

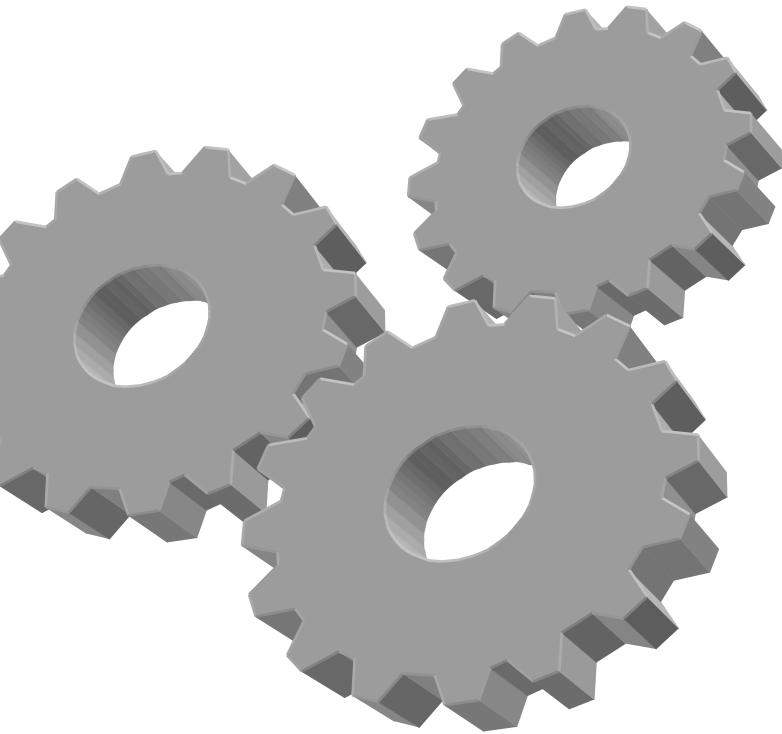
# Reaching Higher



Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness  
for Undergraduate Programs



Oregon GEAR UP Annual Report 2008-09



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Dear Fellow Oregonian:

Oregon GEAR UP has been an enormously valuable asset to our state, helping to make postsecondary education a reality for more Oregonians. Beginning in 2002 with a six-year grant from the United States Department of Education, Oregon GEAR UP served low-income school districts across the state, empowering them to more effectively prepare their students for college. I am delighted that the Oregon University System has received a new GEAR UP grant and will continue its important work through 2014.

This year saw the kickoff of the new grant, and twenty new schools joined the GEAR UP family. The teachers, counselors, staff, administrators and volunteers in these schools have already demonstrated a powerful commitment to student success, working tirelessly to close the achievement gap and raise college-going aspirations among all of their students. GEAR UP has supported the schools’ participation in a variety of key activities – including curriculum enhancement, family and community outreach, college and university events and professional development for educators – that lay the groundwork for a sustained culture of achievement.

I am very proud of GEAR UP’s past accomplishments and I look forward to even greater success with this new grant. As I have said before, Oregon’s bright future will depend upon a highly educated citizenry. Our 40-40-20 plan calls for eighty percent of our residents to attain some form of postsecondary education. GEAR UP is a critical component in our plan to achieve this ambitious goal. I encourage you to learn more about this program and find ways to get involved in college access initiatives in your community.

Sincerely,

Theodore R. Kulongoski  
Governor



Greetings:

GEAR UP's mission is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to succeed in postsecondary educational pursuits. 2008 marked the launch of Oregon's second GEAR UP grant and brought twenty additional schools - representing twelve rural communities - into the GEAR UP program. As you'll read in the pages that follow, these schools have quickly embraced the program and are already making a significant difference in the lives of their students.

GEAR UP emphasizes the early development of college-going aspirations and targets students beginning in the seventh grade. Overall 1,300 seventh graders were served by the GEAR UP program in 2008-09, while even greater numbers of other students benefited from the college-going culture gaining ground in their schools.

High expectations for all students are at the center of GEAR UP's work. However, high expectations alone will not get the job done. They must be accompanied by effective and accessible college preparatory curricula, career exploration opportunities, early awareness of the coursework required for postsecondary success, access to caring adults and supportive peers, and an understanding of the resources available to help make college affordable.

Across the state, staff and volunteers in GEAR UP schools are working hard to address each of these critical themes. This report highlights their efforts and celebrates their successes. I am proud to share these successes with you, and I hope that you will join us in our continued effort to make college a reality for more young Oregonians.

My heartfelt thanks go out to all those who have helped make GEAR UP such a success this year.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Carnahan  
Director, Oregon GEAR UP



*“What a wonderful opportunity for middle school students to access windows of possibility through the GEAR UP program.”*

*-Sharon Baum  
Principal  
North Marion Middle School*

## What is GEAR UP?

College...it's not a dream, it's a plan. That's our motto at Oregon GEAR UP, and it guides our work with middle and high schools around the state. We support schools in their efforts to set high academic expectations, promote early awareness of college opportunities, and engage students in college and career planning. Our goal is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary programs, and we work with school districts, colleges and universities, and a variety of partner organizations across Oregon to realize that goal.

Administered by the Oregon University System, Oregon GEAR UP began in 2002 with a six-year grant from the United States Department of Education. We received a second federal grant in 2008, which will fund activities through 2014. All low-income serving school districts in Oregon qualify for membership in the GEAR UP family and are encouraged to join its statewide college readiness effort.

Activities are concentrated in twelve Oregon school districts receiving GEAR UP funding during the 2008-2014 grant cycle. Grants of \$30,000 to \$40,000 are awarded annually to each district. Alongside the grants, GEAR UP provides the districts with technical assistance and coordinates a variety of statewide activities that support the development of successful school-based college readiness initiatives.

Middle and high school staff in these districts design and carry out most of the program's activities. Our partner organizations provide curriculum support, mentorship programs and professional development opportunities to the schools, as well as college campus-based events that expose students to college life.

# GEAR UP Schools

In 2008, public schools in twelve rural communities around the state became GEAR UP schools. In each of these communities, the GEAR UP program is focused in a school or cluster of schools serving low-income students in grades seven through twelve. GEAR UP activities targeted the class of 2014 during the first year of the grant; a new cohort of seventh graders will be added each subsequent year.



## Aurora

North Marion Middle and North Marion High

## Brookings

Azalea Middle and Brookings-Harbor High

## Cottage Grove

Lincoln Middle, Kennedy High and Cottage Grove High

## Glendale

Glendale Jr/Sr High

## Grants Pass

Fleming Middle and North Valley High

## Irrigon

Irrigon Jr/Sr High

## La Pine

La Pine Middle and La Pine High

## Lincoln City

Taft 7-12

## Merrill

Lost River Jr/Sr High

## Myrtle Creek

Coffenberry Middle and South Umpqua High

## Stanfield

Stanfield Secondary

## Sweet Home

Sweet Home Jr High and Sweet Home High



*“The GEAR UP afterschool program has increased accountability and raised parental involvement with our students and school. Students are more accountable for their educational choices and the extra help has allowed the math program to have nearly 90% of all students in the regular math classes passing the state tests.”*

*-Blaine Braithwaite  
Math Teacher  
Stanfield Secondary School*

## School & Statewide Demographics

### GEAR UP's Rural Focus

Historically, rural Oregonians have been among the least likely in the state to access postsecondary education. Barriers including geographic and cultural isolation from higher education result in a persistent gap in educational attainment between rural residents and those in the rest of the state. Today, students who graduate from high schools in rural Oregon are only half as likely as their urban counterparts to obtain a bachelor's degree. At the same time, rapid shifts toward a knowledge-based economy – in all parts of the state – point to a pressing need to close the rural/urban educational gap: Traditionally rural industries, such as timber and agriculture, increasingly utilize technologies that require employees to gain knowledge and skills through postsecondary education; and the Oregon State Board of Higher Education projects that by 2017, eighty percent of Oregon's high-wage jobs will require a bachelor's degree or higher.

In light of these trends, Oregon GEAR UP targeted rural school districts for the 2008-2014 grant cycle. Participating schools would receive technical support, professional development services and grant funding for six years. Rural, low-income serving schools throughout rural Oregon were invited to apply to the program, and schools were selected based on five key criteria: demonstration of need, strong staff commitment to the program, sufficient partner involvement, readiness to engage in school-wide college readiness efforts, and a solid plan for sustaining those efforts beyond the life of the grant.

The resulting set of participating schools includes seven middle schools, eight high schools, and five schools that combine middle and secondary grades.

Together, these schools yield a demographic profile that is fairly representative of rural Oregon: As reflected in the chart below, the population served by these schools is lower-income and somewhat less ethnically diverse than the state’s population as a whole.

<b>GEAR UP Middle Schools</b>	<b>Oregon Middle Schools</b>	<b>GEAR UP High Schools</b>	<b>Oregon High Schools</b>
62% Free/Reduced Lunch	48% Free/Reduced Lunch	53% Free/Reduced Lunch	39% Free/Reduced Lunch
23% Minority Students	30% Minority Students	20% Minority Students	27% Minority Students
12% Students on IEPs*	14% Students on IEPs	13% Students on IEPs	11% Students on IEPs
0.4% Annual Dropout Rate	0.4% Annual Dropout Rate	2.8% Annual Dropout Rate	3.7% Annual Dropout Rate

Reflects most recent data available from Oregon Department of Education. Dropout rate from 2007-08; all other data 2008-09.

\*Individualized Education Plans for students receiving special education and related services



*“I think this program is one of the best directions we have taken as a staff in terms of providing direction to our students, regardless of their high poverty and lack of parental college involvement.”*

*-Pat Yaeger  
Principal  
La Pine Middle School*

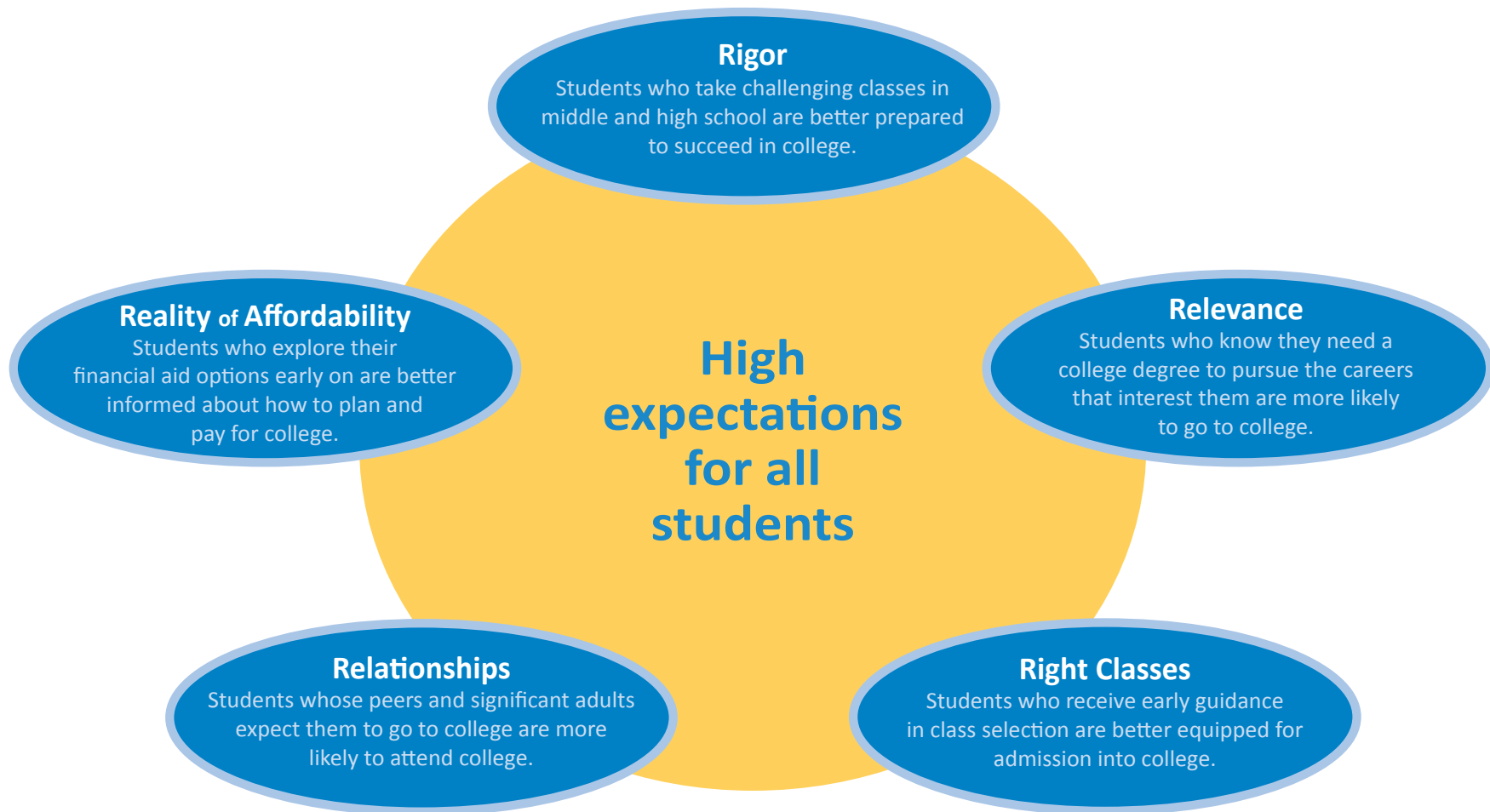
## GEAR UP Partners

Access to Student Assistance Programs in Reach of Everyone (ASPIRE)  
Blue Mountain Community College  
Community and Shelter Assistance (CASA) Corp of Oregon  
The College Board  
Eastern Oregon University  
Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC)  
Education Partnerships, Inc.  
Envictus Corporation  
Lane Community College  
Mathematics, Engineering & Science Achievement (MESA)  
National College Access Network  
NELA Center for Student Success  
Oregon Career Information System  
Oregon College Access Network  
Oregon Institute of Technology  
Oregon State University  
Oregon Student Assistance Commission  
Path to Scholarships  
Preparation for Instruction of Science & Math (PrISM) Oregon  
Quantum Learning  
ReadOregon  
Rogue Community College  
Southern Oregon University  
Umpqua Community College  
United States Department of Education  
University of Oregon  
Western Oregon University



# The Five “Rs”

Oregon GEAR UP emphasizes five key components of effective postsecondary preparation: rigor, relevance, right classes, relationships and reality of affordability. As you’ll read in the following sections, this research-based “Five R” model underpins all school-based and statewide GEAR UP activities, as well as many of the college campus-based events in which GEAR UP students participate.





*“This program has served to bridge the gap in communication that often exists between middle and high schools.”*

*-Heather Yount  
Assistant Principal  
Fleming Middle School*

## School & Statewide Activities

### Rigor

A rigorous middle and high school curriculum sets the stage for success in college. Increasing low-income students’ access to appropriately rigorous classes and associated academic supports are therefore key GEAR UP goals.

Curriculum alignment is one important strategy toward increasing rigor and student success. Oregon GEAR UP partnered with the College Board to offer workshops on building “vertical” teams of teachers across grade levels within a given content area. These workshops provided educators in GEAR UP schools with tools for aligning curricula and developing challenging systems of instruction that foster students’ ongoing academic growth.

A number of schools made curriculum alignment a central feature of their GEAR UP program this year. For example, staff at Fleming Middle School and North Valley High School worked together to align math and language arts curricula across grades six through twelve; Lincoln Middle School and Cottage Grove High School began collaborating on science alignment; the Sweet Home cluster targeted science, language arts and math; the Irrigon cluster initiated alignment across all core content areas; and the Brookings cluster began a large-scale curriculum mapping project tied to statewide standards. The curriculum alignment process has not only fostered greater academic rigor in these schools; it has also led to the development of durable, collaborative relationships among staff members at the middle and high school levels.

These relationships will help to ensure successful student transitions for years to come.

Professional development was not limited to curriculum alignment: GEAR UP funds enabled educators to participate in a wide variety of workshops, conferences and trainings designed to enhance the teaching and learning of rigorous curricula. Educators from GEAR UP schools attended professional conferences and learned cutting-edge instructional methods in science, social studies and math; they received training in standards-based reporting, differentiated instruction and assessment; and they engaged in workshops on literacy, student motivation and dropout prevention.

Increased rigor and heightened expectations of students must be accompanied by strong academic supports, and several GEAR UP schools have developed new programs to that end:

- The North Marion cluster's afterschool tutoring program provides students in grades six through eleven with academic tutors twice a week.
- Taft 7-12's reading and math support classes ensure that all seventh and eighth graders receive the assistance they need to perform at or above grade level in these subjects.
- Stanfield Secondary School provided an extended school day for struggling students.
- Lost River Junior/Senior High School's new mobile computer lab provides students with access to innovative academic technology.
- Coffenberry Middle School created in-school and afterschool tutoring programs.
- The La Pine cluster instituted a new math lab to help students stay on course in math achievement.
- The Glendale cluster's junior high summer school program was established for students requiring remediation in English or math.



**Rigor**Relevance**Right**Classes**Relationships**Realityof**Affordability**



*“I never really thought about college that much before GEAR UP, but now I know that I’m going to go!”*

*-7th Grade Student  
Coffenberry Middle School*

## Relevance

Research indicates that students’ educational success is largely driven by their career goals. Incorporating career-related learning into the curriculum makes school more meaningful and engaging for students and helps to increase their college-going behaviors. Accordingly, GEAR UP promotes early and ongoing exploration of career possibilities, as well as early awareness of the links between careers and education.

Oregon GEAR UP partnered with Oregon Career Information Systems (CIS) to pilot the new CIS Junior program in GEAR UP schools. Designed specifically for middle school students, CIS Junior is a powerful, online career exploration tool that students use to identify their interests, learn about professions that align with those interests, and connect their growing career aspirations to a personalized education plan. Many of GEAR UP’s middle schools participated in the pilot program this year.

A number of schools developed classes or clubs devoted to early career exploration. At La Pine, a new seventh grade Career Club meets during the lunch hour to explore careers, play cost-of-living games and participate in activities related to college and career readiness. Stanfield seventh graders participated in a semester-long Vocational Awareness class where they explored their career interests, recording their findings and reflections in career notebooks that they will continue to use throughout their middle and high

school years. Sweet Home Junior High School students began to explore careers through Career Interest Surveys administered through the school's new GEAR UP Club. Taft 7-12 developed a new GEAR UP class, and for one class project, students surveyed the entire seventh grade to identify the cohort's career interests and coordinated a Community Occupations Night based on the results. The event brought students and their families together to learn more about the careers and to engage in discussions about how students can best prepare for them.

GEAR UP schools employed a variety of other strategies to connect students' career goals with their educational pursuits:

- Lost River implemented a new program of career-oriented field trips exposing seventh graders to the world of renewable energy and its associated professions.
- Fleming Middle School's seventh graders participated in the Women and Men in Trades fair at Rogue Community College.
- Coffenberry Middle School students took part in an interactive Career Exploration Institute at Umpqua Community College along with a variety of industry tours exposing students to careers in the building trades.
- Glendale's Transportation Fair was developed to expose students to a variety of careers in transportation and public safety, while its Career, College and Fun trips to OIT, OSU and UCC focused on the postsecondary educational pathways toward students' desired careers.
- Azalea Middle School students explored careers in environmental science and biology through their participation in the Jack Creek Watershed Restoration Project. Working with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, students collected baseline data on creek health, removed invasive species of plants, and participated in water collection and testing.



**Rigor**Relevance**Right**Classes**Relationships**Realityof**Affordability**



*“Because of the effort being put forth in recruiting and preparing our mid-school kids for college, my expectations for these kids have grown.”*

*-Marilyn Durbin  
English Teacher  
Stanfield Secondary School*

## Right Classes

GEAR UP works to ensure that students understand the kind of curriculum that will prepare them for college-level work and future careers, and we support schools in their efforts to offer college preparatory curricula to all students.

Oregon GEAR UP partnered with Envictus Corporation to offer GEAR UP schools access to an exciting college and career readiness program called Navigation 101. This web-based program includes curriculum and case management applications to help schools ensure that each student is succeeding in college-preparatory coursework and activities. Thanks to this partnership, all GEAR UP schools were invited to take advantage of three-year Envictus readiness grants, which include on-site training and assistance and cover the costs of the full Navigation 101 program. The Irrigon, Glendale, Sweet Home and Taft clusters all plan to kick off the program during the 2009-10 school year.

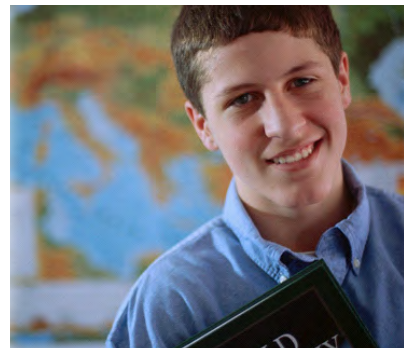
Engaging parents and families is an important means of influencing students' course-taking behaviors, and several GEAR UP schools held events designed to familiarize families with college preparatory pathways through middle and high school. Lost River enhanced its Parent Information Night program to include grade-level sessions on preparing for postsecondary success; Sweet Home Junior High School initiated a series of evening events covering graduation and college entrance requirements; and Glendale added college student panel presentations to its existing parent meetings program, providing family

members with a wealth of information about how to support their students' college-going aspirations.

A number of GEAR UP schools focused on successful middle-to-high school transitions as a key strategy toward increasing students' participation in college preparatory curricula. For example, the Cottage Grove cluster held a Move-Up Day, bringing eighth graders to the high school to familiarize them with the academic culture there; and the North Valley cluster instituted a Middle-to-High Transition program which engages teachers, counselors and students in cross-school visits to increase awareness of the social and academic environments that exist throughout the cluster.

Efforts toward ensuring students' access to the right classes also included the following:

- The Irrigon cluster began the expansion of its Advanced Placement (AP) program, with the goal of offering five different AP classes to each student prior to graduation.
- Taft 7-12 developed an enhanced diploma-planning curriculum, delivering it to students during their advisory periods.
- At Kennedy High School in Cottage Grove, each student took Lane Community College's placement tests in reading, mathematics, and writing. This endeavor has been part of a school-wide goal of having all students enter college needing no remedial coursework.
- Stanfield partnered with Blue Mountain Community College and Eastern Oregon University to present the 1st Annual Round Table Banquet Night for students and their parents. The evening's presentations covered the importance of postsecondary education and the types of classes students need to pursue in high school to make college a reality.



RigorRelevanceRightClassesRelationshipsRealityofAffordability



*“It has been absolutely amazing to watch these students fuel the GEAR UP program with their energy and enthusiasm; they don’t just participate in this program, they own it!”*

*-Kristy Westbrook  
GEAR UP Coordinator  
South Umpqua Cluster*

## Relationships

GEAR UP emphasizes the development of relationships that encourage students’ academic success and college readiness.

In April, Oregon GEAR UP held its annual SUCCESS Retreat in Bend. The purpose of SUCCESS – which stands for Supporting Unique Community Coalitions Engaged in Student Success – was to bring together teams from all the GEAR UP clusters to collaborate on creating a culture of high expectations and high achievement in schools. Retreat participants examined themes of cultural competence, poverty, class and equity; they explored strategies for building effective relationships in their schools and communities; and they worked together to develop their GEAR UP plans for the coming academic year. These activities not only helped GEAR UP teams to identify relationship-building strategies for use in their schools; they also supported the development of collegial relationships among GEAR UP teams across school districts.

Recognizing the importance of peer relationships in influencing students’ choices, a number of GEAR UP schools set out to create opportunities for students to bond around college-going themes. Sweet Home Junior High School’s GEAR UP club, Coffenberry Middle School’s Brown Bag Breakfast series, and Taft 7-12’s seventh-grade GEAR UP class are three great examples. Stanfield also capitalized on peer relationships as tools for raising awareness, having college-bound seniors give presentations to seventh and eighth graders about preparing for high school and college. During one presentation,



a senior commented that the seventh graders seemed unusually focused on their postsecondary educational goals, to which the seventh graders replied, “We have GEAR UP!”

The schools developed a wide range of other activities to strengthen key relationships:

- Irrigon initiated a relationship mapping system to ensure that every student had at least one strong, meaningful relationship with a school staff member who supported their postsecondary goals.
- In the Cottage Grove cluster, the focus was on relationships that make for more successful transitions between middle school, high school and college: Two staff members received training in the Link Crew freshman transition program and initiated plans to expand the program on their campus.
- Staff in the Brookings-Harbor cluster have also set out to expand their Link program, as well as their elementary-to-middle school transition program.
- The Glendale and North Valley clusters began work on ASPIRE student-adult mentoring programs that will be in place for the Class of 2014 as they enter high school.
- La Pine set up a GEAR UP Room for use during parent/teacher conferences; parents and family members visiting the room enjoyed refreshments, learned about the GEAR UP program, viewed photos of GEAR UP events, and learned about volunteer opportunities.

By focusing on relationships – both within schools and between schools, families and communities – these activities have been key in supporting students’ college-going behaviors.



**Rigor** **Relevance** **Right** **Classes** **Relationships** **Reality** **of** **Affordability**



*“I am so excited about what is happening in our district with the GEAR UP program. I truly believe it is going to change the way we do business here... for years to come!”*

*-Nancy Ellis  
Career Center Director  
Sweet Home High School*

## Reality of Affordability

GEAR UP addresses concerns about the affordability of postsecondary education, promoting awareness of college costs and of the multiple financial aid options available to students and their families.

In the summer of 2009, Oregon GEAR UP collaborated with Path to Scholarships to provide a Trainer Seminar to GEAR UP educators. Path to Scholarships is a curriculum that motivates students to chart career paths, plan and prepare for college, and apply for scholarships to help fund their postsecondary educational pursuits. The curriculum includes organizational tools and instructional methods based in research on generational poverty, and it challenges students to transform difficult obstacles into strengths. The Trainer Seminar provided participants with proven strategies for inspiring and guiding students to succeed in their pursuit of careers, college, and scholarships; and participants left the seminar with the resources and materials necessary to implement this innovative program in their schools. On the final day of the workshop, the newly trained participants provided their first workshop to a group of students from GEAR UP schools.

Among the school-based strategies of addressing affordability were family events that explored the costs of college attendance and provided parents with financial aid and scholarship information. A number of GEAR UP schools also developed or expanded mentoring programs that support students in planning for the academic and financial challenges associated with

postsecondary education. Finally, several schools established financial aid workshops for high school students, which provide help with filling out Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms, researching scholarship opportunities, and completing scholarship applications and essays. These programs will be firmly in place by the time GEAR UP's first cohort reaches high school.



RigorRelevanceRightClassesRelationshipsRealityofAffordability



*“Teachers are generating assignments related to college, students talk about where they want to go to college, our math scores are on the rise, the hallways are adorned with college posters and the overall atmosphere has shifted toward a more college-going culture.”*

*-Lynn Neemann  
GEAR UP Coordinator  
La Pine Cluster*

## Campus-Based Activities

**Eastern Oregon University** has partnered with GEAR UP since 2006, designing programs to increase college awareness and preparedness primarily among high school students. This year they expanded their offerings to engage middle school students in meaningful campus experiences that help these students begin to see themselves as “college material.” These events enabled students to experience a range of college activities. Students spent two days and one night on the EOU campus and participated in specially designed classes and activities.

For fourteen years **Lane Community College** has offered students of color the opportunity to realize their dreams of a college education through the Rites of Passage program. This summer activity emphasizes positive self-esteem, cultural awareness, academic preparedness and family engagement. For four weeks students are immersed in cultural and academic experiences that increase their college-going aspirations. LCC partnered with GEAR UP this year to offer the program free of charge to students from GEAR UP schools.

**Oregon Institute of Technology’s** Pre-College Programs are designed to raise students’ aspirations to include higher education and future careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. This year, OIT worked with seventh graders from Lost River Junior/Senior High School to increase their engagement - as well as their parents’ engagement - in academics, career exploration, and postsecondary educational planning. Activities began during the academic year and continued into the summer.

**Oregon State University** created an exciting new opportunity this year for students at Sweet Home Junior High School. The Ocean Science Camp (pictured at right) had four primary components: hands-on courses to build student confidence and understanding of ocean science; college planning activities that gave students a clear vision of college life and planning tools; family involvement activities that exposed parents and other community members to the experiences of students; and teacher participation that afforded teachers from Sweet Home Junior High School the opportunity to co-teach courses at OSU.

**Southern Oregon University** partnered with GEAR UP in a number of ways this year. Staff from the admissions office created a new, age-appropriate visitation program that exposes students to various aspects of college life and planning. GEAR UP students also attended SOU's existing summer academic enrichment programs at no cost. And finally, the Pre-College Youth Programs staff developed a six-day residential experience for students called "Oregon Outdoor Adventure: A Camp for the Wild & Curious," involving stays at the main campus in Ashland, the Deer Creek Field station, and Crater Lake National Park. During their stay, students learn about local natural resources and explore related fields of study.

The Summer Academy to Inspire Learning (SAIL) program at the **University of Oregon** is a week-long academic and college-awareness camp for talented students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This year, UO added a "college connections" component to the program, which provides middle school students with the opportunity to interact with current college students and to learn more about high school preparation, financial aid and admissions, and campus culture.



In order to more effectively engage middle school students and their families, **Western Oregon University** created a new middle school visitation program. The program includes a campus tour, a panel presentation from current college students, lunch in the campus dining facility, information on college admissions and financial aid, and much more.

In addition to the intensive campus-based activities described above, GEAR UP schools participated in a number of single-day college visits over the course of the year. Fleming Middle School students took field trips to Rogue Community College and Southern Oregon University; La Pine Middle School students visited Central Oregon Community College and Oregon State University; Lincoln Middle School students went to Lane Community College and registered for their LCC student identification numbers; North Marion Middle School students toured Portland State University; Lost River students toured both Oregon Institute of Technology and Southern Oregon University; and Sweet Home students travelled to the University of Oregon and Western Oregon University.

Seven GEAR UP middle schools took part in I'm Going to College – a unique program provided by the **Northwest Education Loan Association (NELA)**. The program is designed to educate students and their parents about the benefits of higher education, to increase low-income and minority students' awareness of the steps involved in getting to college, and to frame postsecondary education as an attainable goal for underrepresented students. The program includes a five-part curriculum covering everything from college preparation to college admissions and careers. After students complete the curriculum, they participate in a culminating visit to a college campus, which helps to cement the classroom lessons and increase students' familiarity with campus culture. This year, NELA coordinated Coffenberry Middle School's visit to the University of Oregon, Glendale Junior/Senior High School's visit to Oregon Institute of Technology, Sweet Home Junior High School's visit to Oregon State University, visits to Western Oregon University by Taft 7-12 and North Marion Middle School students, Irrigon Junior/Senior High School's visit to Eastern Oregon University, and Stanfield Secondary School's visit to Blue Mountain Community College.

## GEAR UP in the News



### Coffenberry gears up for college

Douglas County Mail  
October 29, 2008

MYRTLE CREEK — Coffenberry Middle School recently received a federal grant to support college access efforts...The local coordinator of the [GEAR UP] program is Kristy Westbrook and she recently kicked off the program with an information night for parents and students...

Approximately 150 7th grade students and their parents were in attendance...Guests received door prize tickets and a “College Knowledge” packet for coming, and additional door prize tickets and candy for wearing college gear to the event...

“The student enthusiasm was amazing and we had a pretty good turnout too,” said Westbrook.

### GEAR UP revs youths’ college interest

Corvallis Gazette-Times, June 23, 2009

CORVALLIS — Andrea Wilcox learned what Magic Shell syrup and molten lava have in common Tuesday. She poured the syrup into a cup of ice-cold water. Her instant observation:

“The water and the chocolate separated, and the chocolate turned hard,” Wilcox, 13, concluded. Andrea is one of 24 Sweet Home Junior High School seventh-grade students who is attending a five-day Ocean Science Camp at Oregon State University this week. They conducted experiments Tuesday in Graff Hall under the guidance of Laura Dover, a doctoral student in marine resource management.

The chocolate exercise mimicked the development of pillow lava - volcanic eruptions - on the ocean floor. It demonstrated how the molten rock turns solid once it hits the cold ocean, Dover told the students. Other experiments included learning how to take ocean floor core samples and studying marine rocks.

The Sweet Home School District is one of 12 Oregon districts that have received GEAR UP grants - Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs. The district will receive \$40,000 for each of the next six years to help prepare students for college.

During the school year, some 80 to 90 students are attending a weekly program where they are learning about college life, educational exchange trips, financial aid, etc. They also have made three campus visits: Oregon State University, the University of Oregon and Western Oregon University.

The science camp is sponsored by the Saturday Academy of the College of Engineering.

Haley Swanson, 13, had thought “a little bit” about attending college before getting involved with GEAR UP.

“Now, I want to go to college badly,” Haley said. “I want to become a marine biologist.”

## Students try college life

Statesman Journal, August 26, 2009

MONMOUTH -- Western Oregon University opened up its campus this week to about 100 rural middle school students for the GEAR UP Student Leadership event held Aug. 17-19.

The Oregon GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is federally funded, and this event aimed to give rural students from low-income-serving schools a glimpse of the college environment. Among the schools represented was Taft Middle School from Lincoln City.

Other schools were Coffenberry Middle School, Myrtle Creek; Glendale Junior/Senior High School; Irrigon Junior/Senior High School; Lincoln Middle School, Cottage Grove; Stanfield Secondary School.

Organizers said event activities were designed to enhance leadership and communications skills while fostering an atmosphere where attendees can glean a collegiate familiarity. Ideally attendees will come away harboring sharpened thoughts about higher education.

“It’s a double benefit to have the students exposed to a college campus while participating in the event,” GEAR UP Project Director Stephanie Carnahan said. “They are all from rural areas, and many of them have never been on a college campus before this year. It’s a great opportunity for them to see what campus life is all about and what they need to do now and in future years to be academically and otherwise ready for college.”

In addition to the scheduled events, WOU Office of Admissions hosted a campus tour, a scavenger hunt, and a panel presentation by current WOU students.

GEAR UP students engaged in a dynamic series of activities and trainings led by Quantum Learning, a company that provides learning and life skills programs to students and educators globally.

“Quantum Learning uses a variety of innovative techniques that have been shown to increase students’ motivation and improve educational outcomes for even the most challenged students,” Carnahan said. “We want GEAR UP students to go back and act as leaders and peer mentors in their schools using their newfound skills.”

GEAR UP also hosted a concurrent Quantum Learning workshop for more than 20 teachers representing eight Oregon schools. That workshop focused on “brain-friendly” instruction, techniques that modern research indicates will facilitate elevated student engagement.

Organizers hope that participating teachers will return to their schools this fall with a new arsenal of activities to use in the classroom and share with their colleagues.





College. It's not a dream, it's a plan.

Oregon GEAR UP is proud to acknowledge the exemplary work of the 2008-09 GEAR UP coordinators. Their vision, energy and commitment to students have been vital to the success of the GEAR UP program this year, and together with their local teams, they have laid the groundwork for great successes in years to come.

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