

GEAR UP Kentucky Targets Achievement in Middle Schools



Partnerships To Increase Academic Rigor

GEAR UP Kentucky is a complex partnership reaching across every region in the state and made up of local partnerships within a larger statewide network. Local partners such as postsecondary institutions understand the specific needs of the schools and regions they serve and provide services for students, teachers and other school personnel.

Partnerships play an important role in helping to meet the state's agenda to enroll more students in postsecondary institutions. To ensure that GEAR UP Kentucky meets these goals, the Council on Postsecondary Education has set performance indicators for the program. The indicators are based on five priority areas: college awareness, rigorous curricula, increased access to college (scholarships), engagement of parents, and student support.

The indicators for the priority area rigor are focused on improving performance on the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) and the number of students in enriched educational experiences.

The goals for rigor include reducing the percent of students at the novice level in mathematics, science and writing and increasing the number of students taking algebra in middle school.

GEAR UP Kentucky is a partnership of schools, postsecondary education institutions, businesses, and non-profit organizations focused on increasing college participation by low-income students. The program is federally funded. The U. S. Department of Education awarded a five-year, \$10 million grant to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education in September 2000. Partners pledged an equal amount of matching funds.

Finding Common Ground—Collaboration with the Middle Grades Research Project

Both the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and Toyota QUEST have been partners with the Council on Postsecondary Education in the GEAR UP project. Each brings additional resources to the schools served by the program. In 2003, KDE expanded those re-

sources to include support of four GEAR UP schools in the Middle Grades Research Project (MGRP), a project administered by the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning. The resultant alliance between these four partners has created a synergy amongst them, and all schools in the

Program Snapshot—2003

Total Enrollment: 17,471

Grade Levels Served:
7 through 10

Ethnic Distribution:

- 77% White,
- 19% Black,
- 1.6% Hispanic,
- 2.3% Other (est.)

Socio-economic Status:

An average of 65.3% of participating students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch



Opportunities to Enrich School Improvement Activities

INSTRUCTION/CURRICULA

Building Success—Vertical Teams

Building Success—Pre AP

Different Ways of Knowing

TOOLS/RESOURCES

Standards for College Going Culture
Program Improvement Reviews

LEADERSHIP/COACHING

Toyota QUEST
Collaborative for Teaching and Learning

Standards For A College Going Culture

Working with the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning, GEAR UP Kentucky has developed a set of core standards to help guide school efforts in creating a college going culture. These standards answer the question: “*Are we providing an environment for success?*” They prompt schools to think systemically about the activities they design to meet GEAR UP objectives, so that achieving the results becomes the focus rather than the activities themselves. The standards are aligned with Kentucky’s *Standards and Indicators for School Improvement (SISI)*.

Beginning spring 2004, GEAR UP will share these standards with its cooperating schools including the use of the video, *the College Track*. The video produced by a national organization, Roundtable Media, provides context for reflecting on:

- a. How the work of GEAR UP deal directly with issues related to the access of disadvantaged

students to postsecondary education and high performance jobs.

- b. The actions that schools must take for these college going standards to be met.
- c. What the GEAR UP Kentucky priority AREAS (awareness, rigor, [parent] engagement, access [financial assistance] and support) will really mean schools must work to accomplish.
- d. The role each person has for making sure these actions are taken to support the work of GEAR UP in schools.



Every Child a Graduate

Business Partnership for School Improvement

QUEST of Toyota Motor Manufacturing of Kentucky (TMMK) support GEAR UP activities both at the statewide level and in individual schools. Through this partnership school personnel and students have access to training, coaching and meeting facilitation based a quality processes approach. Teachers learn how to set achievement goals, graph results, establish trends, break down individual problem areas and then create action plans to improve student learning. A

training, *Assessing Student Knowledge (ASK)* uses curriculum alignment and student assessment to identify and address student deficiencies. This training focuses on improving student performance on the Kentucky Core Content mathematics test.

[QUEST—*Quest for Useful Employment Skills for Tomorrow* is an initiative created and supported by the Toyota Motor Manufacturing Corp.]

Finding Common Ground— Collaboration with the Middle Grades Research Project (cont'd. from page 1)

MGRP (not only GEAR UP schools) have benefited. An outcome of the partnership is, helping these schools to coordinate their efforts across program initiatives—finding the common ground for improving school and classroom practices thus raising student achievement. The partnership has also moved the GEAR UP priority area rigor, into focus by its emphasis on standards-based curriculum and instruction for all students. Further, the partnership has facilitated a working model of effective coordination of reform strategies.