



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a competitive federal program that provides six- and seven-year grants to education/community partnerships and states to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

The Washington Student Achievement Council received its fourth consecutive state GEAR UP grant in September 2017. The seven-year, \$24.5 million award provides direct services to over 5,500 students and their families each year through partnerships with 26 high-poverty school districts statewide.

The program serves students starting in 7th grade and follows them through their first year of postsecondary education. With additional state funding of \$1 million per year to expand the program, and the program's dollar-for-dollar cost share requirement, the total investment will be over \$49 million.



PROGRAM PURPOSE

GEAR UP prepares students to be academically, socially, and financially prepared to enter and complete the postsecondary program or institution of their choice.

GEAR UP's three objectives are:

1. Increase academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education.
2. Increase high school graduation and postsecondary participation rates.
3. Increase students' and their families' knowledge of postsecondary options, preparation, and finances.

NOTABLE QUOTES

"Becoming a GEAR UP school in 2007 was one critical factor in our story; we were able to teach college readiness skills in classrooms, increase our secondary rigor, and take students to post-high school campuses all over the state. As of June 2013, 100% of the seniors in the Class of 2013 met the new state math requirement for graduation, 68% of the 10th graders in 2013 passed the Biology EOC, and 93% of this same class passed the writing HSPE. By all accounts, we certainly provide evidence of significant change."

*Dr. Ann Renker, former principal
Neah Bay High School*

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

- Students receive support through in-class and extended day tutoring and homework assistance, mentoring, and career and college exploration, including postsecondary campus visits.
- School districts provide 12 Year Campaign activities to assist students with college applications and FAFSA/WASFA completion.
- Schools provide at least three family events per year to increase knowledge of postsecondary options, academic preparation and planning, and financial aid and scholarships.

BENEFITS TO THE STATE

Washington State GEAR UP provides an average of over \$640 per pupil in federal funding to schools, providing more than 50 additional staff members to work with students. In 2016-17, this resulted in over 195,000 direct service hours (an average of 28 hours per student) provided to students and families that would not have been possible without this program.



EMERGING ISSUES

GEAR UP receives \$1 million in annual state appropriations. This funding supports the program in meeting the dollar-for-dollar match required to continue its federal grant funding. Without this critical commitment, the program would be in jeopardy.

The program's current grant cycle ends in 2024. The agency expects to apply for the next federal funding cycle to continue building on GEAR UP's nineteen-year history of success.

PROGRAM RESULTS

- 97 percent of students reported they would graduate on time.
- 30 percent of students have taken at least one dual credit course.
- 72 percent of students have plans to attend a postsecondary program or institution.
- 69 percent of students completed the FAFSA or WASFA

CONTACT

Marcie Mills, Director
Washington State GEAR UP
360-485-1065
marciem@wsac.wa.gov



WASHINGTON
OPPORTUNITY PATHWAYS

Washington's student financial aid programs are known collectively as Opportunity Pathways.

The Washington Student Achievement Council administers these programs, helping tens of thousands of students earn college certificates and degrees annually.