



Year 5 Annual Implementation Report

Texas GEAR UP State Grant
Evaluation

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Overview

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) awarded the Texas Education Agency (TEA) a \$33 million federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant in federal fiscal year (FY) 2012. The broad purpose of the federal GEAR UP program is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education through state and local partnership grants. The GEAR UP program addresses the challenges faced by low-income students in attaining postsecondary success in an early and ongoing manner, providing services, activities, and resources to students from Grade 7 through the first year of college to accomplish the following three goals (1) increasing postsecondary awareness and aspirations; (2) strengthening academic preparation and achievement; and (3) raising postsecondary participation. Through the Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG), four participating districts are providing services to a cohort of students and their parents from Grade 7 (the 2012–13 school year) through their first year of postsecondary education (the 2018–19 school year). This report focuses on implementation in Year 5 of the Texas GEAR UP SG (the 2016–17 school year), the cohort's fifth year in high school (Grade 11).

In order to meet the federal purpose of the grant, the Texas GEAR UP SG program includes nine project goals and 26 corresponding objectives, provided in Appendix A of the report. Three goals are related to advanced coursework, student support services, and summer programs. Other goals intend to increase data-driven instruction (through teacher professional development [PD]), community collaboration, and access to postsecondary information. Outcome goals include on-time promotion, improved high school completion at a college-ready level, college attendance, and college retention. In addition to meeting goals at campuses selected to participate in the program, there are objectives to provide statewide information and professional learning for educators in order to promote college readiness across the state.

Participating schools and their districts are listed in Table ES.1; throughout this report, schools are identified by letter (e.g., High School H, High School I) in order to protect confidentiality.¹ In these districts, program staff, including Texas GEAR UP SG Coordinators and College Preparation Advisors, facilitate and provide Texas GEAR UP SG services, with support from TEA, statewide collaborators (including the Support Center, which serves as the technical assistance provider), and local stakeholders.² Texas GEAR UP SG services are intended to impact teachers through the provision of PD and schools/districts through changes in academic rigor (paired with student support services). Finally, the Texas GEAR UP SG program is

¹ Texas GEAR UP High Schools are labeled High Schools H through M. The seven Texas GEAR UP Middle Schools were identified as Schools A through G.

² The term Texas GEAR UP SG staff is used throughout this report and includes the Texas GEAR UP SG Coordinators, College Preparation Advisors, facilitators, tutors, parent liaisons, and data clerks. These are staff located in the districts or at the schools who have key responsibilities to the project either for the district or at the school.

intended to make a statewide impact, primarily through the provision of the website (i.e., <http://www.texasgearup.com>), where coordinated information and resources regarding postsecondary opportunities for students and their parents throughout Texas are made available.

Table ES.1. Profile of Texas GEAR UP Schools

District	Middle School (2012–13; 2013–14)	High School (2014–15; 2015–16; 2016–17)
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, schools, 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 2018–19
Primary Cohort	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	First Year of College

This fifth implementation report focuses on formative feedback regarding Year 5 implementation, and also provides relevant comparisons to implementation in prior years (primarily Year 4, the previous year and halfway point in high school, but also Year 2, the end of middle school, as relevant). Each of the annual implementation reports was informed by

analysis of student- and campus-level data from statewide databases, interviews with TEA and its collaborators, review of grantee annual strategic planning reports (ASPR), data reported through the GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System (GUIDES), student and parent surveys, and qualitative site visit data.³

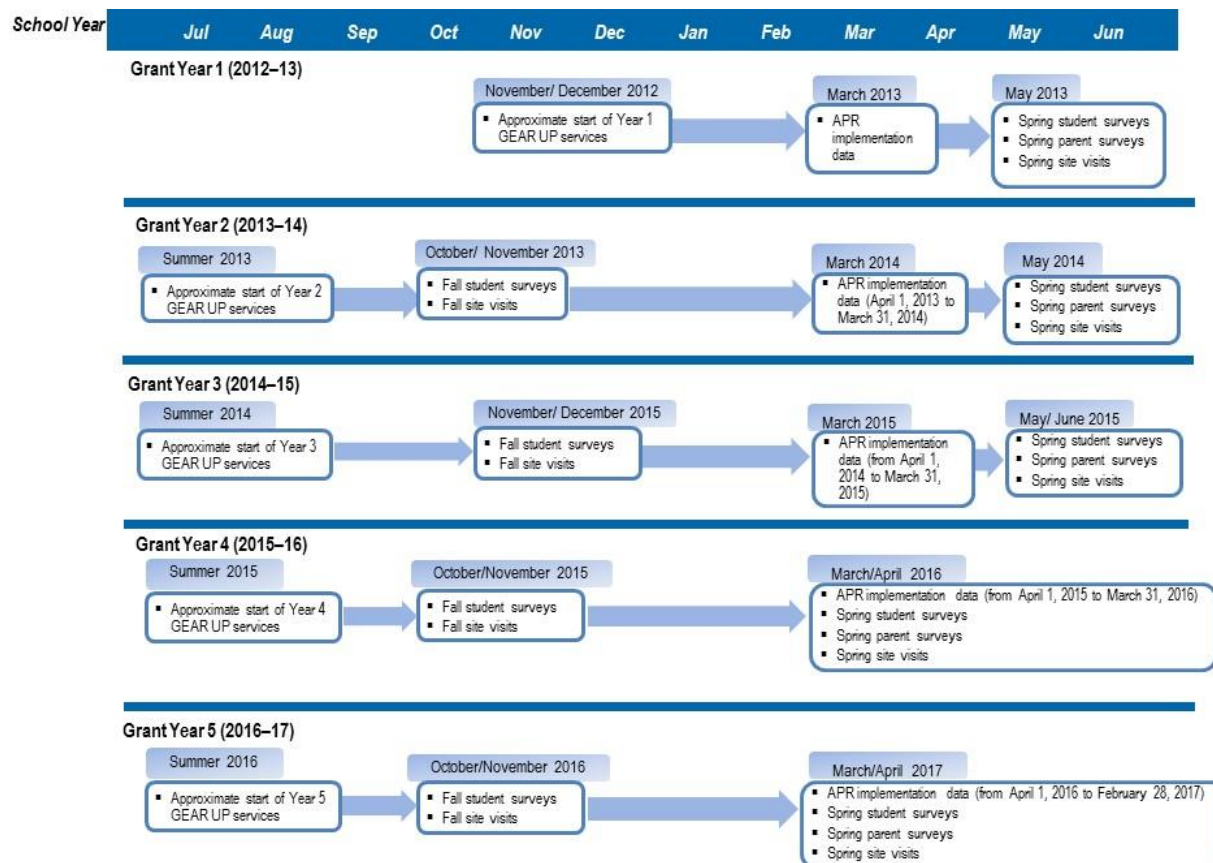
Districts submitted implementation data in line with federal annual performance report (APR) reporting requirements in GUIDES. Therefore, GUIDES data reflected implementation from the date of each district's notification of grant award (NOGA) through March 31, 2013 in Year 1, from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014 in Year 2, from April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015 in Year 3, from April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016 in Year 4, and from March 1, 2016 to February 28, 2017 in Year 5.⁴ Texas GEAR UP SG Year 5 implementation activities that occurred through summer 2017 are not discussed in this report in order to keep the time periods comparable. Participation in summer 2016 programs as reported on during Year 5 are discussed in this report. While forming ideas about the program, readers should keep in mind when data were collected because this report does not capture the entire school year of activities. Additionally, the length of time for program implementation for Years 2–5 were similar; however, Year 1 length of implementation was shorter therefore comparisons to Year 1 should be made with caution. Finally, readers need to be aware that comparisons of differences from Year 2, which reflects implementation at the seven participating middle schools, relative to implementation in Year 4 and Year 5, which reflect implementation in the six participating high schools, may in part be interpreted as due to middle school versus high school differences.⁵ Figure ES.1 provides an overview of the timing of implementation data collection in each grant year.

³ TEA's collaborators on the Texas GEAR UP SG during Year 5 include the Support Center staffed by personnel from the University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI), AMS Pictures, Texas Guaranteed (TG), GeoFORCE (all of which were collaborators in Year 2) as well as Raise Achievement, which was added in Year 3. Signal Vine and FOCUS Training were added for the first time in Year 5.

⁴ Annual Performance Report (APR) data used in the Year 5 report are from summer 2016 and the 2016–17 school year, but only through February 28, 2017. The evaluation team made the decision to align annual performance data to the federal reporting requirements. Other data (such as surveys and site visits) are collected in the late spring, but still do not capture all activities occurring in the remainder of the school year or summer 2017.

⁵ See prior implementation reports for Year 1 (O'Donnell et al., 2013), Year 2 (Briggs et al., 2015), Year 3 (Briggs et al., 2016), and Year 4 (Spinney et al., 2018) for additional information.

Figure ES.1. Implementation Timeline and Evaluation Implementation Data Collections: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, and Year 5



Key Findings

This section provides an overview of relevant project objectives, evaluation questions, and key findings. Findings were considered key if they were aligned to the project goals and objectives set by TEA (see Appendix A).

Selected Project Objectives

Relevant project objectives emphasized in this report include the following:

- Project Objective 1.1: By the end of the project's second year, 30% of cohort students will have completed Algebra I in the 8th grade. By the end of the project's third year, 85% of students will have completed Algebra I.
- Project Objective 1.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Program plus Endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 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.⁶

- Projective Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including limited English proficient (LEP) students, will complete a pre-Advanced Placement (AP) or AP course.
- Project Objective 2.3: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will be eligible to earn college credit by AP exam or through dual credit.
- Project Objective 3.1: All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and project-based learning (PBL).
- Project Objective 3.2: Teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical team preparation and implementation each year.
- Project Objective 4.1: By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the 8th grade students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on results of teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data.⁷
- Project Objective 4.2: Beginning in the second year, at least 30% of the students will be involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level, ease transitions, and increase college awareness.
- Project Objective 4.3: By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college.
- Project Objective 5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT.⁸ By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT.
- Project Objective 5.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of students meeting criterion on the ACT/SAT will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.3: The number of students who graduate college ready in mathematics and English will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 7.1: By the end of the first year, the state office will make information regarding college options, preparation, and financing available to students, parents, and educators throughout the state.

⁶ AP refers to advanced placement courses.

⁷ While Project Objective 4.1 emphasizes student support services in Grade 8, the evaluation will continue to examine the level of implementation during each high school year. Similarly, data associated with Project Objectives 7.1 and 7.2 are examined each year, not only in the first year. Vertical teaming (also referred to as vertical alignment) refers to teachers from a given subject area participating in collaborative meetings in which they coordinate instruction and learning objectives across grade levels.

⁸ Texas GEAR UP SG initially indicated a goal aligned with students taking ACT PLAN by the end of project's fourth year. However, ACT has replaced PLAN with ACT Aspire. Similarly, the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) has been replaced by the PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT) and PSAT 10.

- Project Objective 7.2: By the end of the first year, information and workshops aimed at linking college attendance to career success will be available to 100% of cohort students and their parents.
- Project Objective 7.3: Each year, at least 50% of cohort parents, including parents of current and former limited English proficient (LEP) students, will attend at least three college awareness activities.
- Project Objective 7.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, teachers and counselors will complete training in the college admissions and financial aid process.
- Project Objective 8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.
- Project Objective 8.2: Participating campuses will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.
- Project Objective 9.1: Annually increase the number of educators participating in GEAR UP professional learning, including through Texas Gateway and face-to-face trainings.⁹
- Project Objective 9.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 40% of Texas school districts will have used at least one Texas GEAR UP statewide resource, such as materials or PD.

Selected Evaluation Questions

Interested readers should view the full report for additional information on all key findings. Select evaluation questions relevant to Year 5 implementation—addressed in the report—include the following:

- How was Texas GEAR UP SG implemented overall and at each of the six participating schools?
- What are student, parent, teacher, and school staff perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG student support service implementation strategies?
- What facilitators and barriers were associated with implementation of the strategies?
- What practices implemented by districts are perceived by grantees (students, parents, and staff) to be effective, and therefore a potential best practice?
- What were students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding postsecondary focus and readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, financing college)?
- What were student perceptions of student support services implementation strategies?
- What information or opportunities did students perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding postsecondary education and career readiness?
- What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by students to be effective, and therefore potential best practices?
- What types of information did grantees make available to students?

⁹ Texas Gateway (formerly Project Share) provides an online, interactive learning environment for Texas teachers. See <https://www.texasgateway.org/> for additional information.

- What facilitators and barriers were reported regarding participation in postsecondary education readiness activities?
- To what extent were demographics, time spent in Texas GEAR UP SG, and perceptions of services and activities associated with educational aspirations and expectations of attaining a college degree?
- For what services and activities do grantees use grant funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
- To what extent were grantees able to secure matching funds?
- For what services and activities do grantees use matching funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
- In what ways were trained teachers implementing data-driven strategies? Differentiated instruction? PBL?
- How many collaborations have schools formed with business alliances, government entities, and community groups? What were perceptions of those collaborations?
- In what ways and how often did collaborating organizations offer opportunities for career exploration to students or information about scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness and readiness?
- What types of information regarding college readiness were made available through the state? What steps, if any, did the state office take to communicate to schools and families about the information available?

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 implementation strategies engaged in to any extent by the six high schools in Year 5. All six high schools implemented the core Texas GEAR UP SG strategy types in Year 5: advanced course enrollment, student support services (e.g., tutoring, comprehensive mentoring, counseling/advising), college visits, parent events, teacher PD, and community alliances. Schools K and L continued to not implement all strategies (not implementing two in both Year 4 and Year 5). Schools H and I increased the number of strategies implemented in Year 5 (compared to only completing 17 of 19 strategies in Year 4). Schools J and M continued to implement all tracked strategies.

Table ES.3. Overview of Texas GEAR UP SG Implementation Strategies by School, Year 5 (Grade 11)

	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
Implementation Strategies						
Advanced Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pre-AP/AP Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
PSAT Participation	X	X	X	X	X	X
SAT/ ACT Participation	X	X	X	X	X	X
TSIA Participation	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dual Credit Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X
Summer Programs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Tutoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Mentoring	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Support Services: Counseling/Advising	X	X	X	X	X	X
College Visits	X	X	X	X	X	X
Job Site Visits/Job Shadowing	X	X	X	X	X	X
Educational Field Trips	X	X	X	X		X
Student Workshops/Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Counseling/ Advising	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent Event on College Preparation/Financial Aid	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent College Visit	X	X	X			X
Teacher Professional Development	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vertical Teaming Events	X	X	X			X
Community Alliances	X	X	X	X	X	X
Use of Statewide Services	X	X	X	X	X	X
Total Number of Strategies Implemented (Out of 22)						
	22	22	22	20	19	22

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through February 28, 2017; fall 2016 and spring 2017 site visit data; Texas GEAR UP SG Student Survey (Spring 2017).

Note: An "X" indicates that a school reported implementing the strategy, although it does not capture the level of implementation (such as the number of students served) for each strategy. AP = advanced placement.

In addition, Table ES.3 includes indicators regarding whether each school has met or is on track to meet relevant project objectives. That is, based on available data is it likely that the school will meet the given project objective within the expected timeframe given their current progress. Overall, Texas GEAR UP SG is on track to meet most objectives, with a few exceptions. No school met Project Objective 2.3, regarding college credits earned; Project Objective 5.1, regarding 100% student participation on the PSAT in Year 4; Project Objective 7.3, regarding 50% parental involvement in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events; or Project Objective 7.4, regarding teacher and counselor training in college admissions and financial aid processes. In addition, some, but not all schools were on track to meet Project Objective 1.2, regarding

students graduating on the Foundation High School Program; Project Objective 2.2, regarding pre-AP or AP course completion; Project Objective 3.1, regarding teacher PD; Project Objective 3.2, regarding at least five days of vertical teaming; Projective Objective 4.3, regarding the on-time promotion rate exceeding the state average; Project Objective 4.4, regarding student preparation for college; and Project Objective 5.2, regarding meeting ACT/SAT criterion. For all other project objectives, all schools were on track to meet the objectives. Table ES.4 displays how specific schools are doing regarding each objective.

Table ES.4. School Progress Toward Meeting Project Objectives, Year 5 (Grade 11)

Project Objectives	High School H	High School I	High School J	High School K	High School L	High School M
1.2 - By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Foundation High School Program plus Endorsement or at the distinguished level of achievement, will meet or exceed the state average.	X	X		X	X	X
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.	X	X	X	X	X	X
2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including limited English proficient (LEP) students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course.	X			X	X	X
2.3: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will graduate with college credit earned by AP exam or through dual credit.						
3.1: All core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training with regard to differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and PBL.	X	X	X	X		
3.2: Teams of teachers at the middle and high schools will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.	X	X	X			X
4.1: By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the 8 th grade students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on results of teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data.	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.2: Beginning in the second year, at least 30% of the students will be involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level, ease transitions, and increase college awareness.	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.3: By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average.					X	
4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, the necessary academic preparation for college. ^a			X			
5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the ACT Aspire or the Preliminary SAT. By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT.						
5.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of students meeting criterion on the ACT/SAT will meet or exceed the state average.					X	
5.3: The number of students who graduate college ready in mathematics and English will meet or exceed the state average. ^b	X		X		X	X
7.2: By the end of the first year, information and workshops aimed at linking college attendance to career success will be available to 100% of cohort students and their parents.	X	X	X	X	X	X
7.3: 50% of parents will participate in at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events each year.						
7.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, teachers and counselors will complete training in the college admissions and financial aid process.						
8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.	X	X	X	X	X	X
8.2: Participating campuses will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through February 28, 2017; fall 2016 and spring 2017 site visit data.

Note: An "X" indicates that a school is making reasonable progress toward an objective, although it does not capture the completion or attainment of an objective.

^a High schools were marked as making progress toward Project Objective 4.4 if students participated in at least on in-person college visit and one of the following: met or exceeded the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) in both English Language Arts (ELA) (>=351) and Mathematics (>=350), completed one or more Mathematics courses beyond Algebra II, enrolled in a coherent sequence of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses as part of a four-year plan of study, or at the of the fifth year students' personal graduation plan includes the Foundation High School Program with a Multidisciplinary endorsement.

^b The state average of students who will graduate college ready as indicated by the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) in 2015–16, was 22.6% for ELA and 18.1% for mathematics.

Advanced Course, AP, and Dual Credit Enrollment

Cohort student enrollment in and completion of advanced courses (including AP and dual credit courses) is an important benchmark toward accomplishing Project Objectives 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. The goal of these project objectives is to increase academic preparedness as well as the number of opportunities to earn college credit while in high school. School L had the highest AP or pre-AP course completion rate prior to the end of Year 5 (99%) while School J had the lowest completion rate (59%). In Year 5, 11% of cohort students were enrolled in dual credit courses and by February 28, 2017, 2% of the cohort had completed a dual credit course. The highest enrollment rate was at High School L, with 43% of the cohort currently enrolled in a dual credit course. The lowest enrollment rate was at High School J, with just 1% of cohort students enrolled in a dual credit course. This variance may be a result of several variables such as opportunities to learn about these courses, availability of courses, interaction with students and their College Preparation Advisors, or school culture.

Student Support Services: Tutoring, Mentoring, and Counseling

Each of the schools met or exceeded Project Objective 4.1, to have at least 75% of students participating in tutoring, mentoring, or counseling. The percentage of Grade 11 students who participated in student support services overall was 94%, above the project objective goal. Nearly all (93%) cohort students participated in counseling services during Year 5. The percentage of students who participated in mentoring increased six percentage points from Year 4 to Year 5 (32% to 38% respectively). Almost half (44%) of students participated in tutoring services in Year 5.

Student Participation in College Visits and Job Site Visits

In addition to student support services, college visits and job site visits represent other successful activities offered to the Texas GEAR UP SG primary cohort students in Year 5. All six high schools engaged in college visits in Year 5 and site visit data revealed that college visits included campus tours, speaking with students or alumni, discussions with professors, and class observations. Across all six schools, 32 job site visits or job shadowing opportunities were available for students to participate in with 40% of students participating. Year 5 survey data indicated that students continued to find these activities to be, on average, *mostly effective*.

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 5 (17%) than they did in Year 4 (9%). In Year 5, Texas GEAR UP SG high schools implemented 59 parent activities, compared to 90 in Year 4. Texas GEAR UP SG staff at each district also reported that they began working with the Family Engagement Trainer hired by the Support Center in Year 5. Site visit participants who reported working with her in Districts 1 and 3 claimed that the Family Engagement Trainer offered engaging and fresh content topics and provided letter, email, and marketing material templates for reaching out to parents. Despite the increase in number of events and percentage of those attending events, Coordinators in

Districts 3 and 4 reported concerns about the authenticity of parent relationships with Texas GEAR UP SG staff.

Teacher Professional Development and Vertical Teaming

Overall, PD opportunities supported by Texas GEAR UP SG totaled 181 opportunities across all six Texas GEAR UP SG schools. Texas GEAR UP SG schools are required to offer teacher PD each program year on the topics of advanced instructional strategies, vertical teaming, PBL, differentiated instruction, and college access/preparation. All schools offered PD on advanced instructional strategies and GEAR UP-specific opportunities. However, only five schools offered PD on differentiated instruction and PBL, one school offered financial literacy PD, and four schools offered vertical teaming opportunities.

Educational Aspirations and Expectations

Students' aspirations to obtain a 4-year degree or higher decreased slightly by two percentage points in Year 5 (to 70%); however, only 57% of student survey respondents reported that they expected to obtain a 4-year degree or higher. Of students who do not plan to go to college, the greatest percentage selected *I want to work* as a main reason for not continuing onto postsecondary education (58% across schools), which is consistent with Year 4.

Knowledge about College

Evaluation survey data indicated that the Texas GEAR UP SG served schools where the students generally understood the importance/benefit of college (67% of students rated themselves as *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable*) more than the requirements to get accepted (56% of students rated themselves as *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable*). Students also reported that they continued to need information on specific aspects of college requirements, as only 70% indicated they were *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about the SAT (56% for the ACT). Students' average perceived knowledge of each of the relevant items differed significantly across schools. Only 40% of students selected GEAR UP staff or events as a source for college information (compared to 38% in Year 4 and 46% in Year 2). This implies that Texas GEAR UP SG may need to provide more information to a higher portion of students (and perhaps with greater frequency) in order to get students the information they need about college requirements.

Financial Understanding of College

Nearly half (44%) of student survey respondents reported feeling *extremely knowledgeable* or *knowledgeable* about financial aid and the costs and benefits of pursuing postsecondary education (see Table 3.11). The percentage of students who reported that they had conversations with someone from GEAR UP or their school about financial aid increased in Year 5 (72%, compared to 69% in Year 4). Of the five financial aid terms students were asked about on the survey, they were overall most knowledgeable about scholarships (73% were *extremely knowledgeable* or *knowledgeable*) while they reported that they felt least knowledgeable about Federal Pell grants (49% reported that they had *no knowledge*).

Continuing efforts to increase students' knowledge of the financial aspects of college (through conversations with students, events, and other activities) remain an important area of focus, especially as students become closer to postsecondary education enrollment; this should include information about specific types of financial aid available to them, how to obtain financial aid, and the actual costs of attending.

Perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG Activities

On average, students found each type of activity that they participated in to be *mostly effective*. In Year 5, 37% of students reported on the survey that they were *strongly satisfied* with their College Preparation Advisor and an additional 55% reported that they were *satisfied*. A small percentage of students reported using the GEAR UP website in Year 5 (25%), although this was a slight increase from Year 4 (22%). When asked about Texas GEAR UP SG activities' effectiveness in preparing students for success in high school and preparing them for college, Texas GEAR UP SG summer programs were rated the highest, with an overall mean of 3.12 on a four-point scale.

Summary of Implementation: Year 1 through Year 5

In the report, differences in implementation from across time points are highlighted. Table ES.5 summarizes some of the key implementation data comparisons across Years 2, 4, and 5 of Texas GEAR UP SG.

Table ES.5. Summary Comparison of Year 2 (Grade 8), Year 4 (Grade 10), and Year 5 (Grade 11) Implementation Data

Implementation Area	Year 2	Year 4	Year 5
Level and Mix of Implementation	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 and engage students in the broadest range of services, but the overall level and mix of services across districts was successful.	Districts 1, 3, and 4 implemented and engaged students in the broadest range of services, but the overall level and mix of services across districts continued to be successful.
Student Participation in Texas GEAR UP SG Student Support Services	78% of students participated.	91% of students participated.	94% of students participated.
Student Participation in Any Texas GEAR UP SG Activities	99% of students participated.	98% of students participated.	97% of students participated.
Number of Advanced Courses	10% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses.	27% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses.	14% of students were enrolled in four or more advanced courses.
Enrollment in an Advanced Mathematics Course	43% of students were enrolled in advanced mathematics, including Algebra I.	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),	37% 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., Calculus),
Enrollment in Other Advanced Courses^a	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.	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.	38% of students were enrolled in advanced ELA/writing; 39% of students were enrolled in advanced science; 30% of students were enrolled in advanced social studies. All high schools had at least 9% enrollment in each content area.
Student Knowledge of and Academic Preparation for College	N/A	86% of surveyed students plan to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement.	55% of surveyed students reported that they plan to graduate with a distinguished level of achievement.
Endorsement Selection	N/A	93% of students had chosen an endorsement and 83% of surveyed students understand how their endorsement will help them prepare for college.	96% of students reported pursuing an endorsement and 62% reported that they are on track to graduate with an endorsement.
Parental Attendance at Three or More Texas GEAR UP SG Events^b	7% of parents attended three or more events; 38% of parents attended at least one event.	9% of parents attended three or more events; 28% of parents attended at least one event.	17% of parents attended three or more events; 21% of parents attended in one to two events.
Teacher Professional Development and Vertical Teaming	Two middle schools held five days of vertical teaming events.	Three high schools held five days of vertical teaming events.	One high school held at least five days of vertical teaming events.

Source: Texas Education Agency, GEAR UP Integrated Data Entry System through February 28, 2017; Texas GEAR UP SG Student Survey (Spring 2017).

Note: Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in Year 2 occurred in seven middle schools. In Year 4 and Year 5, implementation occurred in six high schools within the same four districts. N/A reflects areas that the evaluation did not specifically focus on but are topics of interest for Year 4 or Year 5 implementation.

^a ELA refers to English Language Arts.

^b Parental attendance is defined as any adult household member attending an event associated with the given student.

Key Facilitators and Barriers: Implementation

For implementation to be successful, it is important to understand any potential facilitators and barriers to participation. Key facilitators identified in year 5 included the following listed below.

- When describing successes related to parent engagement in Year 5, it was reported that engaging and dependable parent liaisons were an important component of developing quality relationships with cohort parents and initiating engagement with other parents. As the primary person designated to provide parents with information and resources, parent liaisons may be more likely to build relationships with parents that facilitate trust between parents and the program by being engaging and dependable.
- Student participation in college visits and college student shadowing was positively correlated with knowledge of the importance and benefit of college as well as plans to take advanced courses (Table 4.3). This finding may provide insight to a facilitator of increased student knowledge of postsecondary information.
- An additional potential facilitator identified for successful implementation was “local voices” (i.e., school and district administrators) who are bought into the grant and who are embedded within the schools. District Coordinators who reported that their school and district administrators were highly engaged in grant implementation said that the administrators were familiar with grant goals as well as the strategies put in place to work towards those goals. This familiarity led to these administrators’ commitment to ensuring that the grant was successful in their respective districts.

Key barriers identified in Year 5 included the following listed below.

- Teachers who participated in site visits continued to report that they perceived some students to lack the motivation to succeed in high school. Teachers also reported that some students were only motivated to receive grades that will lead to a transcript desirable for higher education, not to learn the material or self-satisfaction for producing high quality work. Further, the perceived lack of motivation to make up missed work due to Texas GEAR UP SG meetings and events was worrisome for some teachers given the high frequency of missed class time for these meetings and events.
- Though parent engagement documented in GUIDES improved in some aspects, parental engagement continued to be a concern in Year 5 as no school met Project Objective 7.3. Some Texas GEAR UP SG staff also expressed that they were concerned that the limited interactions Texas GEAR UP SG staff have with many parents did not lead to “authentic” relationships that would facilitate higher quality engagement.
- Some Texas GEAR UP SG staff also reported on site visits that they were frustrated by limited buy-in for the grant from administrators and school staff. The current level of buy-in, they reported, negatively affected implementation in Year 5 and will also likely affect sustainability of Texas GEAR UP SG initiatives.

Potential Promising Practices

Three Texas GEAR UP SG activities/initiatives implemented during Year 5 were identified as potential promising practices worthy of continued follow-up in the future. Parent and family events that allow attendees to rotate sessions and hear information about a variety of topics in

short periods of time were cited as successful by Texas GEAR UP SG staff. This format allowed parents to interact with Texas GEAR UP SG staff in small, less intimidating settings and to have time to break up information-heavy sessions. The extended PD provided by the Support Center's Educator Outreach Coach provided schools with the opportunity to tailor the trainings and resources for teacher PD based on the needs of the teachers and school. Finally, utilizing dedicated Texas GEAR UP SG staff for parent engagement and data entry were cited as helpful for streamlining efforts for successful implementation.

Recommendations

Based on the range of data analyzed to date, three key recommendations or next steps with regard to program implementation in Year 5 are presented here. Collectively, these include the following:

- Provide targeted services for students. Texas GEAR UP SG staff should consider targeting students based on interest and academic fit when recruiting students and parents for activities such as college visits, educational field trips, and summer programming. The interests of students may be best determined through individual discussions between Texas GEAR UP SG staff or other school staff and students as well as feedback on participation in previous activities. Academic fit may be best determined by grades, teacher and counselor feedback and Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) pass rates or SAT scores.
- Develop guidance on collaboration between Texas GEAR UP SG staff and staff from other college access programs. Guidance from TEA and the Support Center on how to ensure that efforts between Texas GEAR UP SG and other college access programs are not duplicated and the non-GEAR UP resources and services are of a high quality may be helpful for Texas GEAR UP SG staff. Effective communication and collaboration between Texas GEAR UP SG staff and the staff of other programs may facilitate higher quality services to prepare cohort students to be successful in postsecondary education and sustain initiatives and practices implemented by Texas GEAR UP SG.

Encourage more frequent vertical teaming activities. Vertical teaming to align instructional strategies may be one strategy for increasing the academic readiness of students, thus increasing the rigor of advanced courses. Consistent vertical teaming activities may also help districts sustain academic rigor throughout students' secondary education.