

# Oklahoma GEAR UP

## Q & A



### What is Oklahoma GEAR UP?

GEAR UP is a federally funded program administered by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. GEAR UP helps prepare middle and high school students for college through academic preparation programs and scholarships for students, professional learning activities for educators, and college access information for students and parents.

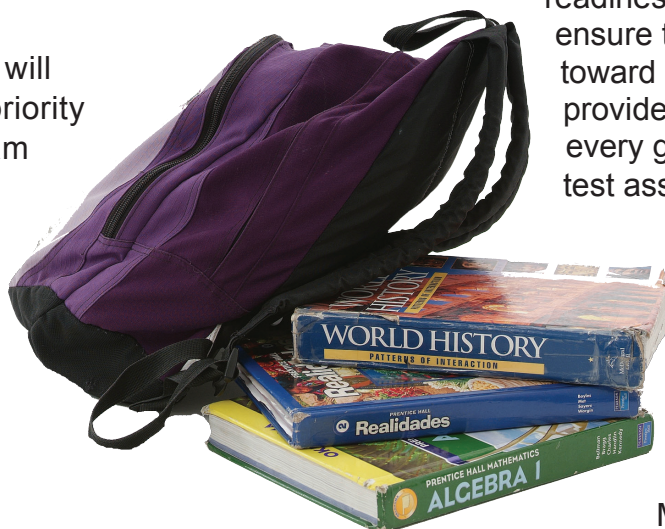
### How much grant money has been distributed?

The U.S. Department of Education awarded Oklahoma its first multi-year GEAR UP grant totaling \$20.5 million in Aug. 1999. The grant was supplemented with a one-year extension of \$4.4 million in 2004. The state received another multi-year grant totaling \$20.6 million in Aug. 2005. The grants were matched by more than \$47 million from state and partner resources. The successful administration of the previous grants was a huge plus in the selection process for a third grant award.

With the addition of the 2011 award, Oklahoma's GEAR UP program will ultimately receive more than \$80.6 million in federal funds by 2018 to help students better prepare for college.

### Who qualifies as an Oklahoma GEAR UP School District?

Oklahoma GEAR UP will provide a statewide priority student model program to 24 school districts in the state, providing services to 21,348 middle and high school students who face many service, infrastructure and opportunity needs.



GEAR UP will also continue to provide statewide student services such as the Student Information Hotline, OKcollegestart and GEAR UP websites and continual promotion of the Oklahoma's Promise Scholarship Program.

### What are the grant requirements?

The GEAR UP School Districts will be required to create school leadership teams to serve as each school's evaluation work team. All target school districts will be required to implement one of the two following service strands:

#### Strand 1: Building Resources for College Series

Qualifying school districts will have the opportunity to offer two student elective courses. CollegeEd for all eighth graders, a 32-week college information curriculum that provides college/career information and exploration to students; and a Building Resources for College (BRIC) program, a 32-week elective course to include College 101 information, leadership development, and student seminars for all ninth grade students.

#### Strand 2: College Connection Seminar Series

This strand is designed to provide students with tools to prepare for college. It offers a series of workshops for seventh through 12th graders and their families to learn more about college readiness and provides services to ensure they are taking the right steps toward a college education. Strand 1 provides college visits and tours for every grade level and standardized test assessment and preparation.

In addition, school districts will be encouraged to recruit students in grades eight through 10 to enroll in one of two summer Science Technology Engineering and Math academies that will be offered on college campuses.

## Additional Requirements

In addition to selecting one of the student service strands, the selected school districts will be required to implement the following direct student services.

## AP Premier and High School Transition Program

Schools will offer a one-day Advanced Placement Premier workshop per year for students who are enrolled in an AP course for the following year. Parents may also attend the workshop. In addition, schools will also receive funding to host an annual high school transition program for students leaving middle school and entering high school.

## ACT Assessments

All 11th grade students will take the ACT assessment. ACT will provide school districts with aggregate GEAR UP profile summary reports each year to provide staff with valuable information on student college readiness based on ACT benchmarks.

## Student Surveys

All seventh grade students will complete a career interest inventory each year and through collaboration with the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, students will receive training on the utilization of the Oklahoma Career Information System (OKCIS).

## College Application Services

The GEAR UP education specialists will provide assistance to seniors by guiding them through the college application process; assisting with ACT test preparation, skills workshops for writing college admission essays and assisting in the completion of financial aid and scholarship forms. Each year, every eighth grade student will receive a personalized 21st Century Scholar certificate. This certificate will indicate the estimated amount of federal financial aid and scholarships available to the student.

## Student Postsecondary Services

GEAR UP students will receive support from college liaisons strategically placed in the five Oklahoma community colleges with the highest enrollment of students from the targeted 24 school districts.

## Professional Development for Teachers, Counselors, Administrators and School Staff

Oklahoma GEAR UP will strengthen the quality of instruction in targeted school districts by providing professional development that will seek to strengthen teacher quality, infuse innovative teaching to increase

classroom engagement, educate teachers about diverse cultural and learning styles, and provide counselors, administrators, and staff with the knowledge and tools to provide accurate information regarding college access.

## Implementation of the EPAS System

Oklahoma GEAR UP education specialists will assist with EPAS implementation in all school districts by providing student planning opportunities through which students can identify career and educational goals early, instructional support to help classroom teachers prepare their students for transitions, assessment support so that academic progress can be monitored in grades eight, 10, and 12.

## Curriculum Development and Alignment

To ensure that GEAR UP students are exposed to a curriculum that is engaging, standards-based, and rigorous, Oklahoma GEAR UP will assist school districts in aligning their curriculum to the Common Core State Standards.

## College Awareness Communication Plan

Working in conjunction with other statewide outreach programs that seek to impress the value of education on students, families, and the community, GEAR UP college awareness activities will seek to educate the school districts' community, parents, and students on the specific issues associated with applying to and financing postsecondary education.

## Community Outreach

Community libraries in the target communities have agreed to establish Plan4College Centers. These centers receive funding through a subgrant to purchase college and career planning materials for a designated area of the library.

## Parent and Family Empowerment Program

Oklahoma GEAR UP will go beyond providing opportunities for parents and families to learn about the education system, college readiness, and the college enrollment process, by creating empowered parent and family leaders. Twenty-four school district-selected parents/family members will receive six days of professional-level training per year to become education advocates, thereby bridging the education system to the larger community. Upon completion of these Parent Leadership Academies (PLA), parent/family members will serve as advocates by providing direct services to students through the utilization of GEAR UP PLA subgrants where they will work with school district leaders to ensure that school/community needs are met.

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