



“Academic Excellence and College Access for ALL Students”

DIRECTOR’S REPORT
January 2008

California GEAR UP provides three modes of services – direct service to a cohort of middle schools through the **School-Based Services Model**, services to a cohort of students through the **Student Services Model Project**, and services to all middle schools in California through a **Statewide Dissemination Model**.

I. School-Based Services Model

From its inception to the present 259 schools have participated in the California GEAR UP program. Since the new grant cycle began in September 2005, California GEAR UP provided service to 29 Cohort 6 middle schools and 30 middle schools selected to participate in the Continuing Sustainability Project (CSP) for 2005-06. GEAR UP schools are located in 91 districts in 27 counties throughout California: 33.4 percent of the schools are in the North, 16.1 percent are in the central part of the state and, 52.5 percent of the schools are in the South. The schools that have participated, or are currently participating, in this program enroll a total of nearly 222,000 students in grades six through nine: 38 percent of these students are English Learners; 72 percent of the students qualify for free- or reduce-priced meals; and, 17 percent of the students qualify for CalWORKS. Included in the total of 259 middle schools that have participated in the GEAR UP program are 42 that have been receiving school-based services since January 2006. *(School roster attached)*

School-based services constitute the foundation of the program and consist of direct services to selected middle schools with on-site support from GEAR UP regional coordinators and project coordinators. School specific activities and initiatives include professional development training and resources for middle school students, staff and families. Outcomes focus on ALL students and the development and sustainability of a *college-going-culture* at the school. *(School Awards and Recognition attached)*

Institutes and Forums Two-day Principals & Leadership Team Institutes are presented in the fall of the year, followed by one-day Forums in the winter. A Leadership Team consists of the principal, counselors, teachers, coordinators, and families. From 1999 through 2005, there have been 1,554 participants at the Institutes and 1,162 participants at the Forums. Each school receives funding to implement a Professional Development Action Plan based upon their School Self-Assessment Rubric (SSAR). The 2008 forums are scheduled for January 29 and February 5 in Pasadena and February 12 in Berkeley.

Facilitation Since 2000-2001, trained facilitators have provided on-site support for school staff to extend the discussions begun at the Institutes and Forums. Through December 2005, schools have received over 676 hours of facilitation services for staff meetings and retreats that involved over 3,846 participants. Approximately 92 school principals have received an estimated 658 hours of consultation in support of their leadership at the schools.

Educational Trust Awards were established for students from GEAR UP schools as well as for participants in Educational Talent Search, a federal TRIO program. Each school site Leadership Team determines the selection process for the awards in the amount of \$2,000 each. Funds are held in a trust account that accrues interest until the student graduates from high school and withdraws the funds to enroll in college. The number of students receiving awards is based on school enrollment, approximately 1 award per 175 students enrolled. The California Student Aid Commission administers the program. Since 1999, 4,326 students have received trust awards with 1,258 students enrolled in postsecondary education. Awardees are notified in May of each year with award letters to students and families in early June. (*Trust Awards background and enrollment data attached*)

ACT Inc. provides instruments and materials designed to assist students in determining their readiness for postsecondary education and to support them in identifying career options. A site license for ACT “DISCOVER” software and training is provided for middle school counselors and teachers to assist students in making important career and educational decisions.

College Board Vertical Teams and Building Success workshops are made available to facilitate faculty-to-faculty discussions at GEAR UP schools. Following on the Leadership Team Forums in the spring, schools may request the topic and provide the location for College Board Pre-AP workshops.

Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) brings schools, parents, and the community together as equal partners in the education of every child to provide all students with the option and access for a postsecondary education. The nine-week curriculum is designed to encourage and support low-income parents of K-12 children to take a participatory role in the learning process, with classes taught in fourteen different languages by credentialed teachers and trained professionals.

Family Initiatives Project (FIP) was developed in collaboration with the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) in response to the need for strategies to enhance the participation of African American and English speaking families at California GEAR UP schools. The five-week curriculum provides information about the school system and strengthens knowledge about the critical role of the family in the academic life of their child. FIP is designed to address broad social and educational issues and challenges schools to take the lead in developing community connections to ensure whole school participation.

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 interactive sessions engage small teams from each school in constructive dialogue and activities focused on continuation of the leadership team model and the use of data to impact long-term planning. 21 schools from the current cohort of 42 will be selected to participate in two sustainability workshops in the fall and spring of each year through 2011.

Counseling Institute shares curriculum and information with those who provide middle school counseling services in their role as college advocates and to strengthen awareness about the importance of academic planning for all students and families. The institute includes a review of district specific graduation requirements and the GEAR UP Resources and Materials Clearinghouse. The one-day sessions, scheduled for March 2008, hosts GEAR UP participating middle schools and neighboring schools, and also support the involvement of faculty from local high schools. (*Announcement attached*)

II. Student Services Model Project

At the request of the United States Department of Education, GEAR UP began this model project in 2005 with the 7th grade cohort of students at Samuel Jackman Middle School in the Elk Grove Unified School District in Sacramento. The cohort of 490 students and their families are now receiving academic support services and college information at Valley High School. The GEAR UP project team includes the Coordinator, Academic Advisor, Family Initiatives Project Coordinator and Assistant, Spanish Translator and Life Skills Initiative Coordinator.

Beginning in September 2007 a comprehensive database has been developed to monitor student attendance, academic performance and progress, and participation in project activity. The database was developed in collaboration with the middle and high school, the school district and the GEAR UP program evaluator. Project staff is engaged with the school site team at the middle and high school and within the community to strengthen the connection with local colleges and universities. The project will follow the cohort through their completion of high school and preparation for college entrance.

Project services include:

- Summer Bridge Prep Course
- Academic Planner workshop
- California GEAR UP pocket guide research
- College Fair
- ACT Explore
- Advocacy-college awareness curriculum
- Individual Academic Planning
- After-school tutoring
- Family programming and information
- Life Skills Initiative series for 83 African American Male students
- Resources and support for school site staff

III. Statewide Dissemination Model

The Statewide Dissemination Model is intended to expand the program's reach and promote the *college-going culture* concept to a much wider audience. This dissemination is key to the GEAR UP sustainability strategy to share resources and infuse the lessons learned into the state's middle school reform movement. These are 3 of the initiatives within this component:

Community Based Project is conducted in collaboration with respected neighborhood organizations and the faith-based community, to integrate and disseminate California GEAR UP resources, materials and information. In August 2007, GEAR UP was a lead sponsor and presenter at the New ERAA Back to School Conference in San Diego. In conjunction with the Center for Parent Involvement in Education, project staff will conduct family programming at the Tubman-Chavez Community Center, the Fulton Elementary/Middle School and the Park Villa Apartments. Staff participated in Resources and Materials Clearinghouse training with plans to locate the GEAR UP "College Corner Kiosk" a multi-media activity center on-site to assist students, families, and educators in navigating the college-going process.

Business Network will be a statewide alliance composed of representatives from businesses, foundations, corporations, and community leaders concerned about the importance of all students being prepared for college and the workplace. The Network will support GEAR UP efforts as ambassadors in statewide professional communities, provide financial support to the program and mentor students from the Student Services Model Project. Introductory meetings are underway with interested individuals in preparation for an initial Network meeting in April 2008.

Faculty Workgroup will engage selected faculty from schools of education to discuss the elements that should be included in pre-service programs to integrate teacher preparation strategies that support a *college-going culture*, with an emphasis on middle schools. Funding for this project is provided by the Improving Teacher Quality grant through the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). In November 2007, six focus groups were conducted in Emeryville and Long Beach with participation of middle school principals, experienced middle school teachers, and first-year middle school teachers. The draft report from the focus groups discusses ways by which to improve pre-service training programs for middle school teachers in schools that serve a high proportion of students from African-American, Latino, and low-income communities. In May 2007, the Superintendent of Public Instruction convened a representative group of Deans and Directors from Schools of Education to begin discussions around teacher effectiveness, curricular alignment, improved partnerships to strengthen the teacher pipeline and placement, and to explore incentives for the teaching profession. Faculty Workgroup activity is being undertaken in alignment with this effort.

Public Awareness and Resources

California GEAR UP has designed activities, materials and resources to increase the number of students and families who are knowledgeable about, and aspire to attend, postsecondary education. These tools were designed to support schools in developing a *college-going culture* and to provide middle school friendly information about the college going process:

Resources & Materials Clearinghouse provides a single source of information, materials and resources designed specifically for middle school educators to assist students and families in preparing for college. The Clearinghouse has been available in three formats since March 2003: the educators kit of five booklets and reference materials; on the GEAR UP website at www.castategearup.org and the College Corner Kiosk, an interactive mobile center containing Clearinghouse resources and machinery to enliven college for students and educators. School site and GEAR UP staff receive ongoing training and provide feedback about the practical use of the Clearinghouse. The revised and updated curriculum will be available in March 2008.

The Complete Pocket Guide of California Colleges and Universities was developed in collaboration with the California Education Round Table Intersegmental Coordinating Committee (ICC) and provides an accessible inventory of all higher educational institutions in the state. A copy is provided for every student at participating GEAR UP schools. Now in its third reprinting, approximately 148,750 guides have been distributed to individuals, schools, academic preparation programs, and private organizations throughout California.

California GEAR UP Newsletter shares information with the GEAR UP community about student and school progress, national and statewide activities, current program services, and GEAR UP contributions to the middle school reform movement. With a current mailing list of 4,394, the 13th edition will be available in January 2008.

California GEAR UP Video: “Kids on Campus: A Journey that Changes Lives” premiered at the March 2003 Community Conference, and provides a virtual tour of colleges and universities throughout California, as seen through the eyes of middle school students and family members. To date, 7,000 copies of the half-hour video have been distributed to individuals, organizations, middle schools and school district offices across the State. The video is available on VHS in English and Spanish.

Alliances and Collaborations

California GEAR UP participates with the broader P-16 community through these national, statewide and local organizations and affiliates:

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships: The mission of NCCEP is to develop and strengthen broad based partnerships throughout the education continuum, from early childhood through postsecondary education. The organization brings together colleges and universities with local K-12, parent groups, businesses, government agencies, foundations, corporations and community-based organizations to create systemic change in education. As the advocate for the National GEAR UP program, NCCEP also hosts the Annual GEAR UP conference and other professional development training workshops. www.edpartnerships.org

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform: The forum is an alliance of educators, researchers, national associations, and officers of professional organizations and foundations committed to promoting the academic performance and healthy development of young adolescents. www.mgforum.org

Superintendent's California P-16 Council: This statewide assembly of education, business and community leaders is charged with developing strategies to better coordinate, integrate, and improve education for preschool through college students. Focused on closing the achievement gap, the Council examines ways to improve student achievement at all levels and link preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and higher education to create a comprehensive, integrated system of student learning. www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/pc/

California League of Middle Schools: For over twenty years, California League of Middle Schools has been the only professional association in California solely committed to supporting middle grades educators and their students. A non-profit membership association, CLMS is dedicated to improving the professional knowledge of middle level educators so that students may experience academic success and personal well being. www.clms.net

ARCHES: Alliance for Regional Collaboration to Heighten Educational Success: This voluntary confederation of regional collaboratives has as its sole purpose to improve student success and close the achievement gap among groups of students. The collaborative is a means to an end; the end, or goal, both individually and collectively of ARCHES and its members, are greater academic achievement, opportunity, and equity in California. www.arches-cal.org

Middle Grades Alliance: The Alliance is composed of these organizational partners: the California League of Middle Schools, the Association of California School Administrators, the California School Boards Association, the California Middle Grades Partnership Networks, the California County Superintendents Educational Association, the California Teachers Association, California Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, California GEAR UP and the California Department of Education. The California League of Middle Schools serves as the lead organization for the program through the Schools to Watch-Taking Center Stage program. www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gm/stw.asp

Note: See *Attached Calendar* for details about GEAR UP and middle grades activities