

Texas GEAR UP: Beyond Grad

Annual Project Outcomes Report

Evaluation of Year 5

Submitted to:

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

Submitted by:

ICF
1902 Reston Metro Plaza
Reston, VA 20190

Submitted:

August 2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ICF evaluation team would like to acknowledge the many members of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), site/campus staff, and collaborative organizations for their support of this evaluation. They provided valuable information and feedback to ensure that the evaluation team had a full understanding of the goals/objectives and implementation of the Texas GEAR UP: Beyond Grad program across participating sites and campuses. The evaluation team looks forward to the continued collaboration with TEA staff, site/campus staff, and other collaborators to provide a high-quality evaluation that can inform policy and practice for schools, nationally and in Texas.

ICF (NASDAQ: ICFI) partners with government and commercial clients to deliver consulting services and technology solutions in the social programs, health, energy, climate change, environment, transportation, defense, and emergency management markets. The firm combines passion for its work with industry expertise and innovative analytics to produce compelling results throughout the entire program life cycle—from analysis and design through implementation and improvement.

For additional information about ICF, please contact:

ICF

1902 Reston Metro Plaza

Reston, VA 20190

Phone: 703-934-3000 or 1-800-532-4783

Fax: 703-934-3740

Email: info@icf.com

Contributing Authors

Kathleen Wang

Lauren Kennedy

Samantha Spinney, PhD

Kimberly Cook

Prepared for

Texas Education Agency

1701 N. Congress Avenue

Austin, TX 78701

Phone: 512-463-9734

Evaluation funded by the Texas Education Agency through funds provided by the U.S. Department of Education for the Texas GEAR UP: Beyond Grad State Grant.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

The materials are copyrighted © and trademarked™ as the property of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and may not be reproduced without the express written permission of TEA, except under the following conditions:

- 1) Texas public school districts, charter schools, and Education Service Centers may reproduce and use copies of the Materials and Related Materials for the districts' and schools' educational use without obtaining permission from TEA;
- 2) residents of the state of Texas may reproduce and use copies of the Materials and Related Materials for individual personal use only without obtaining written permission of TEA;
- 3) any portion reproduced must be reproduced in its entirety and remain unedited, unaltered and unchanged in any way; and
- 4) no monetary charge can be made for the reproduced materials or any document containing them; however, a reasonable charge to cover only the cost of reproduction and distribution may be charged.

Private entities or persons located in Texas that are **not** Texas public school districts, Texas Education Service Centers, or Texas charter schools or any entity, whether public or private, educational or non-educational, located **outside the state of Texas** *MUST* obtain written approval from TEA and will be required to enter into a license agreement that may involve the payment of a licensing fee or a royalty.

For information contact: Copyrights Office, Texas Education Agency, 1701 N. Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78701-1494; phone 512-463-9041; email: copyrights@tea.texas.gov.

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness® (STAAR®) is a registered trademark of TEA. Other product and company names mentioned in this report may be the trademarks of their respective owners.

Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	v
Overview.....	1
Project Goal 1: Increase Access to Rigorous Courses in Order to Reduce the Need for Remediation	2
Project Goal 3: Provide Educator Training and Professional Development for Rigorous Academic Programs	3
Project Goal 4: Increase High School Graduation	4
Project Goal 5: Support Participation in Postsecondary Education and Career Preparation	5
Project Goal 6: Provide Postsecondary and Career Preparation Information to Students and Families	6
Project Goal 7: Increase Educational Expectations for and Awareness About Postsecondary and Career Options.....	8
Project Goal 8: Build and Expand Community Partnerships.....	10
Project Goal 9: Enhance Statewide College and Career Readiness	11
Appendix A: GEAR UP: Beyond Grad Project Goals and Objectives.....	A-1
Appendix B: Data and Analysis Methods.....	B-1

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AP	Advanced Placement
APR	Annual Performance Report
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
GEAR UP	Gaining Early Access and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs
IB	International Baccalaureate
PD	Professional Development
PO	Project Objective
PSAT	Preliminary SAT
TEA	Texas Education Agency

Overview

The Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): Beyond Grad State Grant (referred to as “GEAR UP” in this report) provides supports and strategies for many low-income students to overcome the college achievement gap. GEAR UP serves approximately 6,500–9,000 students from six Texas school districts (five high schools and one kindergarten through Grade 12 comprehensive campus) in rural communities in West Texas, East Texas, and the Coastal Bend. GEAR UP provides services for the following two groups of students:

- *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.
- *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).

To track the implementation and outcomes associated with this grant, the GEAR UP program team established nine goals and 31 corresponding project objectives (POs). This report provides an overview of program performance focusing on the relevant goals and POs during the 2022–23 academic year (Year 5). For POs that were also applicable in 2018–19 (Year 1), 2019–20 (Year 2), 2020–21 (Year 3), and 2021–22 (Year 4) academic years, longitudinal trends are presented. It is important to note that program PO performance during Years 2 and 3 were substantially complicated by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and subsequent March 2020 school closures that disrupted all aspects of schooling. Lingering ramifications from the pandemic were still affecting students, schools, and communities in 2021–22 (Year 4) and a variety of programs and services were canceled in 2020 and 2021.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) reported on program performance for each PO in the federal Annual Performance Reports (APRs) required by the U.S. Department of Education. The findings regarding program performance shared in this report come directly from the APRs for Years 1–5. Relevant qualitative summary and quotes from GEAR UP program stakeholders, including district-level GEAR UP coordinators and school principals, are also included to provide additional contextual information about project performance.¹ Findings include overall results and district-level results if they were reported in the federal APRs.

The following symbols are used throughout this report to indicate if the PO was fully met, partially met, or not met:²



Goal Fully Met



Goal Partially Met



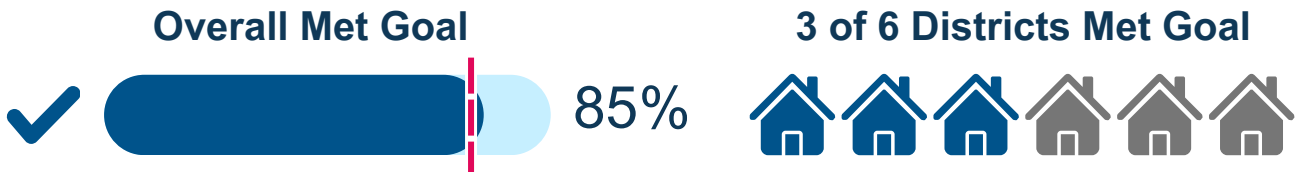
Goal Not Met

¹Stakeholder quotes originated from qualitative data collected for the Year 5 Annual Implementation Report. 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/gubg-yr5aires.pdf>

²Criteria 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).

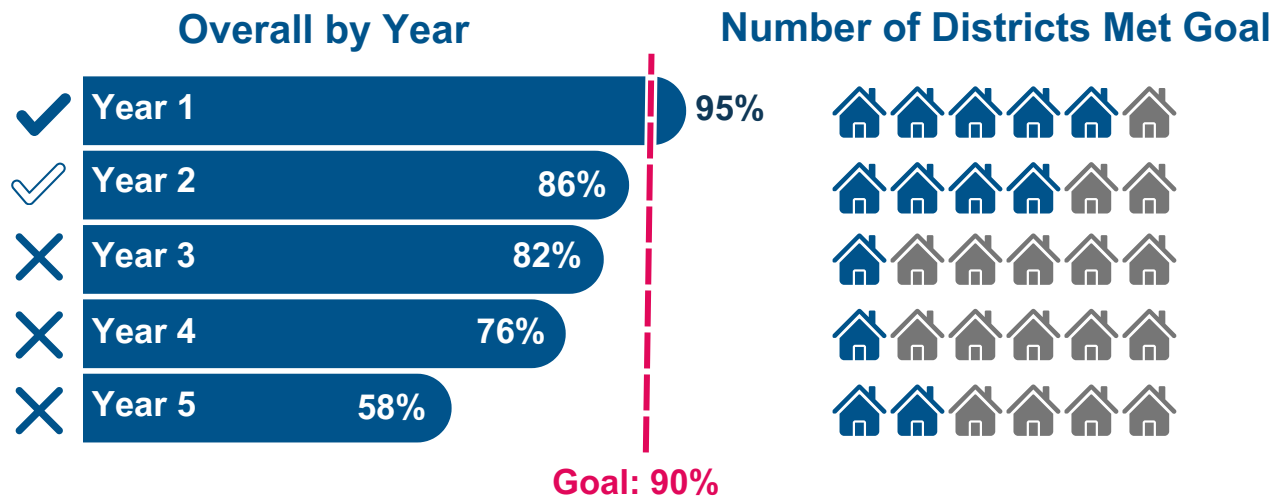
Project Goal 1: Increase Access to Rigorous Courses in Order to Reduce the Need for Remediation

Objective 1.1: By the end of the class of 2024’s third year (Grade 9), 85% of class of 2024 students will complete Algebra I.



Among Grade 9 priority cohort student survey respondents who indicated that they had not completed Algebra I by Grade 8 or earlier, 94% reported being currently in enrolled in Algebra I in Year 5, which was significantly higher than Year 4 (72%).

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.

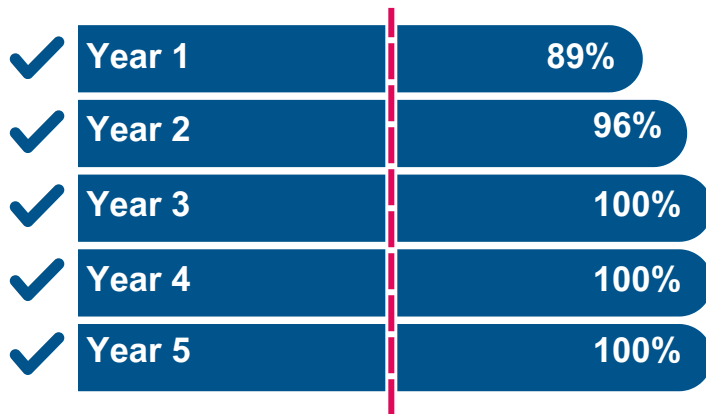


Nearly a quarter (24%) of class of 2024 student survey respondents reported participating in targeted tutoring initiatives in Year 5, which was significantly lower than in Year 4 (50%). Of the class of 2024 student survey respondents who reported receiving tutoring, 88% reported it helped them succeed in classes and that they were generally satisfied with tutoring.

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.

Overall by Year



Goal: 50%

Most school personnel survey respondents (92%) indicated that they participated in one or more professional development (PD) sessions in Year 5 compared to Year 4 (81%). School personnel survey respondents generally *Agreed* that the PD they engaged in provided strategies to increase rigor in their courses.

Objective 3.2: Each year, teams of educators and administrators will complete at least 5 days of vertical teaming in order to align curriculum and reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level.

Teachers reported that the vertical alignments were done with middle schools in order to ensure that appropriate levels of rigor and any necessary scaffolding were provided to help ease students into high school expectations.

Number of Districts Met Goal



Project Goal 3: Provide Educator Training and Professional Development for Rigorous Academic Programs, Cont.

Objective 3.3: Each year, 20% of high school class of 2024 core content teachers will participate in at least three individualized educator coaching and/or mentoring sessions.

Number of Districts Met Goal

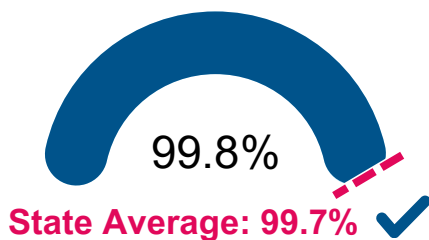


A GEAR UP coordinator found the role-playing instructional strategies were very helpful in identifying opportunities for growth to help facilitate student learning.

Project Goal 4: Increase High School Graduation

Objective 4.2: At the end of the class of 2024’s second year (Grade 8), the on-time promotion rate will exceed the baseline state average promotion rate.

Overall Met Goal



All Districts Met Goal

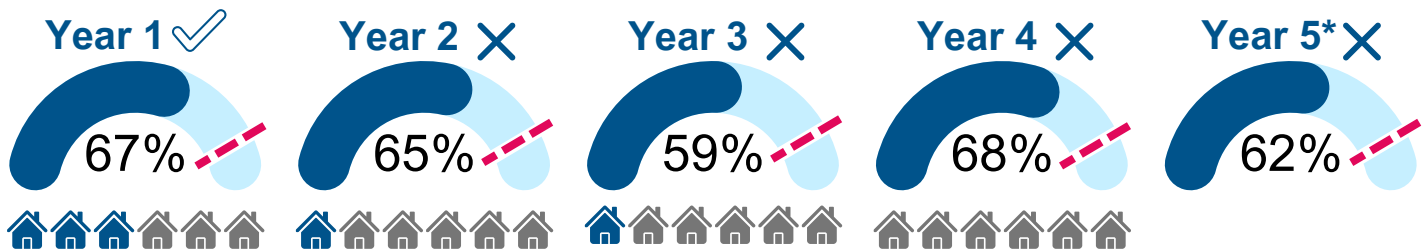


Project Goal 5: Support Participation in Postsecondary Education and Career Preparation

Objective 5.1: Each year, 85% of tenth graders will take the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) or ACT Aspire exam. Each year, 85% of eleventh graders will take the SAT or ACT exam.

Tenth Graders Took PSAT or ACT Aspire:

Goal: 85%

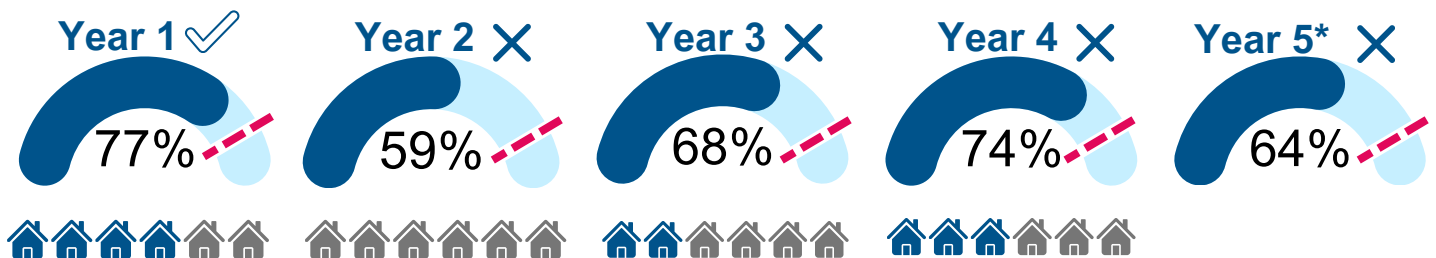


Eighty percent of class of 2024 student survey respondents reported completing SAT or ACT test preparation. Seventy-one percent of students reported that test preparation helped them prepare for college entrance exams in Year 5, which was significantly lower than in Year 4.

*The percentage of tenth grade students that took the PSAT or ACT Aspire by district was provided by TEA (TEA, personal communication, May 28, 2024).

Eleventh Graders Took SAT or ACT Exam:

Goal: 85%



*In Year 5, SAT/ACT completion data was only available at the aggregate level (i.e., data was not available by district).

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

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.

Number of Districts Met Goal



School personnel survey respondents largely *Agreed* that non-profit GEAR UP advisors informed students postsecondary education options and provided grade-appropriate information on postsecondary education and career readiness. A school personnel survey respondent shared that the non-profit advisor was “knowledgeable of all requirements. If [they] don’t know an answer, [they] will find it.”

Objective 6.2: Each year, students and parents will receive information about postsecondary and career options, preparation, and financing.

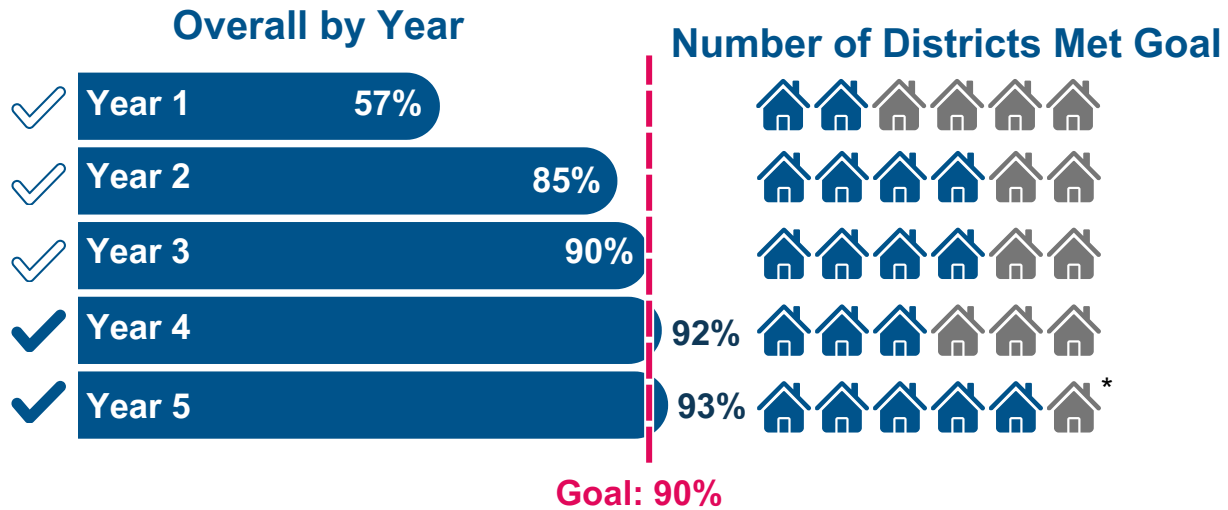
Number of Districts Met Goal



A variety of methods were used in Year 5 to disseminate college and career information to students, including group/classroom presentations, highlighting student successes within the school, and a focus on college readiness. Personnel survey respondents reported providing parents with information through email (66%), phone calls (49%), and in-person meetings/conversations (41%).

Project Goal 6: Provide Postsecondary and Career Preparation Information to Students and Families, Cont.

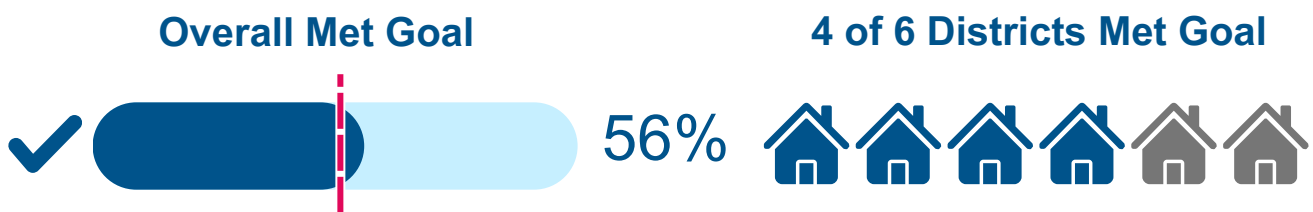
Objective 6.3: Each year, 90% of class of 2024 students will receive at least one comprehensive, individualized college and career counseling session.



Year 5 student survey respondents largely *Agreed* that individual advising sessions provided them with information on the grades and test scores needed to achieve their college and career goals, helped them select the best classes to take to achieve their college and career goals, and helped them develop a plan for their education.

*The percentage of students participating in an individualized college and career counseling session by district was provided by TEA (TEA, personal communication, May 28, 2024).

Objective 6.4: By the end of the third year, 50% of class of 2024 parents will receive at least one individualized college and career counseling session.

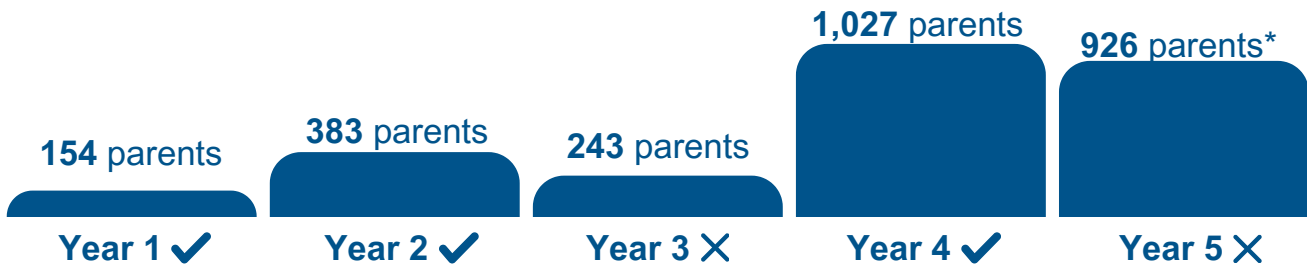


“I’ve had a couple of parents come in after seeing so many messages from me, they wanted to meet me and see what other additional information I could give them...So that’s been nice to see because while a majority of parents aren’t responding, I’m at least getting a couple of [parents] interested in what I’m providing. – Nonprofit advisor”

Project Goal 6: Provide Postsecondary and Career Preparation Information to Students and Families, Cont.

Objective 6.5: Each year, class of 2024 parent attendance at Texas GEAR UP events and services will increase.

Attendance by Year



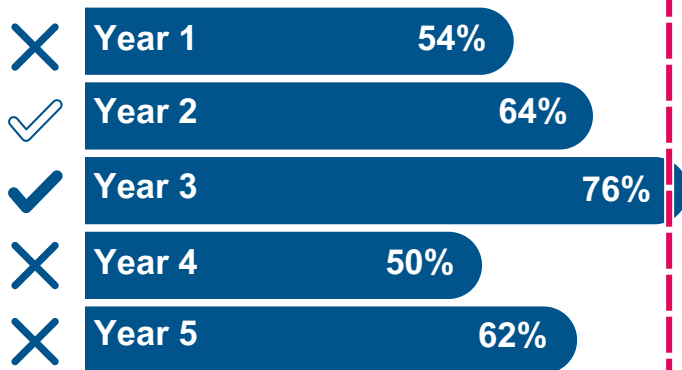
“ We did lots of FAFSA nights at the beginning, had lots of parents there; do your FAFSA, get a pie... We have little mini pies if they completed their FAFSA that night. – Nonprofit advisor ”

*TEA noted that while the number of events offered more than doubled, parent participation decreased (TEA, personal communication, May 28, 2024).

Project Goal 7: Increase Educational Expectations for and Awareness About Postsecondary and Career Options

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

Overall by Year



Number of Districts Met Goal

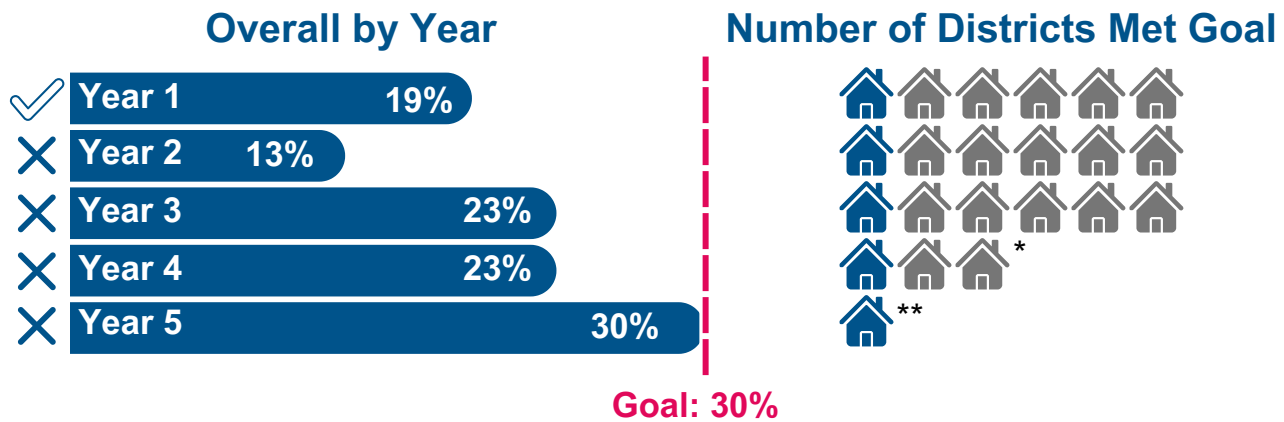


Goal: 75%

* The number of districts that met this objective was provided by TEA (TEA, personal communication, May 28, 2024).

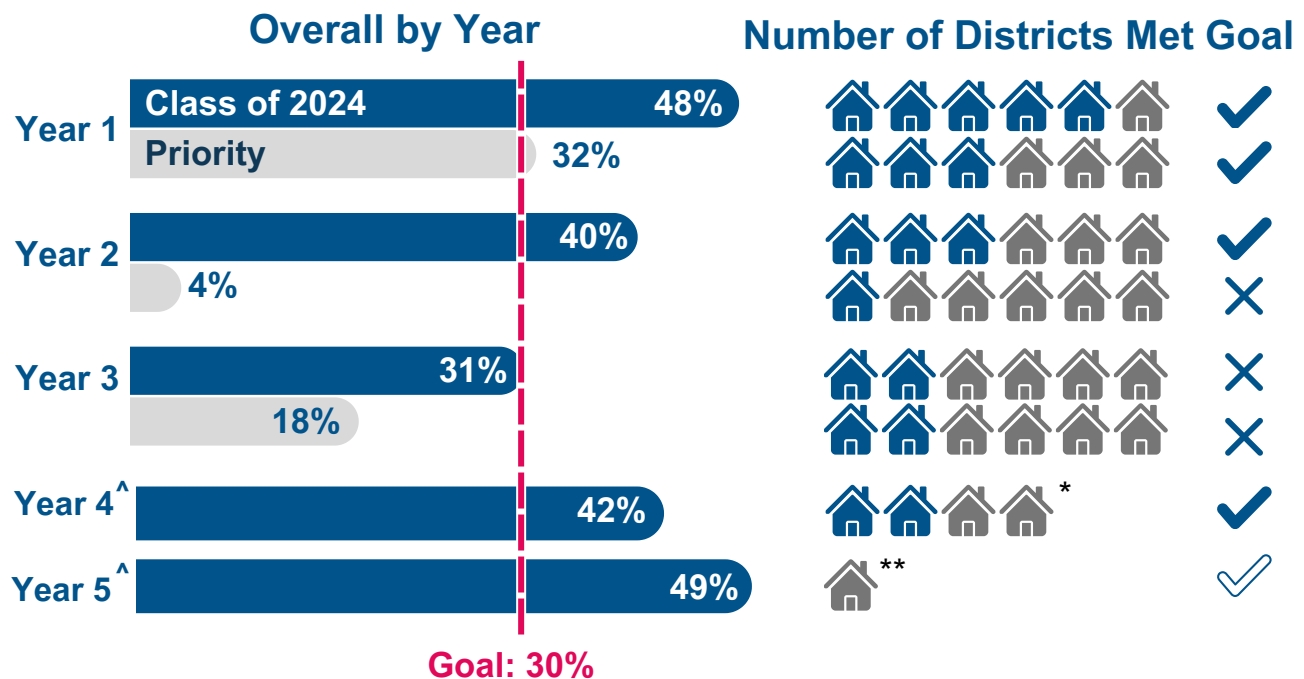
Project Goal 7: Increase Educational Expectations for and Awareness About Postsecondary and Career Options, Cont.

Objective 7.4: Each year, 30% of class of 2024 students will attend a summer program (academic acceleration, enrichment, college exploration, etc.).



*Three of the 6 GEAR UP schools reported data by the Year 4 APR data collection deadline.
 **One out of 6 GEAR UP schools reported data by the Year 5 APR data collection deadline.

Objective 7.5: Each year, 30% of class of 2024 and priority cohort students will participate in a work-based learning opportunity.



*Four of the 6 GEAR UP schools reported data by the Year 4 APR data collection deadline.
 **Data by district were not available in the Year 5 APR.
[^]Data was not provided for priority cohort students by the Year 4 or the Year 5 APR data collection deadlines.

Project Goal 8: Build and Expand Community Partnerships

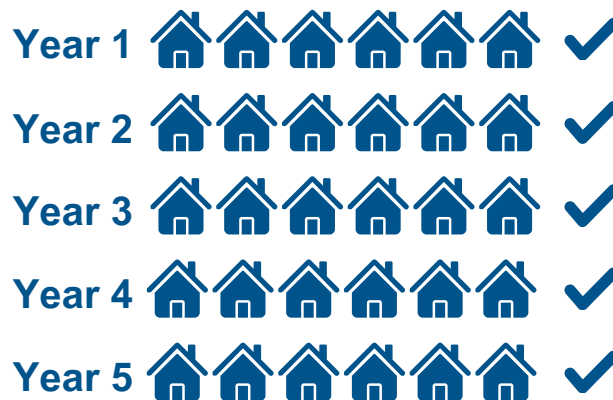
Objective 8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.

All Districts Met Goal



Objective 8.2: All participating districts will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding high school pathways, scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.

All Districts Met Goal



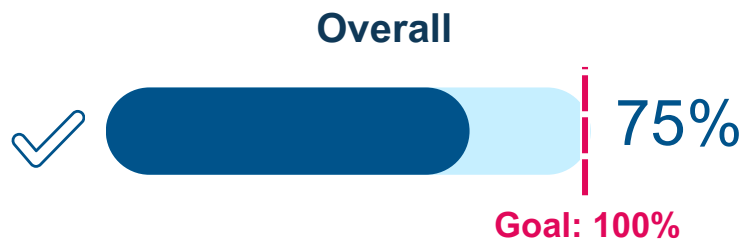
Project Goal 9: Enhance Statewide College and Career Readiness

Objective 9.1: Each year, tri-agency partners (TEA, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission) will convene quarterly to ensure alignment of statewide initiatives around college and career readiness.



*TEA noted that this objective was met (TEA, personal communication, May 28, 2024).

Objective 9.2: By the end of the project’s fourth year, class of 2024 and priority cohort students will have access to a student-focused online resource to assist them in making informed decisions about their education and career pathway options.*



*Data for objective 9.2 were only available with the Year 5 APR.

Objective 9.3: Annually increase the number of educators, counselors, and community members that complete specialized college and career readiness training.



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

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) established the following goals and objectives for 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.³
- ▶ 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 3.3: Each year, 20% of high school class of 2024 core content teachers will participate in at least three individualized educator coaching and/or mentoring sessions.

³ The goals and objectives originally referred to the class of 2024 as the "primary cohort." These have been edited here to use "class of 2024" for consistency with the rest of the report and to clearly distinguish this cohort from the priority cohort.

- ▶ Objective 3.4: By the end of the project's second year, all high school counselors will complete training in college and career advising.

Project Goal 4: Increase high school graduation

- ▶ Objective 4.1: The class of 2024 completion rate will meet or exceed the baseline state average completion rate.
- ▶ Objective 4.2: At the end of the class of 2024's second year (Grade 8), the on-time promotion rate will exceed the baseline state average promotion rate.⁴

Project Goal 5: Support participation in postsecondary education and career preparation

- ▶ Objective 5.1: Each year, 85% of tenth graders will take the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) or ACT Aspire exam. Each year, 85% of eleventh graders will take the SAT or ACT exam.
- ▶ Objective 5.2: By the end of the class of 2024's sixth year (Grade 12), 50% of class of 2024 students will meet the college readiness criterion on the SAT, ACT, or the Texas Success Initiative Assessment.
- ▶ Objective 5.3: At least 60% of class of 2024 students will enroll in postsecondary education in the fall after high school graduation.
- ▶ Objective 5.4: At least 60% of class of 2024 students who enroll in postsecondary education will place into college-level courses without the need for remediation.
- ▶ Objective 5.5: The number of class of 2024 students who complete the first year of college will meet or exceed the baseline district average.

Project Goal 6: Provide postsecondary and career preparation information to students and families

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Objective 6.2: Each year, students and parents will receive information about postsecondary and career options, preparation, and financing.
- ▶ Objective 6.3: Each year, 90% of class of 2024 students will receive at least one comprehensive, individualized college and career counseling session.
- ▶ Objective 6.4: By the end of the third year, 50% of class of 2024 parents will receive at least one individualized college and career counseling session.
- ▶ Objective 6.5: Each year, class of 2024 parent attendance at Texas GEAR UP events and services will increase.

Project Goal 7: Increase educational expectations for and awareness about postsecondary and career options

⁴ Project Objective 4.2 was not reported in the Year 2 Annual Performance Report (APR); however, it was reported in the Year 3 APR. Findings were presented in the Year 3 Annual Project Outcomes Report.

- ▶ Objective 7.1: Each year, 75% of class of 2024 students will attend at least one college visit.
- ▶ Objective 7.2: By the end of the class of 2024's sixth year (Grade 12), 85% of class of 2024 students will complete the Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- ▶ Objective 7.3: By the end of the class of 2024's sixth year (Grade 12), 85% of class of 2024 students will complete at least two college applications.
- ▶ Objective 7.4: Each year, 30% of class of 2024 students will attend a summer program (academic acceleration, enrichment, college exploration, etc.).
- ▶ Objective 7.5: Each year, 30% of class of 2024 and priority cohort students will participate in a work-based learning opportunity.

Project Goal 8: Build and expand community partnerships

- ▶ Objective 8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.
- ▶ Objective 8.2: All participating districts will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding high school pathways, scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.

Project Goal 9: Enhance statewide college and career readiness

- ▶ Objective 9.1: Each year, tri-agency partners (TEA, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission) will convene quarterly to ensure alignment of statewide initiatives around college and career readiness.
- ▶ Objective 9.2: By the end of the project's fourth year, class of 2024 and priority cohort students will have access to a student-focused online resource to assist them in making informed decisions about their education and career pathway options.
- ▶ Objective 9.3: Annually increase the number of educators, counselors, and community members that complete specialized college and career readiness training.

Appendix B: Data and Analysis Methods

Data for the report were collected by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) from six participating school districts, including five high 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 11 in 2022–23) and the priority cohort of GEAR UP students (Grade 9, Grade 10, and Grade 12 in 2022–23). 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 Year 5 Annual Implementation Report.⁵

⁵ For more information about this report, please see the [Texas GEAR UP: Beyond Grad Annual Implementation Report, Evaluation of Year 5](#).