



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.

Washington was awarded its third consecutive state GEAR UP grant in September 2011. The six-year, \$27 million award provides direct services to over 8,000 students and their families in 27 high-poverty school districts statewide, starting in 7th grade. With the program's dollar-for-dollar cost share requirement, the total program investment will be over \$54 million.

PROGRAM PURPOSE

GEAR UP's vision is that all students are 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.

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

- Over the past five years, GEAR UP provided opportunities for students to attend summer camp on college campuses, including Central, Eastern, and Western Washington University, and the University of Washington.
- Students have access to extended day programs for tutoring, mentoring, and advising.
- Students and their families visit multiple college campuses to help them make better choices about college fit and match.

"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 THE STATE

Washington State GEAR UP provides an average of over \$680 per pupil in federal funding to schools, providing more than 40 additional staff members to work with students. In 2015-16, this resulted in over 168,575 direct service hours (an average of 25.5 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 2017. The agency expects to apply for the next federal funding cycle to continue building on GEAR UP's sixteen-year history of success.

PROGRAM RESULTS

- 85 percent of students report someone has spoken to them about college entrance requirements.
- 71 percent of students report someone has spoken to them about financial aid.
- 93 percent of students report they plan to attend college.
- 52 percent of seniors in GEAR UP schools completed a FAFSA in 2015-16, exceeding the overall state rate for public school seniors.



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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.