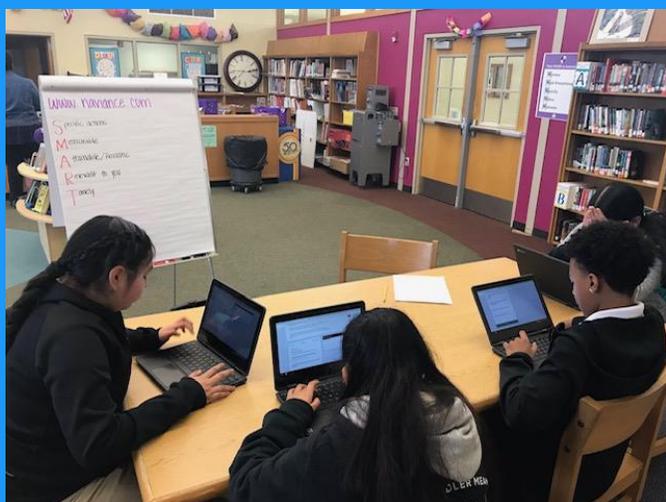


Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) Austin

Annual Evaluation Report 2019–2020





Executive Summary

GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) Austin is a federally funded grant program encouraging economically disadvantaged students and their families to have high educational expectations, graduate high school academically ready to enroll in college, and understand how to pay for postsecondary education. In 2019–2020, the program’s third federally funded year, GEAR UP Austin served a cohort of 8th-grade students ($n = 2,546$) across 11 middle schools.

Nearly all GEAR UP students received support services relevant to college preparation. Evaluation findings suggest that students, teachers, and parents had a positive perspective on the role of the program services in college preparation.

GEAR UP implementation outcomes for students included:

- Ninety-seven percent of GEAR UP students participated in one or more services.
- The majority of GEAR UP students reported college visits (63%) and classroom visits from GEAR UP facilitators (52%) as helpful for college preparation.
- Sixty-nine percent of GEAR UP students reported their facilitators were helpful in preparing them for college and career.
- The percentage of GEAR UP students who passed advanced courses was same (100%) as that of non-GEAR UP students.
- A greater percentage of GEAR UP students who received a high dosage of Austin Partners In Education (APIE) tutoring than of GEAR UP students who received a low dosage of APIE tutoring passed Texas Success Initiative (TSI) reading and writing.

GEAR UP implementation outcomes for teachers included:

- Ninety-four percent of teachers at GEAR UP campuses were confident in their knowledge of how to help students meet their college and career goals.
- Teachers at GEAR UP campuses were perceived by the majority of students as supportive in preparing them for college and career.

GEAR UP implementation outcomes for parents included:

- Seventy-one percent of GEAR UP students thought their parents helped them prepare for college and career.
- The majority of GEAR UP parents regarded college visits (76%) and individual meetings with facilitators/counselors (63%) as the most helpful activities supporting them to prepare their child for college.

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Overview

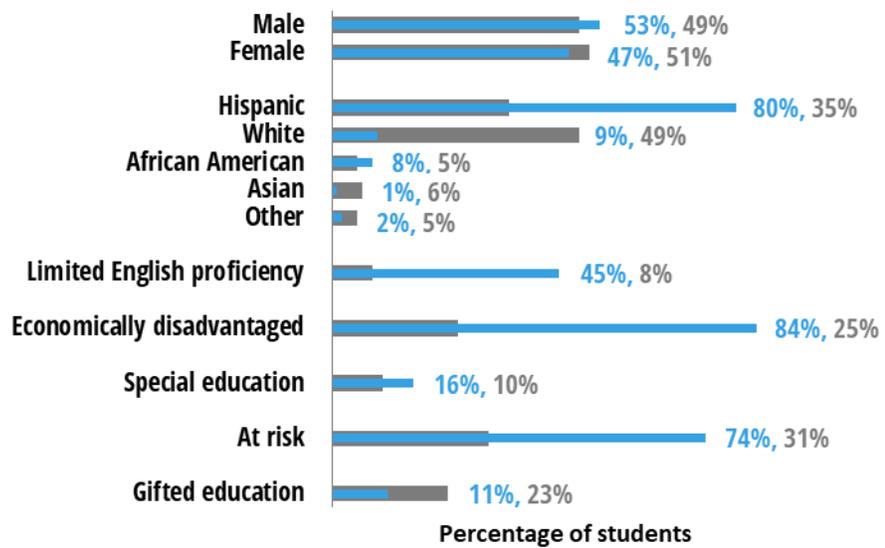
Background of GEAR UP Austin

GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) Austin is a federally funded grant program encouraging low-income at-risk students and their families to have high educational expectations, complete the required courses to enter college, and understand how to pay for their postsecondary education. GEAR UP Austin started serving a cohort of 6th-grade students ($n = 2,514$) across 11 middle schools in the Spring 2018 semester and will follow them into high school through the summer after graduation. In year 3 of the program, Austin Independent School District (AISD) was awarded \$1,980,561 to continue implementing GEAR UP Austin. In 2019–2020, GEAR UP Austin served a cohort of 8th-grade students ($n = 2,546$) across 11 middle schools.

Overall, GEAR UP students differed from non-GEAR UP students ($n = 2,990$) in several ways. Eighty-four percent of GEAR UP Austin students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL), and 80% attended majority-Hispanic schools. Compared with non-GEAR UP students, GEAR UP students were more likely to be English language learners and be at risk (Figure 1)

Figure 1.

The majority of 8th grade students at GEAR UP campuses were more likely than non-GEAR UP students to be Hispanic, English language learners, at risk, and economically disadvantaged.



Source. 2019–2020 AISD student demographics records

Note. Other includes American Indian or Alaska native and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

In 2019–2020, the program’s third year of federal funding, GEAR UP continued to provide intensive support services relevant to college preparation for the 8th-grade cohort. GEAR UP sought to ensure all students graduate from high school and are prepared for and succeed in postsecondary education. GEAR UP aimed to achieve the following eight goals:

1. to expand instruction and increase academic opportunities in mathematics, science, and language arts to enable students to complete college-level courses, without need for remediation
2. to provide access to and enable success in high-quality advanced academic programs in order to reduce the need for course or subject remediation in college
3. to provide for professional development opportunities for GEAR UP Austin personnel to assure strong, student-led and personalized instruction in project schools
4. to provide a network of strong student support services, including those that improve noncognitive skills and behaviors and encourage on-time promotion and academic preparation
5. to ensure on-time high school completion and straight-to-college enrollment
6. to ensure first-year college retention
7. to provide postsecondary information (e.g., about college fit and readiness level, and additional opportunities)
8. to build, expand, and leverage community partnerships

To achieve these goals, GEAR UP implemented services in the following four program areas:

Academic intervention: personalized, rigorous academic preparation to reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level

Enhanced counseling and advising: personalized college and career advising to improve awareness of postsecondary opportunities and increase rates of enrollment

Professional development activities: ongoing professional development activities to help district staff support students’ learning

Family engagement: engagement of family and community members as partners supporting academic growth and college preparation

Implementation Services

In alignment with the program goals, GEAR UP campuses focused service implementation on the four program components throughout the 2019–2020 school year (Table 1). Program implementation proceeded as originally planned until April 2020, when all AISD schools shifted to remote learning due to COVID-19. When campuses closed, program staff provided many of the traditional in-person program services virtually for GEAR UP students and their families.

Table 1. In 2019–2020, GEAR UP implemented services in all four program areas.

Program component	Service
Academic intervention ¹	Tutoring
Enhanced counseling and advising	Comprehensive mentoring Counseling /advising Financial aid counseling/advising College visit Job site visit/job shadowing Educational field trip Student workshop
Professional development activities	Teacher training/workshop
Family engagement	Counseling/advising College visit Workshop Family event

Academic Intervention

GEAR UP Austin supported the expansion of advanced academics and academic support services to students and offered educators targeted professional development activities designed to personalize learning and tailor instruction to meet the needs of individual students. In year 3, GEAR UP Austin continued to build upon the infrastructure of Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and supported online platforms to

¹ Due to COVID-19, summer programs were canceled and not included in the table.

Purpose of the Evaluation

enhance literacy efforts (e.g., Mackenvia) and instruction (e.g., BLEND). Teachers and GEAR UP staff used BLEND (the district’s learning management system, also known as Canvas) to integrate more technology and personalized instruction into the classroom. Furthermore, the GEAR UP Austin Partners In Education (APIE) tutors received access to BLEND in January. GEAR UP supported teachers to use these digital resources in attempts to improve students’ achievement.

BLEND became the primary point of contact during school closure due to COVID-19. This digital learning platform enabled continued interaction and engagement between students and staff. As GEAR UP staff and tutors were already using BLEND for student outreach and workshop topics, GEAR UP program staff swiftly responded to students’ learning needs after campuses were closed and learning continued in a virtual format.

To improve academic preparation for college, GEAR UP partnered with APIE to provide tutoring to its students in all 11 GEAR UP middle schools. APIE tutors, who were recent college graduates bringing diverse backgrounds and educational experiences, provided whole-group or small-group tutoring support. Tutoring focused on English language arts (ELA) and mathematics (math). Tutoring took place in and outside the classroom. APIE tutors were supervised by APIE staff, who met regularly with the GEAR UP project director to review implementation activities and to identify needs for improvement.

GEAR UP also partnered with AVID to enhance instructional practices, students’ engagement, and a college-going culture on AVID/GEAR UP campuses. Teachers at GEAR UP campuses received opportunities for learning AVID strategies to support student learning.

Enhanced Counseling and Advising

GEAR UP students were offered opportunities to develop self-confidence and broaden their educational and career aspirations through the advisory curriculum, relationships with mentors, and college and career awareness and exploration activities. The advisory curriculum included topics such as goal setting, career exploration, and the importance of higher education. As 8th-grade was a transition year, the GEAR UP staff worked to ensure students understood their high school options, pathways, and high school graduation requirements.

In 2019–2020, GEAR UP students continued to receive mentoring opportunities, but some services were limited in the spring by school closures due to COVID-19. Additionally, GEAR UP staff continued to provide college visits in two different formats. Students may have participated in online virtual college tours or visits to a campus. Students enrolled in Bedichek, Burnet, Covington, Lively, Martin, Mendez, and Paredes

The primary purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of GEAR UP Austin in achieving its program goals. This report presents a description of outcomes for the 2019–2020 school year, the third year of GEAR UP Austin implementation in AISD. Specifically, the report describes program implementation, students’ participation in GEAR UP Austin, and students’ academic and college preparation outcomes.

The program evaluation focused on two research questions:

For each program component, what program services were developed, implemented, and/or enhanced in the third year of the GEAR UP Austin project?

What were the outcomes for GEAR UP participants?

To address these evaluation questions, a variety of measurements were used, including surveys, focus groups, documentation, and archival student records (e.g., course enrollment, student attendance, and Texas Success Initiative [TSI] assessment scores).



Middle Schools took virtual college tours. Universities where students took virtual college tours included:

- University of Colorado Boulder
- University of Oregon
- University of California Los Angeles
- University of Michigan
- Texas A&M University
- St. Edwards University
- Yale University
- The University of Arizona
- University of North Texas

All GEAR UP campuses organized at least one college visit. Students visited at least one of the following universities:

- Texas A&M University
- University of Texas at Austin
- Concordia University
- Austin Community College
- Southwestern University
- St. Edwards University
- Trinity University
- Baylor University
- University of Houston
- Huston-Tillotson University
- Texas State University
- University of Texas at San Antonio
- Angelo State University

The GEAR UP program staff focused student workshops on a variety of activities, including:

- college and career exploration
- information sharing about career options from external partners
- academic planning and preparation
- professionals sharing about their college and career path
- financial literacy

The GEAR UP program staff regularly tracked students' attendance to provide support services to improve attendance. For example, the GEAR UP facilitators communicated with students and parents about the significance of regular attendance. To reduce chronic absenteeism, they contacted parents through home visits, phone calls, and meetings. They often set up attendance contracts with students as a strategy to improve attendance rates.

Professional Development Activities

All GEAR UP teachers ($n = 410$) completed prescribed professional learning opportunities throughout the 2019–2020 school year. The prescribed opportunities included campus- and district-based professional learning that supported individualized instruction, increased rigor and students' engagement, and integrated technology and blended learning. Professional learning sessions included alignment of courses, professional development activities, distance learning, and data-informed differentiated instruction. The professional learning sessions included those selected by teachers or required by the district or campus leadership team. Examples of the professional learning sessions in which GEAR UP teachers participated were:

- AISD EDU personalized learning conference
- AISD literacy plan
- AVID college readiness (CR)
- AISD mentor training
- blended learning summit
- blended and personalized professional learning
- campus-based staff development
- coaching connection
- CP&I Capacity Building Foundations: Isolating Race
- creative computing, coding, web design, and computer science
- Creative Learning Initiative leadership trainings
- customer service for teachers and other staff: communicating with parents and caregivers
- district-wide professional learning
- English as a second language (ESL) training
- ESL Academy
- foundations of technology skills for educators
- G Suite for Education, AISD
- high-leverage personalization strategies
- mindfulness in school
- scaffolding classroom management
- sheltered instruction in the classroom
- social and emotional learning (SEL) symposium
- SEL campus facilitator training
- State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) progress measure: data analysis
- supporting blended and personalized learning with BLEND
- Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)
- understanding and supporting dysgraphia

GEAR UP teachers also engaged in professional learning activities provided by the Institute for Public School Initiative (IPSI) at University of Texas (UT) Austin and other providers

selected by the campus leadership team, AVID site-based team, and child-study team. Professional learning sessions provided by IPSI covered cooperative learning, cultural proficiency, and integrating literacy across contents.

In partnership with IPSI, GEAR UP facilitators also participated in monthly GEAR UP meetings and professional development activities focused on program planning and implementation. The monthly meetings provided a forum for facilitators to exchange ideas and best practices with other staff from districts who were awarded a GEAR UP grant. The GEAR UP team developed a College and Career Advising team training day at the end of March, designed to cover the following topics: postsecondary options, pathways, endorsements, and majors; CR testing; and college applications and financial planning. Unfortunately, this event was canceled due to COVID-19, the team has plans to offer the sessions at a future date.

Although it was planned for facilitators to attend at least one conference that highlighted best practices in college and career readiness (e.g., the Texas Association for College Advising Counseling [TACAC] conference and AVID Summer Institute), these events were all canceled due to COVID-19. Furthermore, seven team members were able to participate in a TBRI training in Spring 2020. This training is expected to help GEAR UP staff better support and work with GEAR UP students.

Family Engagement

GEAR UP Austin staff implemented family engagement and outreach. Family engagement activities were provided for any adult (e.g., parent, guardian, family member) who played a key role in the child's life. Training for GEAR UP facilitators was provided on how to engage families in culturally relevant and effective ways, including college visits, campus family nights, coffee with the principal, and individual counseling/advising sessions. Information related to high school endorsements, academic planning, financial literacy, campus expectations, and benefits of higher education were covered during parent nights, in a newsletter, and on the program's website. The GEAR UP team distributed a newsletter to all parents in February, with information about high school programs and options. Furthermore, when COVID hit, the team performed more outreach and parent/family advising through phone calls and text messaging.



Evaluation question 1: For each program component, what program services were developed, implemented, and/or enhanced in the third year of the GEAR UP Austin project, 2019–2020?

The first evaluation question aimed to assess the implementation of the GEAR UP program. To measure program implementation, data were analyzed from program documentation, service tracking records, the GEAR UP Student Survey, the GEAR UP Teacher Survey, and GEAR UP focus groups with students. As schools shifted to virtual learning due to COVID-19, GEAR UP focus groups with campus staff originally scheduled in Spring 2020 were cancelled and therefore not included in the analyses. Included in this section are the percentage of GEAR UP students participating in program services, the average number of hours per participating GEAR UP student, and students' and campus staff's perceptions of GEAR UP services.

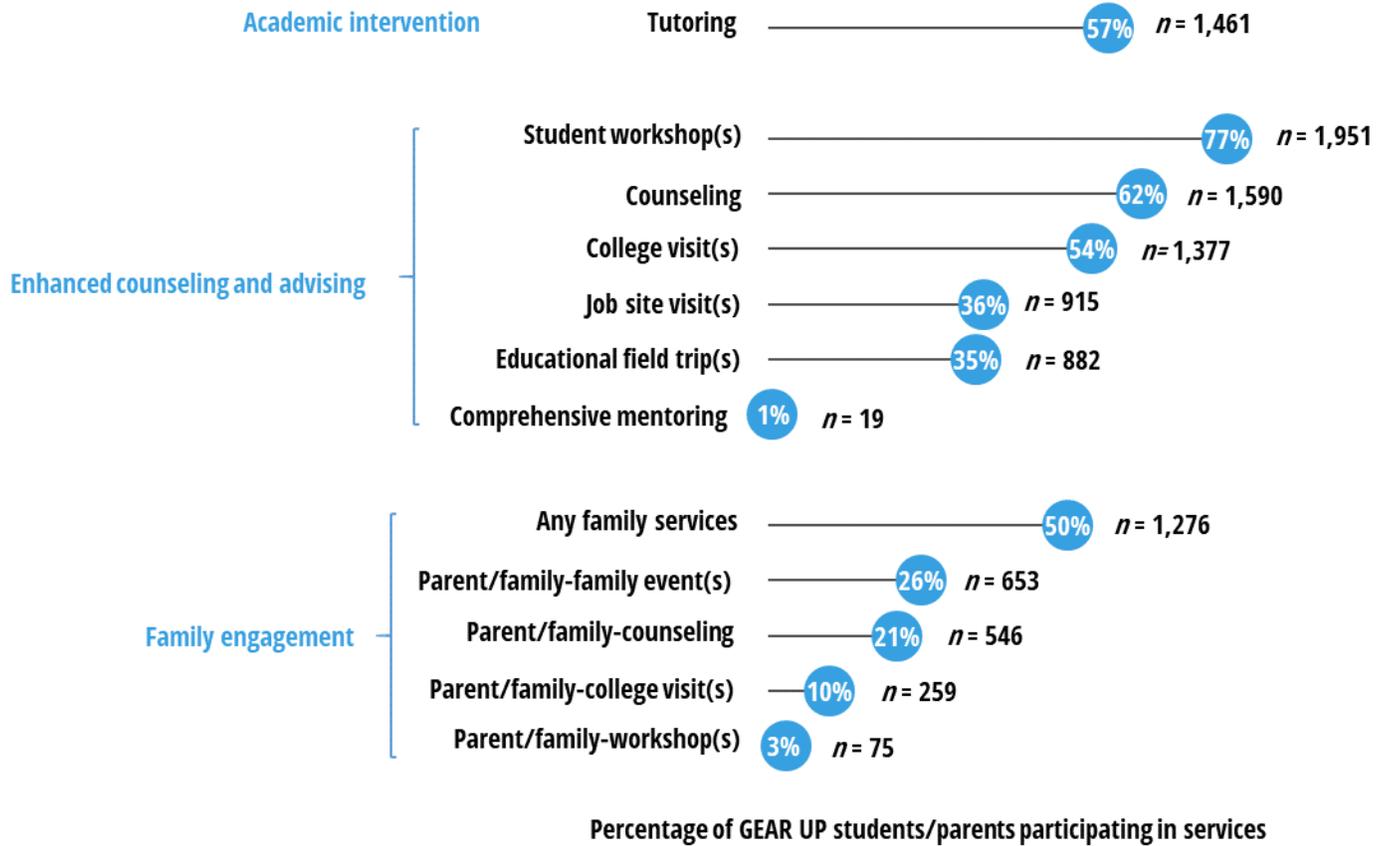
Implementation finding 1: Workshops, counseling, and tutoring were provided to more students than were other services.

The GEAR UP program staff recorded services provided to students throughout the 2019–2020 school year. Almost all (97%) GEAR UP students participated in one or more services provided by the GEAR UP program. Overall, 57% of GEAR UP students participated in academic intervention activities, 94% of GEAR UP students participated in enhanced counseling and advising activities, and 50% of GEAR UP students' parents/families participated in family engagement opportunities. Also, findings demonstrated that 81% of GEAR UP students participated in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, or tutoring program.

More specifically, the majority of GEAR UP students participated in workshops, counseling, and tutoring (Figure 2). The GEAR UP program staff monitored students with failing grades, based on report card records. By the end of the 2019–2020 school year, 60% of GEAR UP students with failing grades had received tutoring services, although the GEAR UP program strives to have 100% of failed students receive tutoring services.

Figure 2.

The majority of GEAR UP students participated in student workshops, counseling, and tutoring, and approximately half participated in college visits.

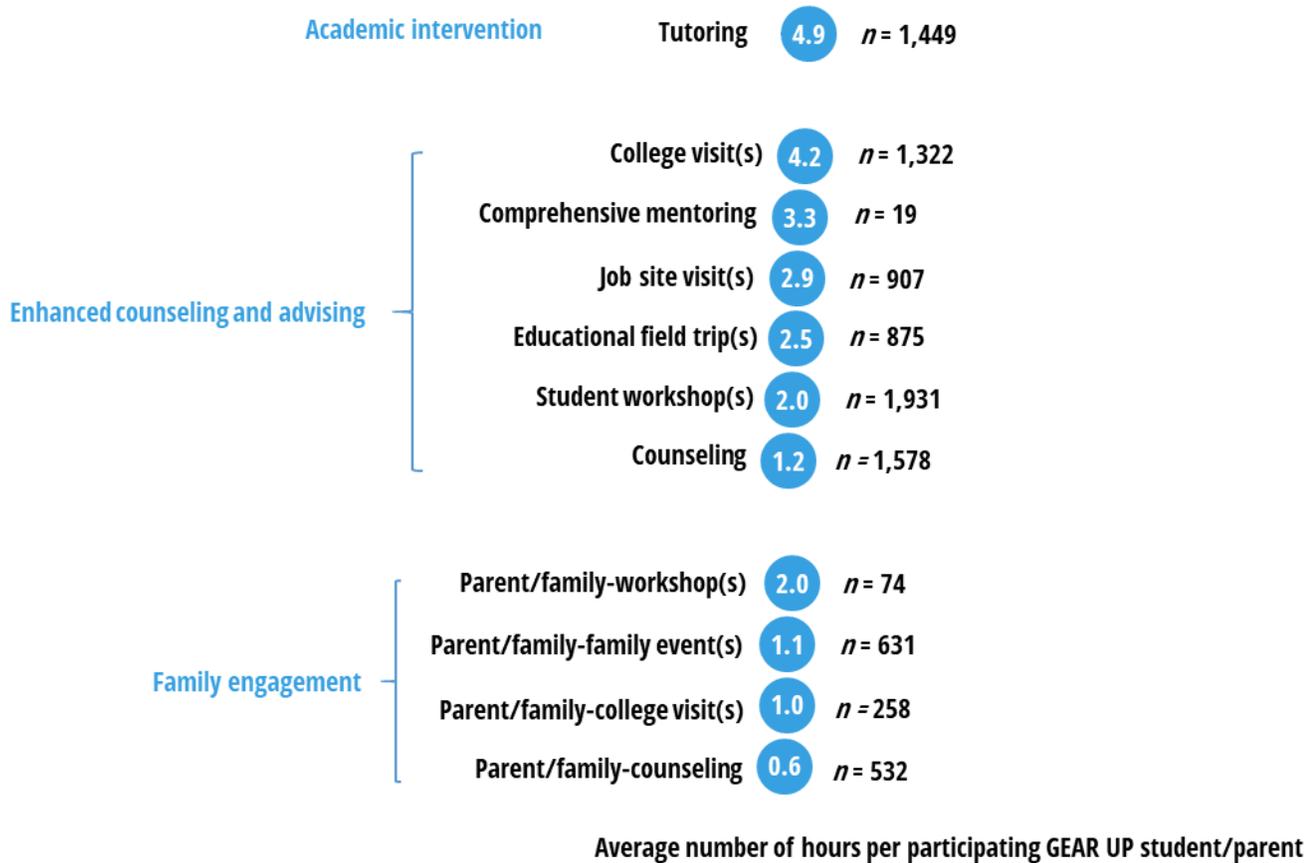


Source. AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020

Overall, participating GEAR UP students had an average of 4.9 hours of academic intervention activities and 6.8 hours of enhanced counseling and advising activities. Each participating family had an average of 1.1 hours of family services. Many students participated in tutoring and college visits. Consistently, each participating students, on average, completed 4.9 hours of tutoring and 4.2 hours of college visits (Figure 3).

Figure 3.

The average number of hours per participating GEAR UP student ranged from 0.6 hour for parent counseling to 4.9 hours for tutoring.



Source. AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020

Note. Average number of hours was based on participating students with dosage records only.

Implementation finding 2: The implementation of GEAR UP services varied across GEAR UP campuses.

The percentages of GEAR UP students receiving academic intervention and family engagement activities varied across campuses, and almost all schools involved more than 90% of GEAR UP students in enhanced counseling and advising (Appendix D). Specifically, at Lively, almost all GEAR UP students participated in workshops and college visits (Appendix E). Almost all GEAR UP students at Garcia Young Men’s Leadership Academy (YMLA) and Martin participated in workshops and counseling. Almost all GEAR UP students at Bedichek participated in educational field trips. The majority of students at Sadler Means Young Women’s Leadership Academy (YWLA) participated in tutoring, job site visits, and counseling.

Seven GEAR UP schools provided participating students with at least 6 hours of enhanced counseling and advising services (Appendix D). Although high percentages of GEAR UP students participated in workshops, counseling, and tutoring, the average number of hours each participating GEAR UP student received services varied, ranging from 0.4 to 9.0 hours (Appendix F). Lively involved 97% of GEAR UP students in college visits, and each participating student had 6.3 hours of college visits, on average. Garcia YMLA involved 99% of GEAR UP students in workshops, and each participating student had 4.7 hours of workshops, on average.

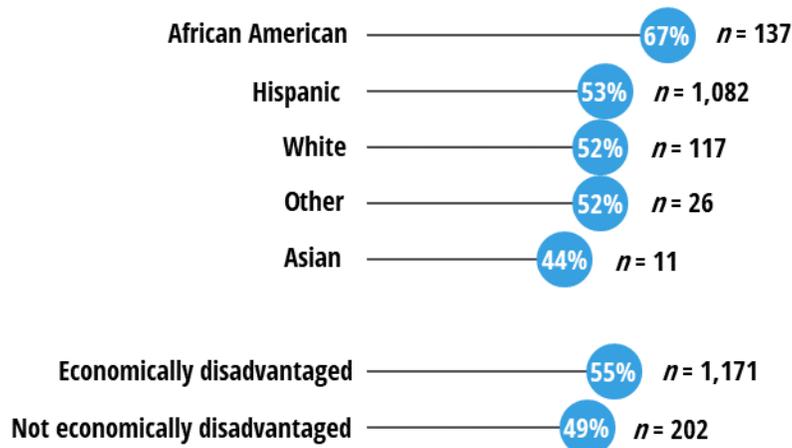
However, this year, GEAR UP students continued to have a lower dosage of participation in counseling than in other GEAR UP services. Each participating student at all GEAR UP campuses had less than 2 hours of counseling, on average.

Implementation finding 3: GEAR UP service participation differed for GEAR UP students according to their ethnic group and economically disadvantaged status.

To further describe students' access to GEAR UP services, GEAR UP students' participation in APIE tutoring, college visits, counseling, and family services was disaggregated by ethnicity and by economically disadvantaged status. The percentage of GEAR UP African American students participating in APIE tutoring was higher than that of Hispanic, White, and Asian students (Figures 4). The percentages of GEAR UP African American and of Hispanic students participating in college visits and family services were lower than those of White and Asian students (Figures 5 and 7). The percentage of GEAR UP students who participated in counseling was lowest for White students (Figure 6).

A greater percentage of GEAR UP students who were economically disadvantaged than of those who were not economically disadvantaged participated in APIE tutoring and counseling (Figure 4 and 6). A greater percentage of GEAR UP students who were not economically disadvantaged than of those who were economically disadvantaged participated in college visits and family services (Figures 5 and 7).

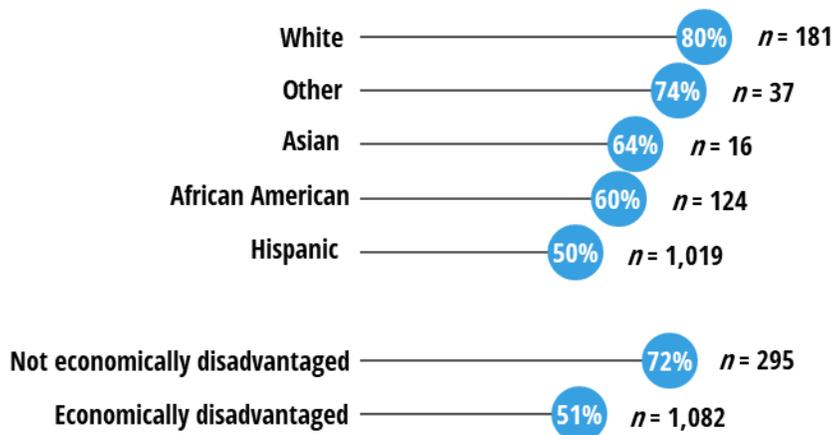
Figure 4.
Higher percentages of African American and economically disadvantaged students than of their peers participated in [APIE tutoring](#).



Percentage of GEAR UP students who participated in APIE tutoring

Source. 2019–2020 AISD student demographics records; AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020
 Note. Only GEAR UP students who participated in small-group or individualized tutoring provided by APIE were included. The difference in percentages of GEAR UP students participating in APIE tutoring was significant between racial groups ($p < .01$) and between economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged groups ($p = .04$).

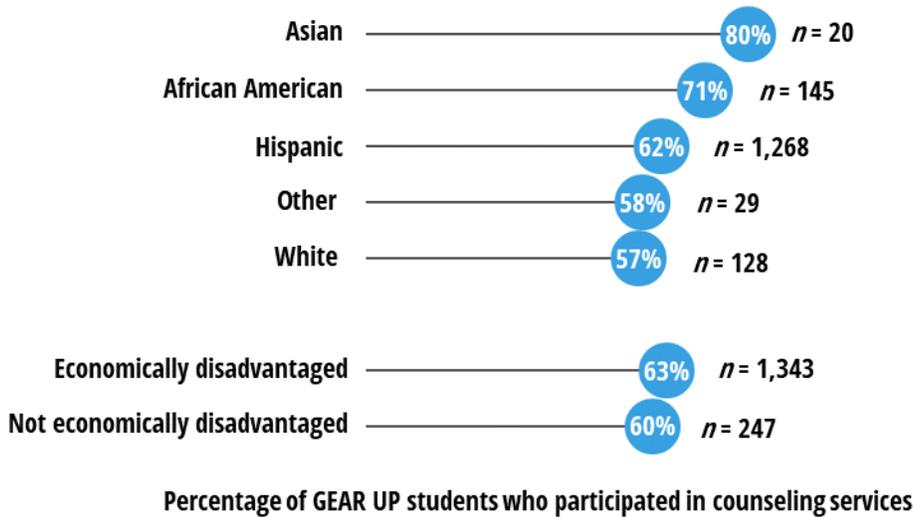
Figure 5.
The percentage of GEAR UP students who participated in [college visits](#) was greatest for White students and for those who were not economically disadvantaged.



Percentage of GEAR UP students who participated in college visit

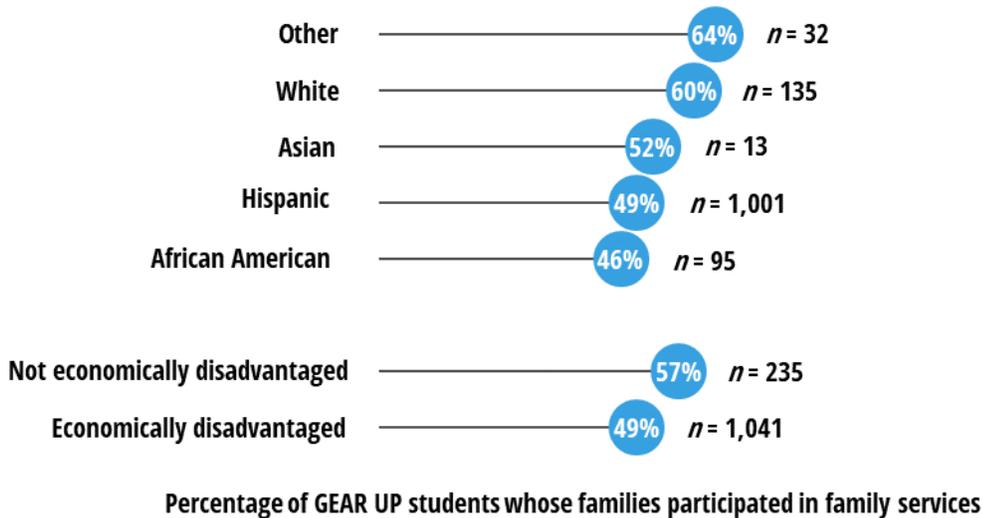
Source. 2019–2020 AISD student demographics records; AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020
 Note. The difference in percentages of GEAR UP students participating in college visits was significant between racial groups and between economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged groups ($p < .01$).

Figure 6.
Lower percentages of White and of non-economically disadvantaged students than of their peers participated in GEAR UP counseling.



Source. 2019–2020 AISD student demographics records; AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020
 Note. The difference in percentages of GEAR UP students participating in counseling was significant between racial groups ($p = .01$).

Figure 7.
Lower percentages of Hispanic, African American, and economically disadvantaged students than of their peers had families who participated in GEAR UP family services.



Source. 2019–2020 AISD student demographics records; AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020
 Note. The difference in percentages of GEAR UP families participating in family services was significant between racial groups and between economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged groups ($p < .01$).

Implementation finding 4: GEAR UP students and campus staff perceived the GEAR UP services positively.

The comments provided by GEAR UP students in the survey and focus groups and by the campus staff in the survey consistently reflected the helpful and resourceful nature of GEAR UP activities. Both students and campus staff recognized the program supported students in school work, college/career readiness, and personal issues. Consistently, students who participated in focus groups this year reiterated college visits as the most helpful activity in preparing them for college. Excerpts of **students'** and **campus staff's** comments included:

GEAR UP has helped me a bunch with school.

I want the people to know that GEAR UP does care about you.

GEAR UP is very useful and helpful because you explore different colleges. They open you up to more options that you may want to be a part of.

GEAR UP is amazing because it helps everyone improve and helps us better prepare for our future.

GEAR UP also helps students to keep focused on all the courses they take in my school.

GEAR UP is very much visible throughout campus and has done a good job of furthering the college going narrative on campus.

Having the extra support personal on campus and in our classes is amazing. Students are truly able to get the one-on-one help that they need as well as the emotional support they might not get otherwise.

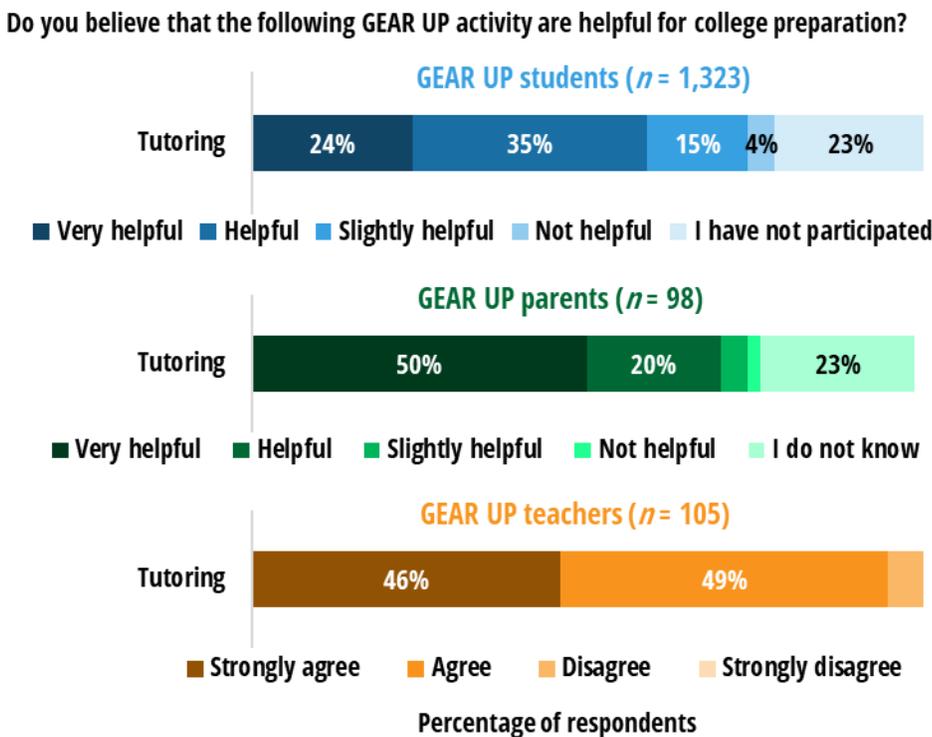
GEAR UP provides our students and families with access to programs and other opportunities they might not have access to if not in the program.

Evaluation question 2: For each program component, what were the outcomes for GEAR UP participants?

Academic intervention outcomes finding 1: GEAR UP participants had positive perspectives about academic support provided by the program.

Results from participants' self-reported surveys revealed that students, parents, and teachers had highly positive perspectives about academic support services provided by the GEAR UP program. They agreed that tutoring was helpful to prepare students for college (Figure 8).

Figure 8. The majority of GEAR UP students, parents, and teachers agreed that tutoring was helpful for college preparation.



Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Student Survey, 2019–2020 GEAR UP Family Survey, 2019–2020 GEAR UP Teacher Survey

The 2019–2020 school year signaled the second full year of comprehensive data collection for the program. This section presents a description of outcomes for the 2019–2020 school year.

The GEAR UP/AVID Student, Family, and Teacher Surveys; student and staff focus groups; and archival student records (e.g., students' attendance, course enrollment, and TSI testing) were used to describe outcomes.

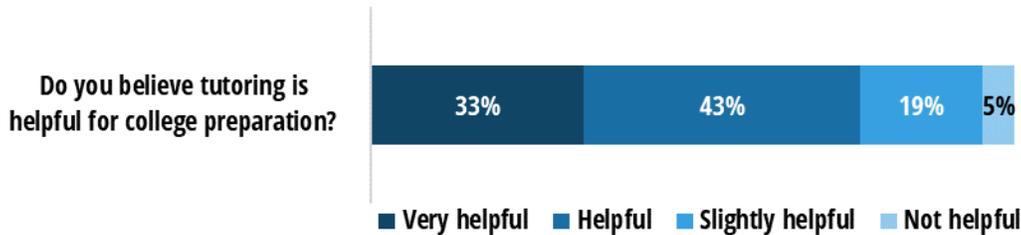
In 2019–2020, students across Texas did not take the STAAR as COVID-19 spread and school districts across the state had to shutter schools. Therefore, outcomes analyses did not include STAAR testing but used TSI testing instead.

Outcomes were organized for each of the four program components: academic intervention, enhanced counseling and advising, professional development activities, and family engagement.



Additionally, GEAR UP students who participated in tutoring services felt tutoring was helpful for college preparation. Of the 1,461 GEAR UP students who participated in tutoring services, 614 provided feedback on the GEAR UP Student Survey about how they felt about tutoring services. Seventy-seven percent reported that tutoring was very helpful or helpful for college preparation (Figure 9).

Figure 9.
The majority of GEAR UP students who participated in tutoring services agreed that tutoring was helpful for college preparation.

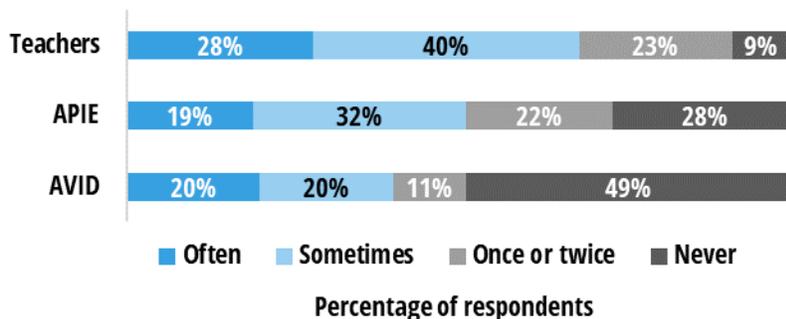


Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Student Survey; AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020

Academic intervention outcomes finding 2: Participants perceived tutoring received from teachers, APIE tutors, and AVID tutors as helpful.

GEAR UP students participated in tutoring provided by teachers, APIE tutors, and AVID tutors. GEAR UP students reported they most often received tutoring services from teachers and APIE tutors (Figure 10). Many GEAR UP students regarded the tutoring services received from teachers, APIE tutors, and AVID tutors as helpful (Figure 11).

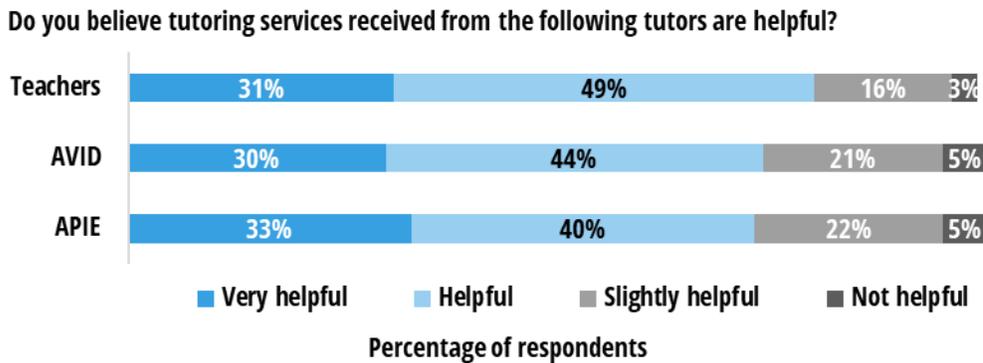
Figure 10.
The majority of GEAR UP students received tutoring services from teachers or APIE tutors.



Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Student Survey

Figure 11.

The majority of GEAR UP students who received tutoring services from teachers, AVID tutors, and APIE tutors agreed that tutoring was helpful.



Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Student Survey

In addition, students who participated in focus groups reported that APIE tutoring was a helpful activity that contributed to their academic progress. This year, 54% of GEAR UP students ($n = 1,373$) participated in APIE tutoring. Students cited small-group tutoring as effective in providing academic support (Wang & Orr, 2020).

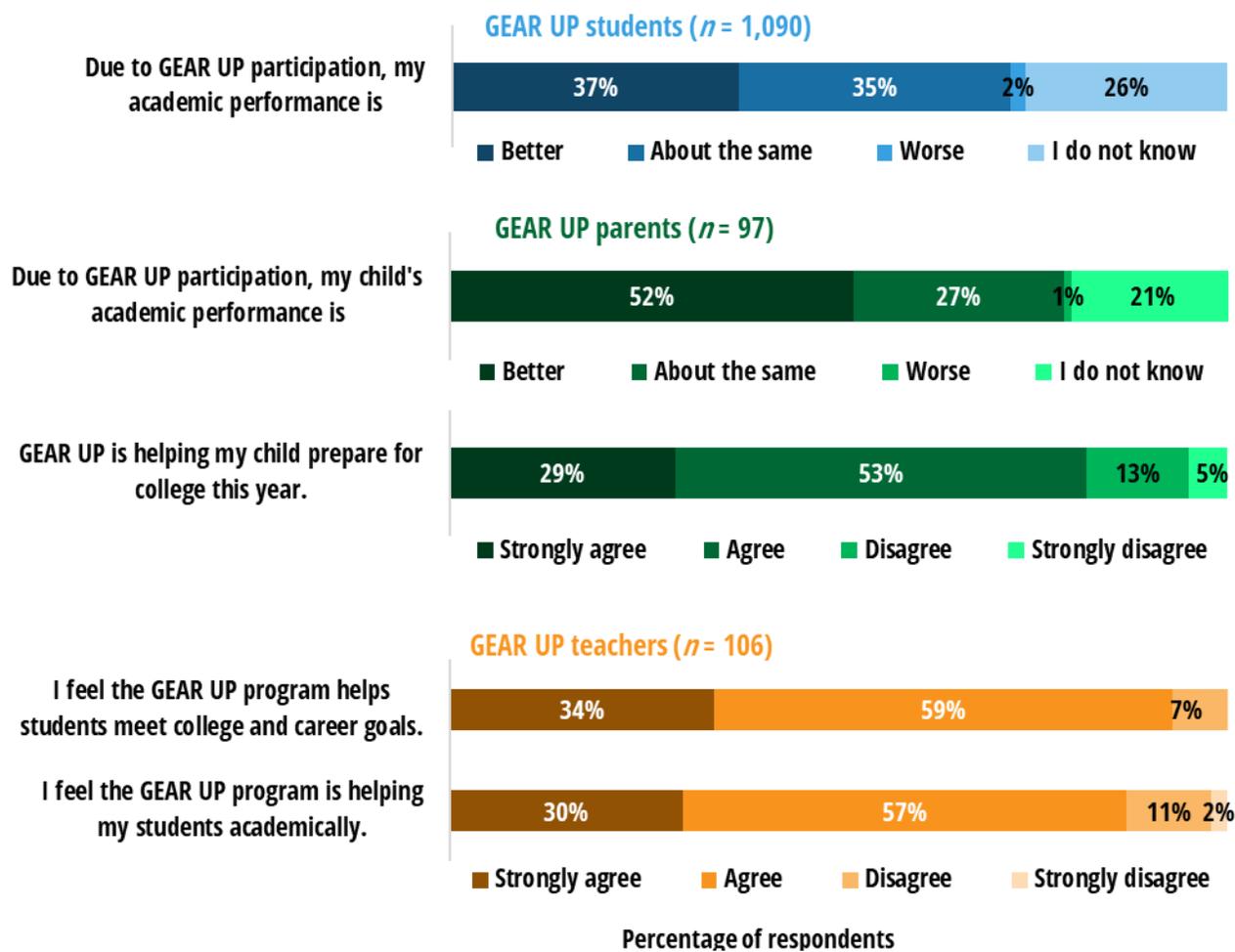
Notably, APIE tutors played an active role in supporting GEAR UP students' learning in a virtual format during school closure due to COVID-19. In collaboration with GEAR UP facilitators and teachers, APIE tutors reached out to students to facilitate academic learning (e.g., office hours, BLEND lessons/assignments, text messaging, and book recordings), technology needs, and students' well-being.

Academic intervention outcomes finding 3: Participants reported the GEAR UP program as a whole provided helpful academic support.

Across data sources, GEAR UP students, families, and teachers reported GEAR UP services provided helpful academic support. Based on student focus group results in Fall 2020, students continued to recognize the GEAR UP program's academic support in preparing students for college (Wang & Orr, 2020). Also, results from the GEAR UP Student, Family, and Teacher Surveys revealed that students, parents, and teachers felt the GEAR UP program as a whole had a positive role in students' academic performance. Approximately 40% of students and 50% of parents indicated students' academic performance was better due to students' participation in the GEAR UP program (Figure 12). The majority of parents and teachers agreed the GEAR UP program helped students academically and prepared them for college.

Figure 12.

The majority of **students**, **parents**, and **teachers** participating in the GEAR UP surveys agreed the GEAR UP program supported students' academic performance and college preparation.



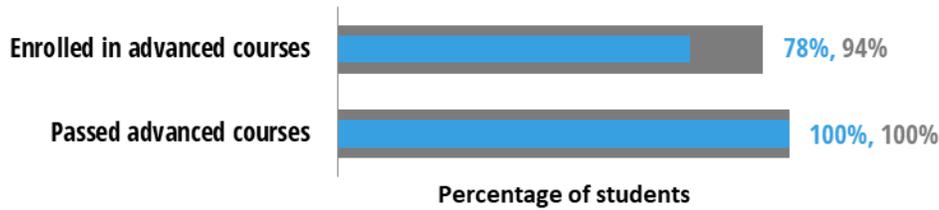
Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Student Survey, 2019–2020 GEAR UP Family Survey, 2019–2020 GEAR UP Teacher Survey

Academic intervention outcomes finding 4: The percentage of GEAR UP students who passed advanced courses was same as that of non-GEAR UP students

One of the GEAR UP program objectives expected that by the end of each year, at least 50% of its students would have enrolled in and earned credit for an advanced-level course. This objective was met in the 2019–2020 school year. Seventy-eight percent of GEAR UP students enrolled in advanced-level courses, and 94% of non-GEAR UP students enrolled in advanced-level courses (Figure 13). However, GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students had similar advanced-level course passing rates. Almost all GEAR UP students who enrolled in the advanced-level courses earned credit for the course, and all non-GEAR UP students earned credit for the course.

Figure 13.

The percentage of non-GEAR UP students taking advanced-level courses was higher than that of GEAR UP students; however, both groups had same passing rates.



Source. 2019–2020 AISD course enrollment records

Academic intervention outcomes finding 5: The percentage of 8th grade students at GEAR UP campuses who passed TSI writing increased from 2018–2019 to 2019–2020.

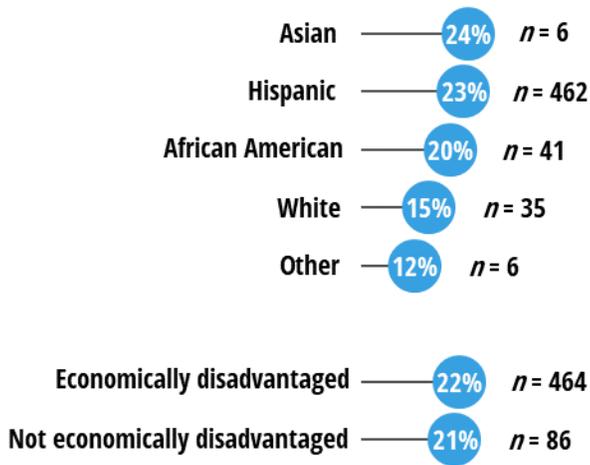
The TSI assessment is part of the TSI program and is designed to determine students' readiness for college-level work in the areas of reading, writing, and math. Students aspiring to enroll in dual-credit courses must meet CR requirements on the TSI, ACT, and/or the SAT. Unless exempt, students in Texas are required to take the TSI assessment.

In 2019–2020, 24% ($n = 607$) of GEAR UP students in 8th grade took TSI reading, TSI writing, or TSI math, while only 2% ($n = 69$) of non-GEAR UP students took TSI reading, TSI writing, or TSI math. Given the low number of GEAR UP students ($n = 73$) and non-GEAR UP students ($n = 30$) who took TSI math, results related to TSI math were not included in the report.

The percentages of GEAR UP Asian and of Hispanic students taking TSI reading were higher than those of African American and White students (Figure 14). The percentages of GEAR UP Hispanic and of African American students taking TSI writing were higher than those of Asian and White students (Figure 15). A greater percentage of GEAR UP students who were economically disadvantaged than of those who were not economically disadvantaged participated in TSI reading or TSI writing (Figures 14 and 15).

Figure 14.

Higher percentages of Asian, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students than of their peers took TSI reading.

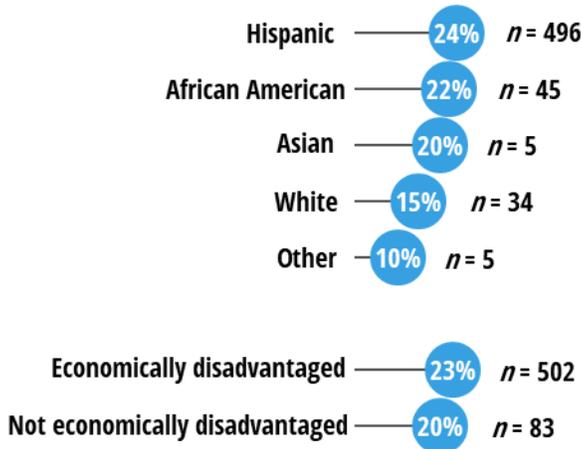


Percentage of GEAR UP students who took TSI reading

Source. 2019–2020 AISD student demographics records, 2019–2020 AISD student TEAMS records

Figure 15.

Higher percentages of Hispanic, African American, and economically disadvantaged students than of their peers took TSI writing.



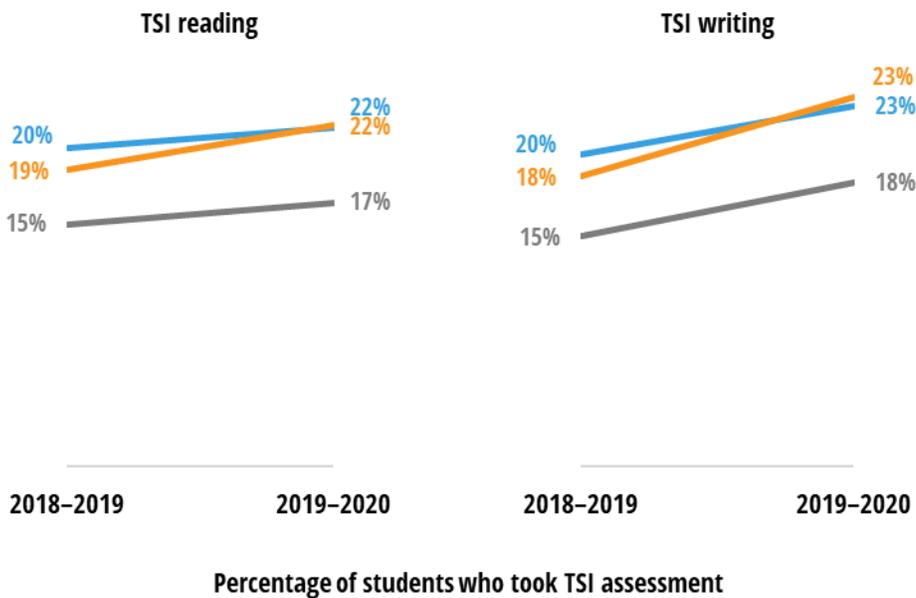
Percentage of GEAR UP students who took TSI writing

Source. 2019–2020 AISD student demographics records, 2019–2020 AISD student TEAMS records

Furthermore, findings indicated that greater percentages of all 8th-grade students at GEAR UP campuses took TSI reading or TSI writing in 2019–2020 than did so in 2018–2019 (Figure 16). This increase may be attributed to the work of GEAR UP program staff who supported the student cohort as they progressed through middle and high school. In attempts to prepare students for college, GEAR UP program staff actively encouraged students to take TSI assessments.

Figure 16.

The percentages of all 8th graders at GEAR UP campuses, economically disadvantaged 8th graders at GEAR UP campuses, and economically disadvantaged 8th graders at both GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP campuses who took TSI reading and TSI writing increased from 2018–2019 to 2019–2020.



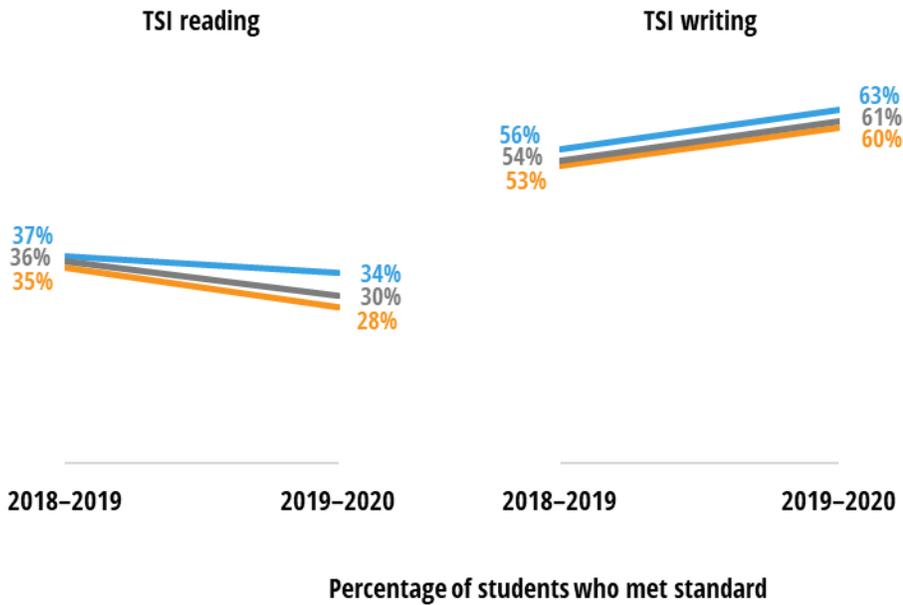
Source. AISD student demographics records, 2018–2019 and 2019–2020; AISD student TEAMS records, 2018–2019 and 2019–2020

Note. Because 84% of GEAR UP students were economically disadvantaged, the TSI results for economically disadvantaged students at the district level and at the cohort level are presented in the figure.

The TSI writing passing rate of all 8th-grade students at GEAR UP campuses increased from 2018–2019 to 2019–2020. In contrast, the TSI reading passing rate of all 8th-grade students at GEAR UP campuses decreased from 2018–2019 to 2019–2020 (Figure 17).

Figure 17.

The percentages of all 8th graders at GEAR UP campuses, economically disadvantaged 8th graders at GEAR UP campuses, and economically disadvantaged 8th graders at both GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP campuses who met the TSI passing standard in reading decreased from 2018–2019 to 2019–2020, while these percentages increased in TSI writing.



Source. AISD student demographics records, 2018–2019 and 2019–2020; AISD student TEAMS records, 2018–2019 and 2019–2020

Note. Because 84% of GEAR UP students were economically disadvantaged, the TSI results for economically disadvantaged students at the district level and at the cohort level are presented in the figure.

Academic intervention outcomes finding 6: GEAR UP students who received a high dosage of APIE tutoring performed better academically than did GEAR UP students who received a low dosage of APIE tutoring.

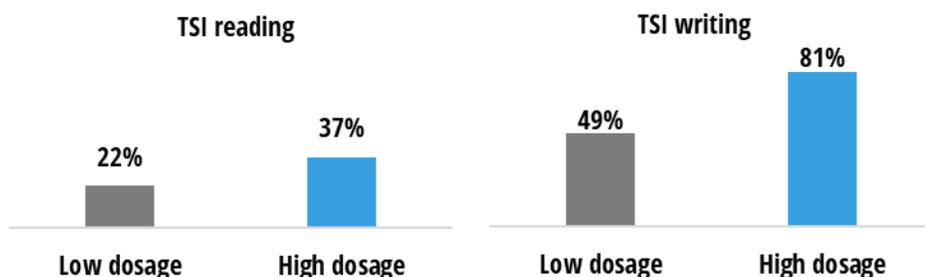
As stated previously, 54% ($n = 1,373$) of GEAR UP students received APIE tutoring services in various subjects, including ELA, math, science, history, and CR. Twenty-seven percent ($n = 367$) of GEAR UP students who received APIE tutoring took TSI reading, TSI writing, or TSI math. Again, outcome results related to TSI math were not reported, due to the low number of GEAR UP students receiving APIE tutoring who took TSI math ($n = 52$).

The percentages of GEAR UP students who received more than the average hours of APIE tutoring (> 4.42 hours) who met the TSI passing standard in reading and writing were higher than of those of GEAR UP students who received less than 4.42 hours of APIE tutoring

(Figure 18). Notably, the differences in the TSI reading and TSI writing passing rates between the two groups were statistically significant.

Figure 18.

The percentages of GEAR UP students receiving a **high dosage** of APIE tutoring who met the TSI passing standard in reading and writing were higher than those of GEAR UP students who received a **low dosage** of APIE tutoring.



Source. AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020; 2019–2020 AISD student TEAMS records

Note. The overall average dosage of APIE tutoring was used to divide GEAR UP students into high-dosage (> 4.42) and low-dosage (< 4.42) groups. The differences in percentages of GEAR UP students passing TSI reading and TSI writing between the two groups were significant ($p < .01$).

Two hundred and eleven GEAR UP students who received a low dosage of APIE tutoring participated in TSI reading, and 215 participated in TSI writing. One hundred and thirty-two GEAR UP students who received a high dosage of APIE tutoring participated in TSI reading, and 139 participated in TSI writing.

Academic intervention outcomes finding 7: GEAR UP students who received APIE CR tutoring performed better academically than did GEAR UP students who did not receive APIE CR tutoring.

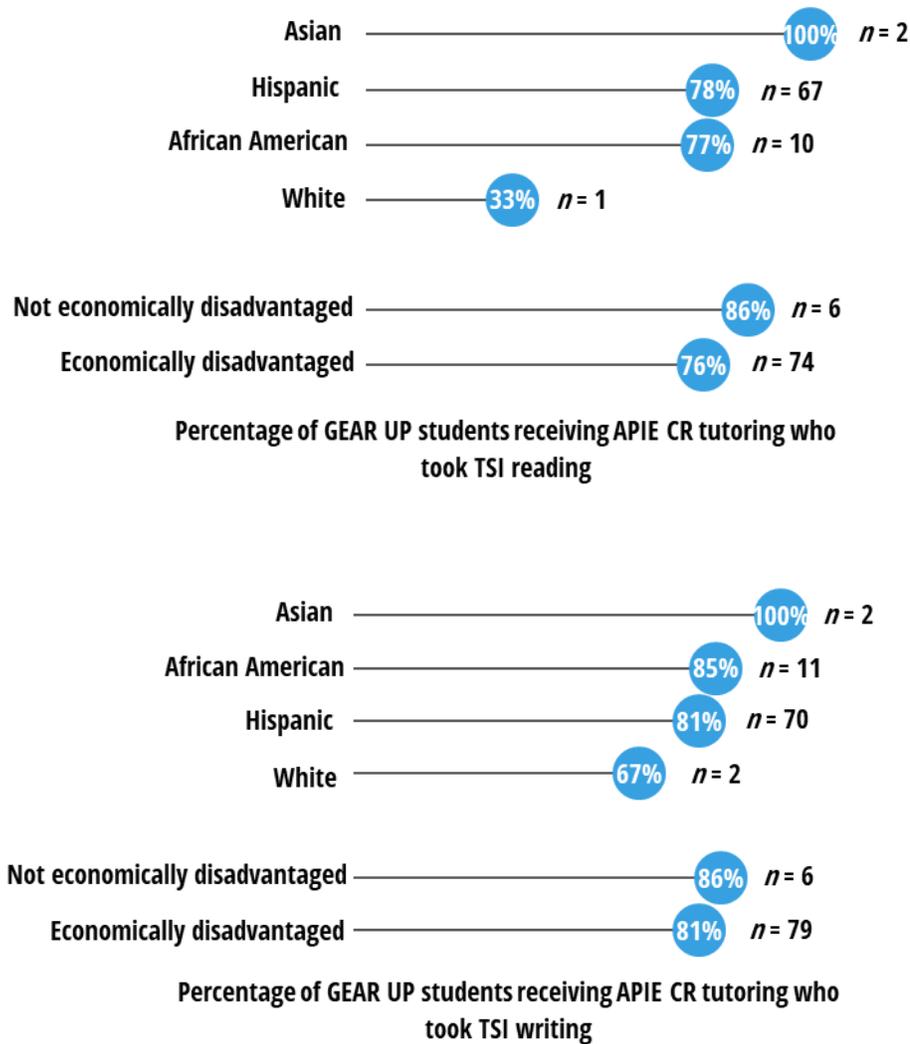
Of 1,373 GEAR UP students who received APIE tutoring services, 8% ($n = 104$) students received APIE CR tutoring. The APIE CR tutoring was only available at specific GEAR UP campuses, including Burnet Middle School, Martin Middle School, Sadler Means YWLA, and Garcia YMLA. The APIE CR tutoring focused on preparing GEAR UP students to meet CR standards on the TSI exams.

Eighty-five percent ($n = 88$) of GEAR UP students who received APIE CR tutoring participated in TSI reading or TSI writing.² GEAR UP students receiving APIE CR tutoring who participated in TSI assessment were disaggregated by ethnicity and by economically disadvantaged status. The percentages of White students receiving APIE CR tutoring who

² None of the GEAR UP students receiving APIE CR tutoring participated in a TSI math exam.

took TSI reading and TSI writing remained lowest (Figure 19). A greater percentage of GEAR UP students receiving APIE CR tutoring who were not economically disadvantaged than of GEAR UP students receiving APIE CR tutoring who were economically disadvantaged took TSI reading and TSI writing.

Figure 19.
Higher percentages of Asian and non-economically disadvantaged students than of their peers took TSI reading and TSI writing.



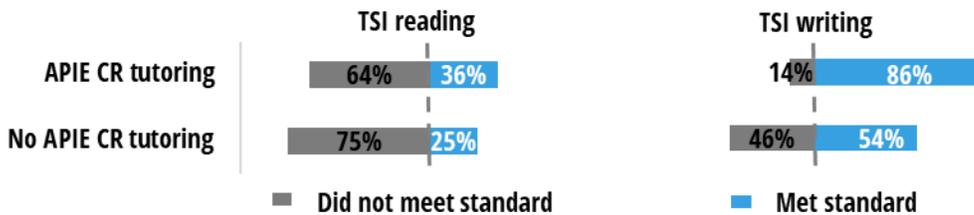
Source. 2019–2020 AISD student demographics records, 2019–2020 AISD student TEAMS records

The percentages of GEAR UP students that received APIE CR tutoring who met the TSI passing standard in TSI reading and TSI writing were higher than those of GEAR UP students who did not receive APIE CR tutoring (Figure 20). Notably, the difference in the TSI writing passing rates between the two groups was statistically significant.

TSI passing results were mixed, based on the average number of hours students were tutored. The percentage of GEAR UP students who received more than the average hours of APIE CR tutoring (> 6.75 hours) who met the TSI passing standard in reading was lower than that of GEAR UP students who received less than 6.75 hours of APIE CR tutoring (Figure 21). The percentage of GEAR UP students who received more than the average hours of APIE CR tutoring (> 6.75 hours) who met the TSI passing standard in writing was higher than that of GEAR UP students who received less than 6.75 hours of APIE CR tutoring (Figure 21). More inquiry into factors influencing the number of tutoring hours in which GEAR UP students received to support TSI test taking should be considered, because a greater dosage may indicate a greater need for academic support.

Figure 20.

The percentage of GEAR UP students receiving APIE CR tutoring who met the TSI passing standard in reading and writing was higher than that of GEAR UP students not receiving APIE CR tutoring.

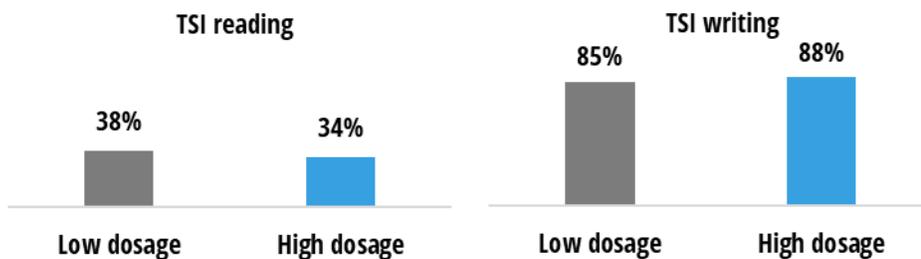


Source. AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020; 2019–2020 AISD student TEAMS records

Note. The difference in the percentages of GEAR UP students passing TSI writing between the two groups was significant ($p < .01$).

Figure 21.

The percentage of GEAR UP students receiving a high dosage of APIE CR tutoring who met the TSI reading and TSI writing passing standard was similar to that of GEAR UP students receiving a low dosage of APIE CR tutoring.



Source. AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020; 2019–2020 AISD student TEAMS records

Note. The overall average dosage of APIE tutoring was used to divide GEAR UP students into high-dosage (> 6.75) and low-dosage (< 6.75) groups.

Forty-eight GEAR UP students who received a low dosage of APIE CR tutoring participated in TSI reading, and 53 took TSI writing. Thirty-two GEAR UP students who received a high dosage of APIE CR tutoring took TSI reading or TSI writing.

Academic intervention outcomes finding 8: Participants perceived AVID classes as helpful for students to perform better.

Approximately 50% of GEAR UP students reported AVID helped them improve in goal setting and organization (Figure 22). GEAR UP students also highly rated the role of AVID in their academic preparation (Figure 23). Many GEAR UP students reported the AVID classes helped them perform better.

Figure 22. Approximately half of GEAR UP students who participated in AVID reported AVID helped them improve goal setting and organization.



Source. 2019–2020 AVID Student Survey

Results based on the small percentage of parents responding indicated that, similar to their child, GEAR UP parents felt AVID had a positive role in students’ academic preparation (Figure 23). The majority of parents recognized that AVID helped their child succeed in academic courses and prepare them for college. Of the 408 parents whose child participated in AVID classes and who were contacted for the AVID Family

AVID aims to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society. The AVID elective class targets students in the academic middle who have the desire to go to college and can complete rigorous curriculum, using the will to work hard. Learn more about AVID at <https://www.avid.org/what-avid-is>

GEAR UP partnered with AVID to enhance instructional practices, students’ engagement, and college-going culture on AVID/GEAR UP campuses. Teachers at GEAR UP campuses participating in AVID received additional professional learning opportunities.

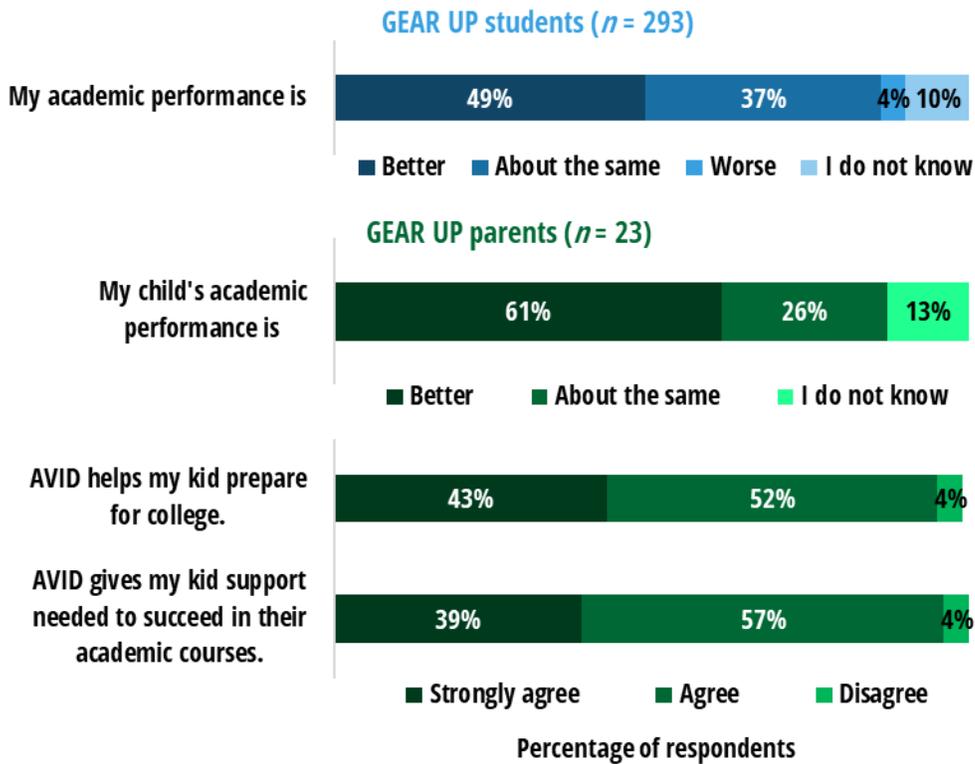
Twenty percent of GEAR UP students ($n = 518$) participated in AVID classes. Nine of 11 GEAR UP campuses provided students with an opportunity to enroll in AVID classes. Of the 518 GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes, 60% ($n = 312$) also participated in an AVID Student Survey.



Survey, 7% ($n = 28$) had a family member participate in the survey.³ It should be noted that the small number of respondents was not found to be representative of the AVID family population, so results should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 23.

GEAR UP students who participated in AVID and their **family members** reported positive academic outcomes.



Source. 2019–2020 AVID Student Survey, 2019–2020 AVID Family Survey

Note. Results from GEAR UP parents' responses about AVID classes were based on a small percentage of GEAR UP families whose child participated in AVID classes.

³ The confidence interval is +/-17.9%, indicating responses provided by the 28 family members were not representative of the population of 408 GEAR UP family members whose child participated in AVID classes.

Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 1: Participants reported college visits to be the most helpful activity preparing students for college.

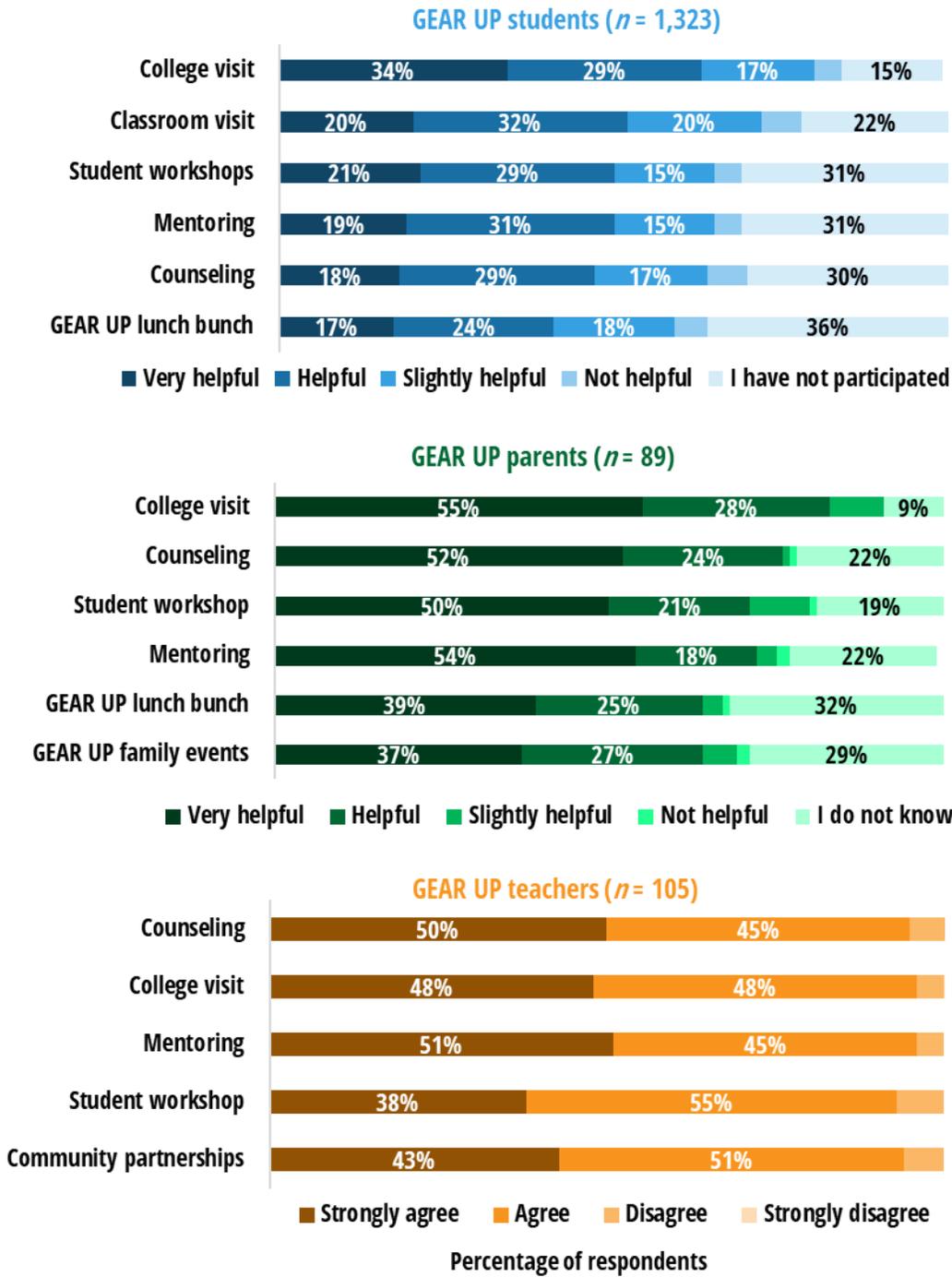
College visits, classroom visits from GEAR UP facilitators, and counseling were the most highly rated as helpful to prepare students for college (Figure 24). For example, GEAR UP students who participated in the GEAR UP Student Survey indicated college visits and classroom visits from GEAR UP facilitators were the most helpful activities in preparing students for college. Findings obtained from the GEAR UP Family and Teacher Surveys indicated both parents and teachers cited college visits and counseling as most helpful. Moreover, teachers at GEAR UP campuses highly rated all other GEAR UP activities, including mentoring, student workshop, and community partnerships.

In addition, students who participated in focus groups perceived college visits as being the most helpful activity in preparing students for college (Wang & Orr, 2020). Focus group student participants said college visits motivated them to think about college, exposed them to college cultures, and helped them develop understanding about college and career options.

Figure 24.

GEAR UP students rated college visits and classroom visits from GEAR UP facilitators as the most helpful GEAR UP activities that prepare students for college; parents and teachers rated college visits and counseling as most helpful.

Do you believe that the following GEAR UP activities are helpful for college preparation?

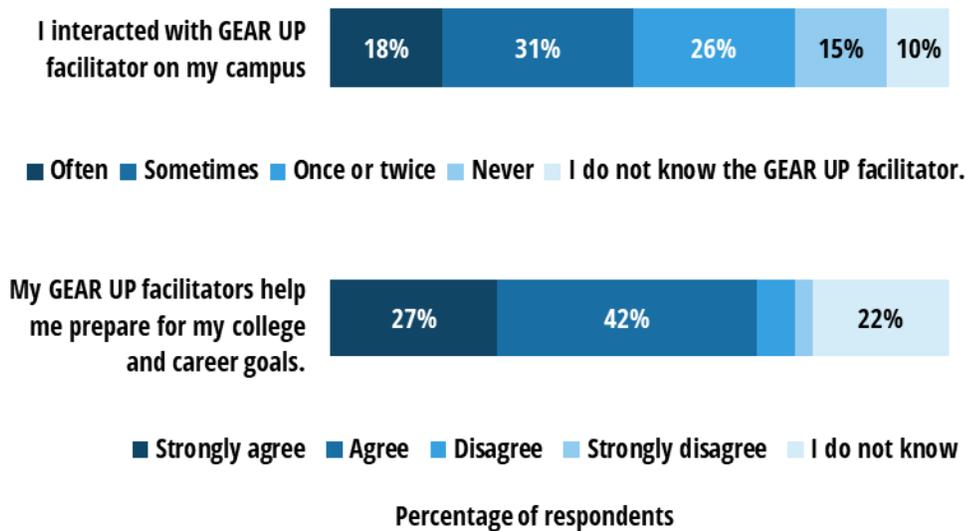


Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Student Survey, 2019–2020 GEAR UP Family Survey, 2019–2020 GEAR UP Teacher Survey

Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 2: Participants highly rated the GEAR UP facilitators.

The majority (69%) of respondents stressed the positive role of GEAR UP facilitators in helping them prepare for college and career (Figure 25). GEAR UP facilitators reached out to almost all students, with 97% of students receiving GEAR UP services. The majority (75%) of students indicated they interacted with GEAR UP facilitators at least once (Figure 25).

Figure 25.
The majority of GEAR UP students interacted with GEAR UP facilitators and agreed that their facilitators were helpful in preparing them for college and career.



Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Student Survey

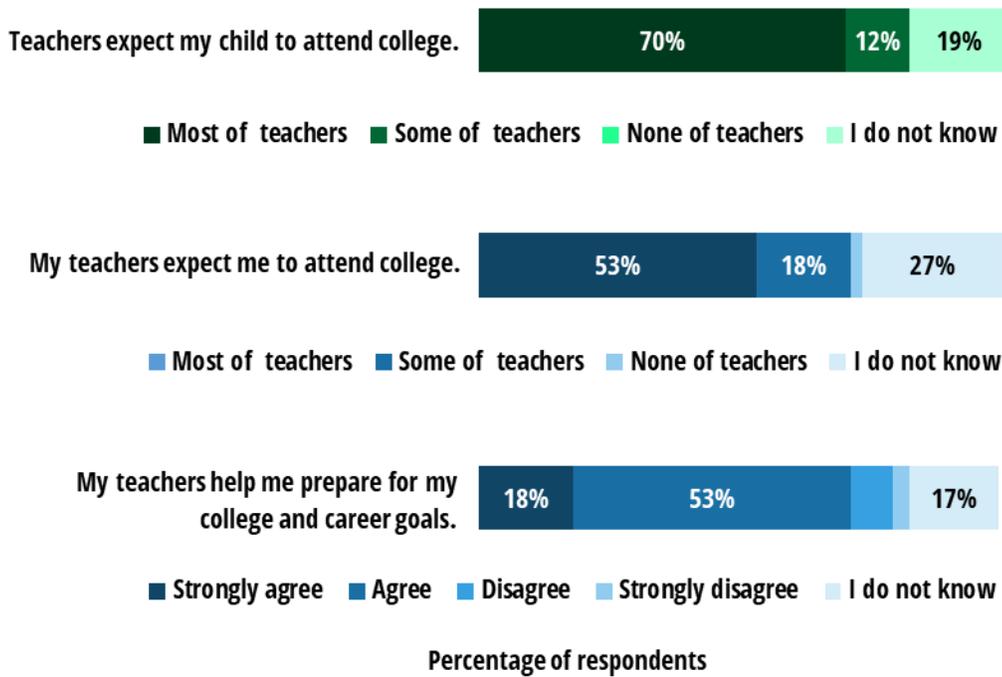
Findings from the student focus groups consistently demonstrated the GEAR UP facilitators were valuable supporters to students in school work, personal issues, and college visits (Wang & Orr, 2020). Students expressed appreciation for their GEAR UP facilitators, who cared about both their academic progress and personal well-being, and encouraged them to move forward.

Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 3: GEAR UP teachers were perceived as supportive for college preparation.

Students’ self-reports from the GEAR UP Student Survey revealed that the majority of students felt supported by their teachers, who helped them prepare for college and career (Figure 26). Parents also agreed that most GEAR UP teachers expected students to attend college.

This finding echoed what students conveyed in the focus groups. Students commented that their teachers motivated them to succeed and supported their college preparation (Wang & Orr, 2020). Student participants in the focus group indicated teachers offered support in various ways, including giving positive feedback, talking about college, providing advice for academic improvement, and motivating students to study for their future education.

Figure 26. The majority of students and parents agreed that teachers expected students to go to college; students agreed their teachers helped them meet college and career goals.



Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Student Survey, 2019–2020 GEAR UP Family Survey

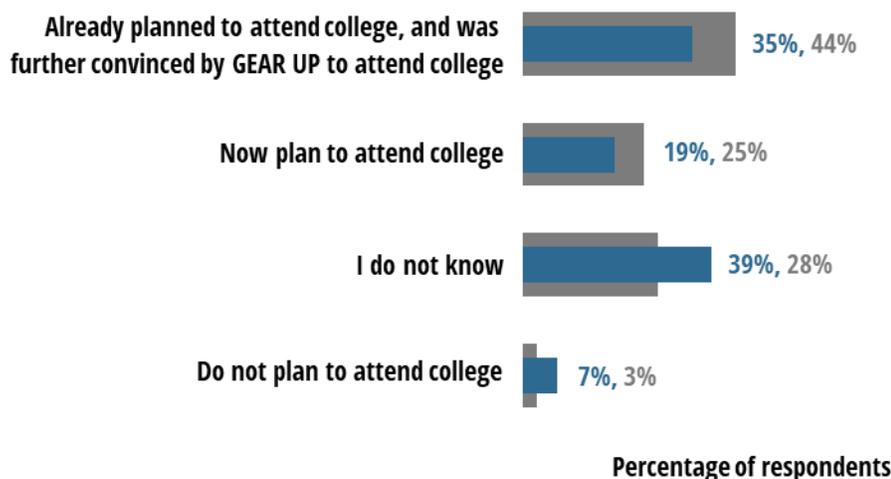
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 4: Participation in GEAR UP activities was inspiring for students' college aspirations.

GEAR UP activities aimed to motivate students to go to college and to increase their college awareness. Respondents to the GEAR UP Student and Family Surveys consistently indicated that GEAR UP activities contributed to their plans to attend college (Figure 27). Findings from the AISD Student Climate Survey also indicated more than half (54%) of GEAR UP students planned to enroll in college (Figure 28).

Students' comments in the GEAR UP Student Survey and in focus groups consistently indicated the GEAR UP program helped them learn about college and helped them feel motivated to go to college. Student participants in the focus groups also indicated their career goals contributed to their college aspirations. Students indicated colleges provided them with opportunities to pursue their desired professions.

Figure 27.

The majority of **students** and **parents** consistently indicated that students planned to attend college.



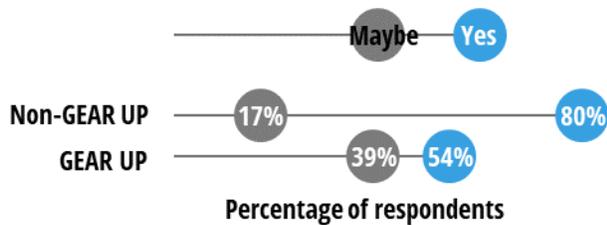
Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Student Survey, 2019–2020 GEAR UP Family Survey

By the end of each year, the program aimed to have the percentage of GEAR UP students who aspired to enroll in college match that of those enrolled from non-GEAR UP schools, as measured by the AISD Student Climate Survey. This objective was not met in the 2019–2020 school year. The percentage of non-GEAR UP students who planned to go to college was higher than that of GEAR UP students who planned to do so (Figure 28). However, the percentage of GEAR UP students who indicated they maybe would go to college was

approximately two times the percentage of non-GEAR UP students who indicated so. The characteristics of these students and their academic outcomes would be worthy of further analyses.

Figure 28.

Although many GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students indicated **Yes**, they planned to go to college after high school, a significant gap existed between the two groups; however, more than one-third of GEAR UP students also indicated they **maybe** would go to college after high school.



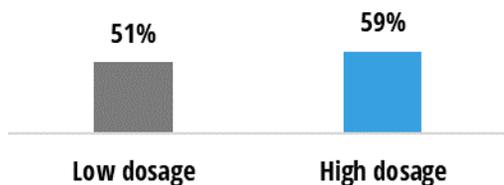
Source. 2019–2020 AISD Student Climate Survey

Note. The difference between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students’ college aspirations was significant ($p < .01$)

Additionally, the percentage of GEAR UP students that received more than the average hours of overall GEAR UP services (> 10.68 hours) who planned to go to college was significantly higher than that of GEAR UP students who received less than 10.68 hours of overall GEAR UP services (Figure 29).

Figure 29.

The percentage of GEAR UP students receiving a **high dosage** of overall GEAR UP services who planned to go to college after high school was higher than that of GEAR UP students who received a **low dosage** of overall services.



Source. 2019–2020 AISD Student Climate Survey; AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020

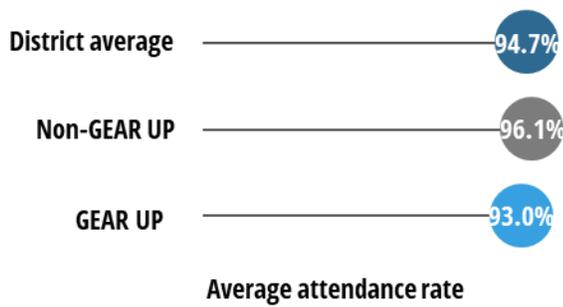
Note. The overall average dosage of students’ service participation was used to divide GEAR UP students into high-dosage (> 10.68) and low-dosage (< 10.68) groups. The difference in the percentages of GEAR UP students’ college aspiration between the two groups was significant ($p = .01$).

Seven hundred and thirty-four GEAR UP students who received a low dosage of overall GEAR UP services responded to this college aspiration question, while 458 who received a high dosage of overall GEAR UP services responded.

Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 5: A gap existed between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students' attendance rates.

Each year, the GEAR UP program staff strategize to improve GEAR UP students' attendance, with the goal of 90% or greater attendance. The average student attendance rate at non-GEAR UP campuses (96%) was higher than that at GEAR UP campuses (93%) (Figure 30). A gap existed between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP campuses with respect to chronic absenteeism (i.e., less than 90% attendance during the academic year).

Figure 30.
GEAR UP students' attendance rate was lower than that of non-GEAR UP students.

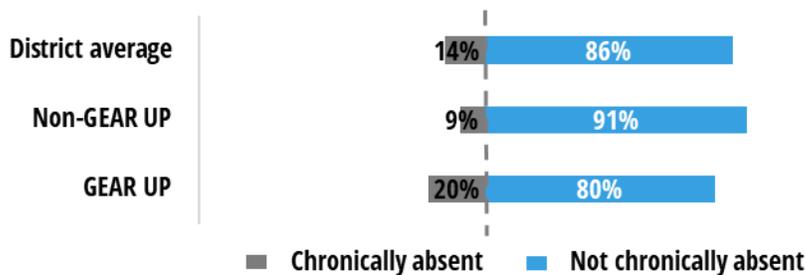


Source. 2019–2020 AISD attendance records

Note. District average includes all 8th-grade students at GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP campuses.

One of the program objectives was that by the end of each year, at least 90% of GEAR UP students would have an attendance rate greater than 90%. This objective was not met in the 2019–2020 school year. Eighty percent of GEAR UP students had an attendance rate greater than 90%, meaning 20% were chronically absent (Figure 31). In contrast, only 9% of non-GEAR UP students were chronically absent.

Figure 31.
The percentage of GEAR UP students who were chronically absent was higher than that of non-GEAR UP students.



Source. 2019–2020 AISD attendance records

Note. District average includes all 8th-grade students at GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP campuses.

Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 6: GEAR UP students receiving a high dosage of overall GEAR UP services were more likely to attend school than were those receiving a low dosage.

Of 2,445 GEAR UP students with a recorded dosage of overall service participation, 61% ($n = 1,494$) received less than 10.68 hours of overall GEAR UP services, and 39% ($n = 951$) received more than 10.68 hours of overall GEAR UP services. The average attendance rate was 95% for GEAR UP students who received more than the average hours of GEAR UP services (> 10.68 hours), as compared with 92% for GEAR UP students who received less than 10.68 hours of overall GEAR UP services (Figure 32).

Moreover, 12% of GEAR UP students who received more than the average hours of overall GEAR UP services (> 10.68 hours) were chronically absent, while 24% of GEAR UP students who received less than 10.68 hours of overall GEAR UP services were chronically absent (Figure 33).

Figure 32.

The attendance rate of GEAR UP students who received a high dosage of overall GEAR UP services was higher than that of GEAR UP students who received a low dosage of overall services.

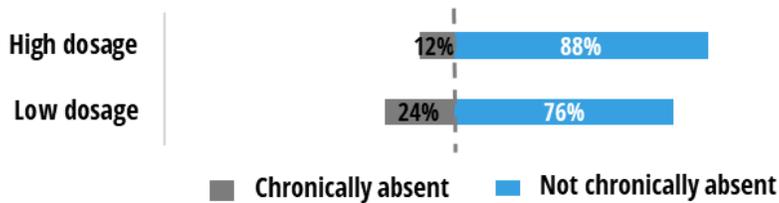


Source. 2019–2020 AISD attendance records; AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020

Note. The overall average dosage of students' service participation was used to divide GEAR UP students into high-dosage (> 10.68) and low-dosage (< 10.68) groups. The difference in GEAR UP students' attendance rates between the two groups was significant ($p < .01$).

Figure 33.

The percentage of GEAR UP students who received a high dosage of overall GEAR UP services who were chronically absent was lower than that of GEAR UP students who received a low dosage of overall services.



Source. 2019–2020 AISD attendance records; AISD eCST data system, 2019–2020

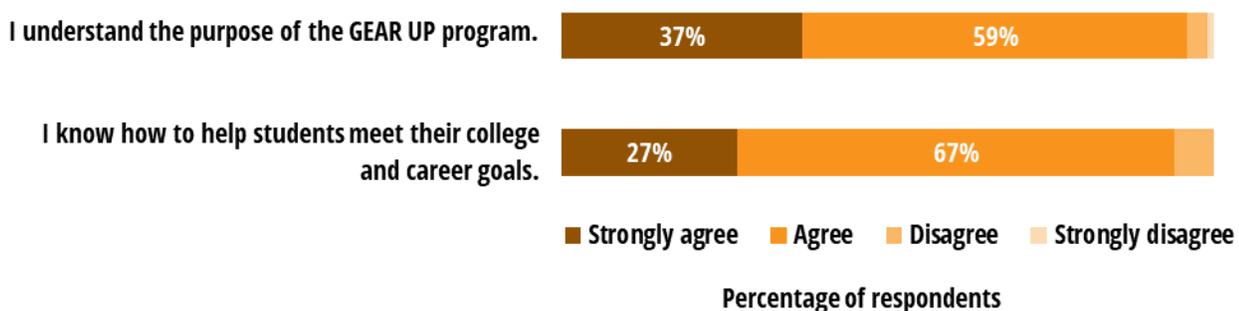
Note. The overall average dosage of students' service participation was used to divide GEAR UP students into high-dosage (> 10.68) and low-dosage (< 10.68) groups. The difference in percentages of GEAR UP students whose attendance rate greater than 90% between the two groups was significant ($p < .01$).

Teacher professional development training outcomes finding 1: GEAR UP teachers felt knowledgeable to help students with college preparation.

Teachers' self-report from the GEAR UP Teacher Survey demonstrated that the majority of educators at GEAR UP campuses knew about the purpose of the GEAR UP program (96%) and agreed that they knew how to prepare their students for college and career (94%) (Figure 34). The GEAR UP facilitators' presence and outreach on campus helped teachers understand the purpose of the GEAR UP program.

Figure 34.

The majority of teachers were aware of the purpose of the program and how to help students prepare for college and career.



Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Teacher Survey

Teacher professional development training outcomes finding 2: GEAR UP teachers reported increasing students' engagement and managing students' behavior as the top two areas of needed support.

The GEAR UP program also provided teachers with professional learning activities to increase the rigor of instruction and increase students' engagement. Teachers' feedback from the GEAR UP Teacher Survey about GEAR UP professional learning support indicated that increasing students' engagement, managing students' behavior, and increasing students' college awareness were their top three concerns (Figure 35).

Figure 35. Increasing students' engagement and managing students' behavior were the top two areas of support requested by teachers.



Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Teacher Survey

Family engagement outcomes finding 1: Families supported their child's college preparation.

The GEAR UP program provided family support services to improve students' academic achievement and college preparation. The program's goal was to have at least 50% of GEAR UP parents participate in academic preparation and/or CR activities. This goal was met this year, as 50% parents/family members participated in GEAR UP activities.

Information collected from teachers and parents / family members revealed that participants recognized the importance of family engagement in contributing to student outcomes. In the GEAR UP Teacher Survey, the majority of teachers reported parent workshops on college (91%) and parent engagement activities (90%) were helpful to prepare students for college.

Survey results also indicated that many families were engaged in their child's education in a variety of ways. Eighty-four percent of families desired their child to pursue at least a college degree. The majority of families (59%) reported they talked frequently with their child about attending college, and 52% reported their child would continue education after high school. Many families appeared to have a good sense of preparing their child for college financially, and 82% reported their child could afford to attend a public 4-year college, using financial aid, scholarships, and family's resources. Families reported they planned to help their child get financial aid (75%) and knew how to get financial aid for college (62%) (Figure 36). In the GEAR UP Student Survey, 71% of students agreed that their families helped them prepare for college and career (Figure 37).

Figure 36.

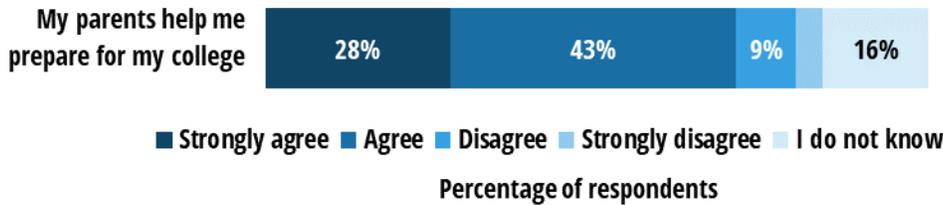
The majority of **parents/family members** indicated an interest in helping their child get financial aid for college.



Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Family Survey

Figure 37.

The majority of **students** indicated their parents/family members helped them prepare for college and career.



Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Student Survey

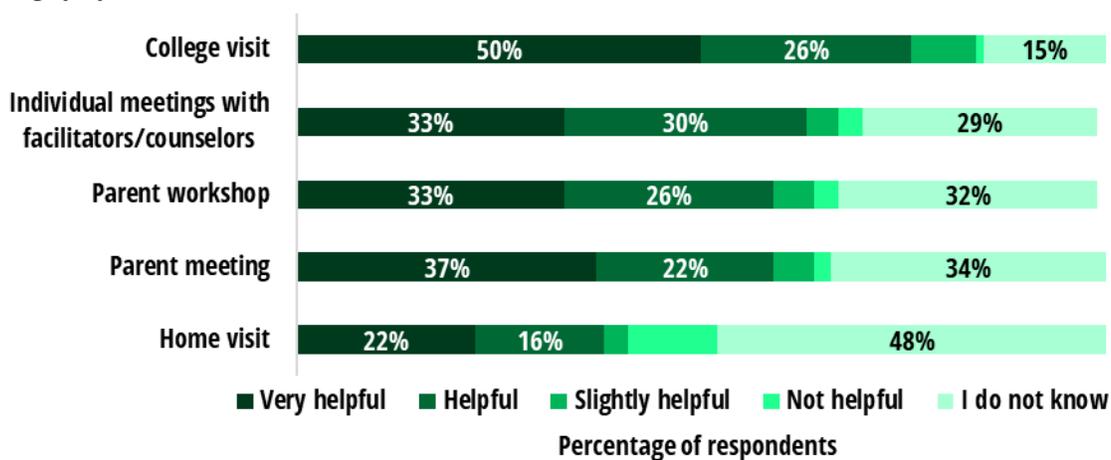
Family engagement outcomes finding 2: College visits and individual meetings with facilitators/counselors were considered most helpful by families.

According to the GEAR UP Family Survey results, parents regarded college visits and individual meetings with facilitators/counselors as the activities most helpful in supporting them to prepare their child for college (Figure 38). However, only 6% of families participated in the GEAR UP Family Survey. Thus, parents’ perceptions of the GEAR UP program may not represent all parents participating in the program’s activities.

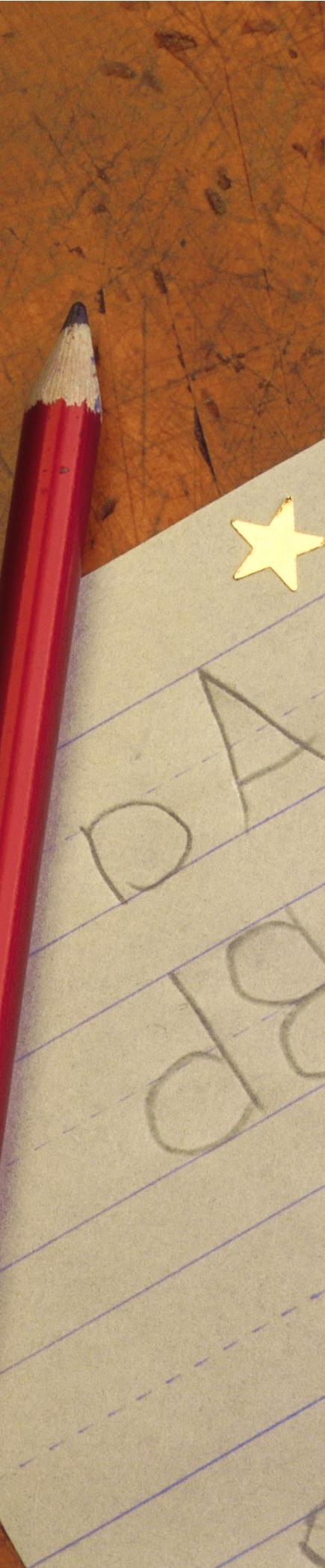
Figure 38.

College visits and individual meetings with facilitators/counselors were the activities respondents felt were most helpful in supporting them to prepare their child for college.

Do you believe that the following GEAR UP activities are helpful to support your participation in your child’s college preparation?



Source. 2019–2020 GEAR UP Family Survey



Conclusion and Recommendations

Data presented in this report indicate that the GEAR UP program continued to engage students, teachers, and parents/families in a variety of services to support students' academic and college preparation outcomes. It was noted that 97% of GEAR UP students participated in one or more services. The majority of GEAR UP students participated in student workshops, counseling, and tutoring. In the 2019–2020 school year, the GEAR UP program consistently met the objective that 75% of GEAR UP students participate in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program.

Participants regarded GEAR UP activities as helpful for college preparation. The majority of students, teachers, and parents cited college visits and counseling as helpful for college preparation. Compared with GEAR UP students receiving a low dosage of overall GEAR UP services, GEAR UP students receiving a high dosage of overall services

- were more likely to plan to go to college after high school,
- had higher attendance rate, and
- were more likely to have an attendance rate greater than 90%.

The GEAR UP program met the objective of at least 50% of its students enrolling in and passing an advanced-level courses. GEAR UP students recognized APIE tutoring contributed to their academic progress. GEAR UP students who received APIE tutoring performed better than GEAR UP students who did not receive APIE tutoring in TSI exams in the following aspects:

- Greater percentages of GEAR UP students who received a high dosage of APIE tutoring than of those who received a low dosage of APIE tutoring met the TSI passing standard in reading and writing.
- Greater percentages of GEAR UP students who received APIE CR tutoring than of those who did not receive APIE CR tutoring met the TSI passing standard in reading and writing.
- Greater percentage of GEAR UP students who received a high dosage of APIE CR tutoring than of those who received a low dosage of APIE CR tutoring met the TSI passing standard in writing.

The facilitators were supportive and helpful to students, teachers, and parents. The majority of students reported their facilitators were helpful in preparing them for college and careers. Teachers of GEAR UP students expected their students to go to college and were supportive in helping students prepare for college. The majority of teachers felt knowledgeable about preparing their students for college. Consistently, the majority of students reported their teachers expected them to attend college and helped them to prepare for college and career goals.

Students, teachers, and parents were aware of the important role of family engagement in students' preparation for college. Most teachers reported GEAR UP activities that engaged parents and parent workshops on college were helpful for students' college preparation. The majority of parents wanted their child to attend college. The majority of students agreed that their parents helped them to prepare for college and career. The majority of parents perceived college visits and individual meetings with facilitators/counselors to be most helpful in supporting them to prepare their child for college.

The evaluation results informed recommendations for program improvement.

- **Increase opportunities for college and career exploration.** Students were in favor of college visits and career-related activities. Some students requested more field trips. They liked the experiences that helped them understand college and career options. The GEAR UP program should continue to provide more opportunities for college visits.
- **Provide more information about financial aid / scholarships.** Many students' top concern about college enrollment was college tuition. Students desired to know more about financial aid / scholarships that would prepare them for college. Parents also indicated interests in seeking financial aid / scholarships for their child's college. As GEAR UP students enter into high school next year, topics about financial planning for college become more crucial. We recommend the program continue to spend more time educating students about financial planning.
- **Increase opportunities for family participation.** The program achieved its goal of involving at least 50% of families in GEAR UP services in the 2019–2020 school year. Given the importance of family engagement in students' college preparation, the program should continue to expand outreach to families so they have more opportunities to participate in family services. Families could take these opportunities to know more about postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing.
- **Increase participation of Hispanic, African American, and economically disadvantaged students in program services.** Findings showed lower percentages of Hispanic and African American and economically disadvantaged students than of their peers participated in college visits and family services. Because students, teachers, and parents regarded college visits as the most helpful GEAR UP activity that prepared students for college, ensuring all students participate in college visits seems critical. In alignment with its goals that prepare traditionally underrepresented groups and economically disadvantaged students for college, the program should continue to provide students with more equitable access to its services.

- **Provide more consistent implementation of GEAR UP services across GEAR UP campuses.** Campus variations existed in the implementation of GEAR UP services, such as college visits, counseling, job site visits, and tutoring. A consistent implementation of GEAR UP services at all GEAR UP campuses would help fulfill the GEAR UP program's implementation objectives.

Appendix A

GEAR UP Student Survey Results

The purpose of the GEAR UP Student Survey was to capture information related to students' experience with the program. Program staff were encouraged to use the survey results to make decisions that would refine and improve the program. A total of 1,399 students participated in the survey, representing a 55% response rate. The confidence interval was +/-1.8%, meaning we can be 95% certain the sample percentage was within 1.8 percentage points on either side of the actual population percentage. In other words, responses provided by the 1,399 students were representative of the population of 2,546 students.

The survey addressed middle school experiences, the GEAR UP program, college preparation, financial aid, and perceived outcomes. Results showed that students had positive perspectives about the program. The majority of students reported that their teachers / families / GEAR UP facilitators helped them prepare for college and career goals, and that their teacher expected them to attend college. The majority of students regarded college visits, tutoring, and classroom visits from GEAR UP facilitators as the top three GEAR UP activities that helped them prepare for college.

Middle school experiences

% answered "Yes"					
Have you participated in any community service opportunities this year?	37%				
	None	1-5	6-10	11-15	16 or more
How many hours per week do you spend studying or doing homework?	27%	57%	11%	3%	2%
	AVID	Pre-AP	Career and Technology Education	None of these	I do not know.
I plan to take the following types of classes next school year:	26%	49%	24%	8%	32%

The GEAR UP program

	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Often	I do not know.			
How often do you interact with your GEAR UP facilitator on your campus?	15%	26%	31%	18%	10%			
How often do you participate in tutoring services received from:	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Often				
Teachers	9%	23%	40%	28%				
APIE	28%	22%	32%	19%				
AVID	49%	11%	20%	20%				
Who has helped you learn the most about preparing for college?	A GEAR UP facilitator	A family member	An AVID teacher	A classroom teacher	A GEAR UP tutor	A GEAR UP mentor	A classmate or friend	A school counselor
	26%	20%	13%	12%	6%	5%	4%	2%
Do you believe that the tutoring services received from the following tutors are helpful?	Not helpful at all	Slightly helpful	Helpful	Very helpful	I have not participated.			
Teachers	3%	16%	47%	30%	5%			
APIE	4%	17%	32%	26%	22%			
AVID	3%	12%	26%	17%	42%			
Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not know.			
My teachers help me prepare for my college and career goals.	3%	8%	53%	18%	17%			
My GEAR UP facilitators help me prepare for my college and career goals.	3%	6%	42%	27%	22%			
My parents help me prepare for my college and career goals.	4%	9%	43%	28%	16%			
	None of my teachers	Some of my teachers	Most of my teachers	I do not know.				
My teachers expect me to attend college.	2%	18%	53%	27%				

Do you believe that the following GEAR UP activities are helpful to prepare you for college?	Not helpful at all	Slightly helpful	Helpful	Very helpful	I have not participated.
College visits (during school year)	4%	17%	29%	34%	15%
Tutoring	4%	15%	35%	24%	23%
GEAR UP classroom visits	6%	20%	32%	20%	22%
Student workshops	4%	15%	29%	21%	31%
Mentoring	4%	15%	31%	19%	31%
Counseling	6%	17%	29%	18%	30%
GEAR UP lunch bunch	5%	18%	24%	17%	36%
Summer programs	9%	15%	21%	17%	39%

What are the reasons why you have been absent this year?	Sick/health issues	Family obligation	Transportation	I do not want to come to school.	I do not know if attendance matters my academic performance.
	68%	23%	20%	21%	8%

From where do you get information about high school?	Teachers	GEAR UP facilitators	Middle school counselor	High school counselor	Websites	Mentors
	50%	46%	29%	24%	21%	8%

College preparation

What level of education do you plan to complete?	I do not plan to finish high school	High school only	Certificate or associate degree (2 year)	Bachelor degree (4 year)	Graduate or professional degree	I do not know.
	1%	10%	10%	30%	20%	29%

What is the main reason you might not continue your education after high school?	NA	It costs too much.	I need to work.	My grades are not good enough.	I want to join military service.	I need to take care of my family.	The job I am interested will provide training	I am not interested.
	39%	21%	9%	7%	3%	3%	8%	10%

I have talked with my parent about attending college.	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Often
	16%	29%	35%	20%

Do you know which classes you should take to prepare for college?	I do not know anything.	I know a few things.	I know a lot.
	33%	53%	14%

Financial aid

	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Often	I do not know anything.	
Have you talked with someone about the availability of financial aid to help pay for college?	32%	25%	17%	5%	21%	
	I do not know anything.		I know a few things.		I know a lot.	
Do you know how to get financial aid for college?	58%		36%		6%	
	Definitely not	Probably not	Probably	Definitely	I do not know.	
Can you afford to attend a public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	5%	16%	37%	9%	33%	
	Not sure		No	Yes		
Are you planning to apply for financial aid for college?	66%		10%	24%		
	I am not eligible for financial aid	I am not planning to go to college.	The process is too difficult.	The process is too time consuming.	My family has money to pay for college.	I do not have enough information.
What might prevent you from seeking financial aid for college?	9%	15%	17%	12%	11%	55%

Perceived outcomes

	Worse	About the same.	Better	I do not know.	I do not participate in GEAR UP activities.
Due to my participation in GEAR UP, my academic performance is:	2%	29%	30%	22%	17%
	No, I do not plan to Attend college.		Yes, I now plan to Attend college.	Yes, I already planned, and GEAR UP further convinced me to attend college.	I do not know.
My participation in GEAR UP activities has changed my plans about attending college.	7%		19%	35%	39%

Appendix B

GEAR UP Family Survey Results

The purpose of the GEAR UP Family Survey was to capture information related to parents' experiences with the program for their child. Program staff were encouraged to use the survey results to make decisions that would refine and improve the program. A total of 118 parents participated in the online survey, representing a 6% response rate. The confidence interval was +/-8.8%, meaning we can be 95% certain that the sample percentage was within 8.8 percentage points on either side of the actual population percentage. In other words, responses provided by the 118 family members were not representative of the population of 1,999 family members.⁴

The survey addressed students' middle school experiences, family expectations, the GEAR UP program, students' college preparation, family participation, financial aid, and perceived outcomes. Results showed that families had positive perspectives about the program. The majority of families wanted their child to pursue a college education. Families regarded college visits, counseling, mentoring, and student workshops as the top four GEAR UP activities they felt were helpful in preparing their child for college. College visits and individual meetings with facilitators/counselors were the activities families felt were most helpful in supporting them to prepare their child for college. The majority of families indicated an interest in seeking financial aid for their child's education, although many never talked with anyone about getting financial aid for college.

⁴ GEAR UP families with emails recorded in the district system were contacted for the GEAR UP Family Survey.

Parent expectations

	High school only	Certificate or associate degree (2 year)	Bachelor degree (4 year)	Graduate or professional degree	I do not know.	
What level of school do you want your child to complete?	2%	7%	39%	45%	6%	
	NA	It costs too much.	My child needs to work.	My child's grades are not good enough.	The job my child is interested in will provide training.	My child is not interested.
Why might your child not continue his/her education after high school?	52%	30%	3%	3%	7%	4%
	Never		Once or twice	Sometimes	Often	
I have talked with my child about attending college.	2%		6%	33%	59%	

The GEAR UP program

	My child sent home	Flyers	Back to school night	School website	Have not received any information
From where did you receive GEAR UP information this year?	58%	27%	34%	18%	17%
	Some of his/her teachers		Most of his/her teachers	I do not know.	
My child's teachers expect him/her to go to college.	12%		70%	19%	
Do you believe that the following GEAR UP activities are helpful to prepare your child for college?	Not helpful at all	Slightly helpful	Helpful	Very helpful	I do not know.
College visits (during school year)	-	8%	28%	55%	9%
Counseling	1%	1%	24%	52%	22%
Student workshops	1%	9%	21%	50%	19%
Tutoring	2%	4%	20%	50%	23%
Mentoring	2%	3%	18%	54%	22%
GEAR UP lunch bunch	1%	3%	25%	39%	32%
GEAR UP family events	2%	5%	27%	37%	29%
Summer programs	1%	1%	22%	44%	31%
	Sick/health issues		Family obligation	My child does not want to come to school.	
What are the reasons why you have been absent this year?	80%		20%	20%	

	Teachers	GEAR UP facilitators	Middle school counselor	High school counselor	Websites	Mentors
From where do you get information about high school?	31%	29%	24%	24%	33%	7%

Student college preparation

	I do not know anything.		I know a few things.		I know a lot.	
Do you know which classes your child should take to prepare for college?	19%		54%		27%	
	No		Maybe		Yes	
Has your child discussed college with you this year?	5%		6%		88%	
	AVID	Pre-AP	Career and Technology Education	None of these	I do not know.	
My child plans to take the following types of classes:	44%	55%	29%	2%	25%	
	Courses my child will need to take in high school to prepare for college	The importance of having my child take entrance tests	The availability of financial aid to help pay for college	How to help My child complete college applications	College entrance exams	
School staff have spoken with me about:	75%	40%	38%	34%	26%	

Parent participation

	% answered "Yes"						
My participation in GEAR UP activities has changed my ideas about my child's attending college.	65%						
	Myself/ another family member	A GEAR UP facilitator	A classroom teacher	A school counselor	An AVID teacher	A classmate or friend	No one has helped.
Who has helped your family learn the most about preparing for college?	27%	27%	4%	4%	8%	4%	22%
Do you believe that the following GEAR UP activities are helpful to support your participation in your child's college?	Not helpful at all	Slightly helpful	Helpful	Very helpful	I do not know.		
College visits	1%	8%	26%	50%	15%		
Individual meetings with facilitators/counselors	3%	4%	30%	33%	29%		
Parent workshops	3%	5%	26%	33%	32%		
Parent meetings	2%	5%	22%	37%	34%		
Home visits	11%	3%	16%	22%	48%		

Financial aid

	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Often	
I have talked with someone about getting financial aid to help pay for college?	72%	19%	4%	5%	
	I do not know anything.		I know a few things.		I know a lot.
Do you know how to get financial aid for college?	38%		42%	20%	
	Definitely not	Probably not	Probably	Definitely	
Can your child afford to attend a public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	5%	13%	47%	35%	
	Not sure	No	Yes		
Are you planning to help your child get financial aid for college?	20%	5%	75%		
	My child is not eligible for financial aid.	The process is too difficult.	The process is too time consuming.	My family has money to pay for college.	I do not have enough information.
What might prevent your child from seeking financial aid for college?	5%	5%	5%	9%	82%

Perceived outcomes

	Worse	About the same	Better	I do not know.
Due to GEAR UP, my child's academic performance is:	1%	27%	52%	21%
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
GEAR UP is helping my child prepare for college this year.	5%	13%	53%	29%
	No, my child does not plan to attend college.	Yes, my child now plans to attend college.	Yes, my child already planned, and GEAR UP further convinced him/her to attend college.	I do not know.
My child's participation in GEAR UP activities has changed his/her plans about attending college.	3%	25%	44%	28%

Appendix C

GEAR UP Campus Teacher Survey Results

The purpose of the GEAR UP Teacher Survey was to capture information related to teachers' experiences in preparing students for college, career, and life. Program staff were encouraged to use the survey results to make decisions that would refine and improve the program. A total of 114 teachers at GEAR UP campuses participated in the survey, representing a 28% response rate. The confidence interval was +/-7.8%, meaning we can be 95% certain that the sample percentage was within 7.8 percentage points on either side of the actual population percentage. In other words, responses provided by the 114 teachers were not representative of the population of 410 teachers at GEAR UP campuses.

Results showed that the majority had positive perspectives about the program. Teachers appeared to have adequate knowledge of the GEAR UP program. Teachers indicated students' engagement, students' behaviors, and students' college awareness as the top three areas for which they wanted more feedback and support. The vast majority of teachers agreed that all GEAR UP activities were helpful to prepare students for college and career.

The GEAR UP program

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I understand the purpose of the GEAR UP program.	1%	3%	59%	37%
I feel the GEAR UP program is building a college-going culture On campus.	1%	7%	61%	32%
I feel the GEAR UP program helps students meet college and career goals.	1%	7%	59%	34%
I know how to help students meet their college and career goals.	-	6%	67%	27%
I feel the GEAR UP program is helping my students academically.	2%	11%	57%	30%
I think the following GEAR UP activities are helpful to prepare students for college and careers:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
College tours	1%	4%	48%	48%
Mentoring	-	4%	45%	51%
Tutoring	-	6%	49%	46%
Counseling	-	6%	45%	50%
Community partnerships	-	6%	51%	43%
Summer programs	-	7%	52%	41%
Student workshops	-	7%	55%	38%
Job site visits	-	9%	50%	42%
Parent workshops on college	-	10%	58%	33%
Parent engagement	2%	8%	53%	37%
Parent counseling/advising	1%	10%	53%	36%

Teacher support

In which area(s) would you like more feedback and support: (Please select all that apply.)	% selected
Increasing student engagement	38%
Managing student behavior	33%
Increasing students' college awareness	30%
Culturally responsive practices	26%
Blended learning	22%

Increasing rigor in the classroom	22%
Incorporating more leadership skills (SEL)	21%
Incorporating more inquiry	20%
Collaborative study groups	14%
Tutoring	14%
Improving my instructional practices	12%
Incorporating more active reading strategies	10%
Incorporating more writing	9%
% answered "Yes"	
I expect most of my students to attend college.	77%
I encourage most of my students to attend college.	98%

Appendix D

Percentage of Students/Parents Participating and Average Number of Hours Participating in Academic Interventions, Enhanced Counseling and Advising, and Family Engagement Activities at Each GEAR UP Campus

Campus	Academic intervention		Enhanced counseling and advising		Family engagement	
	% students participating	Average number of hours of service	% students participating	Average number of hours of service	% students participating	Average number of hours of service
Bedichek (n = 273)	27%	3.4	98%	3.7	54%	0.4
Burnet (n = 319)	74%	9.0	95%	2.6	65%	0.8
Covington (n = 242)	76%	5.6	95%	6.0	65%	0.7
Dobie (n = 212)	51%	4.8	91%	6.6	0.5%	
Garcia YMLA (n = 136)	80%	2.3	99%	9.0	68%	0.3
Lively (n = 339)	73%	2.9	99%	9.7	71%	1
Martin (n = 183)	31%	5.2	100%	10.3	16%	0.3
Mendez (n = 206)	38%	4.7	91%	3.0	30%	0.9
Paredes (n = 318)	46%	5.8	97%	6.3	47%	0.5
Sadler Means YWLA (n = 105)	91%	3.5	97%	9.3	84%	0.3
Webb (n = 213)	62%	3.1	71%	3.6	49%	1.6
Overall average (n = 2,546)	57%	4.9	94%	6.8	50%	1.1

Appendix E

Percentage of Students/Parents Participating in Services at Each GEAR UP Campus

Campus	Tutoring	Student workshop	College visit	Educational field trip	Job site visit	Counseling	Comprehensive mentoring	Family event	Family college visit	Family workshop	Family counseling
Bedichek (n = 273)	27%	60%	26%	95%	7%	25%	0.4%	47%		0.4%	11%
Burnet (n = 319)	74%	92%	22%	0.3%	25%	34%	2%	60%			13%
Covington (n = 242)	76%	31%	88%	86%	19%	15%		63%			6%
Dobie (n = 212)	51%	75%	25%	14%	15%	85%		0.5%			
Garcia YMLA (n = 136)	80%	99%	50%	49%	41%	97%		59%		1%	21%
Lively (n = 339)	73%	97%	97%	20%	30%	90%	2%	15%	35%		54%
Martin (n = 183)	31%	98%	72%	9%	72%	95%		8%		9%	5%
Mendez (n = 206)	38%	74%	26%	13%	30%	62%	1%	0.5%	11%	0.5%	22%
Paredes (n = 318)	46%	86%	82%	62%	84%	82%		2%	37%		13%
Sadler Means YWLA (n = 105)	91%	81%	82%	10%	91%	90%		27%		37%	54%
Webb (n = 213)	62%	48%	17%	2%	12%	48%	0.5%	0.5%		8%	45%
Overall average (n = 2,546)	57%	77%	54%	35%	36%	62%	1%	26%	10%	3%	21%

Appendix F

Average Number of Hours of Service per Participating Student/Parent at Each GEAR UP Campus

Campus	Tutoring	Student workshop	College visit	Educational field trip	Job site visit	Counseling	Comprehensive mentoring	Family event	Family college visit	Family workshop	Family counseling
Bedichek (n = 269)	3.4	0.9	1.7	2.5	3.2	1.2	0.5	0.5		0.5	0.4
Burnet (n = 309)	9.0	1.5	2.6	5.0	3.0	1.5	1.0	0.6			0.8
Covington (n = 238)	5.6	1.0	3.0	2.3	3.7	0.4		1.2			0.7
Dobie (n = 193)	4.8	3.6	4.7	6.6	3.0	1.9					
Garcia YMLA (n = 136)	2.3	4.7	3.5	2.3	3.3	1.1		2.1		3.0	0.3
Lively (n = 337)	2.9	2.1	6.3	2.9	2.2	1.0	7.3	1.5	1.5		0.3
Martin (n = 183)	5.2	2.7	5.5	5.0	4.4	0.4		1.8		1.0	0.3
Mendez (n = 191)	4.7	0.7	2.8	3.6	2.4	0.7	1.3		1.0	2.0	0.7
Paredes (n = 309)	5.8	1.2	2.7	1.9	2	1.5		0.3	0.5		0.4
Sadler Means YWLA (n = 105)	3.5	2.6	4.2	2.6	3.6	1.2		1.6		1.8	0.3
Webb (n = 175)	3.1	1.3	6.1	2.3	4	1.9	0.8			3.2	1.6
Overall average (n = 2,445)	4.9	2.0	4.2	2.5	2.9	1.2	3.3	1.1	1.0	2.0	0.6

References

Wang, C., & Orr, A. (2020). *Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) Austin: 2019 fall student focus group results summary*. Austin Independent School District.

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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