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March 2018

Evaluation of the Oregon GEAR UP The Ford Family Foundation Initiative

Final Evaluation Report

Submitted to:

Stephanie Carnahan, Project Director
Oregon GEAR UP



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Executive Summary – The executive summary provides an overview of the key findings from the evaluation, by R and overall, followed by key lessons learned and conclusions.

Section I – This section provides the context for the initiative and a brief description of the evaluation goals and design.

Section II – Why Oregon GEAR UP? This section provides an overview of the context and need for this program, a description of the ten rural communities that received this grant, and an overview of how the program model addresses the needs of participating students and schools.

Section III – GEAR UP Students Served. This section provides an overview of the characteristics of students and services provided during each year of the grant.

Section IV – Grant Implementation and Outcomes by “R”. This section highlights promising practices in implementing GEAR UP, and discusses the project’s progress in meeting its intended outcomes. Results are organized by each component (“R”) of the Oregon GEAR UP framework: Reaching Higher, Rigor, Relevance, Relationships, and Raising Awareness.

Section V – High School Graduation and College Enrollment Outcomes. In this section, we describe longitudinal trends in high school graduation and college enrollment, and compare the outcomes of TFFF GEAR UP students to other students in similar schools.

Section VI – Lessons Learned. This section summarizes the key lessons learned from the implementation of the TFFF grant related to the program model, school leadership and staff buy-in, centralized GEAR UP supports, the use of technology and data, and sustainability.

Section VII – Conclusions. The report concludes with a summary of key findings from the TFFF grant.

Executive Summary

Oregon schools, in rural Oregon in particular, face a crisis in students' access and success in college. Oregon was ranked 49th in the country in terms of high school graduation rates and 32nd in postsecondary education attainment (Odum and West, 2016). In light of Oregon's college attainment gap, in 2002, Oregon GEAR UP applied for and received its first statewide federally-funded Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant. Oregon GEAR UP is currently in its third grant cycle. In addition, in 2010, Oregon GEAR UP received a grant from The Ford Family Foundation (TFFF) to replicate the GEAR UP program in 10 rural communities in Oregon's Douglas, Coos and Curry counties.



The goal of the Oregon GEAR UP program is to ensure that Oregon's low-income middle school and high school students are prepared for postsecondary education and know the steps involved to get there. Postsecondary options include college degree, certificate, apprenticeship or other career training. To accomplish this, Oregon GEAR UP works with select middle and high schools over six or seven years to create a college-going culture by providing funding and technical assistance, professional development for educators, and summer opportunities for students. The initiative is grounded in an evidence-based framework developed by Oregon GEAR UP that relies on five research-based principles, titled the 5 "R"s: Reaching Higher, Rigor, Relevance, Relationships, and Raising Awareness.

Metis Associates, an independent research firm, was selected to conduct the external evaluation of this grant for 2015–16 and 2016–17. The evaluation, which includes formative and summative components, is designed to: assess program implementation in participating schools; document promising practices, challenges, and lessons learned; and assess the impact of the project on key outcomes areas, including:

- ✓ promoting a school-wide college-going culture;
- ✓ increasing the rigor of instruction and students' academic preparedness;
- ✓ promoting career relevance and awareness;
- ✓ promoting strong, supportive relationships;
- ✓ increasing students' and families' awareness of postsecondary options and financial aid resources; and ultimately
- ✓ increasing high school graduation rates and enrollment and completion of postsecondary education.

EVALUATION METHODS

- School data (academic performance, attendance, and high school graduation)
- National Student Clearinghouse college enrollment data
- Student surveys
- Parent surveys
- Educator surveys
- GEAR UP coordinator and administrator surveys
- Site visits at a sample of schools, which included interviews/focus groups with principals, GEAR UP coordinators, educators, students, and parents
- Interviews with superintendents
- College and Career Readiness Inventory

KEY IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES BY “R”

GRANT GOAL: SUPPORT SCHOOLS IN BUILDING A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE BY CREATING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS, POLICIES, AND TEACHER EXPECTATIONS THAT SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS’ PURSUIT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION (REACHING HIGHER)

Implementation Snapshot

- In 2016–17, GEAR UP schools offered a wide range of services and activities designed to support a school-wide college-going culture. The most frequent types of activities and strategies were: college visits, college and career décor, events to celebrate student accomplishments, college fairs, and career/college advisories.
- During site visits, interviewed staff, students, and parents identified a number of promising practices, including college visits (which were described as eye-opening and life changing experiences), college décor and displays of students’ accomplishments (which helped raise early awareness of GEAR UP and the importance of postsecondary education), and alumni events (which helped expand students’ horizons and make their goals seem more achievable).

“

For my son in particular, the hugest thing he did was get to go to the private college week camp. And that ... just changed his whole life. He found the college he wanted to go to. He made great friends. He got a lot of individual attention from the GEAR UP staff. It was an amazing week, just a life-changing week.

GEAR UP Parent

Key Outcomes

- GEAR UP has played a major role in helping schools promote a college-going culture with many schools reporting positive results in this area. Most GEAR UP coordinators and administrators reported that GEAR UP has had a *moderate to large impact* in increasing students’ expectations (100%) and creating a college-going culture (94%), and to a lesser extent in increasing educators’ and families’ expectations for students (87% and 65%, respectively).
- Student expectations of college degree attainment have risen over time, and more students indicate their teachers and parents think they will pursue a college education.
- Educator expectations increased considerably over the course of the grant, although they continued to be significantly lower than student and parent expectations. For example, educators who completed the survey reported that they expected 62% of their students (average across teachers) to enroll in any postsecondary education, a stark contrast to the 89% of students who indicated they will enroll but higher than the 50% of 2017 graduates who attended college the fall after they graduated.
- Students, parents and educators shared similar perspectives on why they think students may not achieve their postsecondary goals, citing the cost of college, grades or test scores not being good enough, planning or needing to work, and lack of motivation or indecisiveness, as the top reasons. Concerns around college affordability were raised by students and parents participating in focus groups in all case study schools.
- Results suggest that GEAR UP is helping alleviate some of the concerns students and parents have. For example, students and parents were more likely to think they can afford a 4-year public university if they had spoken to GEAR UP or school staff about financial aid or college or had attended a campus visit.

94%

of GEAR UP coordinators and administrators reported that **GEAR UP has had a moderate to large impact in creating a college-going culture** at their school.

GRANT GOAL: ACADEMICALLY PREPARE ALL STUDENTS FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION THROUGH RIGOROUS CURRICULUM AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT (RIGOR)

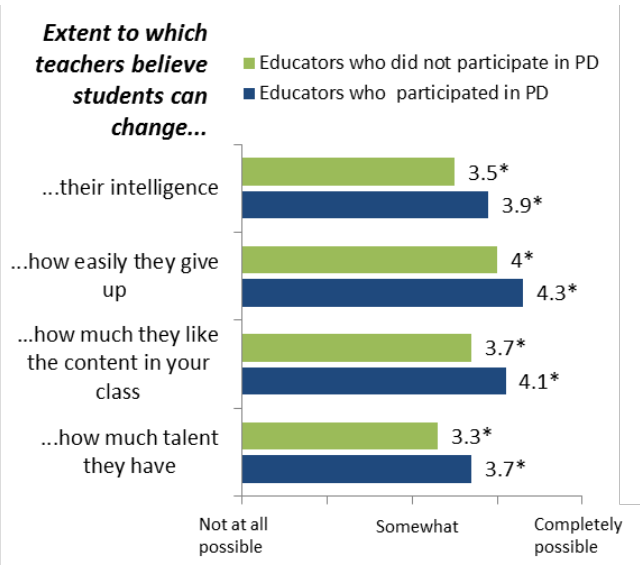
Implementation Snapshot

- In 2016–17, the most frequent types of activities and strategies implemented by GEAR UP schools were: credit recovery classes, dual enrollment classes, online learning courses, staff PD on growth mindset, afterschool tutoring, and academic advisement.
- During site visits, curriculum alignment, professional development, the expansion of rigorous coursework, technology integration, and afterschool programming were all singled out as the most effective interventions that GEAR UP has funded focused on increasing the rigor of instruction.
- Five of the six clusters with available, complete data experienced an increase in the proportion of high school students taking dual credit courses from 2011-12 to 2014-15. Echoing other educators’ thoughts, one teacher said, “The dual-credit courses have been fantastic... and that’s one of these things that will actually be able to stay. ... The idea that you can tell kids, ‘Yeah, you can get your first year of college done while you’re in school,’ especially for kids who don’t have a ton of money, it’s huge. And the other thing is... they know what to expect going into college.”

“
[The Curriculum Alignment Summer Institute] was amazing... because it really helped me make sure that I’m giving my students the tools they need ... either here with us or when they go on to college and start taking college-level writing and math classes.
GEAR UP Educator

Key Outcomes

- GEAR UP Ford students in grades 7 and 8 showed gains in their overall academic performance in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics from spring 2016 to spring 2017; and outperformed other GEAR UP students in federally-funded cohort schools. School attendance, however, declined over the same period of time for students in both Ford and federally-funded schools.
- The large majority of GEAR UP coordinators and administrators indicated that GEAR UP has had a *moderate to large impact* in strengthening teachers’ knowledge, skills, and practices (88%) and increasing the rigor of existing and new courses (82%). Most coordinators and administrators also indicated a *moderate to large impact* on improving students’ academic skills and performance (62%) and supporting their social and emotional development (62%).
- GEAR UP-sponsored PD has resulted in greater use of growth mindset practices and growth mindset gains among educators. Overall, educators were satisfied with the training, with 87% describing it as *good or excellent*. The proportion of educators who have begun planning for and implementing growth mindset strategies increased from 39% prior to the training to 89% three months after the training. Furthermore, surveyed educators who were trained exhibited more positive attitudes and perceptions around their own and their students’ ability to change, learn, and grow than educators who did not receive the training. Differences were statistically significant and of a moderate magnitude.



Note: *An asterisk denotes a statistically significant difference at the .05 level.

GRANT GOAL: LINK STUDENTS CAREER ASPIRATIONS TO THEIR EDUCATIONAL GOALS (RELEVANCE)

Implementation Snapshot

- In 2016–17, the most frequent types of activities and strategies implemented by GEAR UP schools were: guest speaker events focused on careers, career and college advisories, career and college classes, use of Career Information Systems (CIS), and career fairs.
- During site visits, educators and students identified a number of effective strategies and activities for teaching students about careers and promoting relevance, including career fairs, guest speaker events such as Pizza with Professionals, hands-on work experiences, and the use of the Career Information System (CIS) software. Many schools, however, reported experiencing challenges with finding a variety of professionals for their guest speaker events and/or career fairs, and attributed those challenges to the limited job opportunities available in their communities.

Key Outcomes

- The large majority of surveyed GEAR UP coordinators and administrators noted that GEAR UP has had a *moderate* (41%) or *large impact* (47%) on promoting career relevance by linking students' career aspirations to their postsecondary educational goals.
- GEAR UP has also supported the development of partnerships with local businesses, organizations and individuals, and institutions of higher education (with 63% of GEAR UP coordinators and administrators reporting a *moderate to large impact*).

GRANT GOAL: FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS THAT ENCOURAGE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS (RELATIONSHIPS)

Implementation Snapshot

- In 2016–17, the most frequent types of activities and strategies implemented by GEAR UP schools were: events to celebrate student accomplishments, and parent newsletters.
- During site visits, educators and students identified formal and informal mentoring opportunities and the creation of College and Career Centers as two GEAR UP-related activities that helped schools foster positive relationships among students, staff, and families.

Key Outcomes

- The large majority of students believe that their parents and staff at their school are supportive, and expect them to pursue postsecondary education (90% and 76%).
- All surveyed coordinators and administrators reported that GEAR UP has had a *small* (40%), *moderate* (33%) or *large impact* (37%) on promoting positive relationships between students, educators, and families.
- Educator involvement in college and career readiness activities increased considerably over the course of the grant. For example, the percentage of educators who dedicate at least some time each month to these types of activities increased from 37% in Year 2 (the first year the educators were surveyed) to 70% in Year 6. Yet, staff involvement varied widely across schools, with some coordinators reporting that garnering staff buy-in was challenging.

“

GEAR UP was first introduced to me through [the GEAR UP coordinator], so she would come to my class, and do a lot of discussions... So I got to watch her, and over time, I got to help her. And then I created lessons that were connected to some of the GEAR UP stuff that she did.

GEAR UP Educator

- In Year 6, students from each of the three site visit schools spoke very positively about their teachers' involvement and provided examples of how they have helped them think about careers and college. Many teachers participating in focus groups also shared examples of ways in which they have helped students think about and learn more about their career and college choices.
- Over the course of the grant, schools have seen some success in their efforts to promote greater family involvement in academic, career, and college planning efforts. Yet, according to most coordinators and administrators, family involvement continues to be a *little* (47%) or *very challenging* (41%). During site visits, principals and educators provided a number of reasons why they think parents are not involved, including: general apathy towards education, work conflicts, transportation issues, and resistance or weariness from some parents who may not have had positive high school experiences, themselves.
- When asked to provide suggestions to increase family engagement at their schools, parents said: using sporting events to infuse the GEAR UP message; using the students to raise awareness about GEAR UP among parents; being more mindful in the wording used in parent communications, and using mailings instead of having students hand fliers to parents, which many times they end up not doing.

GRANT GOAL: PROMOTE EARLY AWARENESS OF COLLEGE PREPARATION, SELECTION, ADMISSIONS, AND FINANCIAL AID (RAISING AWARENESS)

Implementation Snapshot

- In 2016–17, the most frequent types of activities and strategies implemented by GEAR UP schools were: college visits, college/career décor, College Application Week, college fairs, and college/career advisories.
- During site visits, students, educators, and parents identified a myriad of activities that were helpful, including college visits, FAFSA and college nights, College Application and Scholarship Weeks, and fun activities such as Jeopardy games, Trivia nights, and “door wars.”

Key Outcomes

- All surveyed GEAR UP coordinators and administrators reported that GEAR UP has had a *moderate* (41%) or *large impact* (59%) in increasing their students' knowledge of postsecondary options and financial aid; this was the highest rated area in the survey.
- FAFSA completion rates (by end of June) among seniors increased, from 46% of seniors in 2011-12 to 53% of seniors in 2016-17.
- Results show a positive relationship between participation in GEAR UP-related activities and students' and parents' self-reported knowledge of college entrance requirements. For example, students were more likely to report they know some or all of the 4-year (or 2-year) college entrance requirements if they had: 1) spoken to GEAR UP or school staff about college, 2) attended a campus visit at a 4-year (or 2-year) college, 3) attended an event on financial aid or scholarships, 4) attended a college fair or college night.
- Survey results show that the majority of students (73%), parents (80%), and to a lesser extent educators (54%) do not know how much college typically costs, and most of them are either overestimating the actual cost or “have no idea.” However, students and parents who participated in GEAR UP-related activities—such as discussing college with an adult in school, campus visits, college fairs, college nights, and financial aid events—were more likely to report an accurate range for the cost of college than students and parents who did not participate.

“

Scholarship week was very helpful because I know I wouldn't have done it on my own. ... We had access to computers and staff were there to help us if we had questions. I had a lot of questions.

GEAR UP Student

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Four-year high school graduation rates increased, overall, from 72% for the class of 2012 to 76% for the class of 2017. Six of the 10 clusters experienced increases, ranging from a 4.8% increase in Myrtle Point to a 42.2% increase in Powers. Fall college enrollment rates declined from 56% to 50%. This could be due to a number of factors, including: a decline in Roseburg, which served the majority of students in the cohort; the fact that students who may not have graduated from high school before (and are now achieving this important milestone) may not be as ready or inclined to enroll in college; and the small sizes of the graduating classes in some of the clusters, which have resulted in large fluctuations across year. Four of the 10 clusters experienced increases in their fall college enrollment rates.

LESSONS LEARNED

A number of lessons learned have emerged from the implementation of the Oregon GEAR UP TFFF grant.

- **Ensuring program fidelity.** Schools were appreciative of the flexibility of the GEAR UP model, which allowed them to tailor programming to meet their unique school needs. Yet, this flexibility surfaced a need for the Oregon GEAR UP team to put systems and safeguards in place to ensure program fidelity.
- **Promoting staff buy-in.** GEAR UP awareness and buy-in was largely influenced by factors such as staff turnover, the presence of strong GEAR UP teams and coordinators, and principal involvement.
- **Picking the right coordinator.** Having a consistent, dedicated coordinator with good rapport with students and educators was a critical factor influencing the success of the program.
- **Providing centralized supports and resources.** The Oregon GEAR UP team provided a robust menu of centralized supports to ensure effective communication, guidance, and ongoing learning opportunities.
- **Providing time to plan, reflect, and learn.** The six month planning grant at the beginning of the project had a positive effect on overall implementation. Time constraints were often cited by school staff as one of the main barriers to GEAR UP implementation. Thus, providing the time and space for GEAR UP teams to meet, plan, reflect and learn from each other was critical to the grant's success.
- **Facilitating collaboration.** The TFFF grant facilitated the creation of a collaborative community across participating GEAR UP schools and school districts. Schools collaborated in the planning and implementation of joint activities, including college visits, career fairs, and guest speaker events.
- **Infusing technology.** The infusion of technology was seen as a huge success in many schools. More guidance was needed, however, to ensure that schools change their technology practices.
- **Promoting the effective and meaningful use of data.** Critical to the success of Oregon GEAR UP has been a constant and purposeful effort to use data to manage the grant and build schools' capacity to integrate sound data practices into their GEAR UP work.
- **Ensuring sustainability.** Requiring schools to start planning for sustainability early in the grant and develop a plan was key to ensuring the long-term impact of the grant. All schools reported they will be sustaining most activities, but will cut back on frequency/intensity of activities, and food/prizes/raffles.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2016-17 school year marked the final year of The Family Ford Foundation GEAR UP grant. Evaluation findings and feedback from key stakeholders indicate that the grant has resulted in significant improvements in a number of key areas, most notably increasing expectations, creating school-wide college-going cultures, and raising students' and families' awareness of postsecondary education options and financing. The initiative also generated important lessons that will be used to inform Oregon GEAR UP's current and future efforts.

I. Introduction

Oregon, rural Oregon in particular, faces a crisis in college access and success. Oregon ranks 49th in high school graduation rates in the country, and 32nd in postsecondary education attainment (Odum and West, 2016). By 2020, 70% of all jobs in the state are expected to require some type of education or training after high school (Carnevale, 2013), but only 37% of adults hold a postsecondary degree (2014 American Community Survey). Oregon’s schools also have one of the highest chronic absenteeism rates in the nation and lag behind many other states in academic preparedness and performance (Chang, Ginsburg, and Jordan, 2014). Rural Oregon, especially, faces a number of challenges—including geographic isolation, under-resourced schools, declining economies, and high poverty—that deeply affect children’s educational aspirations, pathways, opportunities, and success.

In 2002, Oregon received its first statewide grant from the US Department of Education to implement GEAR UP, which stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs. The goal of the Oregon GEAR UP program is to **ensure that Oregon’s low-income middle school and high school students are prepared for, pursue, and succeed in postsecondary education** whether that be a college degree, certificate, apprenticeship, or other career training. To do this, Oregon GEAR UP works with select middle and high schools over six or seven years to create a college-going culture by providing funding and technical assistance, professional development for educators, and summer opportunities for students. Since 2002, Oregon GEAR UP has received two other statewide grants from the US Department of Education to work with additional communities.

In 2010, Oregon GEAR UP received a grant from **The Ford Family Foundation (TFFF)** to replicate the GEAR UP program in 10 rural communities. Located in Roseburg, Oregon, The Ford Family Foundation is a private, non-profit foundation that manages large programs and offers a range of scholarships and financial and program resources to promote postsecondary success. TFFF also provides grants to public charities predominantly in rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. TFFF’s areas of focus are: Children, Education, Arts, Engagement, Economy, and Community.¹

Through a competitive process, Metis Associates, an independent research firm, was selected to conduct the external evaluation of this grant for 2015–16 and 2016–17. **This report presents key findings and lessons learned from this 7-year grant funded through TFFF.** The evaluation was guided by the following research questions:

- What does GEAR UP implementation look like in participating schools and communities? What are the common/varying elements in implementation?
- What are promising practices, implementation challenges, and lessons learned?
- What are schools’ perceptions and feedback on the supports and resources provided by GEAR UP? How have these supports helped advance schools’ college and career readiness vision and work? What else could GEAR UP do to continue supporting the schools?

¹ More information on The Ford Family Foundation can be found at <http://tfff.org>.

- What is the project’s progress in:
 - raising expectations for students, parents and educators and promoting a school-wide college-going culture?
 - helping schools increase rigor and prepare students for postsecondary success?
 - promoting career relevance and awareness?
 - promoting positive school climate and strong relationships?
 - raising students’ and families’ awareness of postsecondary options and financial aid resources?
- To what extent does GEAR UP have an impact on the high school graduation and college enrollment outcomes of participating students?

Guided by these questions, **the summative evaluation draws from multiple data sources and key stakeholder groups**, including:

- student, parent, educator, administrator and GEAR UP coordinator surveys;
- interviews with superintendents;
- interviews with GEAR UP program staff;
- site visits in five clusters (two in Year 5 and three in Year 6), which included interviews with principals and GEAR UP coordinators, and interviews or focus groups with students, parents, and educators;
- analyses of program participation from the Events and Cost Share Tracker (ECST) database;
- analyses of data from the College and Career Readiness Inventory (CCRI);
- analyses of student data obtained from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC); and
- a review of program documentation.

When possible, 2016–17 data were compared to previous years’ data to assess changes over time. While the evaluation draws from a **number of strengths in its approach and design**, including availability of longitudinal data for some of key measures, ability to triangulate findings through the use of multiple qualitative and quantitative methods and data sources, and inclusion of feedback from all key stakeholder groups, there are also a **number of limitations** that should be taken into consideration when reviewing the findings. These include external factors outside the control of Oregon GEAR UP that may impact key outcomes; small number of students served in some schools, which may result in large fluctuations in key indicators from year to year; and generalizability of parent survey findings due to low response rates. These limitations, as well as the evaluation design and methods, are described in Appendix A.

II. Why Oregon GEAR UP?

THE CONTEXT AND NEED FOR OREGON GEAR UP

Oregon is the 27th most populous state in the nation but the ninth largest geographically with over 98,000 square miles. Seventy percent of the population lives in Portland and other metropolitan areas, while the remaining 30% lives in suburban or rural, often very remote areas. The primary economic drivers in rural Oregon have traditionally been resource-based – agriculture, timber, and fishing. But these industries are in serious decline and as a result unemployment and poverty are highest in rural Oregon, including the communities served by Oregon GEAR UP. Furthermore, Oregon has one of the highest chronic school absenteeism rates and lowest high school graduation rates in the country (Odum and West, 2016; Chang, Ginsburg, and Jordan, 2014) and also trails in postsecondary educational achievement (2014 American Community Survey).

Education is one of the most powerful means to upward social mobility, and educational attainment has been linked to better life outcomes, including income, health, mental health, and general well-being. Yet, low-income students—the target population for Oregon GEAR UP—may experience a number of challenges that can influence their chances of enrolling and succeeding in postsecondary education. These may include socio-emotional, health, and learning difficulties stemming from the negative impact of poverty on students’ lives; poor academic preparation; lack of resources for enrichment and extra-curricular activities; and limited experiences and knowledge about the college selection, application, and financing options (Byun, Meece, and Irvin, 2012; Bastedo and Jaquette, 2011; Roderick, Coca, and Nagaoka, 2011). Rural schools may also face additional obstacles stemming in part from their geographic isolation, including:

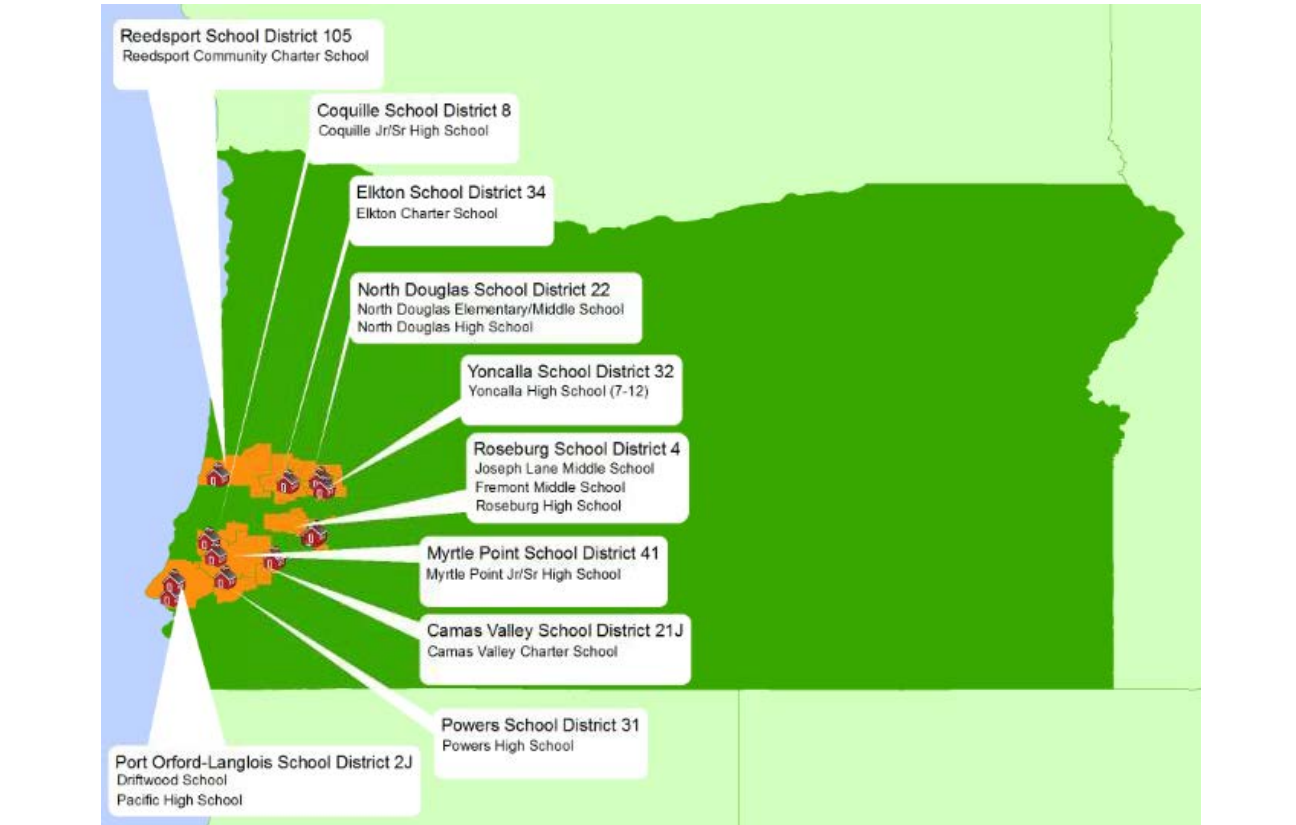
- High staff turnover and difficulties attracting and retaining high quality/specialized teachers (Goodpaster, Adedokun, and Weaver, 2012; Monk, 2007);
- Attendance issues and chronic absenteeism, sometimes associated with transportation challenges (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012);
- High cost of bringing in resources (such as speakers and professional development), sending staff to other areas for training, and exposing students to out-of-school experiences (Markow, and Cooper, 2008; Weitzenkamp, Howe, Steckelberg, and Radcliffe, 2003; Rude and Brewer, 2003);
- Declining school enrollment, which results in under-resourced schools (Schwartzbeck, 2003);
- Limited availability of advanced courses and electives due to limited staffing in small schools and/or staffing without the needed credentials (Gagnon, & Mattingly, 2015; Graham, 2009); and
- Local communities that have historically undervalued postsecondary education and/or are unfamiliar with college selection, application, and financing processes (Provasnik et al., 2007; Cunningham, Erisman, and Looney, 2008).

However, it is also **important to recognize the assets that are present in rural communities**. These include small school size, close-knit communities, schools that serve as community hubs, strong relationships among students and between students and adults in the school, opportunities for individualized attention, and a sense of belonging (NASBE, 2016; Jimerson, 2006; Freeman, Hughes, & Anderman, 2001). Designed to strengthen schools’ capacity to prepare students for careers and college, GEAR UP can capitalize on these important assets while helping schools overcome some of the barriers that low-income rural students may experience.

THE OREGON GEAR UP TFFF COMMUNITIES

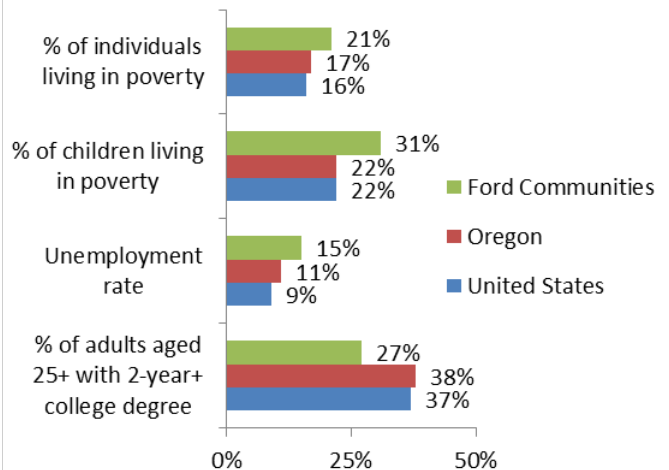
Supported by funding from TFFF, Oregon GEAR UP worked in 14 middle and high schools in 10 rural communities in Douglas, Coos and Curry counties (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Oregon GEAR UP TFFF Districts and Schools



Poverty and unemployment are very high in these communities, often the result of declining economies in areas where traditional industries once flourished. The poverty rate in 2014 was 21% across all 10 communities, which was higher than the state (17%) and national (16%) averages. Poverty rates among children were even higher—31% across all 10 communities—compared to 22% both statewide and across the nation. These communities also lag in terms of educational achievement, with only 27% of adults residing in these areas holding an Associate, Bachelor, or higher degree, compared to 38% in Oregon and 37% nationwide. GEAR UP’s goal of promoting higher educational achievement in these communities could help reduce poverty and unemployment rates and contribute to community revitalization.

Figure 2: Ford Community Statistics (2014 American Community Survey)



THE OREGON GEAR UP MODEL: RESPONSE TO THE NEED

After extensive research, Oregon GEAR UP developed an evidence-based framework to help participating schools prepare their students for postsecondary education. The framework—which has been revised over time—relies on five research-based principles, titled the 5 “R”s: **Reaching Higher, Rigor, Relevance, Relationships, and Raising Awareness** (see description in Figure 3). These principles serve as a comprehensive framework for the project’s benchmarks; strategies, activities and programming; and assessment and evaluation.

Figure 3: Oregon GEAR UP’s 5 Rs and Definitions

Reaching Higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a school environment, policies, and teacher expectations that support all students' pursuit of a postsecondary education
Rigor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academically prepare all students for postsecondary education through rigorous curriculum and necessary academic support
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link students' career aspirations with their educational goals
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster relationships that encourage students' academic success
Raising Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote early awareness of college preparation, selection, admissions, financial aid and other critical steps for college entry

The Oregon GEAR UP model also includes five key strategies to put the 5 “R”s into practice including: **using data** to implement and evaluate programs, building and **maintaining partnerships** in the community, **utilizing varied and flexible resources** from trusted sources, **involving school leadership**, and **encouraging professional development** of educators and school staff on the latest research and strategies related to college and career readiness.

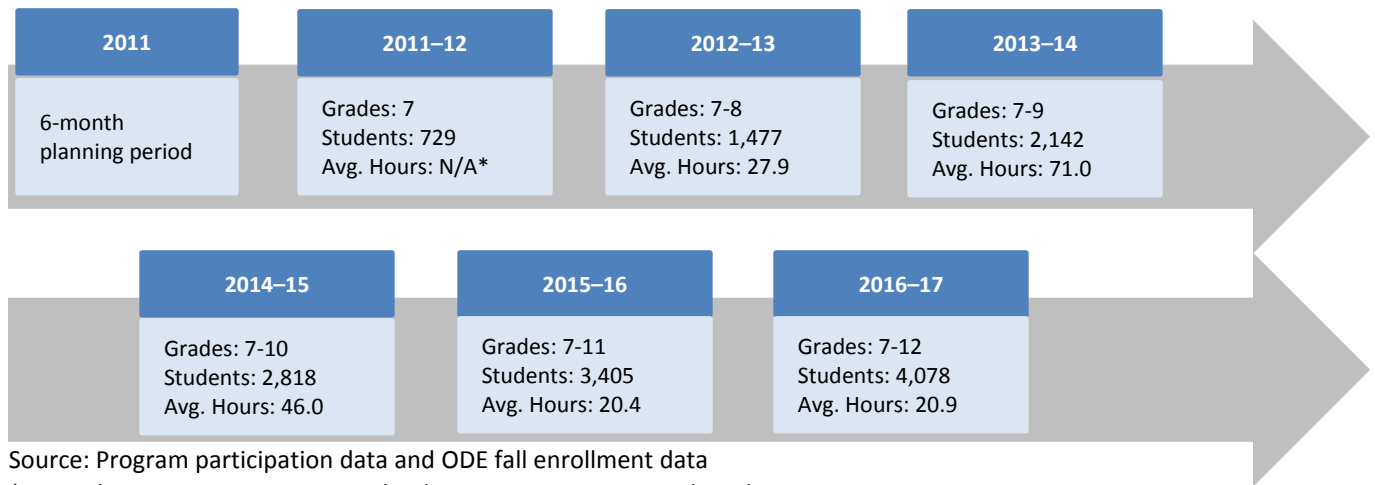
Each year, Oregon GEAR UP schools have been provided with a budget and asked to create and implement a **GEAR UP school plan** that meets the needs of their school. The plan—which was reviewed and approved by Oregon GEAR UP staff—had to include strategies, activities, and supports that build school capacity in each “R.” A GEAR UP school-based team, headed by a GEAR UP coordinator (often a teacher or administrator), has been responsible for overseeing implementation of the plan. In addition, Oregon GEAR UP provided a number of **centralized resources to all schools**, which included professional development resources, summer programming for selected students (e.g., leadership camps), individualized support from school liaisons (who are part of the central Oregon GEAR UP team), toolkits, research briefs, weekly bulletins, and cluster reports with survey findings. In addition, Oregon GEAR UP convened participating schools multiple times each year—for example, through a kickoff meeting, regional meetings, and a statewide SUCCESS retreat in the spring—for schools to network, plan, and advance their learning through professional development and sharing of best practices.

Schools also have had access to **Oregon GEAR UP’s statewide initiatives**, including Oregon Goes to College, which has provided important information and materials (e.g., welcome kits, checklists, planning resources) and organizes events, including College Application Week, College Cash Campaign, and Decision Day. The logic model in Appendix B provides a visual depiction of the project’s context, goals, target population, inputs/resources, framework, activities, and outcomes.

III. GEAR UP Students Served

The Oregon GEAR UP TFFF initiative began in 2010 with a 6-month planning grant. In 2011-12, the ten TFFF GEAR UP communities began their programming with a seventh-grade cohort, and each subsequent year schools added a new seventh-grade cohort and continued to work with the previous cohort of students. By 2016–17, the initiative served over 4,000 students in grades 7-12 in 16 participating schools. The following chart shows a longitudinal snapshot of students served and the average number of hours of GEAR UP programming per participating student per grant year.

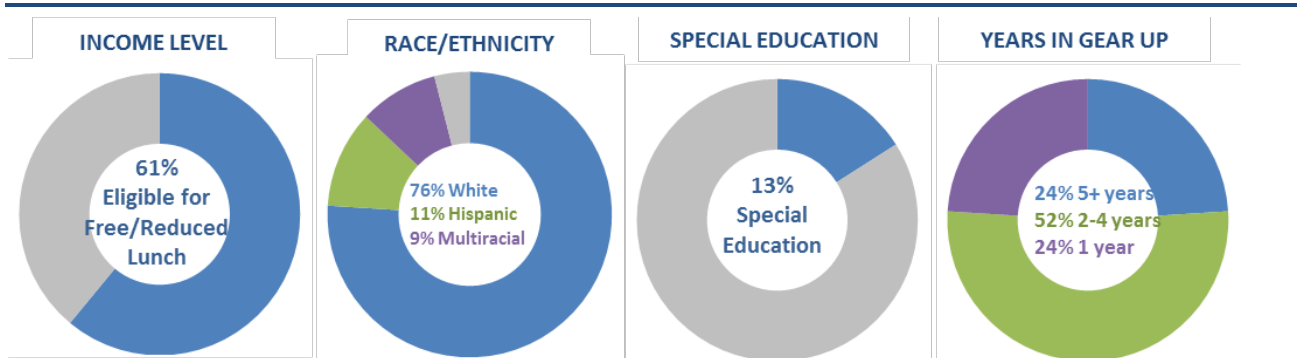
Figure 4: Oregon GEAR UP Timeline of Students Served and GEAR UP Participation



Source: Program participation data and ODE fall enrollment data
 *Note: the program participation database was not operational until 2012–13

Demographic data were obtained from the Oregon Department of Education and analyzed for the 4,320 students who were enrolled in GEAR UP schools by the end of the 2016–17 academic school year. As shown below, more than half of the students served were designated as low-income (this number may be underreported, as it’s dependent on families completing the free and reduced-price lunch eligibility forms). Most students identified as White (76%), followed by Hispanic (11%), and multi-racial (9%). About 13% of the students received special education services. Furthermore, a longitudinal analysis of program participation data shows that, of the 4,911 students receiving GEAR UP programming in 2016–17, 24% had been in GEAR UP for 5 or more years, about half (52%) had been in GEAR UP for 2-4 years, and almost a quarter (24%) were new to GEAR UP that year.

Figure 5: 2016-17 GEAR UP Student Profile



Source: ODE data (N=4,320) and (N=4,911)

IV. Grant Implementation and Outcomes by “R”

This section presents key implementation and outcome findings for each of the “Rs” in the Oregon GEAR UP Model: Reaching Higher, Rigor, Relevance, Relationships, and Raising Awareness. Table 1 provides a synthesis of key findings and is followed by an in-depth discussion of these results. Other findings—including lessons learned regarding grant management, sustainability, the use of data, and the role of central GEAR UP supports—are discussed in section V.

Table 1: Key Findings by “R”

Component	Successes	Challenges
Reaching Higher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student and parent expectations have remained very high over the course of the grant • Teacher expectations have risen considerably • Schools have developed college-going cultures • Promising practices: college visits, college and décor and displays of students’ achievements, and alumni events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although positive changes occurred over time, educator expectations remain considerably lower than student and parent expectations
Rigor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small gains in students’ academic performance in math and English language arts • Increase in the proportion of students taking dual enrollment courses in 5 of the 6 clusters with data • Positive results and feedback from teachers who were trained in growth mindset • Promising practices: curriculum alignment, professional development, the expansion of rigorous coursework, technology integration, and afterschool programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High proportion of students continue to struggle in math and English language arts • Declines in school attendance
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most GEAR UP coordinators and administrators reported a moderate to large impact of GEAR UP on promoting the connection between postsecondary education and students’ career interests • Promising practices: guest speaker events, career fairs, hands-on work-related experiences, and CIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and educators indicated a need for additional career exploration opportunities
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students generally feel supported at home and at school • Educators support for and involvement in college and career readiness efforts has increased significantly • Promising practices: informal and formal mentoring, and college and career centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family, staff, and school administrator involvement in some schools
Raising awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong correlation between participation in GEAR UP-related activities and knowledge of college entrance requirements and cost of college • Promising practices: college visits, FAFSA and college nights, College Application Week, Scholarship Week, and games and fun activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most students, parents, and educators do not know what the actual cost of college is (and often overestimate it)

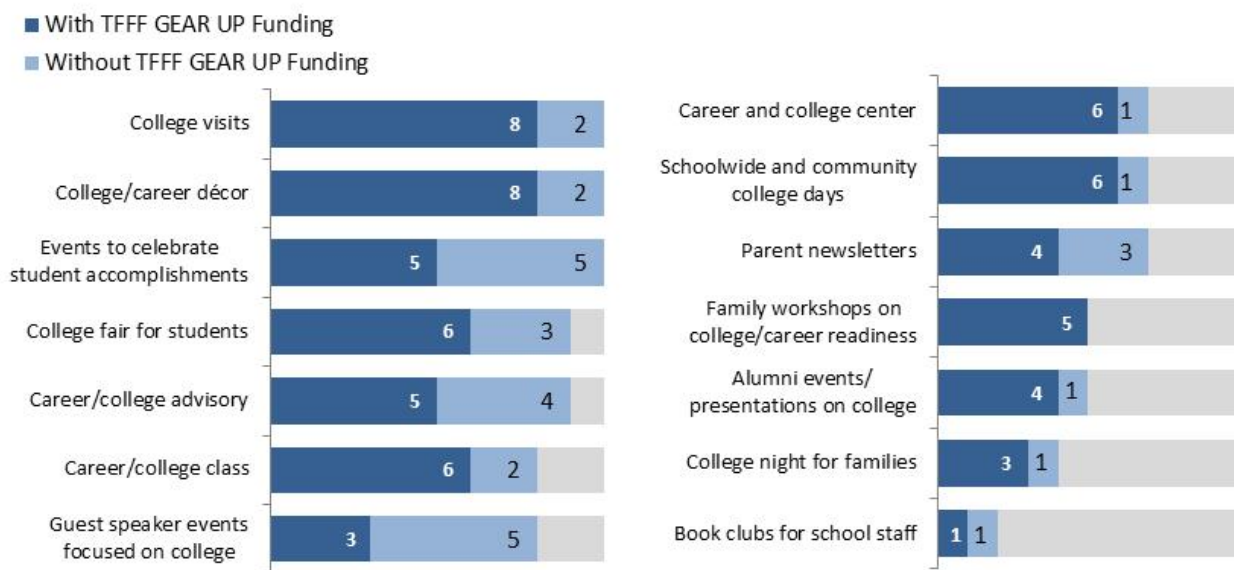
GRANT GOAL: SUPPORT SCHOOLS IN BUILDING A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE BY CREATING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS, POLICIES, AND TEACHER EXPECTATIONS THAT SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS’ PURSUIT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION (REACHING HIGHER)

Teachers’ expectations and beliefs about student potential can strongly influence students’ academic success, particularly for low-income students (Brophy, 2010; Ferguson 2002). Therefore, creating a college-going culture, consistently communicating expectations of postsecondary education for all students and providing the supports that students need to develop college-going identities are central to this grant goal.

Key Finding: In 2016–17, GEAR UP schools offered a wide range of services and activities—many of which were funded through the grant—designed to support a school-wide college-going culture.

As shown below, the most frequent types of activities and strategies were: college visits, college and career décor and displays of student achievement, events to celebrate student accomplishments, college fairs, and career/college advisories.

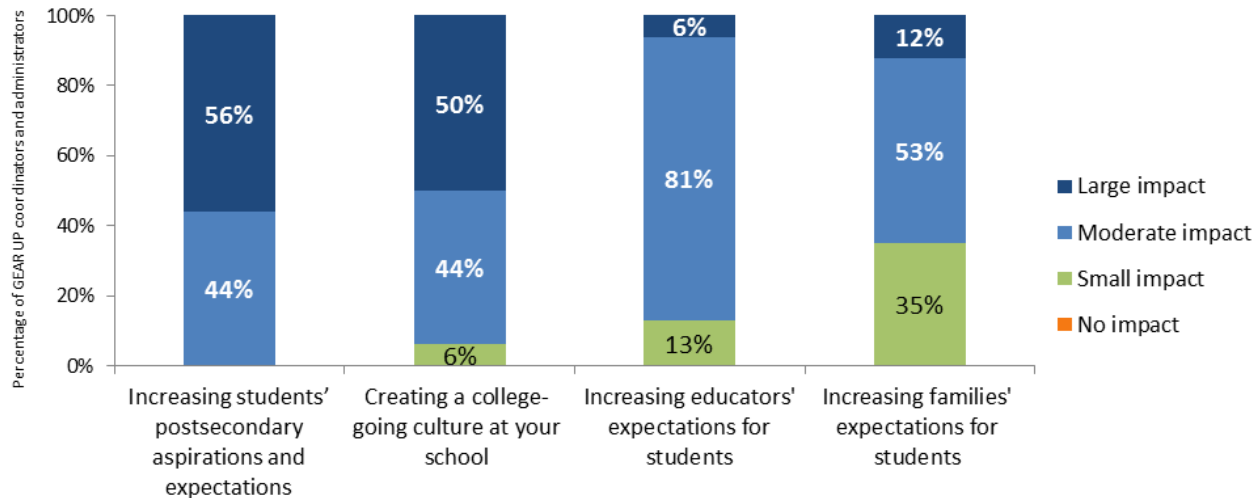
Figure 6: Number of Clusters Implementing Reaching Higher Activities in 2016–17



Source: College and Career Readiness Inventory

Key Finding: GEAR UP has played a major role in helping schools promote a college-going culture with many schools reporting positive results in this area.

Most GEAR UP coordinators and administrators reported that GEAR UP has had a *moderate to large impact* in increasing students’ expectations (100%) and creating a college-going culture (94%), and, to a lesser extent, in increasing educators’ and families’ expectations for students (87% and 65%, respectively).

Figure 7: Impact of GEAR UP on Reaching Higher

Source: GEAR UP Coordinator and administrator surveys (N=17)

Survey findings were consistent with reports from principals, coordinators, and educators at the case study schools. Staff in those schools noted that GEAR UP has been invaluable in helping schools develop a college-going culture. Educators, for example, identified big changes in students' mindsets and the types of conversations around college held at the schools. The fact that GEAR UP starts working with students in middle school was also seen as a huge asset, exposing them early on to postsecondary options and making college a real possibility. As one educator explained, "And I love that they [GEAR UP] started at the middle school level, because I think that's been really important. Because we get kids coming from the middle school going, 'I'm going to college, and this is the one I am going to.' That's been wonderful for our kids."

Another educator commented, "I think this is where GEAR UP is really effective. It's a long period of exposure. And then a long period of supports, with the exposure. And then you slowly kind of start stripping things away their senior year and hope they can stand." And commenting on the impact of GEAR UP, another educator stated, "With my own experience in other schools, college is sort of an opt-in, you have to choose to go. And here it's more of an opt-out. You're going to go to college, unless you're going to do something else. And I think that our students really feel that they can go to college. They have a support system here."

“

GEAR UP has definitely been a positive for us. I think the talk in middle school, especially early on, everybody thinks they're going to go. I don't think it used to be that way, I think it was a far reach for a lot of kids. And I think our culture has changed enough that they think, 'Yeah, I can do that.' ...They all have an idea that college is attainable for everyone.

GEAR UP Coordinator

GEAR UP has encouraged students to look forward to going to college. It has changed the outlook for many students regarding their future.

GEAR UP Educator

Key Finding: Interviewed staff, students, and parents identified a number of promising practices, including college visits, college décor, and alumni events.

During site visits conducted in Years 5 and 6, school staff, students, and parents were asked to identify specific activities or strategies that they found most effective in raising expectations and creating a college-going culture. The following promising and effective practices were identified:

- College visits.** In all five GEAR UP case study schools, there was unanimous agreement among educators, students, and parents that college visits have been one of the most successful strategies to help students develop a college-going identity and envision themselves as college students. In almost all interviews and focus groups conducted with school staff, they indicated that college visits have offered opportunities that their students would otherwise not have. These opportunities have expanded their horizons and career choices, and motivated them to do well in school and get ready for postsecondary education. One educator commented, “I think the biggest thing is the college trips, just because we're so rural, because we're so far out in the middle of nowhere. Every time I take kids on that, I'm always amazed, for a while afterwards, we get really good behavior, and kind of optimism, because they've never been to a college campus. And just the idea of it being a possibility is a huge difference-maker.” Another educator recalled a particularly impactful visit, noting that “We have a group of sophomore students, ...and they did a big overnight trip through GEAR UP to go visit campuses. They came back, they were so excited. ‘I want to go to Southern!’, ‘I want to do this program!’, ‘I want to stay in this dorm!’... And having that off-campus experience really motivated them... We have a few students in that group who are already preparing to start doing scholarships, and going to Southern.”

“

For my son in particular, the hugest thing he did was get to go to the private college week camp. And that made – I mean, that just changed his whole life. He found the college he wanted to go to. He got a lot of individual attention from the GEAR UP staff. It was an amazing week, just a life-changing week.

GEAR UP Parent

In the interviews, many students recalled attending specific college visits and several have made decisions about programs and colleges they are planning to attend as a result of these visits. One student said, “I really enjoy them, because when people talk about college, and you've never been to college, you think, ‘Oh wow, it's this magical place.’ But then when you go there, it's more realistic, and you're like, ‘Okay, I think I can do this,’ because now I know what it looks like, what it's like. I've met some students here.” Another student said, “Many students just wanted to get out into the workforce, like the logging and that kind of stuff. I think mostly what we've grown up around. [And now] Most of my friends are thinking of college. And I think because we're in a small town, we think of, ‘How are we going to get out of here?’ Like, ‘What's beyond?’ And I know a lot of my friends know what's beyond, especially because of GEAR UP and because of the campus visits.”

Many interviewed parents agreed, noting they were appreciative of their schools offering these opportunities. Echoing other parents' sentiments, one parent stated, “I think getting the kids out into different communities to see different community colleges, to see what is available...for me, that has been the biggest piece. And getting them out to places they would otherwise never go, and having them make those connections and meet people from the colleges and see that they're actually approachable and supportive and interested in helping them succeed.” Another parent commented, “I didn't understand, at first, as a parent. My daughter started there in 6th grade. And at first, it seemed like, gosh, just a lot of field trips. But I slowly began to see the importance... My son right now, he already tells me, you know, he's going to go to college, he is going to study computer science. They just returned from a field trip to Lane Community College...and so it gave him this whole other perspective of the type of things that are out there.”

- College and career décor and displays of students' achievements.** Since the beginning of the grant, schools became more deliberate in creating visual displays about postsecondary education, including the posting of GEAR UP messaging, college banners, college door wars, teachers' alma maters, and students' postsecondary plans. Students may be highly involved in these activities, for example by designing the visual displays, conducting research, and/or interviewing the educators. This influx of visual cues helped raise early awareness of GEAR UP and the importance of postsecondary education throughout the schools. One educator, for example, recalled, "I remember when we did door decorations, and we had a contest, and I remember my class won. We did this thing where she [the GEAR UP coordinator] bought us pennants of the schools we attended, and we hung them in our rooms. And that was a big deal, because the kids started to realize that I started at a community college, and then went to Boston State, and then went to grad school. So all of our teachers showed them, 'this was my educational path.'"
- Alumni events.** Schools have used school alumni in career fairs and/or guest speaker events "to show the possibilities" of what students can achieve and for students to hear about alumni's college experiences and career choices. According to staff, hearing from individuals who came from the same community, attended the same school, and are often closer in age to the students themselves, has had a huge impact on the students, making their goals seem more achievable, and expanding their horizons.

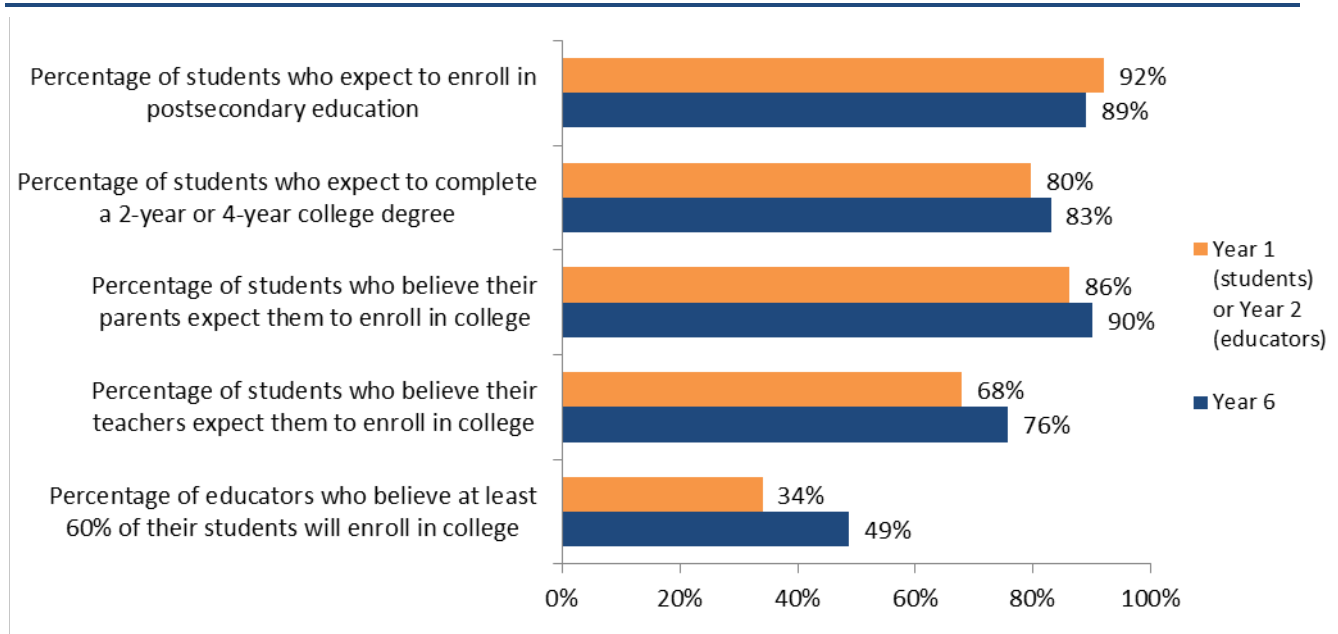


Photo courtesy: student poster at Myrtle Point High School's college and career center

Key Finding: Student expectations of college degree attainment have risen over time, and more students indicate their teachers and parents think they will pursue a college education. Educator expectations increased considerably over the course of the grant, although they continued to be significantly lower than student and parent expectations.

As shown in Figure 8 below, students' expectations for postsecondary education remained very high over the course of the grant. Specifically, in Year 6, 83% of surveyed students in GEAR UP schools reported that they expect to obtain a 2-year or 4-year college degree, up from 80% in Year 1. Furthermore, the proportion of students who think their parents expect them to go to college also increased (from 86% in Year 1 to 90% in Year 6).

The largest gains, however, were observed with regards to educator expectations. For example, the percentage of educators who reported that at least 60% of their students will enroll in college also increased from 34% in Year 2 to 49% in Year 6 and the percentage of students who think most teachers expect them to go to college increased from 68% in Year 1 to 76% in Year 6. Despite increases over time, educators' expectations remained considerably lower than those of students and parents. In 2016–17, surveyed educators reported that they expected 62% of their students (average across all educators) to enroll in any postsecondary education, a stark contrast to the 89% of students who indicated they will enroll. To address this disconnect, Oregon GEAR UP has created a number of resources that are available to schools, including professional development materials for school staff to help them discuss and raise educator expectations, and research briefs highlighting best practices in this area. In addition, several school teams have shared survey data with their entire staff to begin discussions around these expectations.

Figure 8: Changes in Postsecondary Expectations (School-Wide Survey Analyses)

Sources: 2011–12 student survey (N=3,022), 2016–17 student survey (N=3,117), 2012–13 educator survey (N=168), and 2016–17 educator survey (N=289)

Key Finding: Evaluation findings suggest that GEAR UP has been successful in improving students' perceptions about their teachers' and their parents' expectations of them, particularly among students with no family exposure to college and students in the academic middle or under-performing group.

Longitudinal survey results presented in Table 2 show that middle school students, students with no family exposure to college,² and students in the middle and under-performing groups typically experienced greater gains than their peers in their perceptions of their teachers and parents' expectations for them.

- The percentage of middle school students who expect to complete a 2-year or 4-year college degree increased from 80.6% in Year 1 to 86.1% in Year 6 (6.8% increase). This group also experienced gains in their belief that their teachers and parents expect them to go to college (9.6% and 6.0% increase).
- The percentage of students with no family exposure to college who expect to complete a 2-year or 4-year college degree increased very slightly from 71.4% in Year 1 to 71.7% in Year 6. Yet, a higher proportion of students in this group indicated that their teachers and their parents expect them to enroll in college in Year 6 than in Year 1 (15.8% increase and 1.8% increase, respectively).
- Middle-performing students (who self-reported earning mostly "Bs" and "Cs") experienced small gains in their expectations to complete a 2-year or 4-year college degree (2.7% increase), and moderate gains in their belief that their teachers and parents expect them to go to college (14.9% and 2.6% increase, respectively).
- Although the proportion of low-performing students who think they will earn a 2- or 4-year degree declined from 46.6% in Year 1 to 44.5% in Year 6; their perceptions of their teachers' and parents' expectations improved considerably (with increases of 90% and 67.7%, respectively).

² This term refers to students who indicated in surveys that their "immediate" family members (i.e., parents/guardians and siblings) have not attended college.

Table 2: Changes in Postsecondary Expectations, by Subgroup (School-Wide Surveys)

Survey Item	Student Group ³	Year 1 (2011–12)	Year 6 (2016–17)	Percentage Change Difference
Percentage of students who expect to complete a 2-year or 4-year college degree	Middle school students	80.6%	86.1%	6.82
	High school students	79.3%	80.4%	1.39
	Students with no family exposure to college	71.4%	71.7%	0.42
	High-performing students	93.2%	81.8%	-12.23
	Middle-performing students	74.1%	76.1%	2.70
	Under-performing students	46.6%	44.5%	-4.51
Percentage of students who indicate their teachers expect them to enroll in college	Middle school students	70.0%	76.7%	9.57
	High school students	67.1%	75.1%	11.92
	Students with no family exposure to college	57.6%	66.7%	15.80
	High-performing students	87.1%	84.6%	-2.87
	Middle-performing students	59.9%	68.8%	14.86
	Under-performing students	26.1%	49.6%	90.04
Percentage of students who indicate their parents expect them to enroll in college	Middle school students	86.6%	91.8%	6.00
	High school students	85.9%	88.9%	3.49
	Students with no family exposure to college	77.5%	78.9%	1.81
	High-performing students	95.6%	95.3%	-0.31
	Middle-performing students	82.9%	85.1%	2.65
	Under-performing students	48.4%	81.2%	67.77

Source: 2011–12 student survey (N=3,022) and 2016–17 student survey (N=3,117)

Key Finding: For students and parents, the cost of college is the most frequently cited barrier that may prevent students from achieving their postsecondary goals, and the second reason among educators.

The perceived “unaffordable” cost of college can influence students’ postsecondary expectations, making college seem an unattainable goal, and in turn negatively impacting students’ expectations and aspirations, and ultimately enrollment.

Students, parents, and educators shared similar perspectives on why they think students may not pursue a postsecondary education, citing the cost of college, grades or test scores not being good enough, needing to work, and lack of motivation or indecisiveness, as the top reasons. Details are provided below.

³ Year 1 student subgroups: middle school (N=833), high school (N=2,189), students with no family exposure to college (N=659), high-performing (N=975), middle-performing (N=1,845), and low-performing (N=93)

Year 6 student subgroups: middle school (N=1,172), high school (N=1,945), students with no family exposure to college (N=498), high-performing (N=1,543), middle-performing (N=1,414), and low-performing (N=141)

Table 3: Reasons Students May Not Continue their Education Beyond High School

Main Reasons	Students (N=2,020)	Parents (N=372)	Educators (N=289)
Costs too much	35%	34%	22%
Grades or test scores are not good enough	19%	9%	21%
Plans or needs to work	13%	5%	27%
Student is unmotivated or undecided	4%	19%	21%
Does not need college to be successful in chosen career	7%	4%	19%
Wants to join the military service	8%	9%	10%
Wants to stay close to family	3%	2%	9%
Wants to start a family (or needs to take care of family)	3%	1%	7%
Has a disability, special needs, or is on an IEP	-	8%	-
Some other reason	9%	8%	-

Source: 2016–17 student, parent, and educator surveys

Notes: Excludes students and parents who indicated “N/A”. Bolded cells represent the most frequently selected reasons for each respondent group.

Concerns around college affordability were raised by students and parents who participated in focus groups in all case study schools. As one student explained, “I think cost is always a big worry. I mean, that's how we've been raised...money is something that is definitely not taken for granted. So that's always kind of a worry that we all have. But my mom always tells me, ‘Don't worry about it, you'll get scholarships, there's plenty of other things that'll help you through it.’ She just wants me to get through college.” Several students in various schools also said they were thinking of attending nearby community colleges first and then transferring to 4-year universities, to reduce the expenses. One student commented, “Western Oregon and Oregon State were just a couple big ones to me. Because of expenses, I probably won't end up going there. But they were two colleges that have stuff I want, and loved the campuses, and it gave me some information about the programs.”

“

I think cost is always a big worry. I mean, that's how we've been raised...money is something that is definitely not taken for granted. So that's always kind of a worry that we all have.

GEAR UP Student

Interviewed parents also noted that one of the biggest concerns for them and other parents is the cost of college. As one parent noted, “It's still financial. If the kids don't even have stable housing, it's not feasible in their mind that they can do that [go to college].” Another parent noted, “Probably the biggest one is just the affordability. In our town, you have our people that definitely are in poverty and you have our people that are in middle income. I am middle income and there's absolutely nothing available to us. You either have to be really rich to be able to afford it on your own or really poor for anybody to help you. And it really sucks for families like mine where we struggle to put the money away and make our day to day bills.”

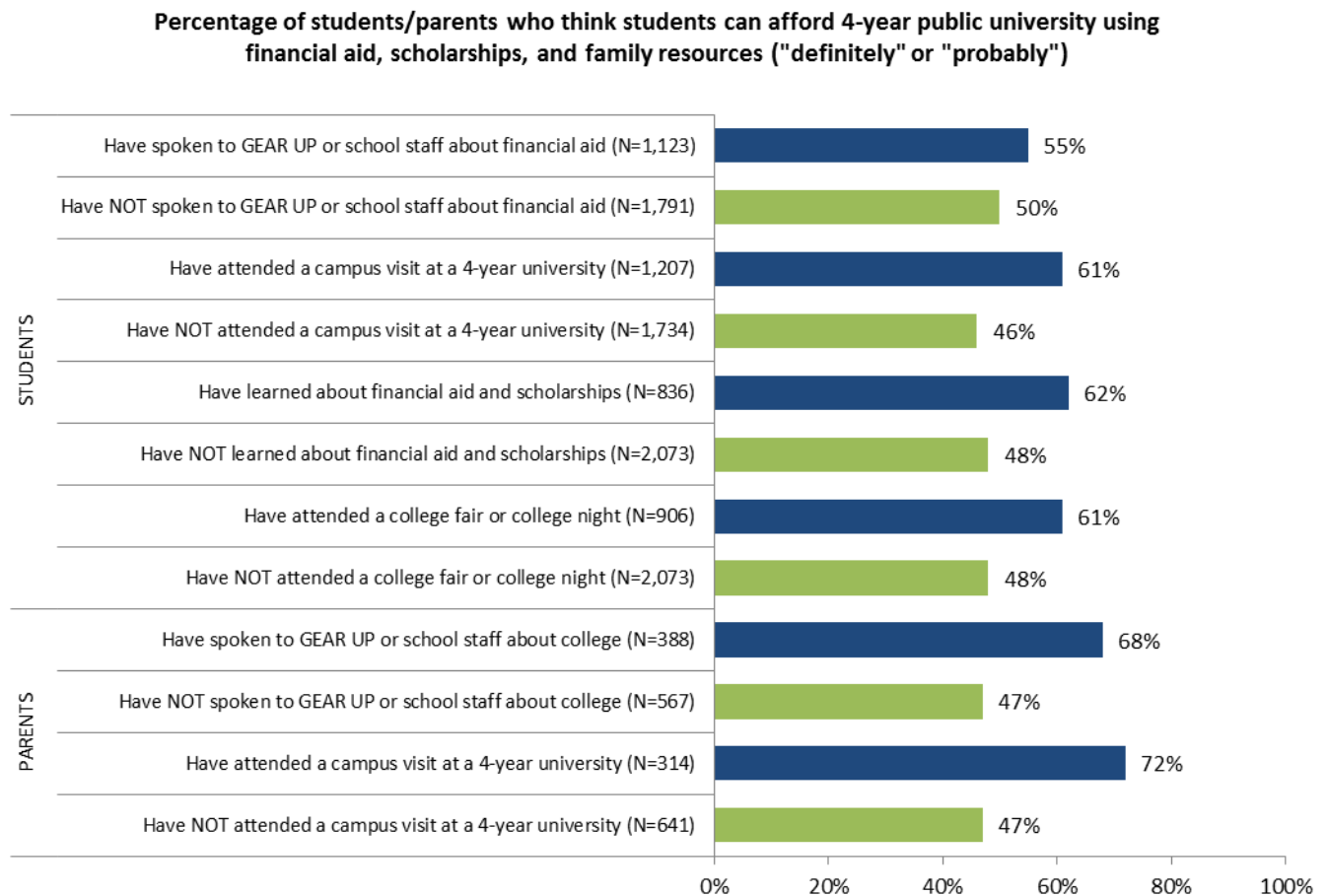
Key Finding: Findings suggest that GEAR UP is helping to alleviate some of the concerns that students and families have about attending college, particularly around college affordability.

There is a correlation between participation in GEAR UP-related activities and more positive perceptions around college affordability. For example, as shown in Figure 9, students were more likely to think they can afford a 4-year public university if they had:

- spoken to GEAR UP or school staff about financial aid or college
- attended a campus visit at a 4-year university
- attended an event on financial aid or scholarships
- attended a college fair or college night event

Similarly, parents who have spoken to GEAR UP or school staff about college and parents who have attended campus visits at 4-year universities were also more likely to think their students can afford to go to college.

Figure 9: Perceptions of College Affordability and Participation in College Readiness Activities



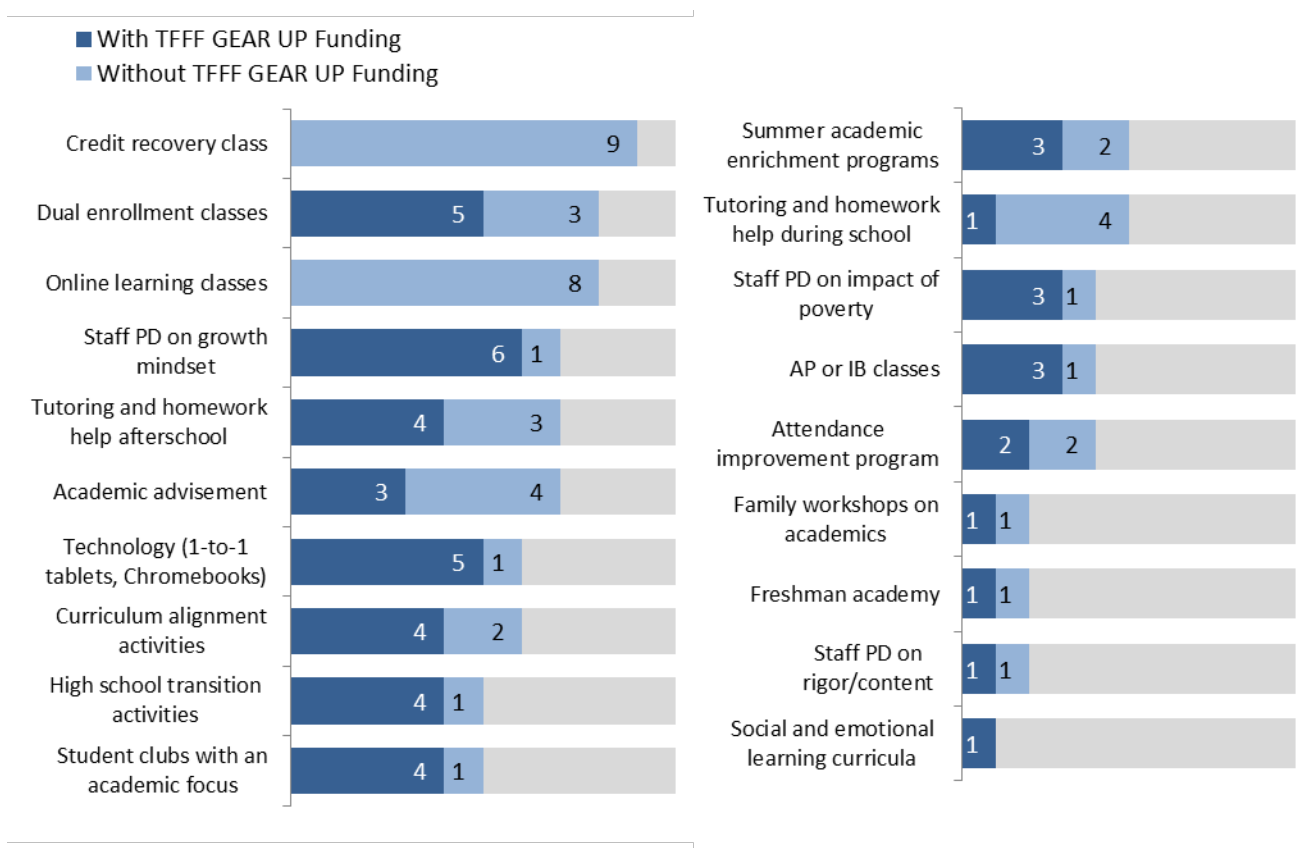
Source: 2016–17 student and parent surveys

GRANT GOAL: ACADEMICALLY PREPARE ALL STUDENTS FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION THROUGH RIGOROUS CURRICULUM AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT (RIGOR)

A central goal of Oregon GEAR UP is to prepare students academically for postsecondary education. Research has shown that academic preparation and taking a rigorous high school curricula are some of the most effective means of increasing the odds that students will graduate from high school, and enroll/persist in college (Adelman, 2006; Bedsworth et al., 2006; Bailey, 2009).

Key Finding: *In 2016–17, the most frequent types of activities and strategies implemented by GEAR UP schools were: credit recovery classes, dual enrollment classes, online learning courses, staff PD on growth mindset, afterschool tutoring, and academic advisement.*

Figure 10: Number of Clusters Implementing Rigor Activities in 2016–17



Source: College and Career Readiness Inventory

Key Finding: *GEAR UP Ford students in grades 7 and 8 showed gains in their overall academic performance in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics from spring 2016 to spring 2017; and outperformed other GEAR UP students in federally-funded cohort schools. School attendance, however, declined over the same period of time for students in both Ford and federally-funded schools.*

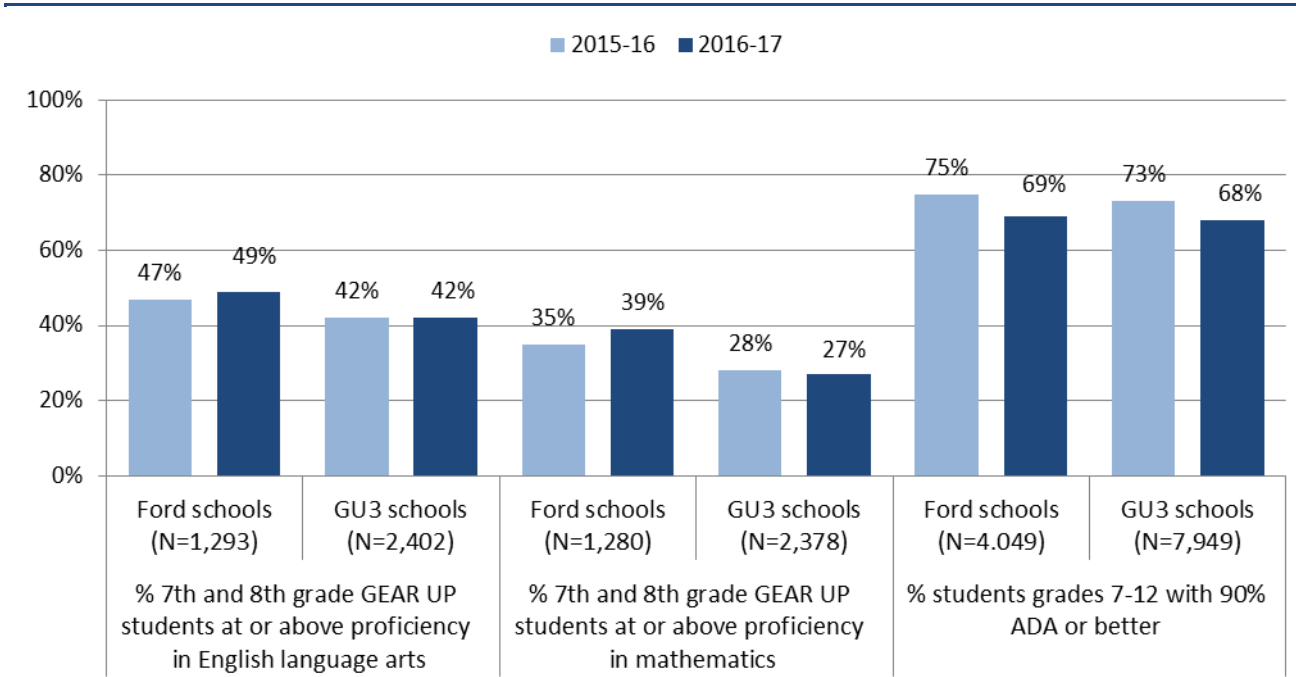
Student-level academic achievement and attendance data were collected from ODE for each student in the GEAR UP cohort for the 2015–16 and 2016–17 school years (it should be noted that the state assessments changed in 2014-15; therefore earlier comparisons could not be made). Results are compared to other

GEAR UP students in the federally-funded cohort schools (which were in their third year of GEAR UP implementation). Matched data were not available for students statewide.

Results shown in Figure 11 indicate that:

- From spring 2016 to spring 2017, the percentage of seventh-grade and eighth-grade GEAR UP students in Ford schools scoring proficient or above in English language arts (ELA) increased from 47% to 49%. In comparison, the proportion of GEAR UP students in federally-funded schools at or above proficiency remained the same (42%) over the two years.
- Over the same period of time, the percentage of seventh- and eighth-grade students in Ford schools scoring proficient or above in mathematics increased from 35% to 39% (compared to a decline from 28% to 27% among students in federally funded schools).
- However, the percentage of Ford students in grades 7-12 with 90% average daily attendance (ADA) or better declined from 75% in 2015–16 to 69% in 2016–17. Similar declines were observed for students in federally-funded schools.

Figure 11: Academic Performance and School Attendance Results



Source: Oregon Department of Education

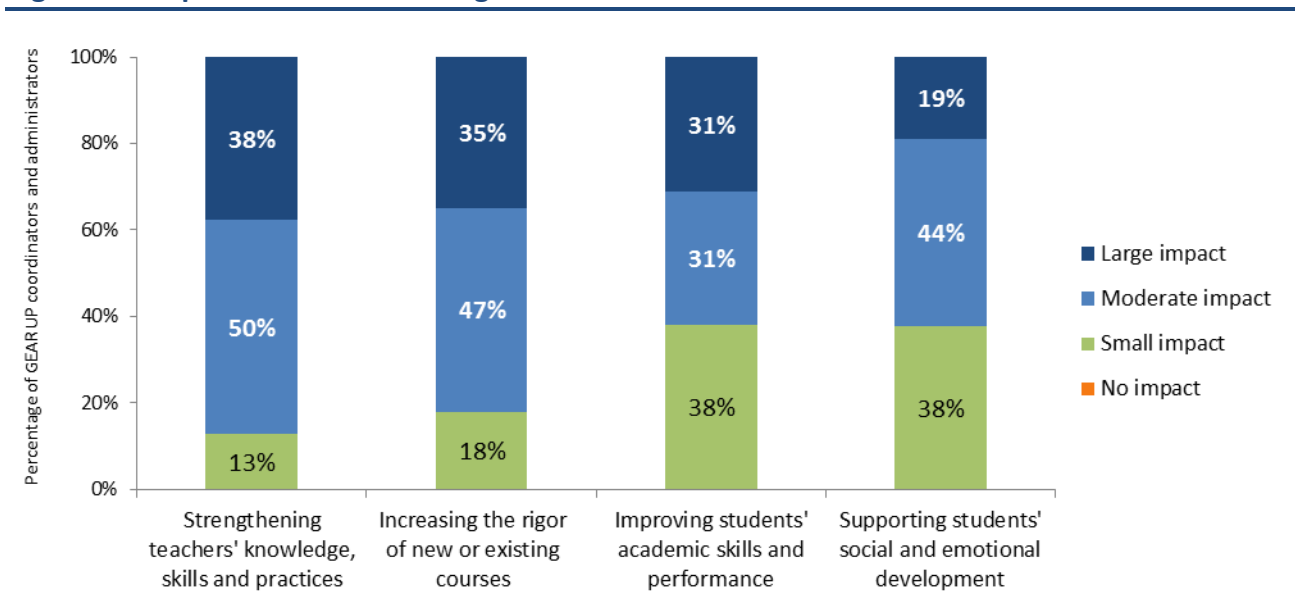
Key Finding: Five of the six clusters with available, complete data experienced an increase in the proportion of high school students taking dual credit courses from 2011–12 to 2014–15.

Community college dual credit data were obtained and analyzed by Education Northwest for the period from 2011–12 to 2014–15. Because of small numbers, data were suppressed for four of the ten Ford school districts (for one or more of these years). Results show that the proportion of high school students taking at least one dual credit course increased from 2011–12 to 2014–15 in five of the six clusters with available and complete data, including: Coquille (from 13% to 16%), Myrtle Point (from 5% to 14%), North Douglas (from 33% to 71%), Port Orford (from 18% to 20%), and Yoncalla (from 11% to 16%). In Roseburg, the proportion of students taking at least one dual credit course slightly declined from 14% to 13%. More recent data are currently being processed by Education Northwest and will be reported in an addendum to this report.

Key Finding: GEAR UP coordinators and administrators reported a positive impact of GEAR UP on increasing the rigor of their classes, enhancing educators’ knowledge, skills and practices, and preparing students academically.

All surveyed GEAR UP coordinators and administrators reported that GEAR UP has had some impact on each area related to “rigor” listed in the survey. Specifically, as shown in Figure 12, the large majority of GEAR UP coordinators and administrators indicated that GEAR UP has had a *moderate to large impact* in strengthening teachers’ knowledge, skills, and practices (88%) and increasing the rigor of existing and new courses (82%). Most coordinators and administrators also indicated a *moderate to large impact* on improving students’ academic skills and performance (62%) and supporting their social and emotional development (62%).

Figure 12: Impact of GEAR UP on Rigor

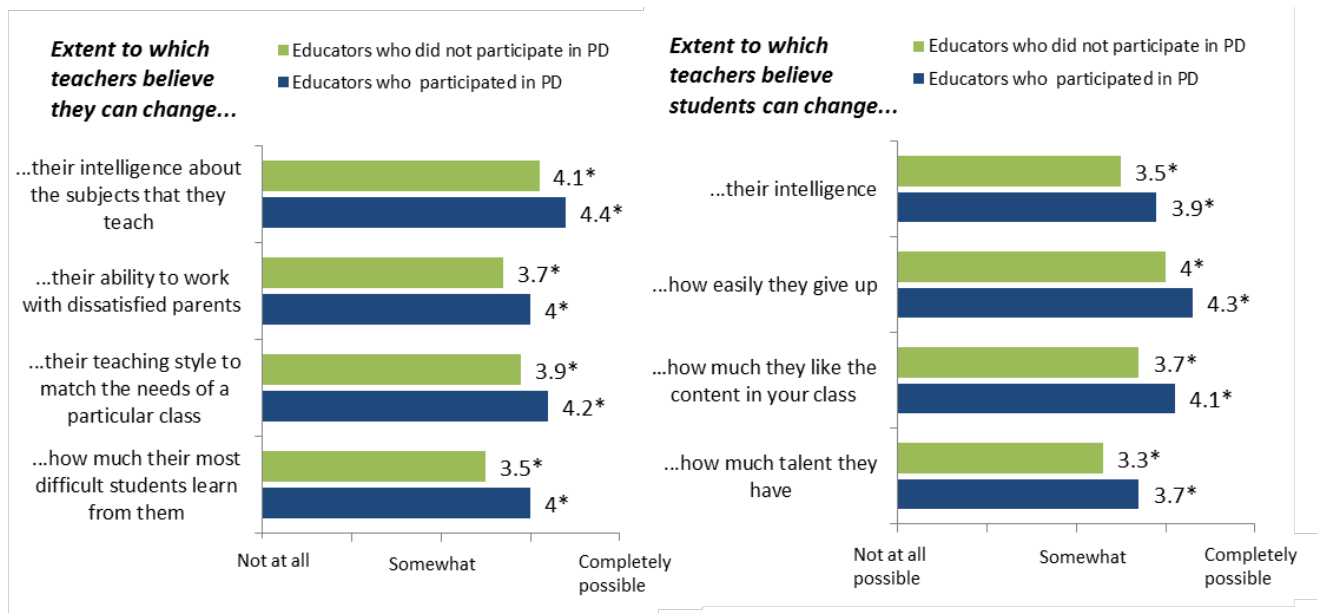


Source: 2016–17 GEAR UP coordinator and administrator survey (N=17)

Key Finding: Additional results suggest that GEAR UP-sponsored PD has resulted in greater use of growth mindset practices and growth mindset gains among educators.

Beginning in 2016, GEAR UP sponsored growth mindset training in 6 Ford clusters. In the annual surveys, almost half (48%) of surveyed educators indicated having participated in GEAR UP-sponsored growth mindset training. As shown in Figure 13, surveyed educators who were trained exhibited more positive attitudes and perceptions around their own and their students’ ability to change, learn, and grow than educators who did not receive the training. Differences were statistically significant and of a moderate magnitude. While the two groups were not matched on any a priori characteristics, these results are promising.

Figure 13: Educator Perceptions Regarding Growth Mindset



*An asterisk denotes a statistically significant difference at the .05 level.

Source: 2016–17 Educator Surveys (N=289)

In addition, 65 educators from 8 schools completed feedback forms before and three months after the training. Results show that, overall, educators were satisfied with the training, with 87% describing it as *good* or *excellent*. Furthermore, the proportion of educators who have begun planning for and implementing growth mindset strategies increased from 39% prior to the training to 89% three months after the training. Teachers also provided feedback on changes they and their students have made as a result of the training.

WHAT EDUCATORS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE GROWTH MINDSET TRAINING

I believe this has made me a more aware teacher of the attitude that I present to the class daily. I think that modeling this mindset myself it helps instill it in the students. How I talk to them and how I show I handle situations and difficulty, it teaches them valuable lessons.

Great training; it definitely helped shape my thinking towards a child's learning and how I can be a hindrance to his or her growth with my wording.

I have been using the list of growth mindset books as my daily read aloud to students; very powerful.

I try to consider each comment I make about successes with respect to growth mindset, and plan for it in course development. I encourage my students to use statement tags like ...yet, and ...as of now. It seems to be changing their learning confidence and attitudes positively.

Key Finding: Curriculum alignment, professional development, the expansion of rigorous coursework, technology integration, and afterschool programming were all singled out as effective interventions that GEAR UP has funded.

During the site visits conducted in spring 2016 and spring 2017, school administrators, educators, and students identified a number of particularly successful efforts in raising the rigor of instruction. These are highlighted below.

- Curriculum alignment.** Educators and school administrators spoke very highly of the curriculum alignment efforts that GEAR UP has funded. For example, in summer 2016, 25 middle and high school teachers from eight of the ten GEAR UP TFFF clusters participated in a four-day Summer Institute on secondary to postsecondary curriculum alignment. Facilitated by Education Northwest, the Summer Institute was a professional development opportunity for middle and high school teachers to focus on critical student learning challenges in the Common Core State Standards, through collaboration with writing and math faculty from 2-year and 4-year colleges across the state. Participants examined and developed instructional solutions to improve the college readiness of students.

During the site visits, educators from two of the schools who had attended the Summer Institute described this opportunity as very impactful and provided examples of changes they made as a result. As reported by one educator, “That was amazing. That was such a good experience, because it really helped me make sure that I’m giving my students the tools they need when they take Writing 121, either here with us, or when they go on to college and start taking college-level writing and math classes. Just being able to make sure that we’re hitting the standards we need to hit to make them successful. That was hugely beneficial. It gave me a lot of ideas. And it was in the middle of summer, so we were still a few weeks out from coming back to school. When I came back, I was able to come in with, you know, ‘I know I need to tweak this, I know I need to shift this.’” Another educator said, “It was so good. It was, hands down, one of the best academic conferences that I’ve been to for English teachers because we met with college professors, and were able to go, ‘Oh, that’s what you want us to do!’ or ‘Good, I’m already doing that!’”

- Professional development.** Educators in case study schools were very appreciative of all the GEAR UP-funded professional development opportunities, which included PD during GEAR UP meetings and retreats, sending teachers to conferences and other outside PD in their content area, and in-school trainings and coaching on growth mindset and poverty. Educators also provided several examples of how they have enhanced their practices as a result of these training. One educator commented, “I was actually really fortunate because she [the GEAR UP coordinator] set up for me to take AP course training to teach advanced literature and composition. ... I got the training last summer and it’s amazing professional development so that’s been an awesome thing to have and I’m very appreciative of that.”

“

[The Curriculum Alignment Summer Institute] was amazing... because it really helped me make sure that I’m giving my students the tools they need when they take Writing 121, either here with us, or when they go on to college and start taking college-level writing and math classes. Just being able to make sure that we’re hitting the standards we need to hit to make them successful.

GEAR UP Educator

GEAR UP sent me to a math teacher training that was very valuable and taught me increasingly engaging ways to teach middle school math. This has, in turn, made our math curriculum more engaging for our students.

GEAR UP Educator

- Expansion of rigorous coursework.** With GEAR UP funds, most of the schools were able to expand their rigorous course offerings, including AP and dual enrollment classes. Both educators and students reported that these opportunities were very effective in preparing students for college success. Echoing other educators' thoughts, one teacher said, "The dual-credit courses have been fantastic. So we just started that this year, and that's one of these things that will actually be able to stay, because we've developed enough of a relationship with SWOC to where they've approved me to teach the course on my own, and they're not charging us for it, for the credits. So that's a really cool thing. The idea that you can tell kids, 'Yeah, you can get your first year of college done while you're in school,' especially for kids who don't have a ton of money, it's huge. And the other thing is, they know what to expect going into college. ...How do you deal with the professor who isn't living up to their syllabus? How do you ask for an extension, or a redo, or these sorts of things? And that's all been a learning process that I've watched kids go through this year. And that's been extremely helpful to them, learning how to deal with that sort of adversity. And they're going to be a lot better off when they go to an actual campus next year or the year after, because of it."

“

We, previous to the GEAR UP program, had a fair percent of our students that would start college, but not a huge number that would make it all the way through. Whereas now our students are doing better, and we're able to have them more ready for college. In fact, we have them complete some of college before they graduate from high school. So they're more comfortable, they're used to it being different, a little more rigorous. And they've also gotten through the writing and the math that usually trip up students their first year in college. When they've already completed it before starting college, there's not as much weight on their shoulders.

GEAR UP Educator

Students were also appreciative of these opportunities. One student, for example, explained, "I'm currently taking two college credits right now, Writing 123 and Medical Terminology 2 and I took 122 and Medical Terminology 1 last trimester and I really enjoy doing stuff like that and was really thankful that we got the money where we could take Medical Terminology this year so I could get those prerequisites out of the way so I could further my career and get started earlier."

- Instructional technology.** All GEAR UP schools have used GEAR UP funding to improve or replace their outdated technology infrastructure and integrate the use of technology into the classrooms. In some case study schools, this infusion of technology was seen by principals and educators as a very powerful instructional tool, one that resulted in increased student engagement, collaboration, and learning. In one case study school, for example, an educator explained, "It's been a complete game-changer for us. ...Once we had the devices themselves – and that's been kind of a two to three-year phasing, now—we basically went with Google for Ed, which is free, and it's amazing. So all of our kids now have a Gmail account. ... And with Google Drive, you've got a fancy collaboration tool. So we can have a group of four working on the same paper at the same time, different parts of it, writing notes to each other on the same document. I mean, that's amazing. That's power. Being able to do research, just kind of grab it and go to their desk and start doing research – huge. And other tools like Kahoot, or NoRedInk, our grammar program. It's adaptive." The new technology also played a critical role in allowing schools to expand their dual credit programs. As one educator said, "Most of our college courses have to be online courses. And so the technology was important to making that happen."

- Afterschool programming.** Many of the GEAR UP case study schools began offering (or expanded) their afterschool offerings with GEAR UP funding. Educators, students, and parents identified tutoring and homework help as a particularly impactful GEAR UP support. As noted by educators, this type of support is particularly important for low-income students, who may not have the guidance they need at home to work on difficult material or assignments (e.g., from personal tutors or parents) and/or who may have other responsibilities afterschool (e.g., taking care of younger siblings, working part-time). One coordinator added, “I think our tutoring [has had the greatest impact]. That’s one thing that [GEAR UP coordinator] designed. And we’ve had a lot of monkey wrenches in it through the years but we’ve kept it, we’ve modified it. It’s not been mandatory. It’s just open so they can go in and get help when they want. And I can honestly say, we don’t have as many kids with F’s as we used to.”

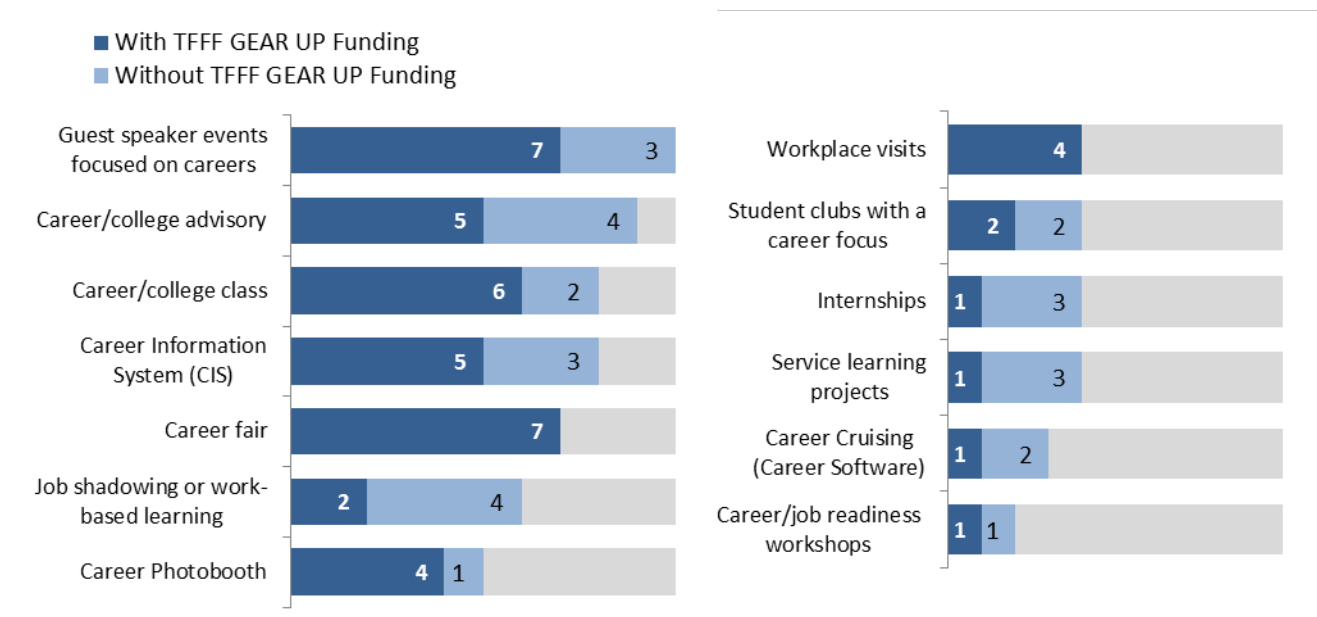
GEAR UP also funded enrichment opportunities. One case study school, for example, started a very successful robotics team. One educator commented, “I think Robotics has made a difference for kids, it gives them something to look for and it’s given them something to focus on, which helps them want to do better in school because they have to maintain grades to participate. So that’s helping, I think, anchor the kids, find their way through and giving them something to look forward to and push for.”

GRANT GOAL: LINK STUDENTS CAREER ASPIRATIONS TO THEIR EDUCATIONAL GOALS (RELEVANCE)

The Oregon GEAR UP model focuses on the importance of making learning relevant to students and linking students’ career aspirations with their educational goals. In fact, research shows that students who understand that a college degree is necessary to pursue their desired career are six times more likely to earn a degree than those who do not (Bedsworth et al., 2006). Furthermore, exposing students to career-relevant instruction and career pathways has been shown to enhance student motivation and engagement in school (Christenson et al., 2008; Orthner et al., 2013).

Key Finding: In 2016–17, the most frequent types of activities and strategies implemented by GEAR UP schools were: guest speaker events focused on careers, career and college advisories, career and college classes, use of Career Information Systems (CIS), and career fairs.

Figure 14: Number of Clusters Implementing Relevance Activities in 2016–17



Source: College and Career Readiness Inventory

Key finding: Guest speaker events, career fairs, and “hands-on” work-related experiences were found to be particularly effective in helping students learn about careers that interest them; however, providing exposure to a variety of career fields was particularly challenging for several of the GEAR UP communities.

During site visits, educators and students identified a number of effective strategies and activities for teaching students about careers and promoting relevance.

- Guest speaker events and career fairs.** All of the case study schools offered GEAR UP-sponsored guest speaker events, such as “Lunch with a Professional,” and career fairs. Educators and students described these opportunities as impactful, allowing students to learn about a variety of careers and the education needed to pursue these fields. In one school, for example, the coordinator said, “We have a career day coming up, April 4th, which we’ve been doing every year, when we invite businesses and colleges from around. It’s always been successful, and we invite Drain and Yoncalla to come over to that. We have everything ...the fire department brings their trucks, and the ambulance and police department bring their cruisers. The electric company locally has this set-up where they show what happens if you touch electric [laughs]. The massage school comes, and the veterinary school comes, just lots of different things. It’s been really successful.”

“

The kids really value that [the career guest speaker events], and the people we have, have been very personal and approachable and supportive. Again, we have a little bit of a limited local resource to draw from. Not that there’s anything wrong with those careers necessarily, ... but what I would like to see in high school is more of higher level careers, and those people aren’t here in our community to ask, so that’s a little bit of a barrier.

GEAR UP Educator

Teachers also provided specific examples of successful guest speaker events. In one school, a teacher said, “The most recent one we had was with a game warden, and the kids were really excited about that, because we have such a huge hunting and fishing population with our kids. It was really cool – that’s a job that a lot of them want to do. And he was a man from the community who several of our teachers know, and so that does help to sort of build that community rapport.” At another school, an educator explained, “Mr. Ford from the Art Institute in Portland comes down and I have him go through all my classes all day because there’s always those students who don’t fit in that normal pathway and it provides an opportunity and kind of opens their eyes to some other pathways that they could pursue—whether it’s video production or acting or art.

Students agreed, with several of them identifying specific events and professionals they spoke to as having helped them think further about their career options. For example, one student commented, “I think the lunch with the professionals was most helpful because it helped me figure out which career seemed interesting...like, from an actual employee of that career. And I think that would actually help a lot of students with deciding. If they’re torn between, say, a police officer or an accountant and you have both of them come in and they just talk about what their job is and what they actually do instead of what the internet tells them or what the books tell them, that would help a lot.”

Parents were also appreciative, noting that “I think that that’s good, to get to see what other people do. Lunches with professionals, and the other things that you mentioned... Just because, you know, in a small town, there’s not a lot of business professionals here, and there’s not a lot of, you know, other types of jobs – computer programming, and you know, it’s good for them to know what’s outside logging, or you know, small town communities.”

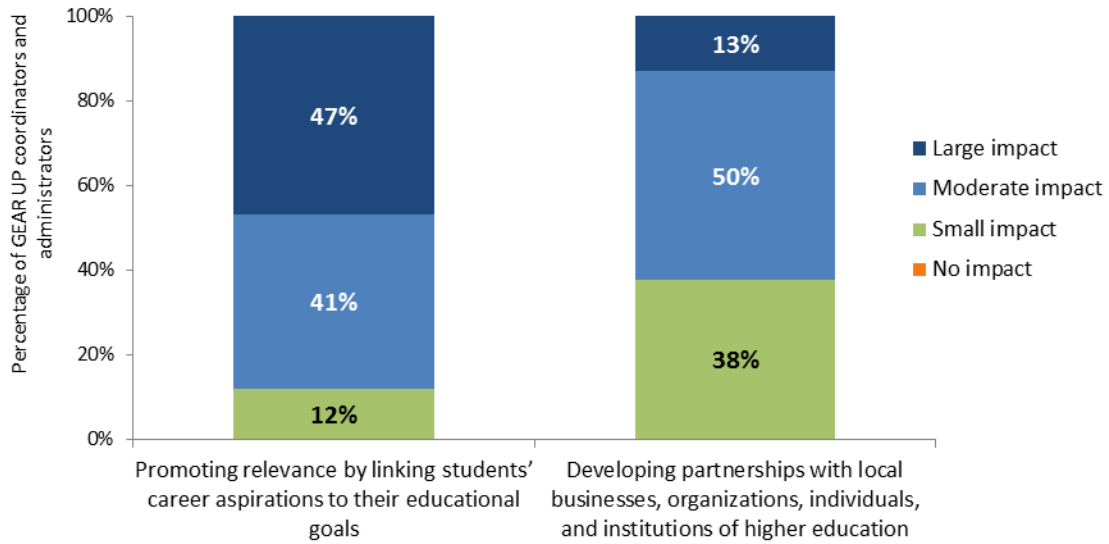
Many schools, however, reported experiencing challenges with finding a variety of professionals for their guest speaker events and/or career fairs, and attributed those challenges to the limited job opportunities available in their communities. One principal, for example, explained, “We’ve had lots of Pizza with Professionals. We’ve tried to get some of the former students to come back. It’s difficult quite frankly because once a lot of folks are out, they don’t come back. And that’s not only for the college kids, that’s for the professionals as well. If you become a geologist or a professional, you’re generally not coming back here. And so there is not a prolific amount of what would be considered professionals that they get to meet and interact with.”

- **Hands-on work-related opportunities.** Hands-on work opportunities—such as worksite visits, job shadowing, and internships—were identified by a small number of students as particularly impactful activities that helped them hone in on careers they were interested in, and in other cases helped them realize a specific career was not for them. One student, for example, explained, “In all honesty, CIS [Career Information System software], I do it because it’s a graduation requirement, but it doesn’t really help me personally. What helps me, because I’m more of a hands-on person is going to a job site and I look and I watch and I see.” And one parent said, “My son wanted to be a diesel mechanic. And so the staff member found a place where my boy could go, observe and see what that career was like. So that’s a neat thing, to get them out and looking at what they think they want. [The GEAR UP coordinator] also told me a story of a girl who had said her whole high school life that she wanted to be a vet, and so they took her for the day, and she got to hang out at the vet’s office, and when she came home she said she couldn’t stand the smell of the office, and she never wanted to be a vet again.”
- **Career Information System (CIS).** Many schools reported using CIS to teach students about a variety of careers and the education needed in those fields. Feedback from staff and students was mixed. Although generally viewed as a helpful tool, several educators reported that CIS activities were not implemented consistently across grades and classes. In one school where CIS had been particularly challenging, the principal decided to shift the responsibility from teachers to one CIS coordinator, a change that resulted in more effective use of CIS. As the principal described, “We put one person in charge of all student folders, and that person received a small stipend as our CIS coordinator. And that has made a huge difference for us. I wish I would have thought of that years ago, because it was always a struggle to have every teacher be an expert in CIS.” Some students felt CIS activities were often redundant and/or unhelpful, while others were more positive, indicating they had learned important information about various careers and they had used CIS to track work-related and college-related tasks. For example, one student commented, “I think CIS helped us a lot. A lot of people complain about how it’s a waste of time but it actually was extremely helpful when you were applying for scholarships cause it’s like, ‘Oh, I have this to look back on and the personal statement,’ and it also gave you an idea of what you might be good at and what your personality is like, and what jobs need these types of personalities, and I really enjoyed that.”

Key finding: Most GEAR UP coordinators and administrators reported a moderate to large impact of GEAR UP on promoting relevance; yet, students and educators identified a need for more activities focused on career awareness and relevance.

As shown in Figure 15, the large majority of surveyed GEAR UP coordinators and administrators noted that GEAR UP has had a *moderate* (41%) or *large impact* (47%) on promoting career relevance by linking students’ career aspirations to their postsecondary educational goals. In addition to expanding schools’ portfolio of career exploration activities, GEAR UP has supported the development of partnerships with local businesses, organizations and individuals, and institutions of higher education (with 63% reporting a *moderate to large impact*). These new partnerships have strengthened the schools’ capacity to expose students to various careers and professional fields and to better understand the steps they need to follow to achieve their postsecondary goals.

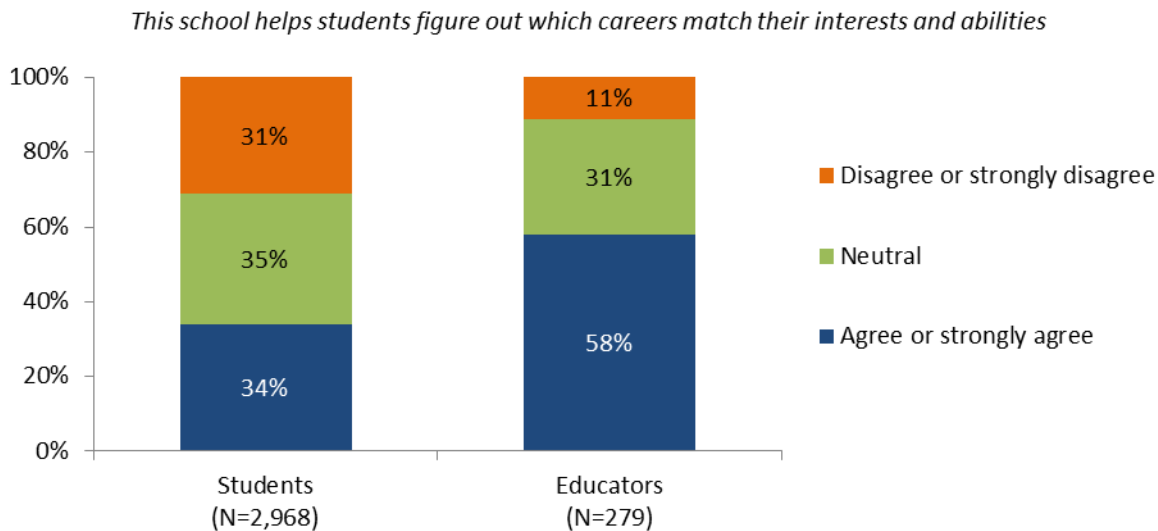
Figure 15: Impact of GEAR UP on Relevance



Source: 2016–17 GEAR UP coordinator and administrator survey (N=17)

However, results show that students may benefit from additional career exploration opportunities. As shown in Figure 16, only 34% of students and 58% of educators reported that the school helps students figure out which careers match their interests and abilities.

Figure 16: Students' and Educators' Feedback on Career Exploration Efforts



Source: 2016–17 student and educator surveys

When asked for suggestions for improving GEAR UP offerings, many educators and students at case study schools mentioned having more events that include a broader spectrum of professions represented. As described by one educator, “I think the one thing that I wish we had more of was getting people out here to talk to them, from different professions. Students really don't have much experience thinking about, you know, ‘What if I want to become a fashion designer?’ because there aren't a lot of people here who do those types of careers. So just giving them, I think, broader perspectives would be really nice. But of course, then you have scheduling, funding, transportation, all those kinds of issues.”

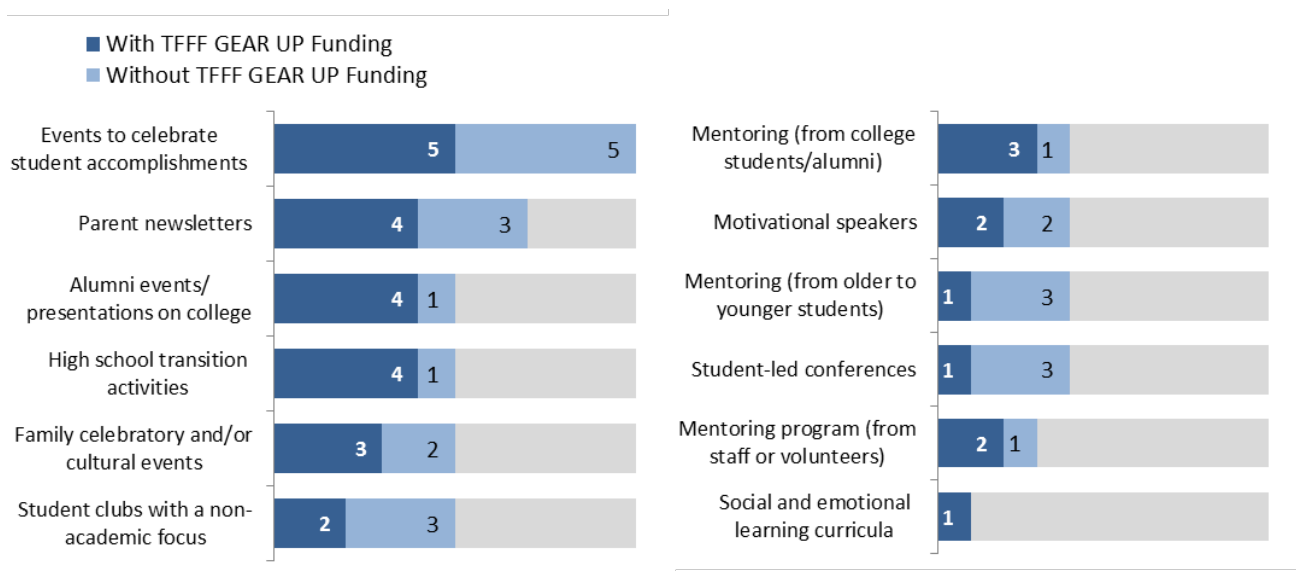
GRANT GOAL: FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS THAT ENCOURAGE STUDENTS’ ACADEMIC SUCCESS (RELATIONSHIPS)

Under Relationships, the Oregon GEAR UP model seeks to foster relationships that encourage students’ academic success. To promote the creation of supportive environments, GEAR UP schools focused on:

- increasing teacher involvement in college and career readiness activities;
- providing student-focused activities—such as clubs and other organized groups—to encourage positive relationships and peer support; and
- facilitating parent events and activities to foster stronger parental involvement in academic, career, and postsecondary planning efforts.

Key Finding: *In 2016–17, the most frequent types of activities and strategies implemented by GEAR UP schools were: events to celebrate student accomplishments, and parent newsletters.*

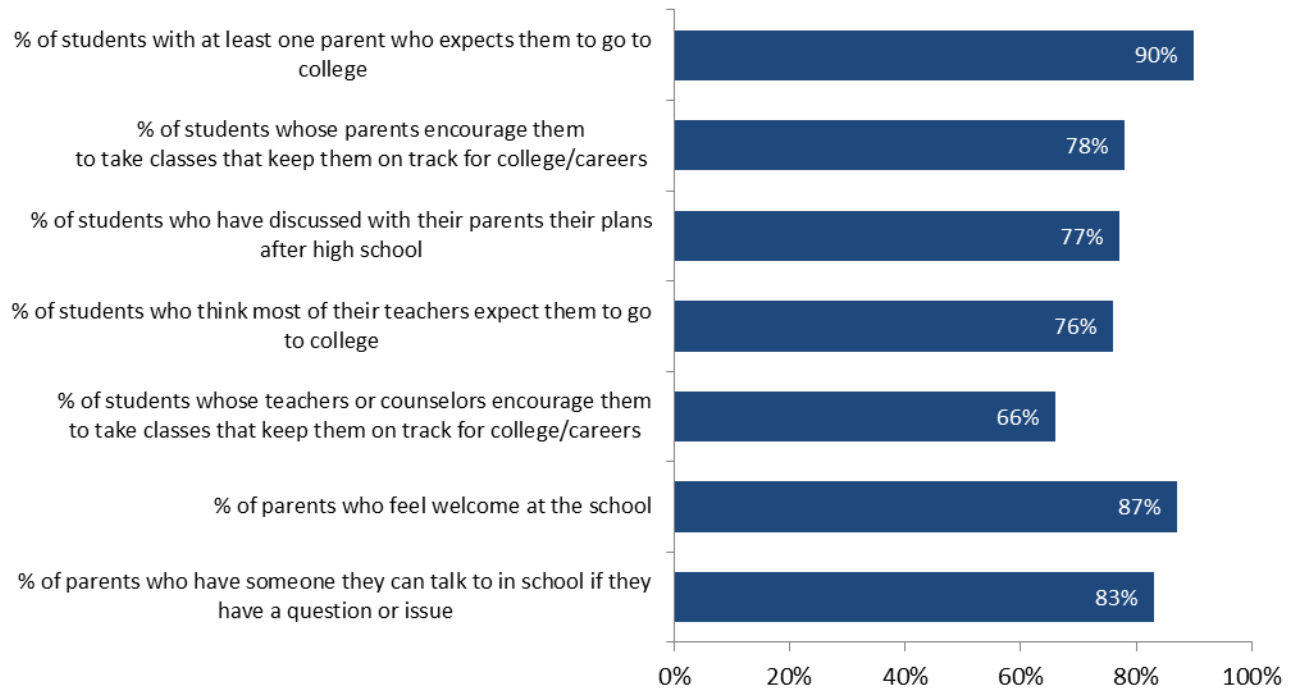
Figure 17: Number of Clusters Implementing Relationships Activities in 2016–17



Source: College and Career Readiness Inventory

Key Finding: *Results suggest that most students have supportive relationships with family members at home and educators at the school.*

As reported in surveys, the large majority of students believe that their parents and staff at their school are supportive, and expect them to pursue postsecondary education (see chart on the next page). Parents also feel generally welcome at the school, as reported by 87% of surveyed parents (however, results should be interpreted with caution due to low response rates). Most parents (83%) also indicated that if they have a question or an issue, they have someone they can talk to at the school. And all surveyed coordinators and administrators reported that GEAR UP has had a *small* (40%), *moderate* (33%) or *large impact* (37%) on promoting positive relationships between students, educators, and families.

Figure 18: Supportive Relationships

Source: 2016–17 student survey (N=3,117) and 2016–17 parent survey (N=986)

In spring 2016 and 2017, educators from four of the five case study schools identified the presence of tight-knit communities as a great asset in their small, rural schools. In these schools, educators—who are aware of students’ personal circumstances and struggles—can serve as a stable source of support. Educators also reported that, in general, students “genuinely care about each other” and help each other through difficult times. In describing his school community, one principal commented, “The good thing is that we’re small and I’ve watched many of these same students since they began their elementary years while I was their principal as a kindergartener. I hope they know and I believe many do that they’re truly supported. And these ladies [the GEAR UP coordinators] have been either in the community or with us for several years, so have our teaching staff.”

“

The good thing is that we’re small and I’ve watched many of these same students since they began their elementary years while I was their principal as a kindergartener. I hope they know and I believe many do that they’re truly supported.

GEAR UP Principal

At another school, the principal commented, “One of the benefits of a small town like this is that you know the parents very well. And so we were able to identify kids who need intervention quicker, and maybe specifically what type of intervention might work for them. I think we do a great job of rehabilitating kids that come in, that have been the subject of abuse or neglect for years. And if they move into town, all of a sudden they move into a tiny school like this where they matter. They have a name, not just a face and a number. They are important, because we are so small. And then the community, when you know the parents that well, it’s easier to get them involved, I think.”

During site visits, educators and students identified mentoring and College and Career Centers as two GEAR UP-related activities that had helped schools foster positive relationships among students, staff, and community members.

- Informal and Formal Mentoring Experiences.** In some schools, GEAR UP has funded a variety of mentoring programs—from staff or community members, and from older students to younger students. In other schools, the GEAR UP coordinator worked very closely and collaborated with existing mentoring programs, such as ASPIRE. Educators and students from two case study schools provided very positive feedback on these programs and the personalized support that GEAR UP coordinators have offered students. One student, for example, indicated that “it’s really good that we have mentors. Some of the other students just don’t have any interest in talking about their careers with any other people, so they don’t really like being a part of it. But for those of us who have concern for our future, or want to know more about it, we are very excited to be able to come meet with our mentor and figure stuff out.” Another student said, “Oh, she was a lot of help, and kind of can funnel my thoughts into something that works for me. And that kind of ties in with [the GEAR UP coordinator]. She’s not my ASPIRE advisor but she helps a lot, too, spoon-feeding us like, ‘Oh, here’s the website with this list of college applications,’... It just helps keep us on track, for sure.” And one parent commented, “Having the mentor in high school [was really helpful]. My son really liked meeting with her, and she kept him on track, with what steps they were supposed to do. You know, when to take the SAT, and those kind of things.”
- College and Career Centers.** GEAR UP has also supported the creation of College and Career Centers in many schools. According to educators, these centers helped foster supportive relationships with students and staff, often becoming the hub for all college and career-related activities. As one coordinator explained, “This room has been pretty amazing overall. It’s kind of turned into just a meeting hub for staff too which is really awesome. And I think it’s allowed us to create more relationships with kids because before, we didn’t have this space, so kids were typically signing up for things like the SAT on their own and now we’ve pretty much forced them to come down here because we have this space.”

Students participating in the focus groups were also generally positive about the support and encouragement they have received at home. Many students, whose parents have not attended college, reported being encouraged by their parents (or grandparents) to pursue postsecondary education, and to avoid making the same mistakes they did. One student, for example said, “My mom, she got pregnant in high school and she always made that very point to go to college because she didn’t even graduate high school and had to work really bum scrubbing the ground jobs and she was a maid, and she was like, ‘No, I want you to go to college and have a good life and be able to get good pay.’... She’s very supportive.” Another student indicated that “Neither of my parents went to college. They just both went to work, so they’re pretty excited for me to go to college because I’m the oldest. So they’re excited to see me grow further than they did.”

“

We have Ms. [NAME OF GEAR UP COORDINATOR], here. And then I also have another advisor. They both have helped me a lot with the SAT, getting ready for college and all that. And they have a lot of information specifically on the colleges that I want to go to, so they’ve been really helpful.

GEAR UP Student

“

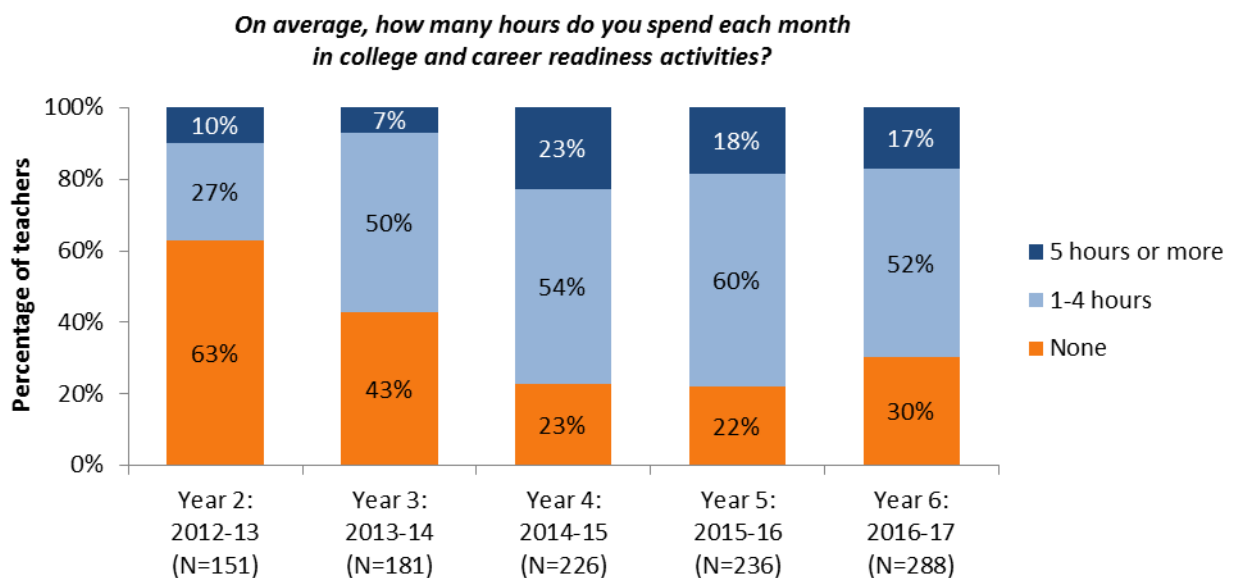
My mom is my number one inspiration because she never got to finish college and she regrets it every day and she got so swamped in loans, so she’s always told me since I was a little kid to work for everything you have and don’t quit.

GEAR UP Student

Key Finding: Educator support and involvement in college and career readiness activities has significantly increased over time and students’ perceptions of educator expectations have improved. Yet, there were large variations in school leadership and staff involvement across schools.

Results also show that educator involvement in college and career readiness activities has expanded considerably over the course of the grant. As shown in Figure 19, the percentage of educators who dedicated at least some time each month to these types of activities has increased from 37% in Year 2 (the first year the educators were surveyed) to 70% in Year 6. The percentage of educators who spent 5 or more hours also increased from 10% to 18% over the same period of time. In addition, as noted earlier, the percentage of students who indicated their teachers expect them to continue their education after high school has increased from 68% in Year 1 (2011–12) to 76% in Year 6 (2016–17). Increases were also observed in educators’ expectations for students.

Figure 19: Educator Involvement in College and Career Readiness Activities



Source: 2012–13 through 2016–17 educator surveys

In Year 6, students from each of the three site visit schools spoke very positively about their teachers’ involvement and provided examples of how they have helped them think about careers and college. In many of these instances, when asked about who they would go to with college-related questions, they identified one or more staff, including teachers and the GEAR UP coordinators. Echoing other students’ reports, one student commented, “Quite a few of the teachers talk about the colleges or will give you a little college inside facts.... Like of course [NAME OF GEAR UP COORDINATORS] talk to us about college, Ms. [NAME] talks to us about college a lot. Mr. [NAME] talks about the college that he went to and Ms. [NAME] really encourages people to go to OSU...I went to a camp at OSU, actually...and we had a great time.” Another student said, “Well, I’d probably go to the civics teacher, Mr. [NAME] and basically, anybody in the office. Almost any teacher here, really, I could go to and they would give me advice.”

“

[If I had questions about college] I would probably go to the civics teacher, Mr. [NAME] and basically, anybody in the office. Almost any teacher here, really, I could go to and they would give me advice.

GEAR UP Student

Many teachers also viewed themselves as playing a critical role in promoting a college-going culture. In focus groups, they provided many examples of ways in which they have helped students think about and learn more about their career and college choices. One educator, for example, explained, “I always tell my story, because I came from a very poor background, I have some student loans that I am working on paying off, and I already had some forgiven, so I try to be really open and honest with the kids. I think that having adults around them who have gone to college, and who can feel open and honest about that, is important. So, I can convince them that it's never too late and you never, never quit trying. And I can also show them the impact it makes on your life to get that post-secondary education and what different things you can do, what doors open, because you went and completed.” And another educator commented, “GEAR UP was first introduced to me through [the GEAR UP coordinator], so she would come to my class, and do a lot of discussions, and ask if she could have time during that class to work on scholarships, to work on college applications with kids. So I got to watch her, and over time, I got to help her. And then I created lessons that were connected to some of the GEAR UP stuff that she did, to make sure that for the OSAC application, students write the personal essays, and they do that in my classroom and it's an assignment.”

However, coordinators from several schools also indicated that staff engagement varied widely and, in some cases, was particularly challenging. In one school, the coordinator commented, “They're all aware [of GEAR UP]. Every year we go over some of the basics of the plan and the different activities we're doing. They're asked to participate in the different activities even if it's not an activity that they're in charge of. I would say maybe half the staff has some buy-in.” At another school, the principal said “I think their involvement, as far as in the GEAR UP planning is pretty minimal. When we have activities that we want to plan, if it's relatable to the staff, then they're involved. But most of the time, it's not.” Involving the larger staff through Committees tasked with overseeing specific GEAR UP activities was seen as a particularly helpful strategy to generate more staff awareness and buy-in. “One of the things that helped a lot, too, was transitioning to the model where teachers took over the committees rather than [the GEAR UP coordinators] planning all these things. Instead, teachers started planning and implementing and I think that went a lot better. It brought us in more and made us have more buy-in. I think because otherwise you're just being told, 'Hey during your advisory today you're going to do this,' and you're handed something and you don't have a clue and you're like ok whatever, maybe I'll do it.”

Key Finding: Despite some successes in many schools, family engagement continued to be a significant challenge over the course of the grant.

Over the course of the grant, schools have seen some success in their efforts to promote greater family involvement in academic, career, and college planning efforts. Many schools, for example, have implemented or strengthened high school transition activities for students and families, and are now offering college and financial aid events for parents to attend. One educator, for example, noted that “when I first came here, there was no one who came to see me on Open House, not a single parent. We all sat for three hours, nobody came. Since we started with GEAR UP, they have paid for these things, like food, and made it more of a celebration, an event, they've done more marketing. I have seen a lot more parents and kids just coming in and out of my room. So I do think they've brought the community in more, which I think is great.”

“

Since we started with GEAR UP, they have paid for these things, like food, and made [open house] more of a celebration, an event, they've done more marketing. I have seen a lot more parents and kids just coming in and out of my room. So I do think they've brought the community in more, which I think is great.

GEAR UP Educator

At another school, staff also commented on the successful GEAR UP supports the school provided, as well as effective strategies in engaging parents, saying that “They [parents] need food, everyone comes for free

food. Since we started giving free food, everybody shows up for conferences now, it's amazing. Food and babysitting because a lot of these people have little children. And then having a one-on-one, or maybe two-on-one, support for parents to fill out the [FAFSA] forms so that they actually know what they are doing [has been successful]."

Yet, according to nearly half of coordinators and administrators, family involvement continues to be *very challenging* (41%). About 47% described it as *a little challenging* and only 12% reported that family engagement is not challenging at their school. During site visits, principals and educators agreed that perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of their GEAR UP work has been involving families in school activities. Staff offered a number of reasons why they think parents are not involved, including: general apathy towards education, work conflicts, transportation issues, and resistance or weariness from some parents who may not have had positive high school experiences, themselves. In one school, for example, the coordinator said, "Well, there are certain parents that want to be involved in everything, and, yay, they are. And then there is a huge portion that want nothing to do with anything." At another school, the coordinator described an overall decline in community, parental, and student engagement. She noted that, "It's been difficult to get community members involved. Every year we've tried to get community members here to volunteer during scholarship week or college application week and they just aren't willing to come in... Athletics—we used to go to basketball games and both sides of the gym and bleachers were filled up. They don't even open one side of the bleachers now and the other side is not even near half capacity. So for whatever reason, there seems to be a total culture shift within the community where people aren't involved anymore, anybody, even the kids. And I hear other schools talking about it, too. Not just involvement but like, it is such a different climate, I don't know if it's just a generational thing or because we're all in such rural areas but we can't seem to get the message across, the importance to think about bettering yourselves and what a college application takes and the different resources that are available."

Parents were also asked to discuss their thoughts about the possible reasons behind their school's low family engagement. Lack of time and lack of motivation were the two reasons parents cited as contributing factors. As one parent described, "I've seen a lot of other parents who just can't or don't take that time, or they don't understand the importance. You know, where we are, there are a lot of parents who just think, 'Yeah, you don't have the money to go, so you shouldn't even bother trying,' without realizing that some of these kids really could qualify for grants and scholarships, and make it. And my family philosophy, starting from what I remember from my grandfather—my grandfather always taught that your children should succeed beyond you. You want them to excel, and be more successful, to learn from your mistakes and have a better life. That's how I live with my kids. But I see other parents around here, who are just like, 'Yeah, you don't need to do more.' And it's hard to break that mentality."

“

I grew up in this community. A generation ago, there really was this idea of how 'I want you to go on and do better than I did.' And now when I see people, they're so worried about validating their own life, that if they see their kid become them, then that's a validation for them ... because my kid wants to do it too. Whereas 30 years ago, it was, 'I'm a log truck driver. I don't want you to do this your whole life. I want you to have choices and options.'

GEAR UP Parent

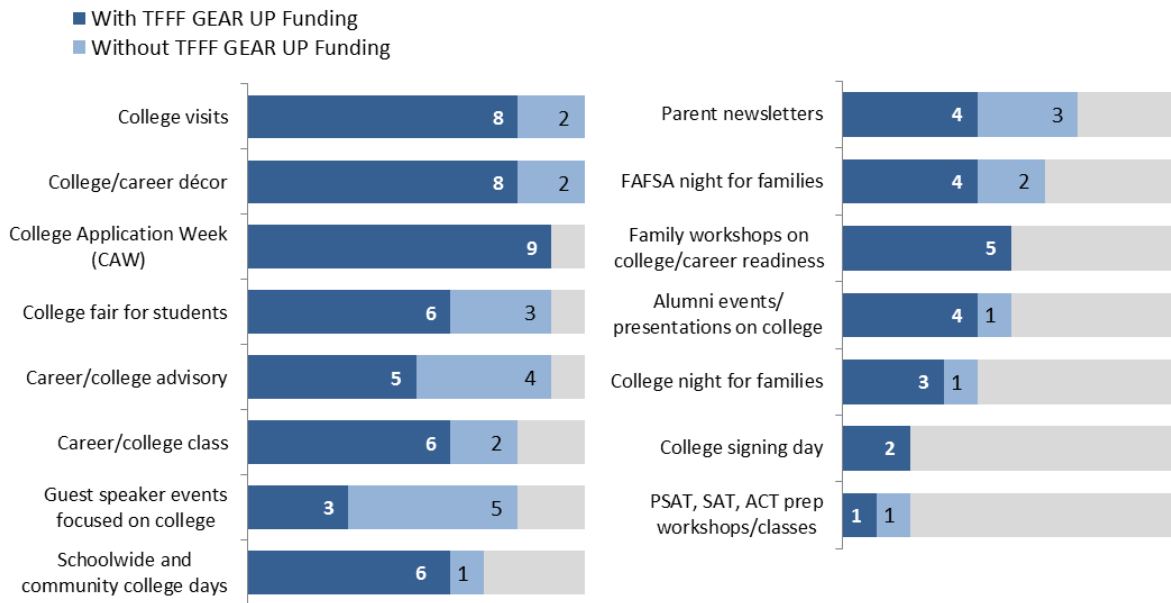
When asked to provide suggestions to increase family engagement at their schools, parents said: using sporting events to infuse the GEAR UP message; using the students to raise awareness about GEAR UP among parents; being more mindful in the wording used in parent communications, and using mailings instead of having students hand fliers to parents, which many times they end up not doing. Coordinators and educators also shared successful strategies such as providing food, providing babysitting, and repetitive calling and reminders.

GRANT GOAL: PROMOTE EARLY AWARENESS OF COLLEGE PREPARATION, SELECTION, ADMISSIONS, AND FINANCIAL AID (RAISING AWARENESS)

Research shows that low-income and first-generation students and their families often lack sufficient information on the necessary steps for college entry such as taking admissions exams, choosing the right college, submitting applications, and paying for their education, all of which strongly influence students’ postsecondary enrollment outcomes (Schneider, 2003; Perna, 2004). To address this barrier, Oregon GEAR UP seeks to promote early awareness of postsecondary education preparation, selection, admissions and financial aid through a wide range of activities.

Key Finding: In 2016–17, the most frequent types of activities and strategies implemented by GEAR UP schools were: college visits, college/career décor, College Application Week, college fairs, and college and career advisories.

Figure 20: Number of Clusters Implementing Raising Awareness Activities in 2016–17

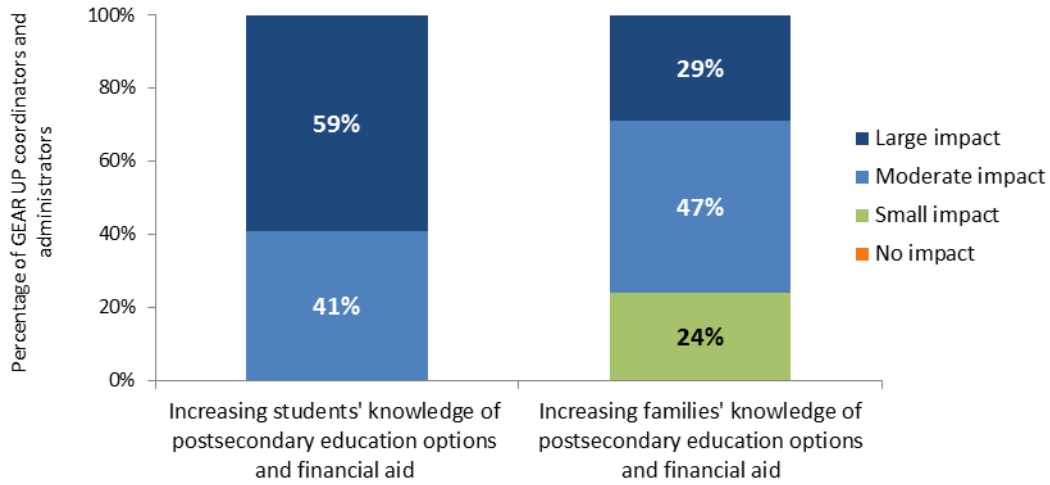


Source: College and Career Readiness Inventory

Key Finding: GEAR UP has had its strongest impact in raising awareness about the steps that students and families need to take in order to help students pursue and achieve their postsecondary education goals.

As shown in Figure 21, all surveyed GEAR UP coordinators and administrators reported that GEAR UP has had a moderate (41%) or large impact (59%) in increasing their students’ knowledge of postsecondary options and financial aid; and, to a smaller extent, families’ knowledge. A principal explained, “I think for students, the biggest impact that we’ve had with GEAR UP is getting them exposure to post-secondary opportunities. Whether that means your traditional four-year college, or maybe just someone that comes in here to talk to them about what it takes to get to college. I think our students were pretty ignorant before that.”

Figure 21: Impact of GEAR UP on Raising Awareness



Source: 2016–17 coordinator and administrator survey (N=17)

In surveys, educators were also asked to provide examples on how GEAR UP has benefited their school. Many of the comments provided by educators were related to increasing students’ knowledge of postsecondary education and helping them achieve the steps necessary to achieve postsecondary goals. Representative comments are shown below.

WHAT EDUCATORS SAY ABOUT THE IMPACT OF GEAR UP ON RAISING AWARENESS

Students have become much more familiar and in many cases conversant with the process of applying for college and scholarships. More of our students understand that college is a gateway to their choice of a career as opposed to something that other students in other communities aspire to.

GEAR UP's main impact has been on students thinking about their lives after high school. With GEAR UP's help, they are more knowledgeable about options and opportunities especially relating to college. It gets them out of this small town with college campus visits and allows them to imagine a future.

GEAR UP has increased student, staff and parents' level of awareness of post-secondary opportunities. To name a few: affordability through scholarships and grants, community college as a stepping stone to a university, and the value of an Associate's degree.

I feel that GEAR UP has made an impact on students going to college and finding the right fit for them. Having them search for scholarships and just knowing that they are out there really helps.

Key Finding: College visits, family events such as college and FAFSA nights, and school-wide events such as College Application Week and Scholarship Week, were among the most impactful activities in raising students' and families' awareness and readiness for postsecondary education.

Qualitative feedback from site visits confirmed that GEAR UP has positively impacted students' and families' knowledge of postsecondary education and financing options, and helped them navigate the system of college and financial aid applications. Educators, students, and parents reflected on many GEAR UP activities that have been particularly successful in this area.

- College visits.** Consistent with prior years' findings, students spoke very highly about the college visits, often identifying these as a turning point for them. Many students reflected on what they learned during these visits and provided examples of how these visits helped them identify colleges that were aligned to (or not aligned to) their needs and interests; thus, providing evidence that these GEAR UP activities helped students think of "college fit." One student, for example, explained, "Going to colleges that I really enjoyed learning about, and getting more information on them, helped me be able to eliminate other colleges, and find out which ones I wanted to further my career in." Another student commented, "The ones I can remember are the Southern Oregon University, Western Oregon University, and then of course we went to OSU and U of O. They were very helpful because when applying to colleges, I looked back and was like, 'Oh that campus was way too big and it was so confusing' or 'there were way too many people there' or 'there weren't that many people there so it was something I'd be interested in," adding that "for someone like me who likes smaller schools, and a better learning environment, it helps me narrow the choices of colleges."
- College and FAFSA Nights.** College and FAFSA nights were identified by staff as some of the more helpful events that allow students and parents to go through a complicated and tedious process they may not be able or willing to complete on their own. One educator, for example, explained, "Because to some parents, it's overwhelming, right? I mean, it's not just your college admission, it's your FAFSA forms and your scholarship forms and the whole system is overwhelming—especially for parents who haven't gone to college. ... So, [parent events and support] it's a huge component. Without some kind of assistance like this program, well, they don't have much of a chance." Parents agreed, noting that GEAR UP provided them with new information about scholarships and help navigating FAFSA. For example, one parent explained, "Through GEAR UP we've learned about some financial aid opportunities, and we got to connect with some of the other parents that I normally wouldn't meet. ...It's nice to have some place where we can check into, and where they're sending home information for us on the FAFSA, and stuff like that." And reflecting on College Night, one student commented, "They [my parents] thought it was helpful. It had a lot of information that we didn't know, a lot more modern information that just came out, so there was a lot of 'Oh, that changed.' And 'Oh, I didn't know that.'"
- College Application Week (CAW) and Scholarship Week.** Students also received invaluable support in completing college and scholarship applications through school-wide events such as College Application Week and Scholarship Week. "What's been most helpful to me so far this year was college application week because I was given the opportunity to work on everything I needed to do, and I was assisted by our counselors, and there was another representative from GEAR UP who helped us a lot and that was extremely helpful."

“

Scholarship week was very helpful because I know I wouldn't have done it on my own. They had snacks to help you stay focused and they had some written [information] up on the board for us, like the FAFSA and the OSAC, and then they had a binder so we just went through and picked ones that we were eligible for. We had access to computers and staff were there to help us if we had questions. I had a lot of questions.

GEAR UP Student

- Games and Fun Activities.** Over the course of the grant, schools also became more creative and devised and implemented games and fun activities for students to learn about colleges. These included: Jeopardy games, Trivia nights, “door wars,” and a competition using college basketball brackets. One school, for example, had GEAR UP “March Madness,” during which students learned about bracketology and about college basketball teams, and were asked to write a reflection about one of the colleges or universities participating in the tournament and why they would or would not want to attend. One educator at this school commented “I think the most fun [activity] has been the college basketball bracket. They love it. And it’s so educational about the colleges. I mean, they can’t just throw something out there. They have to research to find out information about the colleges, and then they get little rewards when they turn them in, and stuff.” When describing the College Night, a student in another school said, “The college readiness night was the one where you bring your family and we just answered trivia questions about colleges, and the team that got most points was the winner, And then she [the GEAR UP coordinator] talked about how much tuition is in different parts of Oregon, so it really helped people understand how much college is.” And another student who participated in their school’s College Knowledge Bowl said, “It’s fun to compete with your new knowledge, because then it sticks in your mind more.”



Photo credit: Student displays of March Madness activities at Powers High School

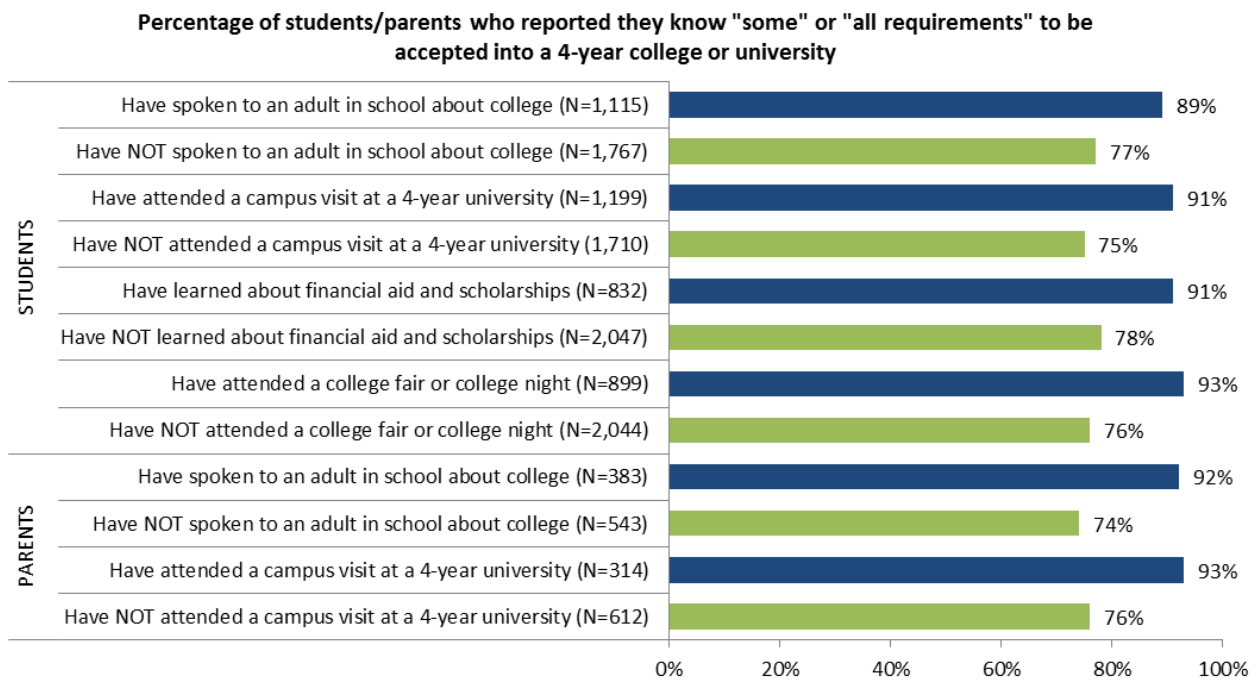
Key Finding: Results show a positive relationship between participation in GEAR UP-related activities and students’ and parents’ self-reported knowledge of college entrance requirements.

For example, as shown in Figure 22, students were more likely to report they know *some* or *all* of the 4-year (or 2-year) college entrance requirements if they had:

- spoken to GEAR UP or school staff about college
- attended a campus visit at a 4-year (or 2-year) college
- attended an event on financial aid or scholarships
- attended a college fair or college night event

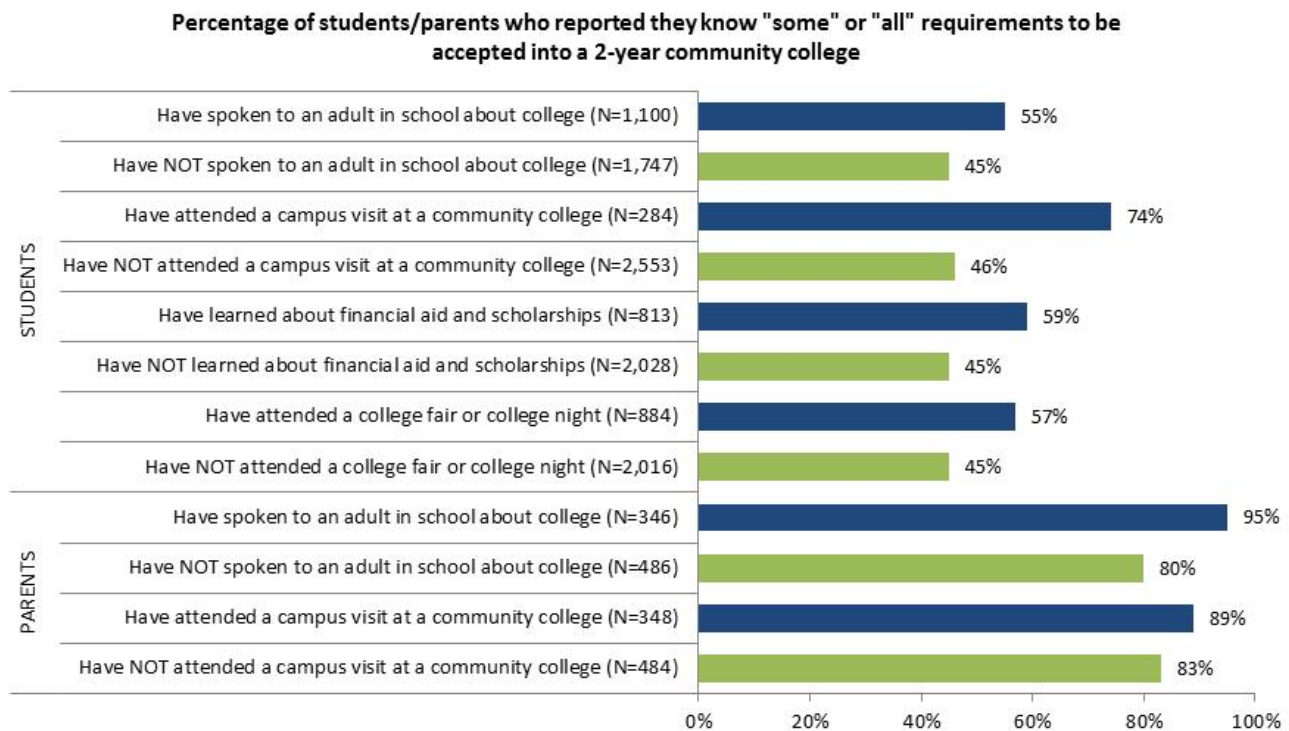
In addition, parents who spoke to someone in school about college and parents who attended college campus visits were also more likely to report knowing the college entrance requirements.

Figure 22: Relationship between GEAR UP-related Activities and Self-Reported Knowledge of 4-Year College Entrance Requirements



Source: 2016–17 student and parent surveys

Figure 23: Relationship Between GEAR UP-related Activities and Self-Reported Knowledge of 2-Year College Entrance Requirements

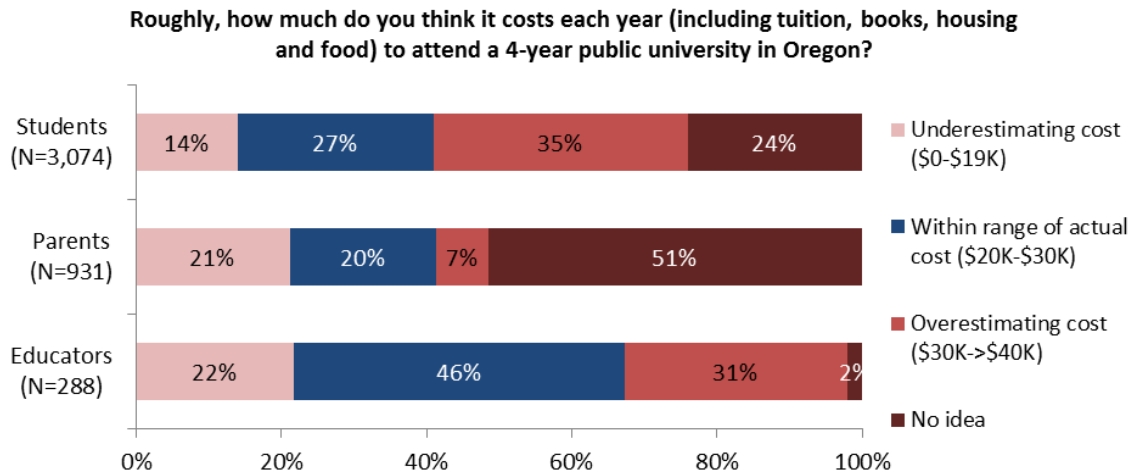


Source: 2016–17 student and parent surveys

Key Finding: Although a majority of students and parents do not know what the actual cost of college is, results suggest that GEAR UP helped students and families learn in this area.

Survey results show that the majority of students (73%), parents (80%), and, to a lesser extent, educators (54%) do not know how much college typically costs, and most of them either overestimate the actual cost or “have no idea.”

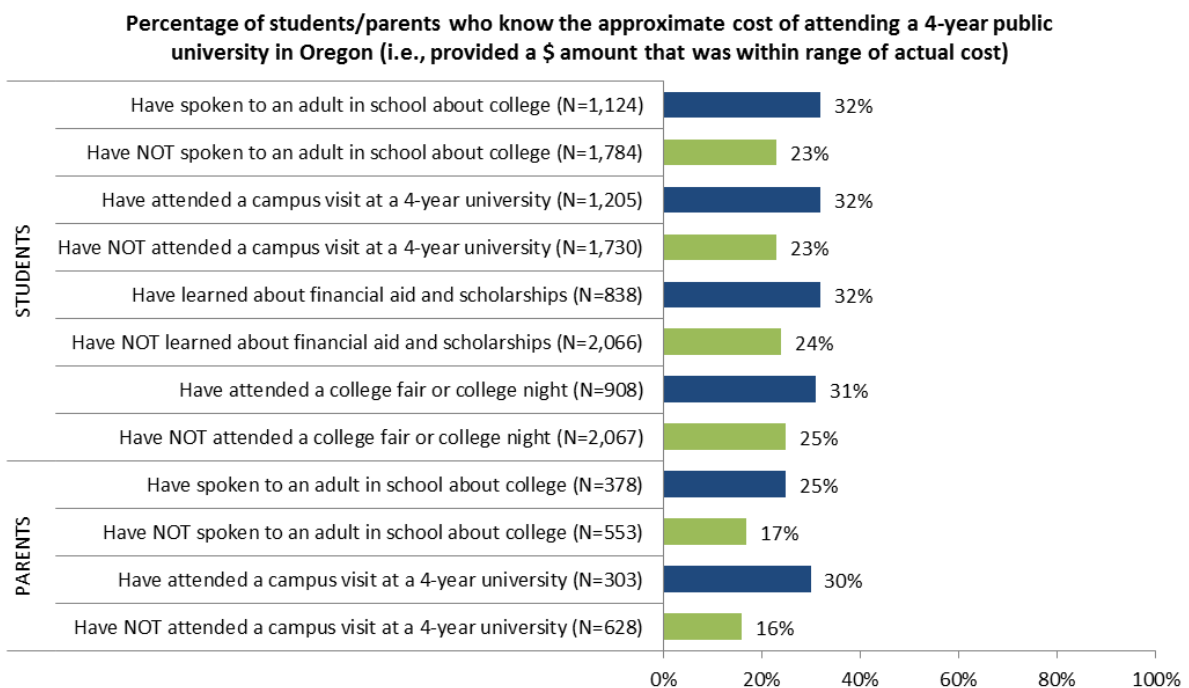
Figure 24: Knowledge of the Cost of College



Source: 2016–17 student, parent, and educator surveys

However, students and parents who participated in GEAR UP-related activities—such as discussing college with an adult in school, campus visits, college fairs, college nights, and financial aid events—were more likely to report an accurate range for the cost of college than students and parents who did not participate.

Figure 25: Relationship between GEAR UP Activities and Actual Knowledge of the Cost of College



Source: 2016–17 student and parent surveys

Key Finding: Results also show a positive increase over the course of the grant in the proportion of students completing the FAFSA, a critical step that has been shown to increase the likelihood of low-income students enrolling and persisting in college. As shown below, the percentage of seniors completing the FAFSA before the end of June increased from 46% in 2011–12 to 53% in 2016–17. Federally-funded GEAR UP cohort schools (which started the program in 2014–15) also experienced gains. When disaggregating by cluster, results show positive increases in 6 of the 10 clusters, ranging from a 5.5% increase in North Douglas to a 102.6% increase in Camas Valley. The remaining clusters experienced declines; however, it should be noted that the small number of seniors in some of these clusters often resulted in large fluctuations across years. It should be noted that these rates increased in the months after graduation, as students continued to explore their options for delayed enrollment.

Figure 26: FAFSA Completion Rates Among Seniors

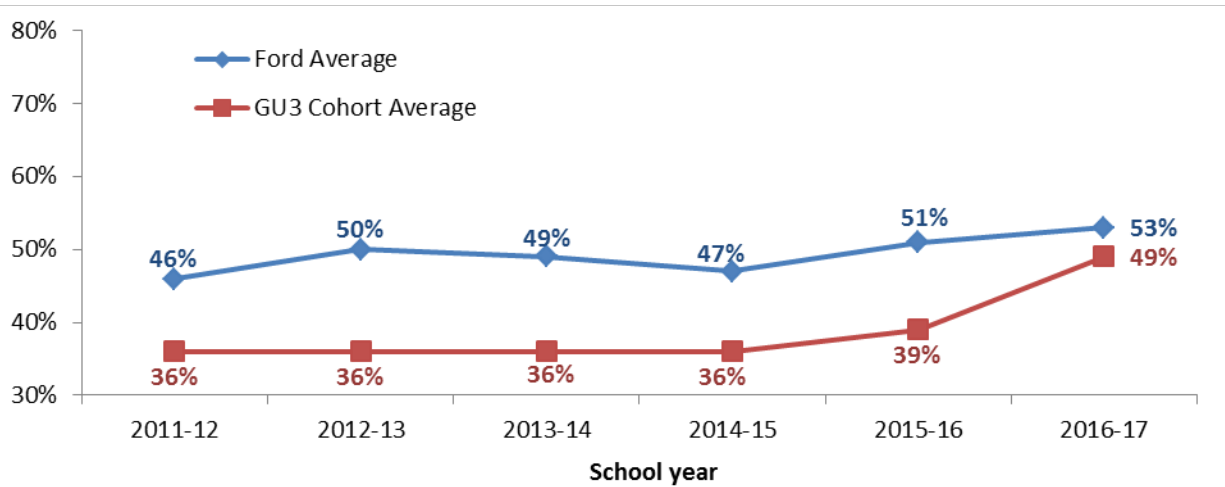


Table 4: FAFSA Completion Rates, by Ford cluster and grant year

Ford cluster	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Percentage change from 2012 to 2017
Camas Valley	38% (6)	n/a	56% (9)	53% (10)	38% (6)	77% (10)	102.6
Coquille	41% (29)	38% (26)	52% (27)	56% (36)	53% (35)	67% (40)	63.4
Elkton	42% (8)	41% (9)	67% (12)	42% (8)	50% (11)	35% (8)	-16.7
Myrtle Point	46% (23)	51% (27)	45% (21)	58% (26)	52% (22)	54% (19)	17.4
North Douglas	55% (16)	62% (13)	62% (16)	25% (5)	67% (10)	58% (15)	5.5
Port Orford	67% (16)	70% (19)	50% (11)	52% (12)	56% (10)	61% (11)	-9.0
Powers	86% (6)	60% (6)	67% (6)	n/a	67% (8)	80% (8)	-7.0
Reedsport	25% (15)	37% (19)	32% (16)	36% (14)	30% (14)	32% (19)	28.0
Roseburg	46% (184)	51% (214)	48% (207)	46% (195)	52% (217)	53% (194)	15.2
Yoncalla	67% (20)	68% (21)	81% (17)	60% (15)	55% (12)	42% (8)	-37.3

Key Finding: Through a partnership with NeighborWorks Umpqua, 142 students in the 10 GEAR UP Ford clusters enrolled in a program to open up Individual Development Accounts (IDA) to save for their college education and receive matching contributions. At the time this report was written, 36 students had successfully completed the program, and 53 students had open active accounts. Of those who completed the program, 16 saved the full \$3,000 (and were matched with \$9k or \$12k, depending upon eligibility for AFI funds). The remainder saved lesser amounts, averaging about \$2,000.

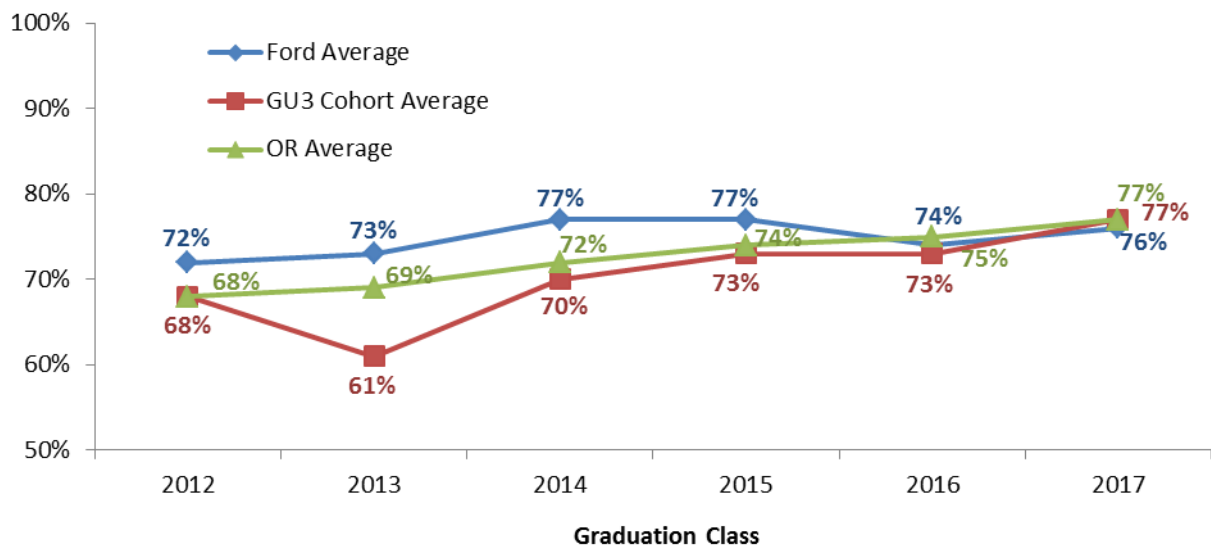
V. High School Graduation and College Enrollment

High school graduation data from the Oregon Department of Education and college enrollment data from the National Student Clearinghouse were collected each year for participating schools. Longitudinal trends were examined to assess progress in these areas.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RESULTS

Results presented in Figure 26 show that Ford schools experienced overall gains in 4-year high school graduation rates from 72% for the class of 2012 to 76% for the class of 2017. Four-year graduation rates among federally-funded GEAR UP cohort schools and schools statewide also increased.

Figure 27: 4-Year High School Graduation Rates



Results also show increases for 6 of the 10 clusters, ranging from a 4.8% increase in Myrtle Point to a 42.2% increase in Powers. The other four clusters showed a decline, ranging from 6.8% decrease in Reedsport to a 15.2% decrease in Yoncalla. It should be noted that the small size of the graduating classes in some of the clusters have resulted in large fluctuations across years.

Table 5: 4-Year High School Graduation Rates, by Ford cluster and grant year

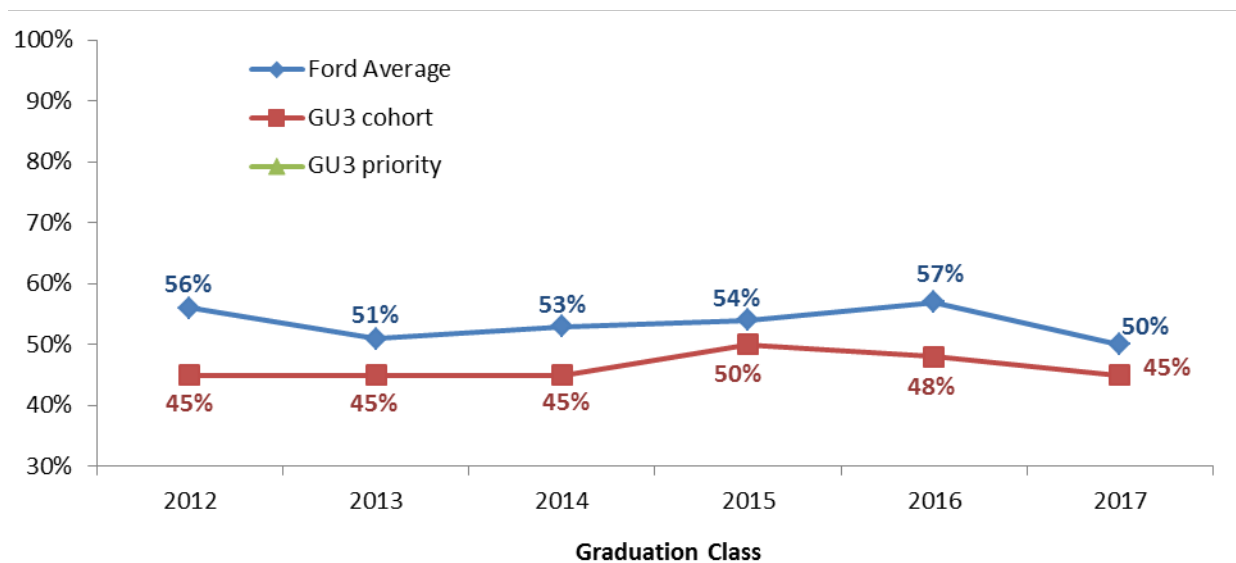
Ford cluster	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Percentage change from 2012 to 2017
Camas Valley	79% (11)	57% (8)	87% (13)	62% (13)	76% (13)	85% (11)	7.6
Coquille	80% (48)	83% (50)	93% (39)	92% (45)	89% (51)	92% (49)	15.0
Elkton	93% (14)	84% (16)	90% (18)	86% (19)	76% (19)	83% (19)	-10.8
Myrtle Point	63% (38)	52% (34)	69% (35)	70% (38)	52% (31)	66% (27)	4.8

Ford cluster	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Percentage change from 2012 to 2017
North Douglas	69% (20)	78% (18)	93% (26)	89% (16)	88% (14)	85% (23)	23.2
Port Orford	78% (18)	68% (21)	81% (17)	82% (18)	85% (17)	70% (14)	-10.3
Powers	64% (7)	82% (9)	78% (7)	91% (10)	100% (10)	91% (10)	42.2
Reedsport	59% (38)	64% (34)	68% (32)	64% (25)	53% (34)	55% (28)	-6.8
Roseburg	73% (335)	75% (362)	75% (354)	77% (350)	77% (342)	77% (308)	5.5
Yoncalla	79% (26)	85% (23)	79% (15)	78% (18)	77% (17)	67% (14)	-15.2

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RESULTS

As shown in the Figure below, fall college enrollment rates decreased over the course of the grant, from 56% among 2012 Ford graduates to 50% among 2017 Ford graduates. It should be noted that this decline is due—in part—to a decline in Roseburg (the largest Ford cluster), and the small sizes of graduating cohorts in other clusters, which may result in larger fluctuations across years. It may also be due to the fact that students who may not have graduated from high school before (and are now achieving this important milestone) may not be as ready or inclined to enroll in college. The majority of 2016-17 Ford graduates who attended college in the fall immediately after their graduation enrolled in 2-year community colleges (71%) compared to almost a third (29%) who enrolled in 4-year colleges and universities, and most students attended public schools (92%).

Figure 28: Fall College Enrollment Rates



Results by cluster also show that fall college enrollment rates increased in 4 of the 10 Ford clusters, ranging from a 7.5% increase at Port Orford to a 27.8% increase at Reedsport. Six clusters experienced declines. Table 6 shows trends in fall college enrollment rates by Ford cluster.

Table 6: Fall College Enrollment Rates, by Ford cluster and grant year

Ford cluster	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Percentage change from 2012 to 2017
Camas Valley	33% (4)	56% (5)	38% (5)	71% (10)	36% (5)	25% (3)	-24.2
Coquille	52% (27)	45% (24)	60% (24)	69% (31)	65% (33)	59% (29)	13.5
Elkton	71% (10)	63% (12)	58% (11)	42% (8)	47% (9)	37% (7)	-47.9
Myrtle Point	55% (23)	49% (17)	44% (16)	49% (19)	48% (15)	37% (10)	-32.7
North Douglas	52% (12)	53% (10)	54% (14)	41% (7)	64% (9)	57% (13)	9.6
Port Orford	53% (10)	43% (10)	33% (6)	39% (7)	41% (7)	57% (8)	7.5
Powers	71% (5)	33% (3)	43% (3)	30% (3)	60% (6)	50% (5)	-29.6
Reedsport	36% (17)	50% (19)	51% (18)	59% (16)	49% (17)	46% (13)	27.8
Roseburg	58% (216)	52% (207)	55% (209)	54% (196)	59% (213)	51% (170)	-12.1
Yoncalla	72% (21)	52% (12)	60% (9)	50% (9)	50% (9)	46% (6)	-36.1

At the time of this report a Life after High school study was being conducted. Preliminary results shed some light on why students are not enrolling in college at a higher rate. Among students who were not enrolled in postsecondary education, 73% said they were *somewhat likely* (15%) or *very likely* (58%) to enroll in postsecondary education in the future. These students thought they would be most likely to enroll in a 2-year community college (42%) or a 1-year technical, vocational, or certificate program (42%), while 16% thought they will enroll in a 4-year college or university. According to these students, the top most important reasons for postponing their enrollment were: they couldn't afford it (33%), they needed a break from school (33%), or they needed or wanted to work (27%).

In addition, Metis used an exploratory binary logistic regression to determine which characteristics were predictive of students' college enrollment outcomes. The sample used for this analysis included students who graduated in 2016-17 from Ford schools and from other federally-funded GEAR UP schools (data were not available from the non-GEAR UP schools). The model captured 90.6% of the population of students who graduated from high school (students with missing data on any of the key variables were excluded). The model resulted in the accurate predictions of outcomes for 69.5% of the cases. Specifically, the model was able to accurately predict 68.4% of college enrollments and 70.4% of non-enrollments.

Table 7 presents the subset of variables that were found to be significant predictors, along with their Beta and Exp(B) values, which express the change in odds related to a predictor. The results show that when other variables in the model are held constant:

- Being female was a positive predictor of high school graduation. Female students were 72% more likely to enroll in college than male students.
- Being in special education was a negative predictor. Specifically, students in this group were half as likely as their peers to graduate.
- Students' average daily attendance, and their 11th grade math and reading performance were positive predictors of college enrollment. Increasing the average daily attendance by 1% raises the odds of enrolling in college by 5%. Increasing the English or math performance by 1 level (there are five

performance levels in total), increases the odds of enrolling in college by 50%, thus highlighting the importance of academic preparation.

- Although being in a Ford school was not found to be a significant predictor, the number of college and career awareness activities implemented in the schools was a positive predictor. Specifically, for every additional activity, the odds of enrolling in college increase by almost 7%. This confirms the key role that GEAR UP has played in introducing many of these activities at the schools.

Table 7: Significant Predictors of College Enrollment

Predictor Variable	Beta	Std. Err.	Exp(B)
Average daily attendance in 2016-17	.057	.007	1.059
Gender (0=male; 1=female)	.541	.105	1.718
Special education status	-.723	.212	.485
English performance level on 11 th grade state standardized tests	.408	.076	1.504
Math performance level on 11 th grade state standardized tests	.455	.066	1.576
Number of reaching higher and raising awareness activities at the school	.064	.026	1.066

Note: The following variables were not significant predictors and therefore were excluded from this model: English language learner status, economically-disadvantaged status, minority status, school size, number of relevance activities, number of rigor activities, number of relationships activities, and group assignment (Ford vs. other GEAR UP schools).

VI. Lessons Learned

Key Lessons Learned

- Allowing for flexibility in programming
- Promoting staff awareness and buy-in
- Finding the right coordinator
- Providing centralized supports
- Providing the time to plan, implement, and reflect
- Supporting effective technology integration
- Encouraging purposeful and effective use of data
- Finding ways to sustain activities after the grant ends

A number of lessons learned have emerged from the implementation of the Oregon GEAR UP grant from The Ford Family Foundation. The lessons, described in this section, stem from evaluation findings, reflections from the Oregon GEAR UP central team, and feedback from coordinators, school administrators, and district leaders.

Lesson Learned: Flexible program delivery makes for effective implementation when sufficient safeguards exist to ensure program fidelity.

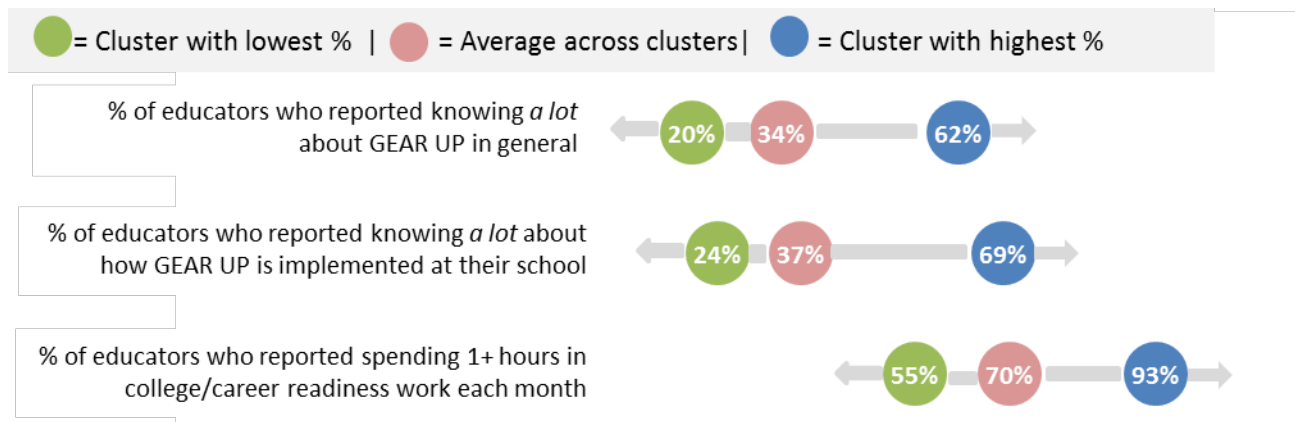
Under the Oregon GEAR UP framework, schools are given a budget and asked, at the beginning of each year, to craft a GEAR UP plan describing the various activities and their cost. Principals and coordinators indicated they really value the flexibility to tailor the program to meet their schools' unique needs. Schools were also encouraged to reflect on their efforts each year and refine or modify their program offerings, as needed. However, flexibility also meant that the Oregon GEAR UP central team had to devise and put in place systems and processes to ensure all activities were aligned to grant goals and had the desired effects on key outcomes. Thus, the template for the school plans changed greatly over time to include more direct links between specific activities and grant goals. The central team responded by dedicating time and resources to "vetting" the plans and providing guidance and feedback. Furthermore, it became apparent that schools needed more guidance on how to measure the success of their activities, which would then influence their decisions of whether to keep, modify, or eliminate those activities in the following year's plan. Thus, the central team's response was to conduct trainings during the spring SUCCESS retreats on how to craft measurable objectives for each activity (both process and outcome-related) and how to collect and analyze the data on those objectives.

Lesson Learned: GEAR UP awareness and buy-in was largely influenced by factors such as staff turnover, the presence of strong GEAR UP teams and coordinators, principal involvement, and participation of staff in GEAR UP retreats.

There was large variation across schools in district, school administration and staff involvement in grant activities and their general awareness of GEAR UP. For example, in Year 6, two coordinators reported *very strong involvement* from the school administration, three reported *some involvement* and two indicated *no involvement*. Most coordinators who reported some or no involvement from the school administration felt that having stronger involvement would have resulted in increased staff buy-in.

Similarly, there was large variation in staff awareness and buy-in across schools. For example, as shown in Figure 29 below, the percentage of educators who reported *knowing a lot* about GEAR UP in general ranged from a low of 20% of educators in one cluster to a high of 62% of educators in another cluster. Similarly, the percentage of educators who indicated *knowing a lot* about how GEAR UP is being implemented in their school ranged from 24% in one cluster to 69% in another cluster. Finally, the percentage of educators who dedicate at least 1 hour or more each month to college and career readiness activities ranged from a low of 55% of educators in one cluster to 93% of educators at another cluster.

Figure 29: Educator Knowledge and Involvement in GEAR UP



District leadership awareness and involvement also varied. In interviews with superintendents, some reported being deeply involved in GEAR UP. One superintendent, for example, indicated “I went on at least four trips every year with students. We [the district office] we were fully involved in all of this. I was on the GEAR UP committee within the district as we worked through this, and now that the grant is ending, we absorbed those events that we started into our general fund, so we’re fully invested.” Other superintendents—including two who worked part-time and were new to the district—said they were aware of the grant but did not know any of the specific activities and interventions offered through the grant. As one superintendent explained, “I do not have a lot of interaction with the GEAR UP program. I know we have used GEAR UP funds for some career-related and academic support programs. Beyond those basics, I do not have the ability to site measurable statistics regarding the program’s success.”

“

I went on at least four trips every year with students. We [the district office] we were fully involved in all of this. ... and now that the grant is ending, we absorbed those events that we started into our general fund.

GEAR UP Superintendent

There was strong agreement among principals and coordinators that involving and relying on other school staff or a team/committee to implement GEAR UP activities is a promising practice that has led to stronger buy-in and to positive changes in school-wide practices and mindsets. Six of the 10 clusters indicated having an “official” GEAR UP team, and all coordinators and administrators in these schools reported the teams to be *effective* (73%) or *somewhat effective* (27%). Time constraints were identified as the main challenge for these teams to meet and implement their plans. As one principal commented, “The [GEAR UP] team worked diligently to get the latest information to the staff, however, like most small schools, staff are already pulled in many directions. The team has shown considerable improvement this year in getting the staff to better understand the importance of early involvement in helping students develop a desire to

continue their education in college.” Coordinators and administrators agreed that smaller teams were more effective, as were teams that involved the key decision-makers in their schools. Another successful strategy, implemented in one of the case study schools, was to create teacher-led Committees, charged with planning and implementing specific GEAR UP activities.

Oregon GEAR UP employed a number of strategies to support schools in promoting staff buy-in. These included: encouraging schools to create “official” GEAR UP teams; creating resources that coordinators and administrators can use to involve the larger staff (such as PD modules on how to increase educator expectations); and asking schools with effective GEAR UP teams and strong staff involvement to share promising practices with other schools during staff retreats.

Lesson Learned: Having a consistent coordinator with a good rapport with students and educators alike was a key factor for the success of the program at the schools. Onboarding processes and procedures helped address coordinator turnover issues.

In interviews, several principals praised the energy, commitment, and strong leadership qualities of their coordinators, noting these were key factors in the successful implementation of GEAR UP. For example, one principal explained in Year 5, “I think having an energetic and organized coordinator is crucial and [NAME] is all of that. She came on later. We tried different coordinators before and it did not work. They were on staff, they were teachers, and it did not work. She—because of her position and her flexibility of time and her nature and organization, and the fact that she knows people in the community and can make connections—that’s been super helpful. That’s super important.” And in Year 6 another principal agreed, noting that, “I think having someone like [NAME OF COORDINATOR], who has lived in this community for a long time, who is well-respected in our community, so she’s not an outsider, [is critical] because sometimes in a community like this, they fear outsiders, and that was hard for me when I moved here. ... And I think that is one of her strengths, that she can connect with lots of different people, and is well-respected in the community.”

“

It really takes the right kind of person to run it. It’s worked well for me because it’s a lot of what I should be doing anyways, so it’s been a good fit even though it’s created more work, but I don’t think that it’s a job you can just throw anybody into. They really have to be passionate about it and invested in it to make it be something worthwhile.

GEAR UP Coordinator

However, several schools had high staff turnover in the coordinator position, which resulted in delays and difficulties implementing the GEAR UP plans as intended. By Year 6 for example, only 2 schools had the same coordinator who had started when the grant was awarded, and 3 schools had had a recent change in the coordinator position (within the last 2 years). To respond to this challenge, the Oregon GEAR UP team developed a number of resources and strategies to facilitate the onboarding of new coordinators, including: a “cheat sheet” for coordinator tasks, a detailed calendar of grant-related activities, a fall GEAR UP kick-off meeting with sessions geared towards new coordinators, and ongoing support from the school liaisons (who are part of the GEAR UP central office team).

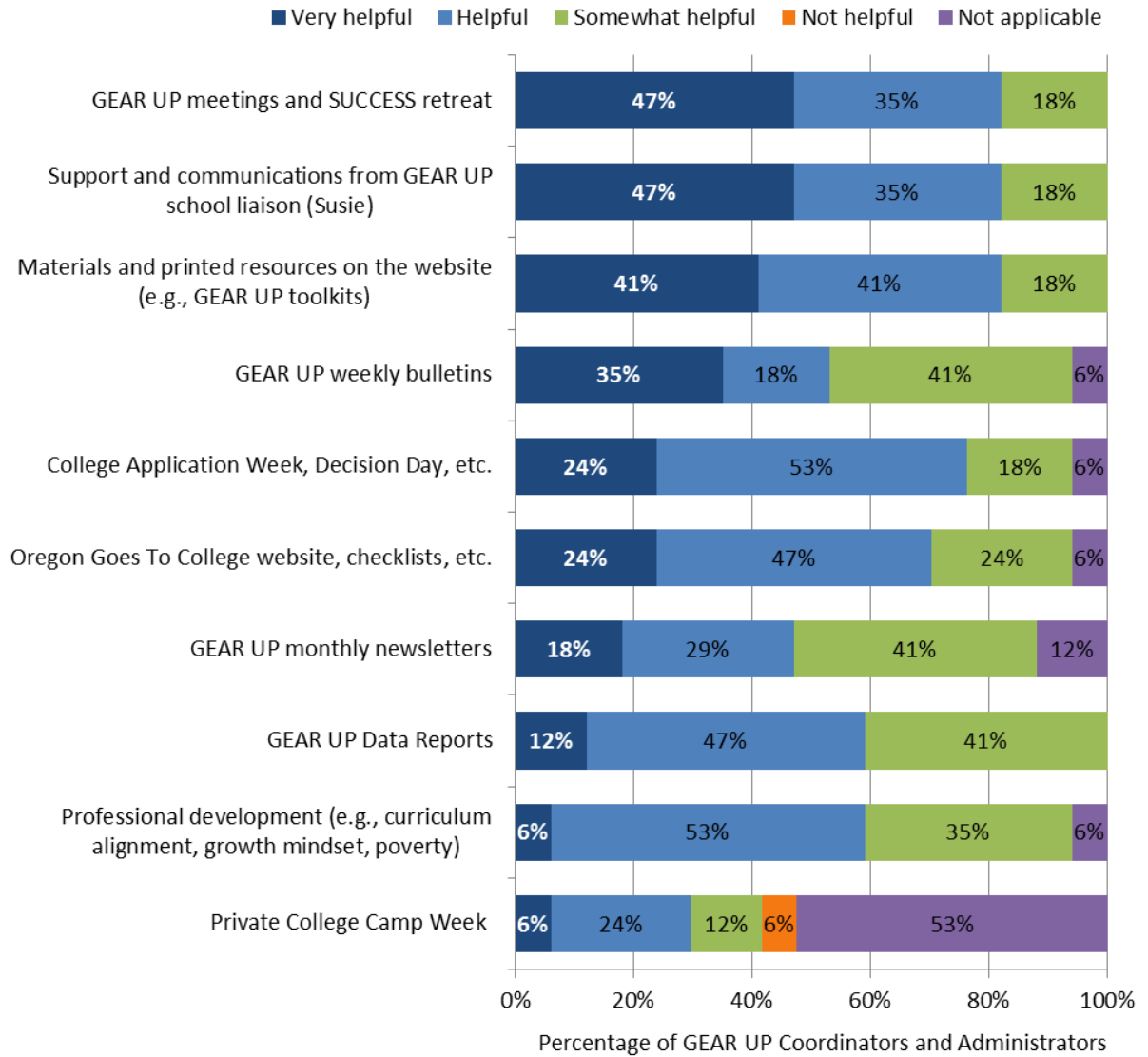
Lesson Learned: In order to manage a grant of this size (with 10 clusters and 16 schools) and complexity (5 “R” framework), the Oregon GEAR UP team provided a robust menu of centralized supports to ensure effective communication, guidance, and ongoing learning opportunities.

To facilitate grant implementation at the school level, help address common challenges that schools were experiencing, and promote cross-school learning, the Oregon GEAR UP team developed a robust menu of resources and supports, which included:

- GEAR UP meetings (e.g., a fall kick-off meeting, mid-year regional meetings, and a 3-day spring SUCCESS retreat), during which time schools could meet, plan, learn from each other, and participate in professional development;
- Ongoing support, coaching, and visits from two school liaisons;
- Weekly bulletins for coordinators and monthly newsletters for administrators and educators, containing grant announcements and reminders, current research on promising practices, and college and career-related resources;
- Materials and resources on the website, including toolkits on various topical areas (e.g., college visits, college-going culture, career and college day, career and college center, college fit, community engagement, GREAR UP Week, games and activities, communications, transition to high schools, and transition to college);
- Cluster-specific GEAR UP data reports, which included results from student, parent, and educator surveys, and progress on key grant measures such as academic, attendance, high school graduation, and college enrollment outcomes;
- Centrally-provided professional development offered during GEAR UP meetings, Summer Institutes, and in-school coaching;
- Oregon Goes to College website, which includes critical information on college-related topics, deadlines, and resources such as checklists;
- Support and guidance on how to implement school-wide events such as College Application Week and Decision Day.

As shown in Figure 30, Oregon GEAR UP coordinators and administrators provided very positive feedback on all the supports they have received. The highest-rated supports were: GEAR UP meetings and retreats, support and communications from the Oregon GEAR UP school liaisons, materials and resources on the website, and weekly bulletins.

Figure 30: Helpfulness of GEAR UP Supports



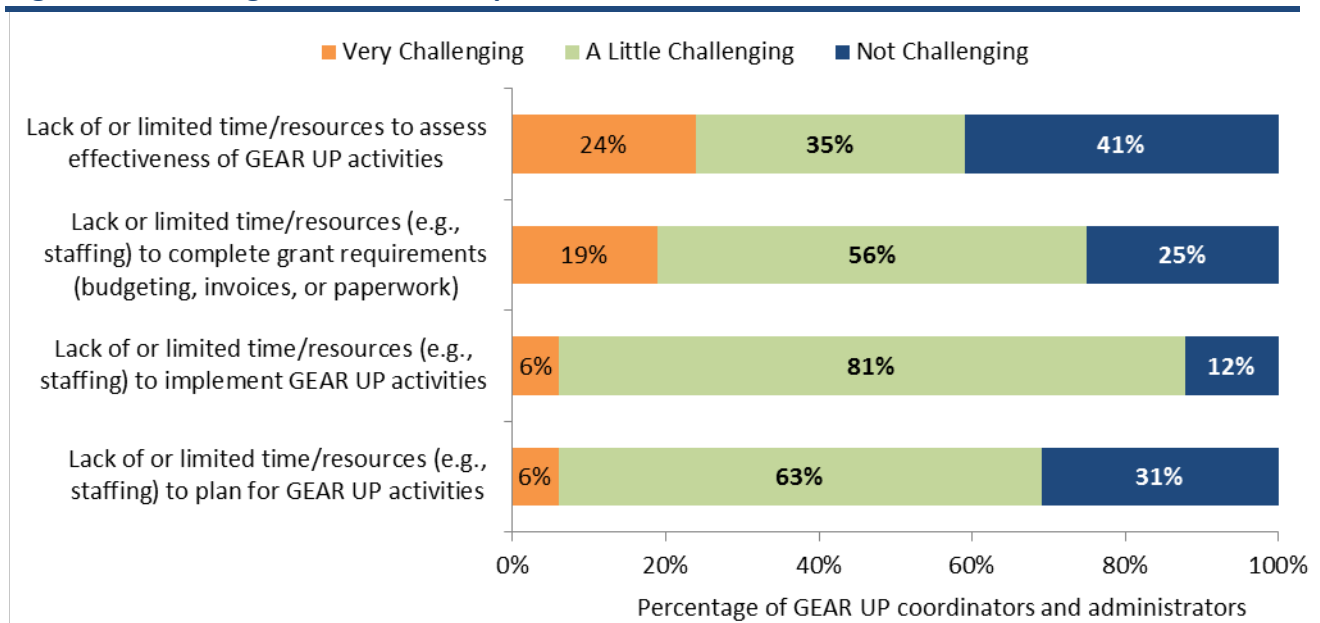
Source: 2016–17 GEAR UP coordinator and administrator survey (N=17)

Lesson Learned: Better defining the time requirements and expectations for the coordinator position, and providing the time and space for GEAR UP teams to meet were critical to the grant’s success.

School staff—including coordinators, administrators, GEAR UP teams, and educators—needed to devote time, effort, and resources to ensure the successful implementation of their GEAR UP plans. These staff, however, had concurrent responsibilities and priorities (and were often “pulled in many directions”); they often cited time constraints as one of the main barriers to GEAR UP implementation.

As shown in Figure 31, most coordinators and administrators reported that it was a *little* or *very challenging* to find the time and resources to plan, implement, and/or assess the effectiveness of GEAR UP activities, and to complete all the grant requirements.

Figure 31: Challenges to GEAR UP Implementation



Over the course of the grant, the Oregon GEAR UP central team worked to further define the role, requirements, and time commitment of coordinators, to ensure that these were well understood and respected by coordinators and administrators, alike. Furthermore, through the work and lessons learned from the second federal grant and the Ford grant, the coordinator position in the third federally-funded grant became a half-time paid position rather than providing stipends to full-time staff at the school.

During the site visits, all coordinators and principals, and many educators, identified the GEAR UP meetings, and in particular the spring SUCCESS retreat for school teams, as a critical support that provided the time they needed to plan for new activities, reflect on past implementation, network with other schools, and share ideas and best practices. As one coordinator commented, “I loved the planning sessions in April. This gave me an opportunity to talk openly about issues that needed to be addressed for the continued success of our students.”

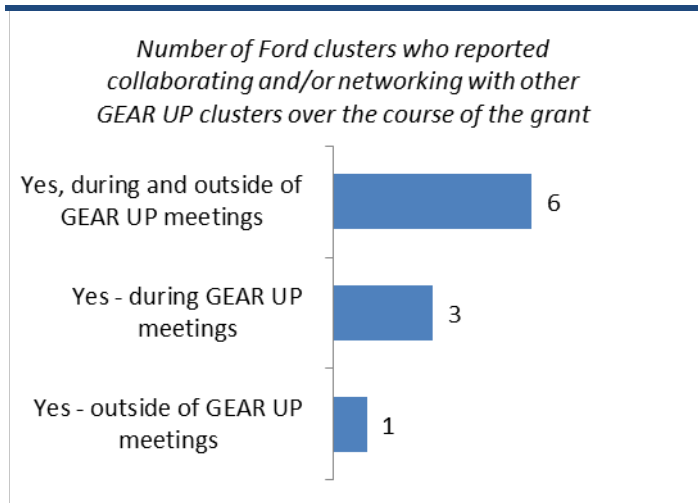
Lesson Learned: The TFFF grant facilitated the creation of a collaborative community across participating GEAR UP schools and school districts.

The ability to network and collaborate with other schools and learn from each other was also seen as having a positive effect on GEAR UP implementation. Speaking of the GEAR UP meetings and planning retreats, one coordinator commented, “And one thing that I love about the meetings is talking to all the other coordinators and what they do and what works and what doesn’t work, and getting ideas from them.” Particularly successful in this area was the introduction of promising practices presentations throughout the GEAR UP meetings and retreats. With input from the school liaisons who worked closely with the schools, schools with promising and/or innovative practices in each of the 5 Rs were identified and asked to present to the larger group using the 7-14-28 presentation format. Other school staff interested in learning more about these practices were encouraged to approach the presenters to get additional information. Topics covered during these presentations included: family engagement, community tours, college/career awareness games, and sustainability, among many others. These sessions were overwhelmingly well received by school staff attending the meetings, who often cited them as some of the most useful knowledge sharing activities they’ve participated in.

Furthermore, all ten clusters reported collaborating with other GEAR UP clusters—during meetings and outside of meetings (Figure 32). The following are examples they provided of these collaborations:

- “Elkton and Yoncalla and Drain, we did some planning together.”
- “We have worked with Coquille and Powers to plan career days. We have talked with Camas about details of their end of the year awards night and vinyl printer. We have also networked with Hermiston about their coffee shop and printer business.”
- “We have collaborated with Bandon [federally-funded cluster] on many activities.”
- “[We have collaborated] with Yoncalla and North Douglas. ... And up until this year, we have always done a pretty good job of that. We always had monthly meetings, and shared ideas back and forth, and went together on certain things. Yoncalla and Drain both got new coordinators, so we haven’t been in touch this year as much, but they are invited.”
- “We collaborated with other schools to put on career fairs, college visitations and other related events.”
- “We met with other Ford Schools similar in size to discuss what they are doing. It was helpful in looking at activities with schools similar in size, socio - economic status, staff, etc.”

Figure 32: GEAR UP Collaborative Community



“

The first three years, we had a regional career fair. We hosted it at Myrtle Point one year, and I think we hosted it at Coquille two years, and we collaborated on that process. And it was a great activity. We would bus all of our junior high students there. We would invite in 10 or 12 different professionals from a variety of types of careers. It was fantastic.

GEAR UP Principal

Lesson Learned: The infusion of technology was seen as a huge success in many schools. More guidance was needed, however, to ensure that schools were intentional in their planning and their use of GEAR UP-purchased technology.

Throughout the grant period, all 10 clusters used GEAR UP funding to build their data infrastructure, which in many cases was considerably outdated. Resources were spent on various technological needs, such as purchasing tablets, laptops, projectors, and Kindle readers, and securing licenses for Career Information System (CIS), graphic arts, and web design software. In many instances, the infusion of technology resulted in enhanced practices (e.g., implementation of Google classrooms) and/or new courses being offered (e.g., online courses); but in other cases, according to some coordinators and administrators, the new technology was not used to its full extent. As a result, the GEAR UP team devoted more attention to ensuring that schools clearly identified in their school plans the various purposes/goals for getting the new technology and provided evidence of its use for those specific purposes. Schools were also encouraged to include professional development related to instructional technology in their school plans. Thus, GEAR UP schools were no longer allowed to include technology as a stand-alone component of their GEAR UP budget but rather it had to be included as part of a grant activity in their GEAR UP school plans.

Lesson Learned: Critical to the success of Oregon GEAR UP has been a constant and purposeful effort to use data effectively to manage the grant and build schools' capacity to integrate sound data practices into their GEAR UP work.

Using data is one of the key strategies in the Oregon GEAR UP framework and was a particular interest to TFFF at the beginning of the program. To encourage schools to make greater use of data, GEAR UP has implemented a number of successful strategies and supports in place, described below:

- Sharing relevant research and data through research briefs and monthly bulletins;
- Providing schools with cluster-based Key Data Reports, which include survey results, and longitudinal school data (e.g., academic achievement, attendance, high school graduation, and college enrollment figures);
- Development of an interactive dashboard (operational in the last year of the grant);
- Providing data literacy training, and space and time, during the SUCCESS retreats for schools to review their data and plan accordingly;
- Encouraging schools to develop measurable objectives for each activity listed in their school plans, and collect and analyze data to assess their progress on those measures;
- Attending staff school meetings to present cluster-specific data (e.g., survey findings) and facilitating school discussions on how to use data to inform school efforts.

“

We and the superintendent, we have talked about it [the Key Data Report], and how to change some things based on that data. So it's good to know what your parents think about what you're doing, and if the students feel safe or not. ... The one thing that interested me the most was how many students think they're going to go to college compared to how many teachers think the students are going to go to college, and they don't always match up. You know, that sort of thing, so it's useful.

GEAR UP Principal

In addition, Oregon GEAR UP used data—gathered through event feedback forms, site visits, school liaisons, student, parent, and educator surveys, and the external evaluation—on an ongoing basis to modify existing supports and devise new strategies, materials, and resources for schools.

Lesson Learned: Requiring schools to develop comprehensive sustainability plans (and to start planning for sustainability early in the grant) is key to ensuring the long-term impact of the grant.

Over the course of the grant, a number of strategies were implemented to support schools' sustainability efforts:

- From the very beginning of the project, schools were asked to address how their activities might be sustained without identify which strategies they planned to use to sustain each of the GEAR UP activities they implemented with GEAR UP funding. This allowed schools to begin planning for sustainability early on.
- Furthermore, during the SUCCESS retreat in the last year of the grant, Ford schools were asked to craft a comprehensive sustainability plan for all the activities they conducted over the course of the grant. Schools were also able to hear from other schools about their sustainability ideas, plans, and promising practices. These activities were extremely helpful, as evidenced by many complimentary comments from participants. One principal, for example, stated: "I think they really did a good job with this. We feel our transition will be smooth and the majority of what we have done will remain in place."
- Six of the 10 GEAR UP clusters also received sustainability grants, ranging from \$11,000 in one cluster to over \$50,000 in another cluster. These grants are funding diverse initiatives, including a student-run store and concession equipment, student-run radio station, and student-run coffee shop and college center; an electronic reader board for school announcements; and a revamped counseling and college/career office. Some of these projects will generate revenue for years to come so schools can continue to fund college and career readiness activities.

According to survey results, schools will be able to sustain most GEAR UP activities to some extent. Specifically, 82% of coordinators and administrators indicated that their schools will be able to sustain *most* GEAR UP components, while the remaining 18% said *some* activities will be sustained. None of the respondents, however, said they would be able to sustain *all* of the activities. Specifically, they identified the following types of activities as the least likely to be sustained:

- College visits and field trips (e.g., reduction in frequency and length of visits);
- Teacher PD and teacher attendance at conferences;
- Student leadership camp opportunities;
- Activities that require funding for staff time outside of the regular day or that occur during the day requiring substitute teachers;
- Mentoring program because, according to a principal, "there won't be a staff to coordinate";
- Incentives (e.g., dinner, prizes) to encourage participation in specific activities; and
- Coordinator position (e.g., "I think we will be able to sustain a good amount of the activities in our plan. Our biggest loss will be our GEAR UP coordinator who put everything together.")

“

I think most things will be sustained. Even if I'm not here, the campus visits will still happen. The classroom visits will still happen, we'll still do Knowledge Bowl, we'll do the PSAT, we'll still offer the dual credits, it will just be absorbed by the budget. It's just a matter of finding a way to pay me to coordinate it all. And if it doesn't happen, different people will have to pick up the pieces.

GEAR UP Coordinator

These results were confirmed during site visits, as exemplified in the following quote from a principal, “There’s actually a lot that will be sustained, it’s just a matter of how it might change a little bit. Like the college night, will we be able to cater it and provide prizes, like we have? Or is it just going to be an evening where we invite people to come? We’re always going to continue to offer the PSAT, college application week and decision day, but again the prizes piece [we may no longer sustain]. ... We would like to see the March Madness Jeopardy continue just because it is something that the 7th and 8th graders can easily do. It might just be a matter of having to figure out time-wise how to get our regular duties in plus that, when there is not a grant requiring it to happen.”

Principals and coordinators were asked to share advice or suggestions on how they will be able to sustain program activities after the grant ends. Examples included:

- Implementing programs that can generate some revenue;
- Looking for ways to generate funds (examples: “We are looking into a vinyl or sublimation printer to purchase that will help sustain GEAR UP activities. Our art teacher will create a new digital arts class in order to run the business.” and “We are looking at other grants and going out and talking with community organizations to help.”);
- Starting the grant with an understanding that some activities will need to be built into school budgets and slowly transferring these activities into the school’s budget;
- Garnering support from the school board, the superintendent, and school administrators, who are willing to create, promote, fund, and enforce the continuation of key program activities;
- Prioritizing what is most important or effective and asking the school/school district to fund it (e.g., “We have expanded our dual credit course offering quite a bit. Our district thought it was important to support the continuation of these courses financially. We cannot continue with everything due to the lack of funds so we had to prioritize what we believed most important.”);
- Having a key member—such as the coordinator—or a team that will make sure specific events and activities continue (e.g., “I happen to be the counselor so many of the activities we do already fit into what I should be doing.”);
- Purchasing “non-consumable” items during the grant that can be used for several years after the grant is completed (e.g., “We added a GEAR UP laptop lab for our GEAR UP classes and those computers will be able to be used for the purpose of the grant for many years.”);
- Looking for community partnerships that can be sustained; and
- Continuing to collaborate with other schools to lessen costs.

VII. Conclusions

In 2016–17, Oregon GEAR UP implemented the final year of The Ford Family Foundation GEAR UP grant. There is strong evidence that this initiative has resulted in important changes in school practices and has helped schools build a stronger college-going culture. All schools implemented a wide range of college and career readiness activities such as college visits, FAFSA and college nights, career guest speaker events, academic interventions and supports, expansion of rigorous coursework, technology integration, professional development, and family events, among many others. Principals and coordinators were confident many of these activities will be sustained after the grant ends.

Results also show that educators have become much more involved in discussing postsecondary options with their students and participating in the schools' college and career efforts. Their expectations regarding students' postsecondary education enrollment rose over time, although they remained lower than students and parents' expectations.

Students benefited from GEAR UP interventions such as tutoring and afterschool help, the expansion of rigorous coursework, and the integration of instructional technology into their classes. Schools experienced small, but important academic gains. GEAR UP seemed to have its strongest impact on increasing students' and families' knowledge and preparation for postsecondary education. The college visits, for example, were identified by many students as “eye-opening” experiences, making college more attainable for many. Furthermore, results show overall gains in FAFSA completion, high school graduation, and fall college enrollment rates; although results varied across individual clusters.

The TFFF GEAR UP grant resulted in important lessons learned—including challenges and promising practices—regarding family engagement, staff and school administrator involvement and buy-in, the use of data, and sustainability. These lessons have helped inform the work being conducted as part of the federally-funded GEAR UP initiative, which is currently in its fourth year of implementation, and will help shape future Oregon GEAR UP efforts in the field of college and career readiness.

“

I would say that there is value in the process. Don't be afraid to fail, but be willing to learn from that and adjust. There is a well developed support system within the GEAR UP program, so challenge your school to be better and see where that journey takes you.

GEAR UP School Principal

Appendix A: Methodology

The 2016–17 evaluation, which included both formative and summative components, was guided by the following overarching research questions:

- What does GEAR UP implementation look like in participating schools and communities? What are the common/varying elements in implementation?
- What are promising practices, implementation challenges, and lessons learned?
- What are schools' perceptions and feedback on the supports and resources provided by GEAR UP? How have these supports helped advance schools' college and career readiness vision and work? What else could GEAR UP do to continue supporting the schools?
- What is the project's progress in:
 - raising expectations for students, parents and educators and promoting a school-wide college-going culture?
 - helping schools increase rigor and prepare students for postsecondary success?
 - promoting career relevance and awareness?
 - promoting positive school climate and strong relationships?
 - raising students' and families' awareness of postsecondary options and financial aid resources?

To answer these questions, the evaluation used multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data from key stakeholder groups. These are described next.

- **Surveys of GEAR UP coordinators and administrators.** In spring 2017, Metis administered a survey for school-based GEAR UP coordinators and administrators. This survey was used to collect critical information about each school's context (e.g., challenges/needs and assets), program implementation successes and challenges, and perceived impact of GEAR UP on key outcome areas. Seventeen GEAR UP coordinators and administrators completed the survey (85% response rate).
- **Interviews with district superintendents.** In spring 2016, superintendents were asked to provide feedback on their role, awareness, and involvement in the GEAR UP grant, as well as their perceptions around the grant's impact, sustainability, and suggestions for improvement. Three superintendents were interviewed over the phone, two provided feedback via email, and two responded to the school administrator survey (they were acting as both principals and superintendent). Despite multiple follow-ups, three superintendents did not provide feedback.
- **GEAR UP student, parent/guardian, and educator surveys.** Student and parent surveys were designed to: 1) assess the extent to which the initiative meets its objective of increasing students' and families' knowledge of postsecondary options, preparation and financing, as well as postsecondary aspirations/expectations; 2) obtain critical data on student and parent needs; and 3) gather feedback on college and career readiness activities. In order to maximize response rates, student and parent surveys were administered online and on paper, and were available in English and Spanish. Parent surveys were administered between August and December of each year; whereas student surveys were administered between January and March of each year.

Schools were allowed to administer the student and parent surveys using different methods (online or paper), and surveys were available in English and Spanish. For the parent survey, schools used a variety of methods and venues, including: registration, school events, through mailings, and through social media. Schools that sent out the parent survey with the registration package over the summer were more successful in getting higher response rates. Student surveys were often administered during an advisory or class. Coordinators overseeing the survey administration efforts had access to an automated report of survey response counts using Qualtrics software to keep track of their progress. The educator survey, which was administered online in January and February 2016, was designed to assess schools’ efforts in building a college-going culture, identify school needs and staff professional development needs, and gather educators’ feedback on the GEAR UP activities being conducted at their schools, including the impact of these activities on teachers, students, parents, and schools.

Table A1 shows the number of completed surveys by respondent group (and when available, response rates).

Table A1: Survey Participation Rates

Surveys	Number of Surveys Completed (Response Rate)	
	Baseline ¹	Year 6 (2016-17)
Student Surveys	3,022 (79%)	3,117 (72%)
Parent/Guardian Surveys	Not used	986 (23%) ²
Educator Surveys	168 (--) ³	289 (--) ³

¹ Year 1 (2011–12) student surveys were used as baseline for longitudinal survey analyses; Year 2 (2012–13) educator surveys were used as baseline for longitudinal survey analyses (educators were not surveyed in Year 1); due to low parent survey response rates, 2016–17 parent survey results were not compared to previous years’ surveys.

² Parent survey response rates are underestimated since parents may have more than one student in the GEAR UP schools.

³ Educator survey response rates were not calculated because information on the total number of educators was not available.

- Site visits.** Site visits were conducted in six Ford schools representing five clusters in 2015–16 and 2016-17. These site visits were used to better understand how different efforts and processes within varying contexts can lead to specific outcomes, as well as to identify critical success factors and barriers to implementation that can inform program development efforts. During these visits, the Metis evaluator conducted individual interviews with the principal and the GEAR UP coordinator, as well as focus groups with school staff, students, and parents. Metis also collected and reviewed relevant school documentation and, when feasible, observed relevant school activities. The following table shows the number of activities and participants.

Table A2: Overview of Site Visits

Activities	Total	2015–16	2016–17
Number of schools visited	6	3	3
Number of interviewed principals	6	3	3
Number of interviewed coordinators	5	2	3

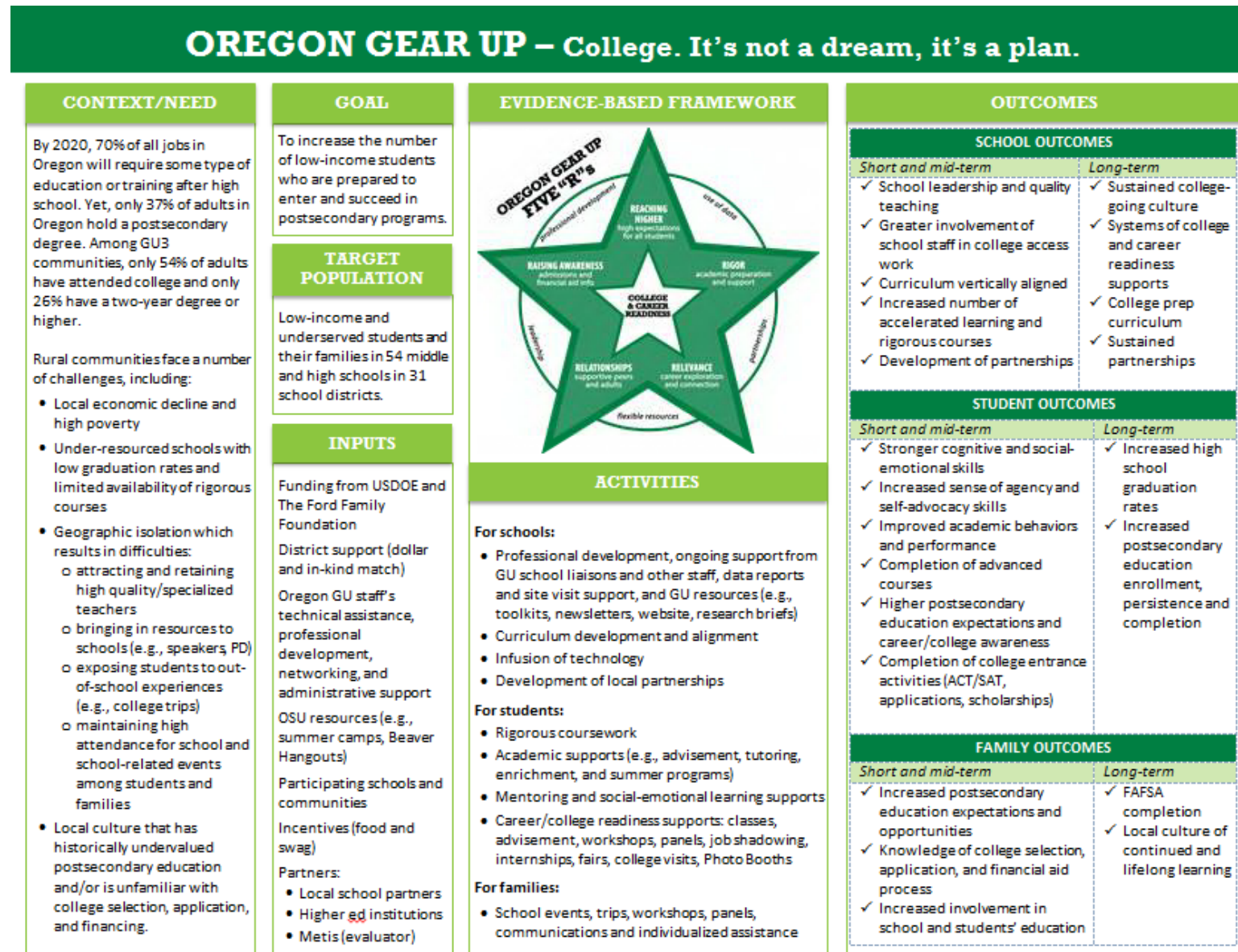
Activities	Total	2015–16	2016–17
Number of interviewed staff	21	10	11
Number of interviewed students	36	12	24
Number of interviewed parents	22	11	11

- **Analyses of student data.** Metis obtained student data from ODE for the target cohort, including information on students’ demographic characteristics, academic performance, daily school attendance, and high school graduation. Analyses were conducted to assess the initiative’s progress towards meeting its project objectives and to measure changes over time. In Year 6, Metis also analyzed high school graduation data for a group of similarly-situated comparison schools. College enrollment data were obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse and analyses were conducted comparing Ford schools to cohort schools (in their 3rd year of implementation).

There were a number of **limitations to the Year 6 study**. These are described below.

- There are some external factors outside of the control of Oregon GEAR UP that may positively or negatively influence the key outcomes of interest, including changes in context, policies, or practices at the community, regional, state, or federal level. A clear example of this is the Oregon Promise. Created by the Oregon Legislature in 2015, the Oregon Promise seeks “to encourage Oregon residents who are graduating high school students and recent GED graduates to immediately continue their education by providing funding to attend community college in Oregon.” This statewide initiative has likely influenced students’ postsecondary education aspirations and choices, thus adding a confounding factor in our impact study.
- Several Oregon GEAR UP TFFF schools are very small in size; because of this, school data—including academic achievement, attendance, high school graduation, and college enrollment results may change considerably from year to year.
- Student, parent, and educator surveys provide critical information and insights from the perspective of key stakeholder groups. While student and educator surveys have consistently shown strong response rates (often 80% or higher), parent surveys have not. Therefore results from these surveys should be interpreted with caution as they may not be generalizable. Furthermore, survey respondents are not matched across years and may represent somewhat different groups of individuals; thus longitudinal analyses of survey data should be interpreted with caution.

Appendix B: Logic Model



Appendix C: References

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