



## **BUILD A TEAM**

*Changing a school culture to one of high expectations and college-going takes time and support. Gain support from administrators and staff and create a team of dedicated individuals who will help implement college and career readiness efforts throughout the school(s).*



# Build Support & Understanding from Administrators

It is critical that principal(s), the superintendent and school board participate in changing the school culture and implementing the GEAR UP program. Bring everyone on board by doing the following:

## SHARE INFORMATION

- Explain how expansive and well-rounded GEAR UP can be. Clearly explain how GEAR UP funds can be used to enhance programs in the school that are put into place to change the culture.
- Emphasize that GEAR UP provides valuable time away from school for staff to get together to evaluate and plan for the year (i.e. SUCCESS Retreat).
- Share and discuss research briefs ([oregongearup.org/resources/research-briefs](http://oregongearup.org/resources/research-briefs))
- Present (see examples on next page) to the school board; stay to answer questions.

## ACKNOWLEDGE CHALLENGES

- Acknowledge the challenges of time, money, and getting staff on board.
- Respect time constraints – be organized and concise when planning meetings.
- Look ahead and solve issues as they come up.

## MAINTAIN ENGAGEMENT

- Involve administrators on the team.
- Encourage administrators to attend statewide GEAR UP planning meetings and conferences and take advantage of networking with other school principals.
- Do the legwork for administrators when planning something together.

## 5 REASONS TO ESTABLISH A GEAR UP TEAM

- **Save staff time:** Creating a team of volunteers can help ensure that college-going activities are implemented in the school, without relying exclusively on school staff, who are often limited on time.
- **Enhance buy-in:** Folks are more likely to support an idea or project if they feel like they're a part of it and can take ownership.
- **Uncover resources:** One of the most valuable resources in any school and community are its people. People can offer time, talent, creativity, knowledge, and connections.
- **Sustain a college-going atmosphere:** A College and Career Readiness Team and their work can become a part of the school norm and culture that continues to exist after GEAR UP funds have expired.
- **Matching funds:** Each Team member is a volunteer. Time spent attending meetings and working on tasks counts as match.

# Build Support & Understanding among Educators and Staff

It is also imperative to educate the entire staff about the importance of GEAR UP and creating a college-going culture.

## SHARE INFORMATION

- Clearly show the staff what GEAR UP is all about. With support from principals and superintendents, present *why* college readiness is important and the research-based GEAR UP model.

## GET THEM INVOLVED

- Include them in planning and invite them to join the Team.
- Get their ideas and feedback. Use what they tell you whenever possible and workable.
- For them to experience GEAR UP first hand, rotate the staff participation to college visits so they can see students in a different atmosphere. Sometimes a staff member will make a connection when they see a student excited about their future.
- Provide ready-made toolkits, worksheets, videos, etc. to use with students and parents.
- Ask them about their experience in college and what advice they would give their students.
- Engage their competitive side with college door decorating challenges or other competitions with prizes as simple as having the principal or counselor cover one class period.
- After a GEAR UP activity or presentation, have a staff meeting to find out what worked and what could be improved upon.
- Instead of “inviting” staff to “your” activity, make it an all-staff planned event.

## RESPECT LIMITATIONS

- Understand that the staff time is stretched to the max. Respect their time by being clear and organized.
- Be careful not to take up class time to do things that can be completed outside of class.
- Thank them for their time. Remember: activities outside of their workday are taking time away from their families. Do not be too demanding.

## PRESENTATION RESOURCES

### Introduction to Oregon GEAR UP Prezi

Basic information on GEAR UP’s goals and model. Customize it to include information and data about your school.

[prezi.com/w8crrq\\_ptdob](http://prezi.com/w8crrq_ptdob)

### Oregon GEAR UP YouTube Channel

Videos showing GEAR UP events and basic information about GEAR UP.

[youtube.com/oregongearup](http://youtube.com/oregongearup)

### Oregon GEAR UP Brochure

A half-page handout for teachers, businesses, and parents.

[oregongearup.org/resource/gear-brochure](http://oregongearup.org/resource/gear-brochure)

# Create a GEAR UP/College and Career Readiness Team

The next step is to assemble a group of committed stakeholders that will meet regularly to help assess, plan and implement services, activities and programs (essentially, help work through the rest of this guide!) The number of Team members is flexible, likely from 3-10, depending on your school size and ability to obtain volunteers. Members should be from a broad spectrum within the school and community: middle and high school staff (teachers, support staff, school leadership, administration, etc.), students, parents, business owners, professionals, community members, retirees, etc.

## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF TEAM MEMBERS?

- **Attendance at meetings:** Team members should agree to attend as many meetings as they can. Don't get discouraged if attendance at meetings is low because members are busy. Continue the monthly meetings and stay consistent in order to institutionalize the Team so people will see it as a reliable and respected group. Coordinators can send follow up notes to the entire group so that anyone who wasn't present can stay in the loop on what they missed.
- **Participation:** Members are expected to engage in dialogue at the meetings and take on tasks when they can. Attempt to uncover the talents and skills of members and encourage them to contribute in ways that they can feel confident and proud.
- **Attendance at SUCCESS Retreat:** Team members (usually up to 8 people) should plan to attend GEAR UP's annual SUCCESS Retreat in late April for professional development opportunities and concentrated time to evaluate and plan for the next year.

## WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO RECRUIT TEAM MEMBERS?

Getting commitments from people may be challenging, but the following tips can help build your Team:

- **School Staff** are best invited by the principal or district leadership to create buy-in.
- **Business/Community Members** are best invited by the school staff and district leadership. But anyone who has a relationship with someone in the community or feels comfortable approaching an individual can invite a community member to join.
- **Parents/Family Members** are best invited by school staff members, especially when a relationship has already been established. Ask school staff if they know of a family member that may want to get involved and ask the staff person if they are willing to invite the individual. Another strategy is to ask students to invite their parents/family.
- **Students** are best invited by school staff that work closely with students and can identify those with leadership potential and the ability to commit their time. Encourage students to list their volunteer involvement on scholarship and college applications.

And remember, you can use GEAR UP funds to pay for staff time for meetings (or subs, as needed) and program implementation.

## HOW OFTEN SHOULD THE TEAM MEET? WHERE SHOULD THE TEAM MEET?

- Bi-weekly during the initial planning process, with monthly or quarterly meetings thereafter.
- The school campus or a local venue both work as meeting locations. Students and staff may enjoy the opportunity to meet at a local restaurant or somewhere off the campus.

### WHO SETS THE AGENDA AND LEADS EACH MEETING?

- The GEAR UP Coordinator should head the College and Career Readiness Team. This person could be an administrator, a counselor, a teacher, or a career center staff member, but should be familiar with and have a passion for encouraging students to pursue postsecondary education as well as have a good rapport with school staff and community members.
- The initial agenda for the meetings should include working through this guide as a team, which will include self-assessment, a broad outline for programs and services for 7<sup>th</sup> graders through freshman year of college, and more specific yearly planning. Once your plan is in place, the Team can work on implementing, evaluating and refining programs.

### HOW DO I LEAD THE TEAM TO BE ACTIVE?

- At meetings, help people feel useful and needed. Ask for their input and ideas and give them freedom to carry out tasks. Take the time to get to know individuals so that you learn of their talents, skills and community connections and encourage them to provide support in ways that utilizes their strengths.
- Show public recognition of the Team’s efforts. For example, at a school-wide function introduce Team members, emphasize their hard work and talk about the success they have accomplished. Put “Thank You/Recognition” ads in the school or local paper. Have a year-end celebration and give appreciation certificates.
- Train the group to be “experts” or “resources” for other parents or community members on topics such as paying for college, the college application process, etc. If possible, have Team members attend professional development opportunities to increase their skills.

GEAR UP TEAM MEMBERS	
<i>Name</i>	<i>Title/Role</i>