

“LET’S TALK FAMILIES”

A REPORT OF

**THE GEAR UP
STATE DIRECTORS’ NETWORK**

Prepared by
CALIFORNIA GEAR UP

In Partnership With
THE COLLEGE BOARD

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the first six years of the national GEAR UP Program, (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) (GEAR UP) there were many discussions about the importance of families in preparing students for college. Moreover, GEAR UP projects across the country -- both State and local partnerships -- have developed myriad strategies, initiatives, and activities to enhance the involvement of families in the educational lives of their children. These varied and multiple approaches respond to the unique and varied circumstances of the communities in which the GEAR UP projects function and to the schools attended by the students in these neighborhoods.

In order to begin to share the lessons learned to date with respect to this critical aspect of our national program, the California GEAR UP Program has compiled information from the majority of the State Grant programs into this publication. "*Let's Talk Families*" was the backdrop for a discussion among GEAR UP state directors from across the nation. This meeting was hosted by the College Board at the 2005 Annual Conference of the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP). Both the California GEAR UP Program and the College Board are appreciative of the interest and enthusiasm expressed by the directors and staff who responded to the survey and participated in this initial substantive discussion among the GEAR UP State Programs.

This publication has three parts:

- *Parent Involvement for Improved College Access* is an overview of the role of parents in the college preparation process. Written by Professor Patricia M. McDonough at the Graduate School of Education and Information Sciences at UCLA, this article summarizes the extant research literature about the critical role that parents play in setting expectations and aspirations for their children. Additionally, Professor McDonough offers recommendations to guide programs in designing strategies and activities to ensure that parents have the information needed to be a resource to their children in the college preparation process.
- "*Let's Talk Families*" Survey Results reports on the current initiatives and activities implemented by 32 State GEAR UP Programs. Contact names and addresses are accurate for May 2006.
- *Roster of State Grant Programs* is provided to encourage the continuation of communication among attendees for the purpose of sharing the lessons that we have learned in the interest of expanding our mutual repertoire of family involvement strategies. The roster reflects State GEAR UP Program contacts and addresses for May 2007.

As the national GEAR UP Program is now into the second grant cycle, the importance of the State Programs coalescing around substantive, policy, and political issues has increased. The California GEAR UP Program hopes that *Let's Talk Families* and the continued discussions are a beginning of this journey together into the second stage of our mutual history.

Parent Involvement for Improved College Access

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Parental involvement in their children's education, especially with an eye toward college access, is often a great 'disappearing act.' While parents are urged to be engaged in the education process in early grades, they are expected to let their children take on more responsibility with age. Thus, parents move from being vitally involved in education to being an invisible influence in the college access planning of students.

Research indicates that family status variables, such as income, education, ethnicity, and marital status, are related to the school achievement of children. Yet, these variables do not explain fully the degree to which parents become involved in their children's education. We know that the groups to which parents belong (family, school, and work) can provide expectations that call for positive involvement in children's schooling. Other factors that influence parent involvement include:

- the views of parents about the roles of teachers;
- the information that parents have about the daily life at school; and,
- the availability of time, money, and material resources.

In addition, parents will expect success if they believe that they have some control over children's success in school. Clearly, the higher the performance of the child, the greater the chance of involvement by the parent.

School factors are also crucial to parent involvement. Communication between teachers and parents predict attendance at parent conference, participation in school activities, and willingness to volunteer in the classroom. Schools that understand the family characteristics of their children are more successful in increasing parent involvement and in improving student performance.

Yet, parents play the decisive role in shaping aspirations. Ninth graders who talked most with their parents about college plans were more likely to go to college. Effective parental encouragement includes:

- saving for college;
- taking students on campus visits; and,
- attending a financial aid workshop with their child.

While parental support and encouragement alone does not determine whether students ever actualize their plans, the most important predictor of college plans is the amount of encouragement and support parents give their children.

In 9th and 10th grades, information that is most useful to parents focuses on career opportunities, college admissions requirements, and financial aid assistance. Parents of these students are especially interested in information about financial aid. Interventions should emphasize the connections between college education and the labor market and information should focus on college costs and student financial aid. Information on

financial aid should be simple; parents need to know that financial aid is available and, despite rising tuition costs, college is affordable

Research indicates that parents perceive their roles in college access with mixed results. Parents often talk to their children about their future and remind them of the importance of necessary tasks and schedule. They often read or edit essays and suggest that SAT/ACT scores can be enhanced with coaching and practice. Often, parents limit college searches for reasons related to keeping their children close to home or to restraining the costs.

There are many lessons learned from studies with parent involvement programs:

- College access programs should take a holistic approach to parents through emphasizing the importance of self-esteem, parenting practices, communication, and empowerment.
- There should be a focus on the relationship between the parent and the program to build trust and cultural sensitivity.
- Parents of low-income, African-American, Latino, and Native American students need extensive knowledge about college preparation, finances, admissions, entrance examinations, and college life.
- The admissions and financial aid process is mysterious and confusing to parents.
- Parents are particularly concerned about rising college costs, loans (as possibly the only form of financial aid available) and the high costs of books.
- African-American and Latino cultural patterns often construct perceptual barriers to higher education that induce hopelessness in parents.
- Language problems and communications often impact parents in their attempts to motivate their children.

Best practices offer several recommendations for college access programs in terms of their services for parents:

- Encourage parents to invite new parents to increase attendance at workshops and events.
- Mail flyers directly to parents and follow with phone calls.
- Develop written materials with clear college expectations and admissions requirements.
- Invite college admissions officials to high schools.
- Offer accurate financial aid and standardized testing information.
- Secure resources for trips for students and parents to college campuses.
- Ask questions of students so that information can be tailored to individual circumstances.
- Design strategies to effectively support the aspirations of their children.

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SURVEY RESULTS GEAR UP State Grants May 2006

Arizona – Northern Arizona University GEAR UP (2000)

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Arizona GEAR UP reaches out to parents in a number of ways: through regular newsletters that provide parenting tips; college and financial aid information; details about upcoming enrichment opportunities for their GEAR UP students; workshops on college admission and financial aid application processes, which are especially tailored for parents who lack first-hand experiences with postsecondary education or training; and one-on-one counseling about their children's academic progress. The programs, overall, aim to ensure that parents receive the type of information and

support that is useful to helping their children succeed.

California – Regents of the University of California (1999)

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Since 1999, the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) has partnered with California GEAR UP in conducting a nine-week series for 100 families at every GEAR UP school. A graduation ceremony is conducted upon completion of the program. The newly anchored Family Initiatives Project (FIP) was developed in collaboration with PIQE and is in the second year of operation. This project provides strategies to enhance the participation of English-speaking families at California GEAR UP schools. The five-week curriculum gives information about the school system and the critical role of the family in the academic life of their children, with particular attention to the needs of African-American families. Schools have taken the lead in

developing community connections to ensure full participation. Family sessions, a training manual, and parent guide are available for selected schools upon submitting a letter of agreement to California GEAR UP. For more information please visit our website at www.castategearup.org

Colorado – State of Colorado (1999)

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College Parents of America is the only national membership association dedicated to advocacy and service on behalf of current and future college parents. Association members include parents, colleges and universities, local school systems, corporations, associations, and other organizations dedicated to making higher education accessible and successful for all Americans. Members have access to timely information and vital resources; valuable consumer deals and discounts; and advocacy and

representation in legislative actions affecting parents and students.

Connecticut – Board of Governor/State Dept. of Higher Education (1999)

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The program conducts workshops to help parents become informed and guiding forces in their children's education. Topics include: *Children and Success, What Parents Should Know; Getting Your Child on the Path to College, Riding the Coaster of Change, A Survival Guide for Middle School Parents, and Financial Aid 101*. Transportation is offered for parents and students to attend meetings and events, mostly on weekends. Parents act as chaperones for events, including family picnics.

District of Columbia – State Education Office (2002)

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The District of Columbia's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (DC GEAR UP) uses a comprehensive approach to provide resources and services so that students and their families are empowered and well-prepared to make informed decisions and pursue postsecondary endeavors. The District's GEAR UP program is designed to improve the academic performance of approximately 1,100 middle/junior

high school students. The program comprises five components: *Academic Preparation* (includes professional development for teachers and principals), *Early College Awareness Information and Education*, *College Financial Assistance*, *Student and Family Support Services* (i.e., counseling, mentoring and tutoring), and *Parental Involvement*. College and university partners provide a range of activities and programs for GEAR UP students, families, teachers and principals. DC GEAR-UP's university partners include: Georgetown University, Howard University, Trinity University, Southeastern University, and the University of the District of Columbia.

Hawaii – University of Hawaii (2000)

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The State of Hawaii's GEAR UP program is a consortium of partners that include the State of Hawaii's Department of Education, the University of Hawaii's ten-campus system and many other community partners. GEAR UP services are designed to support students, increasing the flow of students throughout the pipeline, and to improve educational systems, addressing the infrastructure of the pipeline including transitions in the pipeline and systemic issues.

Project activities aim to increase access to higher education for Hawaii's students by providing information and encouragement for students and families, higher supporting student academic preparation, and increasing students' access to financial aid:

Awareness and Encouragement: Studies show that Hawaii's students and their families need appropriate information about the costs and preparation for college.

Academic Preparation: GEAR UP supports the Hawaii's Department of Education's goal that all students will graduate high school prepared for postsecondary education without the need for remediation.

Access to Financial Aid: Students and families in Hawaii's view cost as the greatest obstacle to attending college.

GEAR UP is committed to increasing access to financial assistance through scholarships and information so that students will have the resources they need for college.

Indiana - State Student Assistance Commission (1999)

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The Parents Project connects 1,500 parents to a support and resource group interested in finding ways to become better advocates on behalf of their children's educational success. The program engages teachers, counselors, and staff in professional development and training.

Kentucky – Council of Postsecondary Education (2000)

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GEAR UP Kentucky II is a statewide project designed to establish a culture of academic success by creating and renewing partnerships with local postsecondary institutions, organizations, and businesses. The program theory of GEAR UP Kentucky II is driven by the *Standards for a College-Going Culture* and its Five Strategic Priority Areas: Awareness, Rigor, Engagement, Access, and Support. Within each area is a set of implementation standards for a college-going culture that provide a system of goals and activities that schools and districts can use to support and

institutionalize GEAR UP. The *Standards* ensure that students get an early start in taking rigorous coursework, meeting prerequisites for college, and making a successful transition from high school to college.

Louisiana – Board of Regents (2002)

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College Connections is a series of financial aid workshops held on an annual basis for GEAR UP students and families. The series also provides information about how parents can help their children with test preparation, summer academic camps, and career exploration. Newsletters are also being sent to the homes of GEAR UP students.

Maine – Department of Education (2005)

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The Maine Department of Education's GEAR UP Program, in collaboration with the Maine Support Network, University of Maine System, the Community College of Maine System, 28 local school districts, and the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), to serve seventh grade low-income students, and priority students previously served in Maine's 1999 GEAR UP grant. The project goal is to leverage the State's advanced technological infrastructure to create a sustainable program that supports low-income students prepare for, access, and succeed in postsecondary education. The program is anchored in a rich technology component that builds on the States' robust telecommunication network and the Maine Learning

Technology Initiative (MLTI), which provides a laptop to every 7th and 8th grade student and teacher in the State.

GEAR UP interventions focus on creating an electronic learning community to build professional development skills for GEAR UP advisors and professional staff and providing an innovative and systemic approach to parental engagement. Early college awareness activities, comprehensive mentoring, academic counseling and parental support are linked to the GEAR UP program. A strong component of cultural diversity is embedded in the activities of the grant to service a changing urban population within the state.

Maryland – State Department of Education (1999)

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All 18 Maryland GEAR UP sites have parent programs ranging in sizes from 30 to 200 parents during each semester at the schools. Speakers are invited to educate parents about financial aid and College Days invite the parents along with the students. Attendance is increasing as parents recognize that their children want to go to college -- a goal that requires finances. Major challenges are in the low-income, urban and rural neighborhoods where some parents are not familiar with financial aid details. However, being consistent and being "there" is the way that Maryland GEAR UP is gradually winning the trust of families.

Massachusetts – Board of Higher Education (1999)

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GEAR UP Massachusetts serves 7 middle schools and 9 high schools in the same 7 high poverty urban districts. GEAR UP provides targeted academic support programs so that the middle schools move closer to their AYP goals and professional development that supports the certification requirements of NCLB and each school's improvement plans. GEAR UP resources target mathematics achievement through tutoring, after-school and summer programs, particularly math camps. Schools have on-site GEAR UP

Coordinators to coordinate academic support programs, college admissions and financial aid guidance and outreach to parents and community resources.

GEAR UP staff reflect the ethnicity and can speak the language of non-English speaking parents. A specific activity that has been well received has been Family Math Nights. The content and structure vary at each school. Parents want to help their children with their homework but feel the least able to help with mathematics. A strategy that we are embarking upon for this new grant is to develop parent GEAR UP Ambassadors -- parents at each of our sites trained in college admissions and financial aid and reaching out to other parents. Targeted information is available for parents on our website at: <http://www.gearup.mass.edu/parents/>

Michigan- Department of Labor and Economic Growth (2001)

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GEAR UP Michigan targets the students, families, teachers, and counselors in major urban areas. **GEAR UP Michigan!** Builds on the multitude of career education programs available through DLEG and provides services to 3,900 students that have transitioned from 22 middle schools to 7 high schools. Students receive academic counseling, a detailed educational development plan, after-school tutoring, and career and college preparation assistance. They are encouraged to participate in on-campus college enrichment

programs. Emphasis is placed on connecting future careers with the academic skills needed to be successful.

GEAR UP Michigan! Promotes new attitudes that encourage students to realize their full potential regardless of their economic conditions. The Michigan Department of Treasury provides parents, students and counselors with in-depth financial aid information to plan for future college costs.

Minnesota – Higher Education Services Office (1999)

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The Get Ready Program, Minnesota's state GEAR UP project, encourages and values family involvement. Families are invited to participate in parent workshops, family nights, summer academic camp fairs, college visits, and other events throughout the year. Families also receive monthly newsletters about what their children are learning about college. The program also offers parent guidebooks containing college-related activities, discussion starters and college prep calendars.

Mississippi – Mississippi Institution for Higher Learning (2001)

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Mississippi GEAR UP publishes a quarterly parent newsletter, which is mailed directly to the parents of each GEAR UP student. The program also provides parents with online Parent Resources including: Collegeboard.com, College Prep for Delta Students, ESF, FAFSA on the Web - U.S. Department of Education, Fastweb.com - free scholarship and college search, Federal Student Aid, and FinAid: The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid. Mississippi has a faith-based program and provides online tutoring programs, which can be accessed at the homes of the students. The program will be holding a parent-

student convention focused on financial aid and college requirements and sponsors parent, teacher, and student activities. Many of our services can be found online at www.gearupms.org.

Missouri – Department of Higher Education (2000)

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The GEAR UP Missouri grant focuses on the challenge of study habits, course selection, preparation, and graduation from high school so that more underserved students become academically prepared to enroll and succeed in college. Program services emphasize Math Readiness, including family mathematics sessions to encourage parent involvement and help them understand ways to support their students as they prepare for future educational opportunities.

Montana – Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (1999)

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Montana GEAR UP is not a one size fits all program – we pilot and then implement and/or promotes best practices to schools. This year Montana GEAR UP is piloting an extensive parental involvement program modeled after the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) program from California. The program was piloted at three GEAR UP schools located on or near Indian reservations. In addition to implementing the program for parents, teachers and other school personnel also receive training in

working with the parents. The program will expand to other schools next year.

Other family best practices include inviting parents to attend college visits. Parent nights provide information about college and financial aid, beginning in middle and continuing through high school. Events also include discussions on the use of portfolios and other programs designed for student success.

Nevada – Department of Education (2001)

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Nevada GEAR UP is heavily invested in parent participation. GEAR UP schools strive to become effective learning communities and include parent involvement as an important component in the process. Parent meetings are scheduled regularly at each school and incorporate family preparation for college, financial literacy information, financial aid training for families and scholarship information. GEAR UP encourages families to provide academic support at home so that students achieve their goals. Effective family events include community speakers, college

speakers, financial literacy speakers, financial aid presenters, college field trips, and career/ college fairs. Student entertainment and awards are also included in family events.

New Jersey – Commission on Higher Education (1999)

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Through the New Jersey program, parents participate in an advisory group which recommends to GEAR UP staff the types of programs that would be most helpful to families. Opportunities are created for families to attend field trips to college campuses and parents participate in workshops on self-selected topics. Weekly progress reports are sent to parents about student academic progress.

New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (1999)

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New York GEAR UP hosts parent night programs -- a series of programs developed specifically for the 10th grade student and their parents. Topics include: information about college entry, financial assistance, preparation during high school, and potential careers or self-employment.

North Carolina – University of North Carolina (2000)

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GEAR UP North Carolina is currently serving over 11,000 families who are invited to events in thirty-five school districts during the school year and summer months. Each school year begins with an open house or “Kickoff Celebration” which allows families to engage in discussion about postsecondary education. Families also learn more about their important role as it relates to the decision-making process and the academic rigor that is necessary for their child to go to college. Parents attend summer enrichment information sessions pertaining to residential

programs that are hosted in partnership with various universities. Entire families have also visited college campuses to engage in the college-going experience.

The faith-based outreach initiative is effective in collaborating with local churches to encourage continued education in the communities. College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC) partners with GEAR UP NC to provide statewide college access initiatives. One of these initiatives is the annual FAFSA Day, which is held each February. CFNC representatives, GEAR UP staff and representatives from colleges, universities and financial aid offices, assist students and parents in completing and submitting the online FAFSA form. The CFNC.org website, which is in English and Spanish, provides college planning resources to students and families. A Spanish Services Coordinator provides college- planning workshops to the Spanish-speaking students and families. The Spanish Services Coordinator also translates print materials into Spanish to be distributed to parents. There has also been success with parents creating and launching a calling tree to keep other parents connected to college and school- related activities. In some school districts parents coordinate Career Week activities.

Ohio – Board of Regents (1999)

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GEAR UP Ohio is built on a partnership in which the Ohio Board of Regents, as the lead organization, works with its partners, the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) and the Ohio Department of Education, to implement proven comprehensive strategies for increasing the numbers of students at selected middle and high schools in the eight targeted urban and rural “lighthouse” communities that successfully participate in postsecondary education.

GEAR UP Ohio provides a comprehensive system of school- and community-based services to improve the college aspiration, preparation, and successful participation of approximately 30,000 “priority” students and their families. Three of the program's four goals reflect its commitment to eliminate major college access barriers for participating students: 1) To assure that GEAR UP students are academically prepared for high school completion and success in postsecondary education; 2) To increase GEAR UP student and parent understanding of the importance and relevance of higher education and increase the number of students who aspire to higher education; and 3) To increase student and parent understanding of actual college costs and the availability of financial aid opportunities.

Oklahoma – State Regents for Higher Education (1999)

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Parent Expectations Support Achievement (PESA) is a parent education program created by the Los Angeles County Office of Education designed to improve skills of parents or caregivers. It teaches techniques to improve a child’s academic achievement, through self-confidence and communication with family. PESA is built on the belief that parents’ expectations can predict a child’s academic achievement level. A

behavioral change program that teaches parents fifteen interactions to use at home with their children, PESA interactions reinforce the same classroom skills taught to teachers in the Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA) program. TESA’s foundation principle is to have high expectations for all students. PESA links home and school in developing a consistent environment of high expectations, nurturing, and standards. Oklahoma GEAR UP has one-time grants for community-based organizations and schools to participate in PESA facilitator training. Facilitators meet with parents in groups of 10-12, once a week, for six sessions. During each session, parents learn the 15 interactions and choose parent partners to provide practice and reinforcement throughout the training. At home, parents practice the interactions with their children.

Oregon – State Regents for Higher Education (2002)

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Oregon GEAR UP supports the work of 39 middle and high schools throughout the state. Each of these schools has created an individualized plan for effectively involving family members in their children's education. Examples of these efforts include: Latino conference for students and their families; series of college prep workshops for parents; parent liaisons in the schools; courses for the community in the school; and community access to computer labs.

In addition to these school-based activities, Oregon GEAR UP provides support and education in community involvement. A cornerstone of these efforts is our S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (Supporting Unique Community Coalitions Engaged in Student Success) Retreat. The purpose of the SUCCESS Retreat is to provide concentrated time for GEAR UP schools to work with family and community members to identify barriers to student success and to formulate a school, family, community partnership plan addressing those barriers. Each school cluster is invited to bring a team of 8 consisting of key school personnel, family members, and community leaders for planning and team development. Oregon GEAR UP has dedicated a robust section of the state GEAR UP website to family involvement. This section includes information on the importance of colleges, ways to support students in their educational pursuits, ways to pay for college, and links to resources for parents and families.

Pennsylvania – Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (2002)

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Pennsylvania GEAR UP partners include the PA State System of Higher Education, Harrisburg School District, School District of Philadelphia, PHEAA, Cheyney University, East Stroudsburg University, Kutztown University, Shippensburg University and West Chester University. The program serves 9,409 students in 28 schools beginning with 7th grade and adding a new 7th grade, adding a new cohort each year.

Student Early Intervention Services include: Career exploration, Academic monitoring and counseling, Enhanced campus visits, Tutoring and Mentoring, Financial aid workshops, College information nights, Summer academic programs and Parent involvement. The "Grow your own" Pre-service Teacher Education Programs provide urban field experiences and opportunities for mentoring and tutoring Harrisburg and Philadelphia GEAR UP students.

Rhode Island – Office of Higher Education (2000)

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Rhode Island GEAR UP offers family engagement programs and services that are staffed by a full-time family engagement coordinator. The Family Advisory Board (FAB) is composed of 15 parents of Crusaders who represent diverse backgrounds and localities and serve as the family voice of the Crusaders and the community.

The program reaches diverse groups of families, and offers workshops with Spanish interpreters upon request. A series of topics include: Helping Your Child Be Successful in School; Helping Your Child Transition to Middle and High School; Helping Your Child Prepare for College; Getting More Involved in Your Children's Education; Family Educational Rights; No Child Left Behind Act; and FAFSA nights for students and parents to complete the FAFSA with professional advisors.

South Carolina – Commission on Higher Education (1999)

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Learn the Power to Earn provides families the opportunity to explore a great new frontier of possibilities. The program encourages students and their families to become actively involved in early awareness by designing a "game plan" for college. It encourages an early commitment to a successful future and fosters interactive, hands-on programming for 7th graders and their families to build an early understanding of college. *Learn the Power to Earn* involves family members and unites students with business and community leaders.

Vermont – Student Assistance Corporation (1999)

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The Vermont State GEAR UP program serves 1700 students in 46 Vermont schools through a priority caseload and cohort (whole class) approach. GEAR UP counselors live in the communities they serve. School personnel nominate students based on income eligibility and their potential to succeed in postsecondary education. Primary partners include the Vermont Department of Education, Vermont Principal's Association, University of Vermont, Linking Learning to Life, Vermont

State College System and IBM. In addition to extensive student service, the program provides: Information, support and strategies designed to increase parent involvement in preparing students for college; Opportunities to participate in GEAR UP events; Assistance with college, and financial aid planning and the application process; Resources for school improvement strategies; and Collaboration with the primary partners. In 2004-05, Planning for Higher Education, A Guide for Parents, was distributed to all new GEAR UP participants, partner schools and guidance offices.

Virginia – State Council of Higher Education (2000)

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GEAR UP/ACCESS Virginia works collaboratively with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and its college and business partners to close achievement gaps among all student groups and increase math, science, and reading scores among students from low-income families. Further, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, through its GEAR UP program, educates students and parents about the value of completing high school, and of enrolling in postsecondary school as a

means of acquiring the skills necessary for success in a changing world economy. College fieldtrips, career awareness activities, tutoring, mentoring, and summer enrichment programs have been utilized over the past six years to send the message that each student is worthy, capable, and expected to succeed in school and beyond.

Washington – State of Washington, Office of the Governor (1999)

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Washington State GEAR UP is a partnership of the Office of the Governor, University of Washington (UW), the Washington Education Foundation (WEF), the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) and the Scholars Project with twelve school districts. HECB administers a GEAR UP Scholars Project to provide comprehensive academic services and support to 1,000 low-income seventh graders and follow them through high school graduation. The project goal is to increase students' academic

performance, prepare them for college and increase students' and their families' knowledge of college options, preparation, and financing. After meeting annual benchmarks, Scholars Project students are eligible to apply for, and receive, a scholarship in the form of Guaranteed Education Tuition units.

West Virginia – Department of Education (2000)

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West Virginia GEAR UP, in cooperation with local education agencies, has worked to strengthen academic programs and learning opportunities for all students, enhancing the reform and improvement of schools. The program offers homework assistance, mentoring, and campus visits around the state. Every effort is made to ensure that students and parents are knowledgeable about postsecondary preparation requirements, opportunities, financial planning options, scholarships, and financial aid

programs. All 8th grade students take the ACT EXPLORE assessment, while all 10th grade students take the ACT PLAN assessment. The results are shared with students and their parents, then utilized to complete the student's Five-year Plan and address remediation or acceleration needs. WV GEAR UP works closely with the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission on their "College for West Virginia GO GET IT" campaign, a venture to provide post-secondary and financial aid awareness to students and their parents. The program partners with the Community and Technical College System of West Virginia on the Earn a Degree Graduate Early (EDGE) courses and conduct student and parent workshops on the "Coaching Your Student To Success" handbook, a "How To" book on successfully navigating high school and postsecondary experiences.

Wisconsin – Department of Public Instruction (1999)

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The Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Program (WEOP) is the agency within the Department of Public Instruction that administers the GEAR UP grant. As a state GEAR UP grantee, DPI/WEOP provides programs and services to 3,000 priority and cohort low-income students enrolled in grades 6-12 in 11 rural and urban targeted school districts located in the cities of: Ashland, Bayfield, Eau Claire, Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, Racine, Wausau, and

Washburn, Wisconsin. DPI also contracts with the Bray Neighborhood Center in Racine and the United Community Center in Milwaukee to provide services to eligible GEAR UP students from their communities. State GEAR UP students attend 24 high schools, 22 middle schools, and 2 cohort elementary schools throughout Wisconsin.

GEAR UP Education Specialists are located in all seven DPI/WEOP offices and provide personal, career, academic, and financial aid counseling to GEAR UP students enrolled in the targeted schools in their communities. Counselors also provide professional development opportunities for educators and parent workshops.

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