



Year 4 Annual Implementation Report

Texas GEAR UP State Grant
Evaluation

March 2018

Submitted to:
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

Submitted by:
ICF
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

Table ES.1. Profile of Texas GEAR UP Schools

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

Evaluation of Texas GEAR UP State Grant

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

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

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

Table ES.2. Evaluation Timeline

Grade in School by Grant Year							
	Grant Year 1 2012–13	Grant Year 2 2013–14	Grant Year 3 2014–15	Grant Year 4 2015–16	Grant Year 5 2016–17	Grant Year 6 2017–18	Grant Year 7

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

Implementation

Level and Mix of Implementation

The federal GEAR UP program encourages grantees, including the Texas GEAR UP SG, to engage in a wide range of implementation practices (referred to here as the “mix of implementation”) in order to support project objectives. Table ES.3 provides a high-level overview of the range of implementa

FP0p \the rani 0.0224 Tc[(l)] TJETment0 0 1 7Pf 1 476.2

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

	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
--	---------------	---------------	---------------	---------------	---------------	---------------

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

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

Project Objectives	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
2.1: By the end of the project’s fourth year, all participating high schools will make opportunities available for each student to complete 18 hours of college credit (through AP, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment) by the time he or she graduates from high school. ^a	X	X	X	X	X	

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

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT WITH TEXAS GEAR UP SG

As was the case in prior years, no school met Project Objective 7.3 of having 50% of parents attend at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events annually, though schools made more progress on this goal in Year 4 (9%) than they did in Year 3 (3%). In Year 4, Texas GEAR UP SG high

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

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

Key Facilitators and Barriers: Implementation

Strong Stakeholder Engagement

Key Takeaway:

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

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

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

Key Takeaway:

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

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

Potential Promising Practices

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

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

Recommendations

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

Offer a Variety of Academic and Emotional Support Platforms to Ensure College Readiness. Academic support, such as tutoring, and emotional supports, such as mentoring, for students may improve their perceived lack of motivation in advanced classes and aid students who were academically unprepared and enrolled in advanced classes. While the percentage of students who aspire to obtain a 4-year degree or higher has steadily increased over time, these supports may better prepare students for success and increase persistence in postsecondary education and increase the number of students who expect to obtain a 4-year degree or higher.

Provide Additional and Varied Opportunities for Parent Engagement. As all six Texas GEAR UP SG schools continue to struggle with parent engagement, Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider hosting parent and family events that allow parents to discuss their child's postsecondary plans and readiness in groups and space that are more intimate.

ToBT/F1 10.98 Tf1 0 0 1 9057>-m.s.0 0 1e32()] entor6 Tm[4 440.6005100030000480046a sinsegarts, Op a

