

Washington State GEAR UP

Year 6 Kickoff Workshop

Leavenworth August 16-17, 2022



Overview & Objectives

Washington Student Achievement Council convened the Washington State GEAR UP school partners for a Year 6 Kickoff workshop in Leavenworth, WA.

Over 90 GEAR UP school staff and the Student Advisory Committee participated in the in-person, two-day workshop. The focus of the event included:

- Financial Aid Information and Resources;
- Post-High School Pathways and Student Support;
- Hope Science; and
- Family Outreach.

Summary of Content

For Educators

The workshop featured interactive sessions, team time, a guest speaker, a Student Advisory Committee/high school student panel, and a postsecondary panel.

- Both panels shared their perspectives on financial aid & postsecondary applications.
- Guest speaker, Tyler Monk of Underdog Mentality, presented on Finding Your Why. This session connected post-high school pathways, hope science, and family outreach and helped attendees synthesize workshop concepts.
- Additionally, Christina Winstead of the 12th Year Campaign joined the workshop to provide financial aid support.

For Student Advisory Committee

Eleven students from across the state who serve as our GEAR UP student advisors joined to learn and practice professionalism, communication, and team building. They gathered in a pre-conference session for the first time in person this year. This opportunity allowed our team to teach crucial skills to build a better Advisory, based on the students' input. They asked for skills training in communication, dialogue, and professionalism.

Additionally, the students participated alongside GEAR UP coordinators, building administrators, and staff over the following two days, providing student insight as event panelists. Dan Ashe provided an afternoon experiential training session to deepen the skills they used within the Advisory Group and with the GEAR UP professionals during the event. During this time, Annie prepped the students on how to serve as panelists and participate in event activities.

Post-Conference Survey Summary:

- 89% said the conference speakers provided valuable and timely information relevant to attendees' day-to-day work.
- 92% of respondents indicated the event exceeded expectations.
- On what participants on significant takeaways, responses included:
 - *Student panel was valuable in seeing things from students' perspectives.*
 - *Reinforcement on the need to address student needs individually within the general school structure and environment.*
 - *I always appreciate the timing of this workshop to get me in the right mindset for the new school year.*
 - *The Student Panel was so insightful! Their responses were so genuine and really helped me to gain a better perspective of what my students are thinking and feeling. Absolutely loved Tyler Monk, too. His enthusiasm was refreshing and contagious.*
 - *Variety of presentations. The student and postsecondary panels and Tyler Monk were great additions to GU meetings. Positive and collaborative environment.*

Student Recommendations:

Students' recommendations were two-fold, some directed around better GEAR UP services and some directed at the student advisory work.

GEAR UP Service Recommendations

1. More direct parent communication, including direct invites and multiple methods of communication.
2. More financial aid and scholarship information during the school day.

3. Increased communication with students, but gentle and consistent. Slow building of trust and relationships.

Student Advisory Recommendations

1. Add more members from the east side of the state so that our group better represents our GEAR UP student demographics.
2. Create more in-person opportunities like this so students can continue building trust and community, better serving GEAR UP through increased transparency.

Lessons Learned

The workshop concluded with a round of Plus EBI, or Even Better If... The main takeaways that attendees shared were that they would like to increase team time, cross-school collaboration, and have session choices.

Next Steps

The post-event next steps include posting workshop materials online. WSAC staff will align the objectives to ongoing professional development opportunities, including virtual and in-person events. Additionally, WSAC will survey attendees approximately 90 days afterward to evaluate workshop effectiveness and the use of concepts learned.

Students' responses will help inform what professional development we provide GU schools over the year. The Advisory will continue to meet to provide a way for students to share their GEAR UP experiences each month remotely. These meetings will follow the academic calendar and serve as opportunities for us to tap into how students experience the seasons of senior year that lead up to college and career pathways. A feasibility test will see the benefits of gathering students in person over various periods. More to come. We will recruit 3-4 new students to join our advisory work from the east side of the state.