

THE CALIFORNIA STATE GEAR UP PROGRAM:

2015–2016 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the California GEAR UP Program is:

To develop and sustain the organizational capacity of middle schools to prepare all students for high school and higher education through a systemic network of support for adults who influence middle school students, specifically their counselors, faculty, school leaders and families. This expanded capacity is expected to result in a higher proportion of students, particularly from backgrounds and communities that have not historically pursued a college education, enrolling and succeeding in higher education.

The ultimate outcome expected from this Program is that a higher proportion of students will be prepared to enroll and succeed in advanced courses in middle school and high school and enter and graduate with a degree from a higher educational institution.

This Program has three modes of services to support schools in reaching this goal:

- direct service to a cohort of students through the **Bridge for Students Model**;
- services to a cohort of middle schools through the **Whole School Model**; and,
- services to all California middle schools through the **Educational System Transformation Model**.

Bridge for Students Model

The Bridge for Students Model is characterized by collaboration, student progress tracking, and data sharing among a family of schools across educational levels in order to prepare all cohort students for college. The objective guiding this model is:

Objective 1: To Increase by 20 Percent the Number of Bridge Students Achieving at Grade-Appropriate Levels in Mathematics as Compared to the Respective 2010–11 Class at the School.

The first step in building this bridge occurred when 631 sixth graders at five elementary schools were introduced to a *college-going culture* in the 2010–11 year. Today, these students are eleventh graders at Valley High School in the Elk Grove Unified School District and will graduate from this school in 2017, the final year of this grant cycle.

These high school students received research-supported, grade-appropriate services to enhance their opportunity for success, especially in mathematics, including:

- assistance and guidance with their college application process through CSU mentor;
- enrollment in Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) courses and Career Technical Pathways through Health Teach and Project Lead the Way;
- field trips that expose students to various collegiate environments and careers;
- support from GEAR UP staff to monitor student academic progress and facilitate success at the school;
- career exploration with staff in areas of interest, job shadowing, and mentors in connected fields;
- collaboration with schools in the feeder pattern, local businesses, the Elk Grove School Unified School District, and Consumnes River College to offer more rigorous coursework, create a *college-going culture*, increase cross-articulation opportunities in Advanced Placement/Honors coursework, Career Technical Education Pathways, and dual enrollment at Consumnes River College, a community college across the street from Valley High School.

Whole School Model

The Whole School Model is characterized by services, staff, and resources designed to create systemic change at a school site. This model is predicated on systemic change theory and research about effective learning communities that demonstrates the importance of planning time, the principal as an instructional leader, and the critical nature of using data to inform decision-making. The objective guiding this model is:

Objective 2: To Increase by Five Percent Each Year the Number of Students at the Participating GEAR UP Schools Who Are Performing at Grade-Appropriate Levels in Mathematics as Compared to the Performance of Students at These Schools in the 2010–11 Year.

In May of 2012, 48 low-income schools across the state were selected to participate in the Implementation Phase of this six-year grant cycle. A School Services Coach has been assigned to each school with the responsibility for assisting to coalesce a GEAR UP School Leadership Team composed of the principal, other school administrators, guidance counselors, teachers in core academic content areas, a parent, and a counselor.

In the fall of 2015, GEAR UP schools attended regional Principal and Leadership Team Institutes to provide opportunities to learn from each other and problem solve together about common concerns and issues. These events were customized to meet the needs of participating schools within each region and were in alignment with focused areas of growth identified on the School Self-Assessment Rubric (SSAR) developed by the UCLA Graduate School of Education. In this Program, the SSAR serves as a yardstick to assess school change over time and guide the development of a *college-going culture* at the school site. These Institutes were followed by Regional Events in spring of 2016 that were focused on the systems that impede the creation of a *college-going culture* for all students, instructional strategies that enhance effective implementation of Common Core State Standards, and the development of region-wide professional learning communities.

GEAR UP schools in the cohort have continued to make progress with the implementation of the Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project on the Daskala online platform. This diagnostic test measures student readiness for mathematics courses ranging from Pre-Algebra to Calculus. This online tool provides teachers timely diagnostic data to identify specific topics and skills that need more attention, allows them to develop formative assessments, and informs and evaluates instruction and curricula to prepare students for success in mathematics courses needed for college and career readiness. During this year, GEAR UP Coaches and MDTP Directors have collaborated to monitor progress at the school site.

Beginning in fall of 2013, California GEAR UP launched a pilot project using the College Board's SpringBoard curriculum at selected GEAR UP middle schools. A total of seven GEAR UP middle schools in Southern California are currently implementing the program in English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms. Three of the seven schools have been implementing the curriculum over the course of three years; 2015 was the first year for four of the seven schools. Two middle schools are implementing SpringBoard curriculum in Mathematics as well.

The SpringBoard program serves all students in all classrooms and provides customizable pathways for integrating rigorous instruction, performance-based assessment, and exemplary professional learning. As a result of school site training and College Board professional development training for teachers, approximately 5,900 students have been exposed to SpringBoard curriculum in varying degrees. The pilot includes teacher training, progress monitoring through classroom visitations, data collection, and critical understanding by schools of the nature of their learning and the reasons for doing so. Teachers have access to SpringBoard coaches, grade level seminars, and an online digital community for peer connection and support, including videos and instructional resources.

In May 2015 the GEAR UP program launched A College and Career Equity-Based STEM Strategy (ACCESS) project. This tiered professional development experience is being implemented at 13 GEAR UP schools across eight school districts in the Central Valley and San Diego area. ACCESS curriculum and training tools promote the implementation of Common Core State Standards and utilize the Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project diagnostics for assessment of content gaps, student learning, and readiness for next level course placement.

Educational System Transformation Model

An **Educational System Transformation Model** expands the program's reach in promoting a *college-going culture* for all students and offers opportunities to impact the educational enterprise as a whole, albeit less intensively. The objective of this model is:

Objective 3: To Increase by Five Percent in Six Years the Number of Students in the State Completing Grade-Appropriate Mathematics Courses as Compared to 2010–11 Statewide Outcomes.

In July 2014, program staff met with California GEAR UP Partnership project staffs at the GEAR UP Conference sponsored by the National Council for Community and Educational Partnerships (NCCEP) in Washington, DC. The result of these meetings was the launching of the California Partnership Initiative. Through this initiative, the California delegation met again in February 2015 at the NCCEP Capacity Building workshop and at the National GEAR UP conference in July 2015. In November 2015, the California GEAR UP Program convened the California Partnership Initiative Conference. This one-day event assembled staffs from the State Grant and 17 of the 19 local partnership projects to leverage the collective resources and expertise of GEAR UP in California.

The GEAR UP program has continued to collaborate with the California Subject Matter Projects (CSMP), the state's professional development system for public school teachers in nine disciplines. As such, its responsibility is to improve instruction through the development of effective pedagogy, curriculum, and instructional strategies. In this regard, CSMP supports both schools participating in the California GEAR UP Program and other schools serving a predominantly low-income population to enhance teacher competencies that are expected to lead to improved student achievement.

Another activity undertaken through this model was participating in the Seventh Annual Professional Development Summit in Oakland in January, 2016. This two-day event featured state and national leaders and educators discussing a social justice agenda specifically focused on African- American students.

Finally, GEAR UP strengthened its partnership with the California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP) -- a State initiative to improve instruction in secondary schools through collaborative efforts involving higher education. CAPP continued to fund two high schools to which GEAR UP middle schools matriculate students in order to sustain a *college-going culture* for those students, particularly in grades 10 and 11.