



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oregon Schools Light the Way for National GEAR UP Week, Celebrating Two Decades of Student Success

Ten regional school districts kick off National GEAR UP Week with student-led events, FAFSA milestones, and career-focused pathways.

Corvallis, Oregon — From campus door-decorating contests and alumni panels to FAFSA completion milestones and college-bound celebrations, schools across Oregon are joining a nationwide movement this September. National GEAR UP Week, running from September 21-25, 2026, under the theme “*Lighting the Way*” highlights the positive impact of the federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) initiative.

For more than two decades, Oregon GEAR UP has been a cornerstone of postsecondary preparation across the state. Since its inception in 2002, the program has partnered with 109 schools across 48 predominantly rural communities, walking alongside more than 40,000 students on their paths to higher education and fulfilling careers.

Throughout GEAR UP Week, local communities are spotlighting how early college and career planning strengthens school culture. Participating schools—including Bonanza, Gervais, Gilchrist, Mapleton, Pilot Rock, Prospect, Neah-Kah-Nie, St. Helens, Toledo, and Waldport—are hosting campus events designed to raise academic expectations, engage families, and demonstrate that education beyond high school is an attainable reality for every student, whether that leads to a technical certification, trade school, apprenticeship, or a 2- or 4-year degree.

"GEAR UP Week is a celebration of a new school year focused on helping students make meaningful plans for college and career," said Adrienne Enriquez, Oregon GEAR UP Program Director. "It's a reminder that preparation starts early—and that consistent support matters."

Funded through a competitive federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Oregon GEAR UP works hand-in-hand with school districts, higher education institutions, and community partners to expand access and preparation. By providing essential resources, professional development for educators, and voluntary student programming, the initiative builds long-term traditions of student success that endure well beyond the grant lifecycle.

To learn more about Oregon GEAR UP and see how communities are celebrating GEAR UP Week, follow along on social media using the hashtags #GEARUPworks, #GEARUPweek, and #LightingTheWay.

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