OREGON GEAR UP – College. It's not a dream, it's a plan.

CONTEXT/NEED

By 2020, 70% of all jobs in Oregon will require some type of education or training after high school (Carnevale, 2013). Yet, only 37% of adults in Oregon hold a postsecondary degree. Among GU3 communities, only 54% of adults have attended college and only 26% have a two-year degree or higher.

Rural communities face a number of challenges, including:

- Local economic decline and high poverty
- Under-resourced schools with low graduation rates and limited availability of rigorous courses
- Geographic isolation which results in difficulties:
  - attracting and retaining high quality/specialized teachers
  - bringing in resources to schools (e.g., speakers, PD)
  - exposing students to out-of-school experiences (e.g., college trips)
  - maintaining high attendance for school and school-related events among students and families
- Local culture that has historically undervalued postsecondary education and/or is unfamiliar with college selection, application, and financing.

GOAL

To increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary programs.

TARGET POPULATION

Low-income and underserved students and their families in 54 middle and high schools in 31 school districts.

INPUTS

Funding from USDOE and The Ford Family Foundation

District support (dollar and in-kind match)

Oregon GU staff's technical assistance, professional development, networking, and administrative support

OSU resources (e.g., summer camps, Beaver Hangouts)

Participating schools and communities

Incentives (food and swag)

Partners:
- Local school partners
- Higher ed institutions
- Metis (evaluator)

EVIDENCE-BASED FRAMEWORK

ACTIVITIES

For schools:

- Professional development, ongoing support from GU school liaisons and other staff, data reports and site visit support, and GU resources (e.g., toolkits, newsletters, website, research briefs)
- Curriculum development and alignment
- Infusion of technology
- Development of local partnerships

For students:

- Rigorous coursework
- Academic supports (e.g., advisement, tutoring, enrichment, and summer programs)
- Mentoring and social-emotional learning supports
- Career/college readiness supports: classes, advisement, workshops, panels, job shadowing, internships, fairs, college visits, Photo Booths

For families:

- School events, trips, workshops, panels, communications and individualized assistance

OUTCOMES

SCHOOL OUTCOMES

Short and mid-term	Long-term
✓ School leadership and quality teaching ✓ Greater involvement of school staff in college access work ✓ Curriculum vertically aligned ✓ Increased number of accelerated learning and rigorous courses ✓ Development of partnerships	✓ Sustained college-going culture ✓ Systems of college and career readiness supports ✓ College prep curriculum ✓ Sustained partnerships

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Short and mid-term	Long-term
✓ Stronger cognitive and social-emotional skills ✓ Increased sense of agency and self-advocacy skills ✓ Improved academic behaviors and performance ✓ Completion of advanced courses ✓ Higher postsecondary education expectations and career/college awareness ✓ Completion of college entrance activities (ACT/SAT, applications, scholarships)	✓ Increased high school graduation rates ✓ Increased postsecondary education enrollment, persistence and completion

FAMILY OUTCOMES

Short and mid-term	Long-term
✓ Increased postsecondary education expectations and opportunities ✓ Knowledge of college selection, application, and financial aid process ✓ Increased involvement in school and students' education	✓ FAFSA completion ✓ Local culture of continued and lifelong learning

Reaching Higher: Create a school environment, policies, and teacher expectations that support all students' pursuit of a postsecondary education.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- When teachers have high expectations for students and provide engaging, high interest tasks, students build self-esteem, increase confidence and improve academic performance (Brophy, 2010).
- Teachers' beliefs about student potential are particularly powerful for students of color and students from low-income families (Ferguson, 2002).
- Parents' beliefs also play a critical role in motivating and supporting students' decisions to pursue postsecondary plans (Hossler and Stage, 1992). In rural communities, parents—particularly low-income parents with no prior college experience—may not see the value of their children pursuing a postsecondary education degree. Parents may also experience anxiety about their children leaving and not returning to the community ("brain drain"), and may encourage them to immediately enter the workforce so they can contribute financially to the family and/or work in the family business.
- Helping students develop college-going identities is a process that consists of five stages: envisioning, believing, aiming, organizing, and connecting. Implementing activities that intentionally lead students through these developmental stages increases the likelihood of their enrollment in college (Bouffard and Savitz-Romer, 2013).

STRATEGIES

- Incorporate preparing students for postsecondary options into school mission statements and classroom activities, lessons, and homework assignments.
- Create visual clues about the importance of college (college door wars, display teachers' alma maters, and seniors' postsecondary plans).
- Create partnerships with postsecondary institutions.
- Prepare school personnel to coach students to take the appropriate classes necessary for their postsecondary goals.
- Explore differences in expectations among students, parents, and teachers; work to correct discrepancies.
- Have students explore their "possible selves" and help them develop strategies for moving beyond their fears.
- Encourage students to identify their strengths, specifically in areas that inform their self-concept.
- Have students "try on" the role of college students though on-college-campus experiences and using college-like practices in high school activities.
- Develop educational plans with all 8th graders that include postsecondary options.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

- College/career décor
- Career and college center
- Career/college classes and advisories
- Schoolwide and community college days
- College visits
- College fair for students
- College night for families
- College signing day
- College Application Week (CAW)
- Guest speaker events
- Alumni events/presentations
- Beaver Hangouts
- Events to celebrate student accomplishments
- College awareness activities and workshops for families
- PD for school staff (e.g., how to integrate college/career readiness in their work)
- Book clubs for school staff

Resources:

- Oregon Private College Week Camp
- GEAR UP PD Template on High Expectations
- Oregon GEAR UP Toolkits:
  - College Visits
  - Career and College Day
  - College and Career Center
  - College Fit
  - College-Going Culture
  - It's A Plan
  - The Transition to High School
  - GEAR UP Week

GRANT OBJECTIVES

- Increase the percentage of students with expectations of achieving a postsecondary degree or certificate.
- Increase the percentage of parents/families who expect their students to achieve a postsecondary degree or certificate.
- Increase the percentage of students that school staff expects to complete a postsecondary degree or certificate.
- Increase the percentage of students who graduate from high school.
- Increase the percentage of students who enroll in college.

ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Increase the percentage of school staff who incorporate college/career access work in their instruction/practices.

Rigor: Academically prepare all students for postsecondary education through rigorous curriculum and academic support.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- Academic preparation is by far the most effective means of increasing the odds that students will graduate from high school, and enroll/persist in college (Bedsworth et al., 2006; Bailey, 2009).
- A rigorous high school curriculum has greater impact on bachelor's degree completion than any other pre-college indicator of academic preparation, regardless of socio-economic status and race (Adelman, 2006).
- Understanding what constitutes a college-ready curriculum should be introduced by ninth grade (Tierney, 2009).
- Developing sufficiently rigorous courses and supports, aligning the curriculum from middle school through the first year of college, and encouraging students to take math all four years of high school are among the most successful strategies for reducing the need for remediation in college (Boatman, 2013).
- Critical traits related to academic performance are: grit, self-control, enthusiasm, social intelligence, gratitude, optimism, and curiosity (Tough, 2013).

Need in GU3 communities:

- Low academic preparation of students in GU3 communities (% students meeting/exceeding grade-level benchmarks in reading and math is lower than statewide averages).
- An average of 69% of school graduates in G3 communities enroll in developmental/remediation courses in community college.

STRATEGIES

- Align curriculum with state standards, including Common Core, as well as across grades, to eliminate gaps and overlapping in courses.
- Provide equitable opportunities to access college preparation courses.
- Provide access to academic supports before, after, and/or during school, as well as summer.
- Provide access to academically challenging courses as a default college-prep curriculum, dual enrollment programs, and online or other distance media.
- Uphold rigorous performance standards for all students in all classes.
- Ensure that all students understand what constitutes a college-ready curriculum.
- Utilize performance data to inform students about their academic proficiency and college readiness.
- Use advisories, ninth-grade academies, and senior seminars to cover goal setting, persistence, self-awareness, motivation, self-efficacy, time-management, study skills, and other non-cognitive skills.
- Encourage families to support college-going behavior by helping their children be organized, setting aside dedicated time and space for academic and college-related activities, and being intentional and mindful about the future.
- Help students develop their cognitive skills such as research, interpretation of data, and communication.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

- Curriculum alignment activities
- Teacher PD to increase rigor of existing classes
- New AP/IB/Advanced courses/Online learning/Dual enrollment
- Tutoring and homework help
- Summer academic enrichment programs (e.g., STEM)
- Robotics or academic clubs
- Academic advisement
- Freshman academy
- Credit recovery
- Workshops or advisories to increase cognitive skills and non-cognitive skills
- Technology infusion

Resources:

- Chromebooks
- AVID
- Growth mindset PD
- Evidence-based socio-emotional (SEL) curricula (e.g., Positive Action, Second Step, Success Highways)
- Grit (e.g., EduGuide)
- GEAR UP PD Template on Rigor
- GEAR UP Toolkits
  - It's A Plan
  - The Transition to High School

GRANT OBJECTIVES

- Increase performance on standardized tests.
- Reduce the percentage of students with failing grades.
- Increase the percentage of students who pass pre-Algebra by the end of 8th grade.
- Increase the percentage of students who pass Algebra I by the end of 9th grade.
- Increase the percentage of students who take two years of math beyond Algebra I by the end of 12th grade.
- Increase the percentage of students who are on track to graduate at the end of each grade.
- Increase the number of AP/IB and dual credit classes offered and taken.

ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Increase students' cognitive and non-cognitive skills.
- Improve students' school attendance, motivation, and engagement.
- Increase the percentage of students who place into college-level Math and English without need for remediation.
- Increase the percentage of current and former students who are on track to graduate college.

Relevance: Link students' career aspirations with their educational goals.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- Students who understand that a college degree is necessary to pursue their desired career are six times more likely to earn a degree than those who do not (Bedsworth et al., 2006).

- Exposing students to career-relevant instruction and career pathways greatly enhances their motivation and engagement in school (Christenson et al., 2008; Orthner et al., 2013).

- Youth need a balance of intrinsic and extrinsic goals. Simply focusing on the financial rewards of attending college is insufficient. External incentives can be useful when framed in ways that help students internalize them and used in concert with a focus on learning and long-term intrinsic rewards such as finding a satisfying career and making positive contributions to their communities. (Bouffard and Savitz-Romer, 2013).

STRATEGIES

- Utilize the Oregon Career Information System or similar resources to create personal education plans that include postsecondary options.

- Partner with community partners, businesses, and professionals to offer a career fair and/or guest speaker series.

- Offer service-learning and work-based learning opportunities.

- Ensure that all students understand early what courses are necessary to prepare them for the college-level work that will fulfill their career goals.

- Help students draw a connection between their interests/passions and college-going.

- Provide balanced reasons for going to college (e.g., interesting work, financial stability, meeting others with similar interests, quality of life, positive community contributions).

- Help youth see the value of learning for its own sake and for the purpose of pursuing interesting work later.

- Provide opportunities for youth to hear from their peers or near peers about how their future goals align with their cultural traditions and values.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

- Career classes

- Career workshops

- Guest speaker with professionals in various career fields

- Career fairs

- Workplace visits

- Work-based learning opportunities

- Internships

- Service-learning opportunities

- Mentoring from professionals in various career fields

Resources:

- Oregon Career Information System

- Careers Photo Booth

- College and career readiness curricula (e.g., CollegeEd, Career Choices)

- GEAR UP Toolkits
    - o Career and College Day
    - o College and Career Center
    - o It's A Plan

GRANT OBJECTIVES

- Increase the percentage of students with a personal education plan that includes some type of education beyond high school.

- Increase the number of opportunities available for students to explore career options through career fairs, job shadows, internships, or other career-related learning experiences.

- Increase the number of businesses and community partners that collaborate with the school.

ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Increase students' interest in careers.

- Increase students' knowledge of career fields and associated educational requirements.

Relationships: Foster relationships that encourage students' academic success.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- Peers have a strong influence on each other. For example, students are four times more likely to enroll in college if a majority of their friends also plan to attend than if their friends do not (Choy, 2002).

- Parental influence is equally as important as that of peers. Compared to peers with college-educated parents, first-generation students are more likely to report that the reason they went to college was their parents' desire for them to go. The number of first-generation students citing parental encouragement as their primary motivator has more than doubled since 1971 (Saenz et al., 2007).

- The positive impact of mentoring on college planning and preparation is demonstrated by strong and long-standing evidence. Some of the impacts of mentoring include: increased grade promotion; decreased absenteeism; improved relationships with parents; and increases in goal-orientation and achievement, interest in attending college (particularly when the mentors have attended college), and awareness of the steps required for college entrance, and improved overall satisfaction with school (Coles, 2011).

STRATEGIES

- Create student organizations focused on academics and college attendance.

- Show youth that people who share their racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other characteristics can and do succeed in college, through carefully 'matched' mentors, alumni panels, and/or motivational speakers.

- Host transition activities as students move from MS to HS and HS to college.

- Facilitate student relationships with peers who plan to attend college through a structured program or extracurricular activities.

- Ensure all students have meaningful connections with at least three staff members.

- Partner with community agencies and organizations that have staff who are more likely to share a common identity and characteristics with youth.

- Provide current college students as mentors for younger students.

- Provide staff with tools for working/communicating with students and families from diverse backgrounds.

- Include families in college access activities and school governance bodies.

- Host student-led conferences.

- Reduce language barriers by translating school communications.

- Visit the homes of incoming 9th grade students to welcome them to high school.

- Conduct projects in which youth interview their parents or other adult family members about the family's hopes and goals for the young person's future.

- Reach out to underrepresented parent and community groups, gather their views, and use these to improve programming and outreach.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

- Student clubs or organizations

- Student-led conferences

- Mentoring from older students to younger students

- Mentoring from college students and alumni to current students

- Mentoring from staff or community volunteers

- Motivational speakers

- Transition activities (workshops, summer camps, dinners, family events)

- Student and family celebratory and/or cultural events

- Family workshops on relationship building

Resources:

- ASPIRE

- FOCUS training and Gear Up for Excellence (student leadership camps)

- GEAR UP Toolkit
  o Parent Engagement
  o It's A Plan
  o The Transition to High School
  o The Transition to College
  o Communications

GRANT OBJECTIVES

- Increase the number of recognized student clubs/organizations focused on academics, careers, and/or college.

- Increase the percentage of students who report that their teachers expect them to go to college.

- Increase the number of parents and families involved in academic, career, and college planning.

ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Improve school climate.

- Increase the percentage of students who feel supported by peers, parents, and school staff.

- Increase students' leadership and socio-emotional skills, including: conflict resolution, developing healthy relationships with peers and adults, and communication.

Raising Awareness: Promote early awareness of college preparation, selection, admissions, and financial aid.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- Low-income and first generation students and their families often lack sufficient information on the steps necessary for college entry such as taking admissions exams, choosing the right college, submitting applications, and paying for their education (Schneider, 2003; Perna, 2004).

- Low-income students who attend financial aid information sessions and subsequently apply for financial aid are much more likely to attend and complete college, presumably because they understand both the net-price cost of college and the types of aid available to them (Bedsworth, 2006).

STRATEGIES

- Include family members in the college planning process.

- Organize workshops for students and families to inform them prior to 12th grade about college affordability, scholarships, and financial aid processes.

- Provide mentors and parent volunteers to coach their peers on the importance of college and choosing the right classes.

- Take students and their families on college trips.

- Invite recent graduates now attending college and their parents to serve on panels to inform students and parents of the importance of academic preparation for college.

- Develop partnerships with colleges to provide assistance to students and families.

- Inform students at early ages about college entrance requirements in order for them to make good choices about the courses they take.

- Build financial literacy and financial aid activities into math courses.

- Partner with college financial aid directors to offer workshops and serve as a resource for families.

- Build local scholarship endowments.

- Provide savings opportunities such as Individual Development Accounts.

- Provide help with college applications, financial aid forms, and applying for scholarships, loans, and grants.

- Use scholarship questions for essay prompts in ELA classes.

- Embed college admissions, affordability, and financing into school curriculum.

- Host special events such as College Application Week.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

- College fair
- College and career classes
- College selection, application, and financial aid workshops/events for students and families
- Alumni presentations and panel discussions
- College Application Week
- FAFSA and college nights for students and families
- Assistance with scholarship and financial aid applications
- Curriculum planning and development to integrate career/college awareness activities into lessons
- Parent newsletters

Resources:

- GEAR UP Parent Newsletters & Workshops
- GEAR UP Toolkits
  - College Visits
  - Campus Visits for Younger Students
  - Parent Engagement
  - College and Career Center
  - College Fit
  - Communications
  - It's A Plan

GRANT OBJECTIVES

- Increase the percentage of students and parents who are aware of entrance requirements for 2-year colleges, 4-year colleges, and trade and technical schools.

- Increase the percentage of students and parents who are familiar with various forms of financial aid.

- Increase the percentage of students and parents who can correctly identify the cost of attending a 4-year public university.

- Increase the percentage of students and parents who say they can afford postsecondary education using financial aid and their family's resources.

- Increase the percentage of seniors submitting college applications.

- Increase the percentage of seniors submitting FAFSAs.

- Increase the percentage of seniors submitting OSAC applications.

- Increase the percentage of GEAR UP students who are on track to apply for college as measured by completion of the SAT or ACT by end of 11th grade.

ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Increase the percentage of GEAR UP students who are on track to apply for college as measured by completion of the SAT or ACT by end of 11th grade.

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