents of economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students should receive specialized support services. These services should be characterized by frequent and individualized communication and focus on expanding parent knowledge about postsecondary options, preparation, and financing. For example, parents could accompany their children on college visits to better understand the college preparation and applications processes and participate in workshops that enable them to complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). As parent support services are provided, counselors, parent support specialists, and other school program staff should increase their collaboration. They should develop strategies for tracking parent participation and provide specialized outreach to families who may not participate in school-sponsored events.

2. The school district should continue to provide intensive academic support services for economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students. GEAR UP evaluation results indicated that an academic achievement gap remained between GEAR UP seniors and their non-GEAR UP peers. Therefore, it is recommended that the district explore areas of student academic need and provide related academic support, especially for economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students.

Academic support services should include intensive and individualized tutoring to support students enrolled in regular and advanced coursework. High School Allotment funds, provided through the Texas Education Agency, could be used to support ongoing tutoring services, as they are intended to be used for preparing underachieving students for college and encouraging students to engage in advanced academic opportunities. Funding support might include the costs of tutoring program facilitator, tutor pay, and tutor training. Tutors may be recruited through the University of Texas (UT) student work-study program and Austin Partners in Education (APIE).

The district's Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program would provide a proven and structured venue for ongoing academic support and tutoring services. AVID is designed to meet the needs of academically average

students, many of whom are economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students who may require extra support to be successful in rigorous courses and prepare for college. AVID also was determined to have a significant impact on student academic performance and college preparation that increased with enrollment over multiple school years (Coneway, 2006).

Should the AVID program be selected as a way to address the academic support needs of economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students, it would require that the district to expand its offerings of AVID courses and recruit more economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college students to take AVID courses across multiple school years. Obtaining funding for additional sections of an AVID course would need to be further explored, as a single course section for the AVID costs approximately \$10,000 per year.

3. The school district should provide intensive, embedded professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their instructional practices and better meet student academic needs. GEAR UP supported teacher professional development opportunities across multiple school years, and teacher participation increased each school year. However, the academic achievement gap between student groups continues to exist. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers participate in professional learning communities that will improve student engagement and instructional rigor, with a focus on literacy and mathematics skills as an academic foundation.
4. The district should continue to develop and maintain collaborative partnerships with community businesses and organizations to provide enhanced academic and college preparation support for at-risk students. The GEAR UP program utilized community resources through the development of collaborative relationships with local university, business, and community partners. GEAR UP partners supplied matching funds and in-kind contributions to provide enhanced support services for students, parents, and teachers across 6 years. These partnerships enabled the district to sustain a few academic support and college preparation services without continued federal funding. Therefore, it is recommended that district administrators continue to develop and maintain collaborative partnerships that will benefit students and the community at large.

**APPENDICES**

### Appendix A: Summary of Student Achievement and College Preparation Gaps by Student Group, 1999 and 2006

Table A1: Summary of Student Achievement and College Preparation

1999-2000						
	African American	Hispanic	White	Native American	Asian	Econ. Disadv.
Passing State Reading Test, 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (English)	67.7%	69.2%	92.5%	72.7%	92.2	65.2%
Passing State Math Test, 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade (English)	63.7%	72.3%	91.7%	90.0%	97.3%	68.1%
Taking AP Courses	12.6%	13.1%	34.7%	17.8%	42.5%	10.2%
Taking SAT/ACT Tests	46.4%	35.5%	70.8%	100.0%	81.7%	n/a
Scoring >= Criterion on SAT/ACT tests	10.9%	19.8%	53.0%	25.0%	56.4%	n/a
Taking AP Tests	10.4%	14.1%	34.4%	28.6%	50.2%	n/a
Scoring >= Criterion on AP tests	24.9%	43.4%	60.6%	45.5%	52.1%	n/a
Graduating	62.9%	58.6%	84.4%	75.0%	82.8%	51.3%
Graduating on Recommended HS Plan	11.2%	19.7%	30.5%	28.6%	37.3%	11.3%
Enrolled in postsecondary institution (Class of 1998)	33.6%	38.7%	63.0%	N/A	78.3%	26.1%
2005-2006						
Passing State Reading Test, Exit-Level (English, 11 <sup>th</sup> grade)	82%	82%	95%	83%	89%	77%
Passing State Math Test, Exit-Level (English, 11 <sup>th</sup> grade)	57%	67%	93%	82%	92%	63%
Taking AP Courses (2004-2005)	14.0%	15.0%	31.8%	12.3%	44.2%	13.5%
Taking SAT/ACT Tests (2005)	74.5%	53.9%	81.9%	88.9%	98.3%	N/A
Scoring >= Criterion on SAT/ACT tests (2005)	7.0%	15.7%	60.3%	37.5%	51.8%	N/A
Taking AP Tests (2005)	18.5%	22.9%	47.5%	38.9%	51.6%	N/A
Scoring >= Criterion on AP tests (2005)	15.2%	31.4%	60.7%	52.9%	66.4%	N/A
Graduating (Class of 2005)	77.0%	73.3%	89.0%	72.7%	90.0%	72.7%
Graduating (Class of 2006)*	68.7%	74.1%	89.7%	87.5%	87.0%	75.1%
Graduating on Recommended HS Plan (Class of 2005)	61.8%	69.4%	82.7%	63.6%	93.2%	65.2%
Enrolled in postsecondary institution, fall semester (Class of 2005)	47.8%	35.9%	70.1%	40.0%	62.9%	N/A

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System, Texas Education Agency, 1999-2000, 2000-2001, and 2005-2006 and district postsecondary enrollment reports, 2000 and 2006

Notes. The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) for reading and math is reported at the 6th grade level as a baseline for GEAR UP student performance. Passing percentages for students identified as limited English proficient were not reported by AEIS for 1999-2000. The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) for reading and math is reported for the exit-level test required for high school graduation.

**Appendix B: GEAR UP Austin Project Partners, 2000-2006**

ACT  
Applied Materials, Inc.  
Austin Coca Cola  
Austin Community College  
Austin Energy  
AVANCE  
Capital Area Training Foundation  
Career Resources Development  
College Board, Southwest Regional Office  
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  
University of Texas at Austin

### Appendix C: Demographic Summary for GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP High Schools in AISD, 2005-2006

Table C1: Demographic Summary for All Students Enrolled in AISD High Schools, 2005-2006

Schools Served by GEAR UP					
	N	% African American	% Hispanic	% White	% Economically Disadvantaged
<b>Akins</b>	2,351	12.3%	64.7%	20.3%	53.8%
<b>Crockett</b>	2,001	10.2%	56.0%	32.2%	50.5%
<b>Johnston</b>	735	17.7%	80.7%	1.6%	82.6%
<b>Lanier</b>	1,589	14.7%	73.1%	8.9%	78.5%
<b>McCallum</b>	1,671	22.0%	26.5%	50.5%	34.0%
<b>Reagan</b>	1,009	33.9%	63.4%	2.0%	79.7%
<b>Travis</b>	1,555	13.0%	79.3%	6.7%	78.9%
<b>Johnson (LBJ)</b>	1,666	29.2%	35.1%	28.9%	48.9%
Schools Not Served by GEAR UP					
	N	% African American	% Hispanic	% White	% Economically Disadvantaged
<b>Anderson</b>	2,088	8.1%	21.5%	63.0%	17.9%
<b>Austin</b>	2,150	6.2%	36.3%	56.1%	26.8%
<b>Bowie</b>	2,673	4.2%	24.2%	66.9%	7.7%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), Texas Education Agency, 2005-2006, prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation

Table C2: Demographic Summary for GEAR UP Students Enrolled in AISD High Schools, 2005-2006

	N	% African American	% Hispanic	% White	% Economically Disadvantaged
<b>Akins</b>	309	12.6%	67.0%	17.8%	65.1%
<b>Anderson*</b>	72	23.6%	29.2%	38.9%	46.5%
<b>Austin*</b>	113	6.2%	72.6%	20.4%	61.6%
<b>Bowie*</b>	28	3.6%	57.1%	35.7%	32.1%
<b>Crockett</b>	123	11.4%	65.0%	23.6%	68.0%
<b>LBJ</b>	280	33.6%	32.5%	25.0%	47.5%
<b>Johnston</b>	109	23.9%	73.4%	2.8%	89.9%
<b>Lanier</b>	277	17.0%	66.4%	13.7%	82.7%
<b>McCallum</b>	150	37.3%	28.0%	33.3%	48.0%
<b>Reagan</b>	197	37.6%	60.4%	1.5%	84.8%
<b>Travis</b>	278	9.0%	84.2%	5.8%	84.5%

Source: District student enrollment records, (2005-2006) prepared by the Department of Program Evaluation

\* Indicates non-GEAR UP high school

**Appendix D: GEAR UP Project Objectives, 2000-2006**

Table D1: GEAR UP Project Objectives, 2004-2005

<b>I. Academic Intervention</b>		<b>Objective Met</b>
A. 80% of cohort students will meet minimum passing standards for all TAKS tests		Yes
B. 100% of cohort students with course averages between 50-69 will participate in tutoring each weekly		Yes
C. 18% of cohort students are enrolled in advanced courses		Yes
D. 63% of cohort students complete the SAT and/or ACT test		No, 48.7% took SAT/ACT tests.
E. 27% of cohort students score at or above criterion on SAT/ACT tests		Yes
F. 50% of cohort students enroll in postsecondary education		In Fall 2006, 42% were enrolled.
<b>II. Enhanced Guidance &amp; Counseling</b>		<b>Objective Met</b>
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		Yes
B. 100% of cohort students will visit college Internet site		Yes
C. 100% of cohort students will receive a 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Scholars certificate		Yes
D. 100% of cohort students will visit a College and Career Center (CCC) twice per year, complete the PSAT/PLAN, and identify 2 post-sec institutions for enrollment		Yes
E. 90% of cohort students will complete financial aid applications		Students could not be required to disclose FAFSA information.
<b>III. Professional Development</b>		<b>Objective Met</b>
A. 100% of project staff and cohort teachers will complete 20 hours of staff development per year		Yes. 99% of teachers completed and average of 49 PD hours.
B. 100% of project partners will engage in at least one project planning session each year		Yes
C. 95% of school principals and project partners will meet annually to evaluate project's collaborative and intervention strategies		Yes
D. 100% of project support staff and core team of teachers at each campus will complete IMPACT/GAIT team training		Yes
<b>IV. Parent Involvement</b>		<b>Objective Met</b>
A. 100% of cohort parents will receive a GU brochure and attend a parent orientation		Yes
B. 100% of cohort parents will sign a GU participation contract		Yes
C. 50% of cohort parents will participate in Parent University classes annually		No, 31% of parents participated in a class or workshop.
D. Parents from each GEAR UP campus will serve in an advisory capacity to GEAR UP staff and to the school on parent issues		Yes
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		Yes

Source: GEAR UP Project Records, 2000-2006

### Appendix E: Student Perceptions of GEAR UP Staff

Nearly half (48%) of all GEAR UP seniors reported that GEAR UP staff were the most helpful source of information and guidance during the postsecondary application and financial aid process. GEAR UP seniors gave their GEAR UP staff an average rating of 3.5 to 3.6 on seven items measuring GEAR UP staff helpfulness (on a 1-4 scale). Twenty-seven percent of GEAR UP seniors gave their GEAR UP leaders the highest possible ratings on every measure of helpfulness, including the processes of college search, applications, admissions, and financial aid, and working both individually and in a group outside of class.

Approximately 20% of seniors who were not officially in GEAR UP reported GEAR UP staff helped them prepare in some way for the application and financial aid processes. Non-GEAR UP seniors' ratings of GEAR UP staff helpfulness were favorable yet lower than were those of GEAR UP seniors, averaging 3.2 on a 1-4 scale.

Table E1. Senior Ratings of GEAR UP Staff Helpfulness

	Non-GEAR UP Senior	GEAR UP Senior	Total
<b>GEAR UP staff helped prepare the student for postsecondary application process.</b>	21%	73%	42%
<b>GEAR UP staff helped student the MOST with postsecondary application process.</b>	9%	48%	24%
<b>GEAR UP staff helped student obtain information about financial aid.</b>	19%	67%	38%
<b>GEAR UP staff helped student the MOST in obtaining information about financial aid.</b>	13%	48%	27%
<b>How helpful was GEAR UP staff in the following ways? [Based on 1-4 scale: 1 = Not at all helpful, 4 = Very helpful]</b>			
<b>Individually</b>	3.1	3.5	3.4
<b>In a group outside of class</b>			
<b>In class</b>	3.2	3.5	3.4
<b>College search/selection process</b>	3.2	3.6	3.4
<b>Admissions process</b>	3.2	3.5	3.4
<b>Financial aid process</b>	3.2	3.5	3.4
<b>Scholarship process</b>	3.1	3.5	3.3
<b>Percentage indicating full GEAR UP approval*</b>	5%	27%	14%

\* Full GEAR UP approval meant students indicated GEAR UP staff helped them the most in the application and financial aid processes, and said GEAR UP staff were "very helpful" on all measures.



## REFERENCES

- Alderete, K., Coneway, C. & Waxler, S. (April 2006). *Gaining early awareness and readiness for undergraduate programs (GEAR UP): Annual performance report for partnership and state projects*. Unpublished report submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by the Department of Program Evaluation. Austin Independent School District. Austin, Texas. (Available from the Department of Program Evaluation, Austin Independent School District.)
- Alderete, K., Coneway, C. & Vaughan, A. (2006). *GEAR UP Austin: Impacting lives project, 2004-2005*. Austin Independent School District. Austin, Texas. Available from the Austin Independent School District website:  
[http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope\\_GU\\_Narrative\\_Report\\_2004-05.pdf](http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope_GU_Narrative_Report_2004-05.pdf)
- Coneway, C. (2006). *Advancement via individual determination (AVID): An evaluation of student academic performance*. Austin Independent School District. Austin, Texas. Available from the Austin Independent School District website:  
[http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope\\_AVID\\_HLM\\_EVAL\\_REPORT\\_102606.pdf](http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope_AVID_HLM_EVAL_REPORT_102606.pdf)
- District Summary of ACT High School Profile Report*. (2006). Unpublished summary report and data file. Office of Accountability, Austin Independent School District. News release available from Austin Independent School District website at  
<http://www.austinisd.org/newsmedia/releases/index.phtml?more=1123&lang=>
- District Summary of College Board High School Profile Report*. (2006). Unpublished summary report and data file. Office of Accountability, Austin Independent School District. News release available from Austin Independent School District website at  
<http://www.austinisd.org/newsmedia/releases/index.phtml?more=1123&lang=>
- Eccles, J. S., Vida, M. N., & Barber, B. (2004). The relation of early adolescents' college plans and both academic ability and task-value beliefs to subsequent college enrollment. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 24(1), 63-77.
- Horn, L., & Nuñez, A. (2000). Mapping the road to college: First-generation students' math track, planning strategies, and context of support (NCES 2000-153). *Education Statistics Quarterly*, 2(1). Retrieved February 12, 2007, from  
[http://nces.ed.gov/programs/quarterly/vol\\_2/2\\_1/q5-1.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/quarterly/vol_2/2_1/q5-1.asp)
- Hunsaker, S. L., Frasier, M. M., King, L. L., Watts-Warren, B., Cramond, B. & Krisel, S. (1995). *Family influences on the achievement of economically disadvantaged students:*

- Implications for gifted identification and programming* (RM95206). Storrs, CT: The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, University of Connecticut.
- Murdock, S., White, S., Hoque, M., Pecotte, B., You, X., & Balkan, J. (2002). *A summary of the Texas challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Implications of population change for the future of Texas*. College Station, TX: The Center for Demographic Socioeconomic Research and Education, Texas A&M University. Retrieved November 9, 2006, from <http://txsdc.utsa.edu/pubsrep/pubs/txchal.php>
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2003). *Getting ready to pay for college. What students and their parents know about the cost of college and what they are doing to find out: A statistical report* (NCES 2003-30). Washington DC: National Center for Educational Statistics. U.S. Department of Education.
- Patrick, E. (2000). *The automated follow-up data report, 1999-2000: College enrollment for the 1997-1998 senior cohort*. Austin Independent School District. Austin, Texas. Available from the Austin Independent School District website at: [http://www.austinisd.org/inside/accountability/evaluation/report\\_archive.phtml](http://www.austinisd.org/inside/accountability/evaluation/report_archive.phtml).
- Schmitt, L. (2006). *Results of the AISD high school exit survey: Classes of 2003 to 2006*. Austin Independent School District, Austin, Texas. Available from Austin Independent School District website at [http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope\\_HS\\_Exit\\_Survey\\_District\\_Report\\_2006.pdf](http://www.austinisd.org/inside/docs/ope_HS_Exit_Survey_District_Report_2006.pdf)
- Texas Education Agency. (1999-2000). *Academic excellence indicator system: District performance report*. Retrieved November 7, 2006, from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/2001/district.srch.html>
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2002). *Appropriations for developmental education in Texas public institutions of higher education*. Retrieved October 30, 2006 from <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/0456.PDF>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2002, August). *Texas 2000: Census 2000 profile*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration. State profile report issued in August 2002 by the U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved November 7, 2006, from <http://txsdc.utsa.edu/>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2006, October). *Gaining early awareness and readiness for undergraduate programs (GEAR UP)*. Retrieved October 30, 2006 from <http://www.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html>

Venezia, A., Kirst, M., & Antonio, A. (2003). *Betraying the college dream: How disconnected K-12 and postsecondary education systems undermine student aspirations*. Stanford University. Retrieved November 7, 2006, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/bridgeproject/>

# **AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

## **SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., Ph.D.

## **OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

Maria Whitsett, Ph.D.

## **DEPARTMENT OF PROGRAM EVALUATION**

Holly Williams, Ph.D.

## **AUTHORS**

Karen Alderete, Ph.D.

Casey Coneway, M.P.P.



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Mark Williams, President

Rudy Montoya, Vice President

Johna Edwards, Secretary

Cheryl Bradley

Annette LoVoi, M.A.

Lori Moya

Robert Schneider

Karen Dulaney Smith

Vincent Torres, M.S.

Publication Number 05.20

March 2007