



Academic Excellence and College Access for ALL Students

HIGHLIGHTS: 2009-10

As summer ends, we begin to GEAR UP for an exciting school year! This will be the final year in our current grant cycle (2005-2011). These are a few “Highlights” from the California GEAR UP community. Please visit our website <http://www.castategearup.org> for more in-depth information about these special moments in 2009-10. You will be inspired by the good work and good news from our schools and their commitment to ALL students!

SERVING SCHOOLS

The primary focus of the California GEAR UP Program is to support the adults at middle schools -- the administrators, faculty, counselors and families -- in order for them to increase opportunities for all students. In the School-Based Services Model, GEAR UP provides professional development and support services to create a self-sustaining *college-going culture* at each school that is reflected in improvement in the preparation of students for college. Since the 2005-2011 grant cycle began, GEAR UP has provided service to 84 middle schools located in 43 districts in 19 counties throughout California, representing a total of 83,560 students in grades six through eight.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Continuing Sustainability Project develops and implements long-term strategies to maintain the active participation of middle schools with California GEAR UP and to chart the sustainability of program initiatives towards the development of a *college-going culture*. The 12 middle schools in the project have been with GEAR UP for 5 years and are in the culminating stages of their sustainability plans. This project will add to the lessons learned through the School-Based Services Model and provide a 5.5 year model for the development of a sustainable culture of academic rigor, counseling, and family involvement, preparing all students for high school, career, and post-secondary education.

HONORING STUDENTS

The scholarship component of the program requires the State to establish and maintain a financial assistance program for students to attend institutions of higher education. Since 1999, 5,190 California GEAR UP students have received Education Trust Awards from the program. Of that number, 2,016 graduated from high school in 2008 and claimed their awards. Education Trust Awards provide \$2,000 in resources to defray the costs of college attendance. Award recipients are selected by school personnel at GEAR UP middle schools. The awards are available to students within one year of high school graduation and upon college enrollment. During Spring 2010, over 80 percent of California GEAR UP schools held ceremonies to honor student Trust Award recipients.

IN THE NEWS... California GEAR UP Students and staff, University of California President Mark Yudof and California Community Colleges Chancellor Jack Scott joined Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez and Assembly Higher Education Committee Chair Marty Block at a State Capitol press conference on June 3rd. Speaker Perez spoke about the importance of college access and higher education programs in California to address current economic and employment woes. Students were among those voicing support for the higher education provisions in the Assembly Democrats’ California Jobs Budget.

COLLABORATION

The California GEAR UP – Valley High School Collaboration began at Samuel Jackman Middle School in 2005 with a seventh grade class of 585 students. The cohort of 378 students is now beginning their senior year at Valley High School. This year Valley High School announced a remarkable achievement on the statewide API which demonstrates where a school ranks on a scale of 1–10, compared with 100 other schools with similar demographic characteristics. California public schools serve students with many different backgrounds and needs

and hence, schools face different educational challenges. The similar schools ranks for 2010 allow schools to look at their academic performance compared to other schools with some of the same opportunities and challenges.

Valley High School newsworthy accomplishments:

- Number 1 (non charter) in Similar Schools and demographics in California;
- Of 100 Similar Schools in CA, VHS scored a perfect 10: the **only** non-charter to do so;
- The highest API score of any non-charter school and the 8th highest API overall.

GEAR UP ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 11th Annual GEAR UP Conference was convened by the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) on July 18-21 in Washington, DC. The conference hosted over 2100 participants and featured 180 sessions, highlighting exemplary program models and effective strategies to expand college access for low-income students. Conferees were in attendance from across the United States and Mexico, with staff from the U.S. Department of Education and members of Congress in attendance. Keynote speakers included Congressman Chaka Fattah, the “Father of GEAR UP”; James Davis, U.S. Department of Education; Martha J. Kanter, Undersecretary, U.S. Department of Education; Congressman Ruben Hinojosa; Juan Williams, NPR Correspondent/Author; and Senator Jack Reed.

PARTNERSHIP

During the Annual GEAR UP Conference in Washington, DC, California GEAR UP collaborated with NCCEP to provide up-to-date information to GEAR UP communities across the country. Daily activities were shared via ‘live-blogging’ on the California GEAR UP website and timely updates were featured on Twitter and Facebook. The primary goal of our partnership with NCCEP was to increase our profile as a leader in the GEAR UP community, and to disseminate key information during the conference. Early data indicates our efforts were successful with over 500 new webpage visitors, 150 new blog page views, increased time on site and bounce rate from our site and increases in Twitter followers and Facebook fans, during the time of the conference.

COMMUNICATIONS

Beginning September 2009, the program launched a comprehensive communications plan focused on strategic messaging and venues. Through the website and the blog, we share up-to the minute information, stream photos and videos and are connected through Twitter and Facebook. Daily updates feature current information and articles about national and statewide activities, program services, and contributions to the middle school reform movement. California GEAR UP is ranked the #1 GEAR UP website in the country at www.castategearup.org

SPECIAL MENTION... GET ON BOARD!

From April 12 to May 14, 2010, the California State University and AT&T once again took to the road with the message of academic preparation, access for underserved students, and the need for future workforce professionals in California. Thousands of middle and high school students at 40 stops statewide boarded a 40-foot high-impact "wired" bus wrapped with the "Road to College: Get on Board" theme, and complete with laptop computers with career exploration, academic preparation and financial aid planning information. The 2010 tour was made possible by funding from AT&T. Again this year, the Road to College bus visited a GEAR UP school: Harris Middle School in Elk Grove on May 3 where more than 400 students had the opportunity to “Get On Board”. California State Assemblymember Alyson Huber and CSU staff encouraged the students throughout the visit to stay on the “Road to College.”

SAVE THE DATE: NATIONAL GEAR UP DAY – SEPTEMBER 30, 2010