Texas GEAR UP: Beyond Grad

Annual Project Outcomes Report

Evaluation of Year

Submitted to:
Texas Education Agency
William B. Travis Building
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701-1494

Submitted by:
ICF
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

and

Agile Analytics
1621 West 6th Street
Austin, TX 78703

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Acronyms and Abbreviations2

Overview

As a strategy to overcome the college achievement gap for many low-income students, the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): Beyond Grad State Grant (referred to as "GEAR UP" in this report) serves approximately 9,000–10,500 students from six Texas school districts (12 middle schools and high schools) in rural communities in West Texas, East Texas, and the Coastal Bend. GEAR UP provides services for the following two groups of students:

- The grant provides *targeted services* to a grade-specific primary cohort of students who were in Grade 7 during the 2018–19 school year (i.e., the **class of 2024**) through their first year of postsecondary education.
- The grant also provides *basic services* to **priority cohort** students consisting of all other students in Grades 9–12 attending participating high schools during each year of the 7-year grant (i.e., from school years 2018–19 to 2024–25).

The GEAR UP program team established nine goals and 31 corresponding project objectives (POs) to track the implementation and outcomes of this federal grant. This report provides an overview of program performance regarding the relevant goals and POs during the 2018–19 (Year 1) and 2019–20 (Year 2) academic years. Program performance regarding Year 2 POs was substantially complicated by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and subsequent March 2020 school closures that disrupted all aspects of schooling. Many GEAR

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To indicate whether the project objective was fully met, partially met, or not met, the following symbols were used throughout the report as applicable:[2]

Fully Met Goal	Partially Met Goal	Not Met Goal
✓	✓	✗

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[2] Criteria for determining projective objectives as fully met, partially met, or not met were based on a combination of the following factors and informed by programmatic knowledge of the field: 1) The individual district performance (i.e., how many districts met the objective); 2) the percent of the total number of students that met the objective, regardless of the results of the districts (this was used when an objective was significantly missed); and 3) the impact of COVID-19 on a district's plans to meet an objective (i.e., a campus or district may have otherwise been on track to meet the objective but plans were cancelled or delayed due to COVID-19).

Project Goal 1: Increasing Access to Rigorous Courses in Order to Reduce the Need for Remediation

"One of the other things that…we are working very hard to meet [is] the Algebra I threshold goal in the eighth grade. And we've made strides toward that goal, but we do still have some work to do." – Year 2 curriculum director (PO 1.1)

"So, right now we're also in the process of kind of reframing how the tutor is going to move forward to next year…in

Project Goal 3: Providing Educator Training and Professional Development for Rigorous Academic Programs

"Yes. So we'll do professional development for the whole high school and part of the junior high, middle school, and sometimes district-wide we share some of the same strategies that we're doing PD [professional development] with the secondaries, so if elementary wants to know about that as well" – Year 2 curriculum director (PO 3.1)

Objective 3.1: Each year, 50% of high school core content teachers will participate in professional development that supports a rigo

"[TNTP] puts everything together for you [for vertical teaming sessions]. Everything. I mean, word for word. If you don't understand something, they put everything together for you." – Year 2 GEAR UP coordinator (PO 3.2)

Project Goal 3 (cont.): Providing Educator Training and Professional Development for Rigorous Academic Programs

"I do have a sense [that] the teachers are open [to educator coaching]. We have a lot of first year teachers, so, they're actually very open to the suggestions that [TNTP is] making. They take the constructive criticism well…they're taking it on. They know exactly what some of the issues are, and they're open to learning their craft."

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Project Goal 5: Supporting Participation in Postsecondary Education And Career Preparation

"I don't think we ever provided access to an online PSAT program as early as we have now. So, for example, we've already started putting [a] PSAT prep course together for freshmen for next year's PSAT— it's going to appear on campus soon— and just to get them kind of in that mindset of this is what we do. We have supports in place and the expectation is that you utilize them so that way you find succepoca (he)]em on a 60479 -1.14-2.227

Project Goal 6: Providing Postsecondary and Career Preparation Information to Students and Families

"I think that GEAR UP has done a very good job with preparing [students] as far as for registration purposes. So, talking about the endorsements that we offer, the career pathways, kind of helping them to explore before the high school counselor has to go and sit down with them and do a four-year plan. So it's like they know about that information before they get to us." – Year 2 high school counselor (PO 6.1)

Objective 6.1: Each year in ninth grade, students will receive information about the school's high-quality pathways and programs of study that align to postsecondary programs and high-demand careers available to them.

Year 1

Year 2

Objective 6.2: Each year, students and parents will receive

"Well, increased parent participation, which is a problem district-wide with or without GEAR UP. Getting the information out to parents on the importance of GEAR UP and what it's doing for the community." – Year 1 GEAR UP coordinator (PO 6.5)

Project Goal 8: Building and Expanding Community Partnerships

"[The district] has built partnerships with local businesses and have been fortunate to bring those opportunities to [the high school]. Business partners have been willing to work with the district to continue providing students with opportunities while complying with district safety policies. During COVID-19 we have been able to build new partnerships that offer resources for students and teachers during this time." – Year 2 GEAR UP coordinator (PO 8.1)

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

Year 1

Year 2

Objective 8.2: All participating districts will formmmm̃ãẮ̃Ắ̃ŠSQy rt781c ( )TJ EMC /P AMCID 11 BDC 0 0.318 0.439

Appendix A: GEAR UP: Beyond Grad Project Goals and Objectives

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) established the following goals and objectives for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP):

Project Goal 1: Increase access to rigorous courses in order to reduce the need for remediation

▸ Objective 1.1: By the end of the class of 2024's second year (Grade 8), 30% of class of 2024 students will complete Algebra I. By the end of the class of 2024's third year (Grade 9), 85% of class of 2024 students will complete Algebra I.[6]

▸ Objective 1.2: By the end of the class of 2024's fifth year (Grade 11), 60% of class of 2024 students will complete a Pre-Advanced Placement (AP), Pre-International Baccalaureate (IB), AP, or IB course.

▸ Objective 1.3: Each year, 90% of class of 2024 students who receive a failing grade on a progress report will receive targeted academic tutoring.

Project Goal 2: Graduating prepared for college and career

▸ Objective 2.1: By the end of the project's sixth year, 60% of class of 2024 students will be eligible to earn college credit through achievement of a passing score on the AP exam, IB exam, or completion of a rigorous dual credit course.

▸ Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of class of 2024 students graduating on the Foundation High School Program with an endorsement and/or receiving the Distinguished Level of Achievement will meet or exceed the baseline state average.

Project Goal 3: Provide educator training and professional development for rigorous academic programs

▸ Objective 3.1: Each year, 50% of high school core content teachers will participate in professional development that supports a rigorous curriculum (e.g., project-based learning, advanced instructional strategies, teacher externships, student engagement, etc.).

▸ Objective 3.2: Each year, teams of educators and administrators (middle school, high school, and institutions of higher education) will complete at least five days of vertical teaming in order to align curriculum and reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level.

▸ Objective 3.3bjation at

▶ Objective 7.1: Each year, 75% of class of 2024 students will attend at least one college visit.

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Appendix B: Data and Analysis Methods

Data for the report were collected by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) from six participating school districts, including six middle schools and one K-12 school with the class of 2024 cohort of Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) students (Grade 7 in 2018–19 and Grade 8 in 2019–20), and five high schools and the same K-12 school with the priority cohort of GEAR UP students (Grades 9–12 in 2018–19 and 2019–20). For the class of 2024, data were collected at the individual level and the data elements included student demographics, advanced courses participation, student services received, student/family events provided and attended, and professional development events for teachers. The priority cohort data were collected through a school survey in which each participating school reported aggregated information on student demographics, services received, and event attendance.

TEA analyzed data for the purposes of submitting the GEAR UP Annual Performance Report to the U.S. Department of Education. ICF used these metrics and added additional contextual data based on some of the qualitative data collected for the Years 1–2 Annual Implementation Report.[8]

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[8] For more information about this report, please see https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/program-evaluations/program-evaluations-middle-school-high-school-and-college-preparation/program-evaluation-middle-school-high-school-and-college-preparation-initiatives