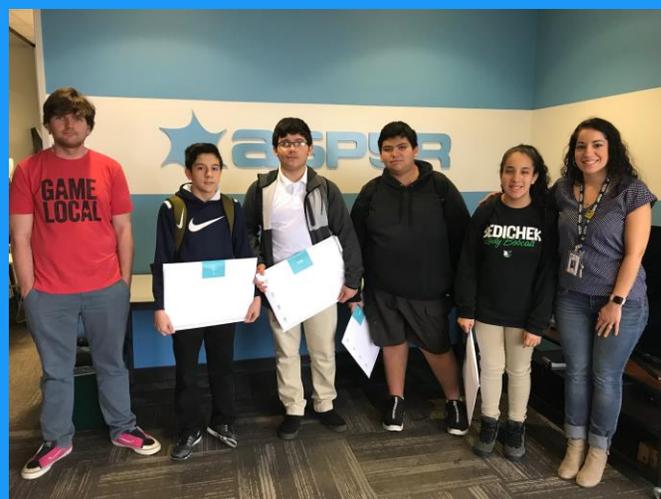


Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) Austin

Annual Evaluation Report 2020–2021





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 2020–2021, GEAR UP Austin served a cohort of 9th-grade students in the class of 2024 ($n = 2,650$) across seven high 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 tutoring (74%), mentoring (74%), and counseling (73%) as most helpful for college preparation.
- Seventy-two percent of GEAR UP students reported their facilitators were helpful in preparing them for college and career.
- A greater percentage of GEAR UP students than of non-GEAR UP students passed Texas Success Initiative (TSI) English language arts and reading (ELAR).
- GEAR UP students who participated in Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) classes had higher passing rates in advanced-level courses, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) end-of-course (EOC) algebra 1, biology, and English 1, and TSI ELAR and math than did GEAR UP students who did not participate in AVID classes.

GEAR UP implementation outcomes for teachers included:

- Ninety-six percent of teachers at GEAR UP campuses felt comfortable explaining the college process to students.
- 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-five percent of GEAR UP students thought their parents helped them prepare for college and career.
- The majority of GEAR UP parents regarded college visits (77%) and individual meetings with facilitators / counselors (72%) as the most helpful activities supporting them to prepare their child for college.

Table of Contents

- Executive Summary i
- List of Figures iv
- List of Tables vi
- Overview 1
 - Background of GEAR UP Austin..... 1
 - Implementation Services 3
 - Academic Intervention..... 3
 - Enhanced Counseling and Advising..... 4
 - Professional Development Activities..... 5
 - Family Engagement 6
- Evaluation question 1: For each program component, what program services were developed, implemented, and/or enhanced in the fourth year of the GEAR UP Austin project, 2020–2021? 7
 - Implementation finding 1: Workshops, college visits, and counseling were provided to more students than were other services. 7
 - Implementation finding 2: The implementation of GEAR UP services varied across GEAR UP campuses..... 9
 - Implementation finding 3: GEAR UP service participation differed for GEAR UP students according to their ethnic group and economically disadvantaged status. 10
 - Implementation finding 4: GEAR UP students and campus staff perceived the GEAR UP services positively..... 13
- Evaluation question 2: For each program component, what were the outcomes for GEAR UP participants? 14
 - Academic intervention outcomes finding 1: GEAR UP participants had positive perceptions about academic support provided by the program 14
 - Academic intervention outcomes finding 2: Participants perceived tutoring received from teachers, APIE tutors, AVID tutors, and GEAR UP facilitators as helpful. 15

Academic intervention outcomes finding 3: Participants reported the GEAR UP program as a whole provided helpful academic support.....	16
Academic intervention outcomes finding 4: The percentage of GEAR UP students who passed advanced courses was lower than that of non-GEAR UP students.....	17
Academic intervention outcomes finding 5: Non-GEAR UP students performed better in STAAR EOC algebra 1, biology, and English 1 than did GEAR UP students.....	18
Academic intervention outcomes finding 6: GEAR UP students performed better in TSI ELAR than did non-GEAR UP students.	19
Academic intervention outcomes finding 7: GEAR UP students receiving APIE tutoring performed better than did GEAR UP students who did not receive APIE tutoring.....	22
Academic intervention outcomes finding 8: GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes performed better academically than did GEAR UP students who did not participate in AVID classes.....	23
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 1: Participants reported counseling to be the most helpful activity preparing students for college.....	24
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 2: Participants highly rated the GEAR UP facilitators.	26
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 3: GEAR UP teachers were perceived as supportive for college preparation.....	27
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 4: Participation in GEAR UP activities was inspiring for students' college aspirations.	27
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 5: A gap existed between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students' attendance rates.	30
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.	31
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 7: GEAR UP students receiving APIE tutoring were more likely to attend school than were those not receiving APIE tutoring.	32
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 8: GEAR UP students participating in AVID classes were more likely to attend school than were those not participating in AVID classes.	33

Teacher professional development training outcomes finding 1: GEAR UP teachers supported students' college preparation. 34

Teacher professional development training outcomes finding 2: GEAR UP teachers reported increasing students' engagement and trauma-informed practices as the top two areas of needed support. 35

Family engagement outcomes finding 1: Families supported their child's college preparation. 36

Family engagement outcomes finding 2: College visits and individual meetings with facilitators/counselors were considered most helpful by families. 38

Conclusion and Recommendations..... 39

Appendix A..... 41

Appendix B..... 46

Appendix C..... 50

Appendix D..... 53

Appendix E..... 54

Appendix F..... 55

List of Figures

Figure 1. Demographics of GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Students	1
Figure 2. Percentage of GEAR UP Students/Families Participating in Each Service.....	8
Figure 3. Average Number of Hours per Participating GEAR UP Students in Each Service	9
Figure 4. GEAR UP Students’ Participation in APIE Tutoring, by Demographics	11
Figure 5. GEAR UP Students’ Participation in College Visits, by Demographics	11
Figure 6. GEAR UP Students’ Participation in Counseling, by Demographics	12
Figure 7. GEAR UP Students’ Participation in Family Services, by Demographics.....	12
Figure 8. GEAR UP Students’, Parents’, and Teachers’ Perceptions About the Helpfulness of Tutoring.....	14
Figure 9. Tutoring Participant Students’ Perceptions About the Helpfulness of Tutoring....	15
Figure 10. GEAR UP Students’ Participation in Tutoring Services	15
Figure 11. GEAR UP Students’ Perceptions About the Helpfulness of Tutoring	16
Figure 12. GEAR UP Students’, Parents’, and Teachers’ Perceptions About the Program’s Academic Support	17
Figure 13. GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Students’ Advanced-Level Course Completion	18
Figure 14. Students’ Passing Rates in STAAR EOC Algebra 1, Biology, and English 1	18
Figure 15. GEAR UP Students’ Participation in TSI ELAR, by Demographics	19
Figure 16. GEAR UP Students’ Participation in TSI Math, by Demographics.....	20
Figure 17. The Passing Rates of Students Who Took TSI Assessments in TSI ELAR and TSI Math	20
Figure 18. Students’ Passing Rates in TSI ELAR and TSI Math.....	21
Figure 19. GEAR UP APIE Tutoring Participants’ Perceptions About the Helpfulness of Tutoring.....	22
Figure 20. Advanced Course Completion for Students Receiving Any APIE Tutoring and Students Who Did Not Receive Any APIE Tutoring	22

Figure 21. Grade-Level Promotion for Students Receiving Any APIE Tutoring and Students Who Did Not Receive Any APIE Tutoring.....23

Figure 22. Advanced-Level Course Completion for GEAR UP Students Participating in AVID Classes and Those Not Participating in AVID Classes23

Figure 23. STAAR EOC Algebra 1, Biology, and English 1 Passing Rates for GEAR UP Students Participating in AVID Classes and Those Not Participating in AVID Classes.24

Figure 24. TSI ELAR and Math Passing Rates for GEAR UP Students Participating in AVID Classes and Those Not Participating in AVID Classes24

Figure 25. GEAR UP Students’, Parents’, and Teachers’ Perceptions About the Helpfulness of GEAR UP Activities.....25

Figure 26. GEAR UP Students’ Perceptions About College Preparation Support From GEAR UP Facilitators.....26

Figure 27. GEAR UP Students’ and Parents’ Perceptions About Teacher Support in College Preparation27

Figure 28. GEAR UP Students’ and Parents’ Perceptions About Students’ College Plan.....28

Figure 29. GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Students’ Perceptions About Yes or Maybe They Would Go To College.....29

Figure 30. College Aspiration for GEAR UP Students Receiving a High Dosage of Overall GEAR UP Services and Those Receiving a Low Dosage29

Figure 31. GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Students’ Attendance Rate30

Figure 32. GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Students’ Attendance Rate Greater Than 90%30

Figure 33. Average Attendance Rate for GEAR UP Students Receiving a High Dosage of Overall GEAR UP Services and Those Receiving a Low Dosage31

Figure 34. Average Attendance Rate Greater Than 90% for GEAR UP Students Receiving a High Dosage of Overall GEAR UP Services and Those Receiving a Low Dosage.....32

Figure 35. Average Attendance Rate for GEAR UP Students Receiving Any APIE Tutoring and Those Not Receiving Any APIE Tutoring32

Figure 36. Average Attendance Rate Greater Than 90% for GEAR UP Students Receiving Any APIE Tutoring and Those Not Receiving Any APIE Tutoring33

Figure 37. Average Attendance Rate for GEAR UP Students Participating in AVID Classes and Those Not Participating in AVID Classes.....33

Figure 38. Average Attendance Rate Greater Than 90% for GEAR UP Students Participating in AVID Classes and Those Not Participating in AVID Classes 34

Figure 39. Teachers’ Support in Students’ College Preparation..... 34

Figure 40. Teachers’ Concerns About Professional Support 36

Figure 41. Teachers’ Perceptions About the Helpfulness of Family Engagement Activities .37

Figure 42. Students’ Perceptions About Family Support in College and Career Preparation 37

Figure 43. Parents / Family Members’ Perceptions About the Helpfulness of GEAR UP Activities for Family Support in College Preparation 38

List of Tables

Table 1. In 2020–2021, GEAR UP Implemented Services in All Four Program Areas.....3



Overview

Background of GEAR UP Austin

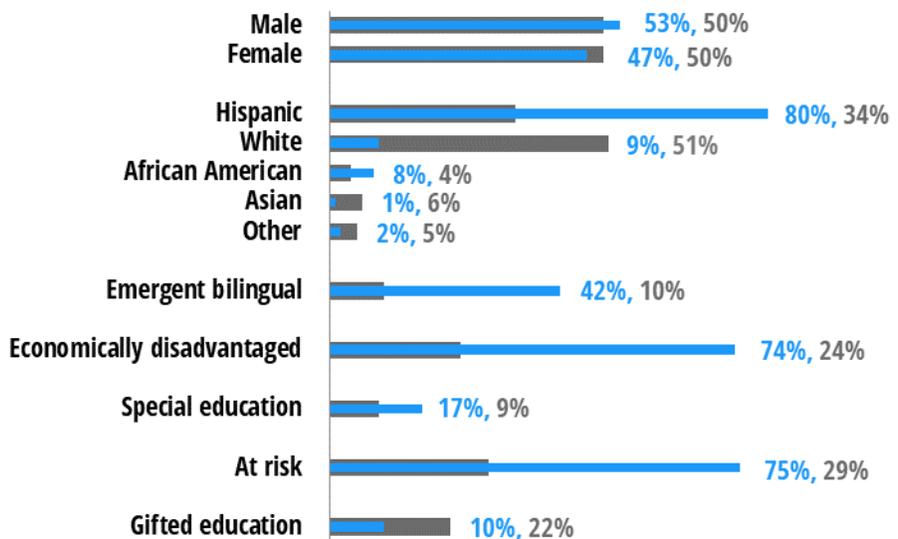
GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) Austin is a federally funded grant program encouraging low-income at-risk students and their families to have high educational expectations, complete the required courses to enter college, and understand how to pay for their postsecondary 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 4 of the program, Austin Independent School District (AISD) was awarded \$1,980,561 to continue implementing GEAR UP Austin. In 2020–2021, GEAR UP Austin served a cohort of 9th-grade students in the class of 2024 ($n = 2,650$) across seven high schools. Non-GEAR UP students included all 9th-graders at the non-GEAR UP campuses.

Overall, GEAR UP students differed from non-GEAR UP students ($n = 3,100$) in several ways. Seventy-four percent of GEAR UP students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL), and 80% were Hispanic. Compared with non-GEAR UP students, GEAR UP students were more likely to be emergent bilingual and be classified as at risk (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Demographics of GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Students

The majority of 9th-grade GEAR UP cohort students were more likely than non-GEAR UP students to be Hispanic, emergent bilingual, at risk, and economically disadvantaged.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD student demographics records

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

In 2020–2021, the program’s fourth year of federal funding, GEAR UP continued to provide intensive support services relevant to college preparation for the 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

Program Services

In alignment with the program goals, GEAR UP campuses focused service implementation on the four program components throughout the 2020–2021 school year (Table 1). Due to COVID-19, program staff continued to provide many of the traditional in-person program services virtually for GEAR UP students and their families.

Table 1. In 2020–2021, GEAR UP Implemented Services in All Four Program Areas

Program component	Service
Academic intervention	Tutoring
	Summer program
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 transitioned to high school during an unprecedented global pandemic. The 2020–2021 school year started virtually, with many students choosing to remain virtual for the entire school year. Despite this new modality, GEAR UP continued to support students' academic growth and success. All curriculum was in BLEND (the district's learning management system, also known as Canvas).

In addition to the global pandemic, this academic year was disrupted by the winter storm in February 2021. Despite the challenges, GEAR UP continued to find innovative and systemic ways to support students' academic needs. GEAR UP continued to build upon the infrastructure of Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and their partnership

Purpose of the Evaluation

with Austin Partners In Education (APIE) to provide virtual tutoring to its students in all seven high 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 virtually through Zoom. APIE tutors supported classes and breakout rooms, and they were available to students during asynchronous time. Additionally, some of the APIE college readiness advocates provided additional academic support for students in their college-level courses. 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.

By Summer 2021, GEAR UP Austin was able to offer academic enrichment and support across multiple campuses. The focus for students was to recover credits, while also being exposed to new experiences, such as kayaking (learning about environment) and in-person college tours. Moreover, field experiences were incorporated into course curriculum, which gave students real-life applications of concepts. After a full school year of online learning, summer programming provided students with the opportunity to make face-to-face connections with their peers. The summer programs included components of social and emotional learning, as the GEAR UP team continued to build relationships with students at their new campus.

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.

GEAR UP collaborated with other college and career readiness partners in the district to expand the districts' College and Career Readiness Scope and Sequence course into a BLEND course that all 6th through 12th graders were automatically enrolled in. Furthermore, the GEAR UP team created a unified GEAR UP BLEND course across the seven campuses.

In 2020–2021, GEAR UP students continued to receive virtual mentoring opportunities. GEAR UP staff continued to provide college visits in a virtual format. Universities where students took virtual college tours included:

- Austin Community College

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 2020–2021 school year, the fourth 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 fourth 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, STAAR testing, and TSI assessment scores).



- Baylor University
- Boston University
- Bowie State University
- Harvard University
- Howard University
- Huston-Tillotson University
- Stanford University
- San Angelo University
- Texas A&M University
- University of California Irvine
- University of Colorado Boulder
- University of Kentucky
- University of Texas at Austin
- Yale University

In Summer 2021, GEAR UP students had an opportunity to participate in in-person college tours to Concordia University and Huston-Tillotson University.

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

- college and career exploration
- information sharing about college and career options from external partners
- academic planning and preparation
- mental health
- skill building
- financial literacy

Although attendance was defined differently during this academic year, based on engagement in the virtual platform, the GEAR UP program staff regularly tracked students' attendance to provide support. The GEAR UP team supported campuses through phone calls and outreach throughout the year, and especially ensured that they would meet students' basic needs.

Professional Development Activities

Almost all GEAR UP teachers ($n = 567$) completed prescribed professional learning opportunities throughout the 2020–2021 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 and

those required by the district or campus leadership team. Examples of the professional learning sessions in which GEAR UP teachers participated were:

- GEAR UP Financial Aid and College Admission Overview
- AISD EDU Personalized Learning Conference
- AISD Equity
- AVID College Readiness (CR)
- Blended Learning Summit
- Cultural Proficiency and Inclusiveness (CP&I) Capacity Building Awareness
- High School Partnership Summit (through Austin Community College)
- Managing Devices to Support Student Engagement
- Sheltered Instruction in the Classroom
- Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)

In partnership with the Institute for Public School Initiative (IPSI) at University of Texas (UT) Austin, GEAR UP facilitators participated in monthly GEAR UP meetings and professional development activities focused on program planning and implementation. The monthly meetings provided a forum for GEAR UP facilitators to exchange ideas and best practices.

Due to the global pandemic, conferences became virtual, which allowed more staff to participate. A total of 17 staff members participated in professional learning conferences. For example, in August 2020, five GEAR UP team members attended the GEAR UP Virtual National Conference. In March 2021, nine staff across the district's College Career and Military Readiness (CCMR) team (representing AVID, Counseling, College Readiness, Career and Technical Education, and Research and Evaluation) attended the virtual National Postsecondary Strategy Institute. GEAR UP collaborated with campus college advisors to send two counselors to the Texas Association for College Admission Counselors (TACAC) virtual conference. Furthermore, most of the GEAR UP team members completed TBRI practitioner training in March 2021.

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. Due to the ongoing pandemic, family engagement looked different in 2020–2021 because it was almost all done virtually. GEAR UP collaborated with AVID to offer multiple virtual opportunities for any family in the district on topics such as paying for college and types of colleges. Although most family engagement efforts were virtual, GEAR UP participated in various neighborhood walks and Operation Reconnect. The walks enabled school staff to reconnect with school district families, learn about their needs, and share resources and information.



Evaluation question 1: For each program component, what program services were developed, implemented, and/or enhanced in the fourth year of the GEAR UP Austin project, 2020–2021?

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, and the AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey. 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 about GEAR UP services.

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

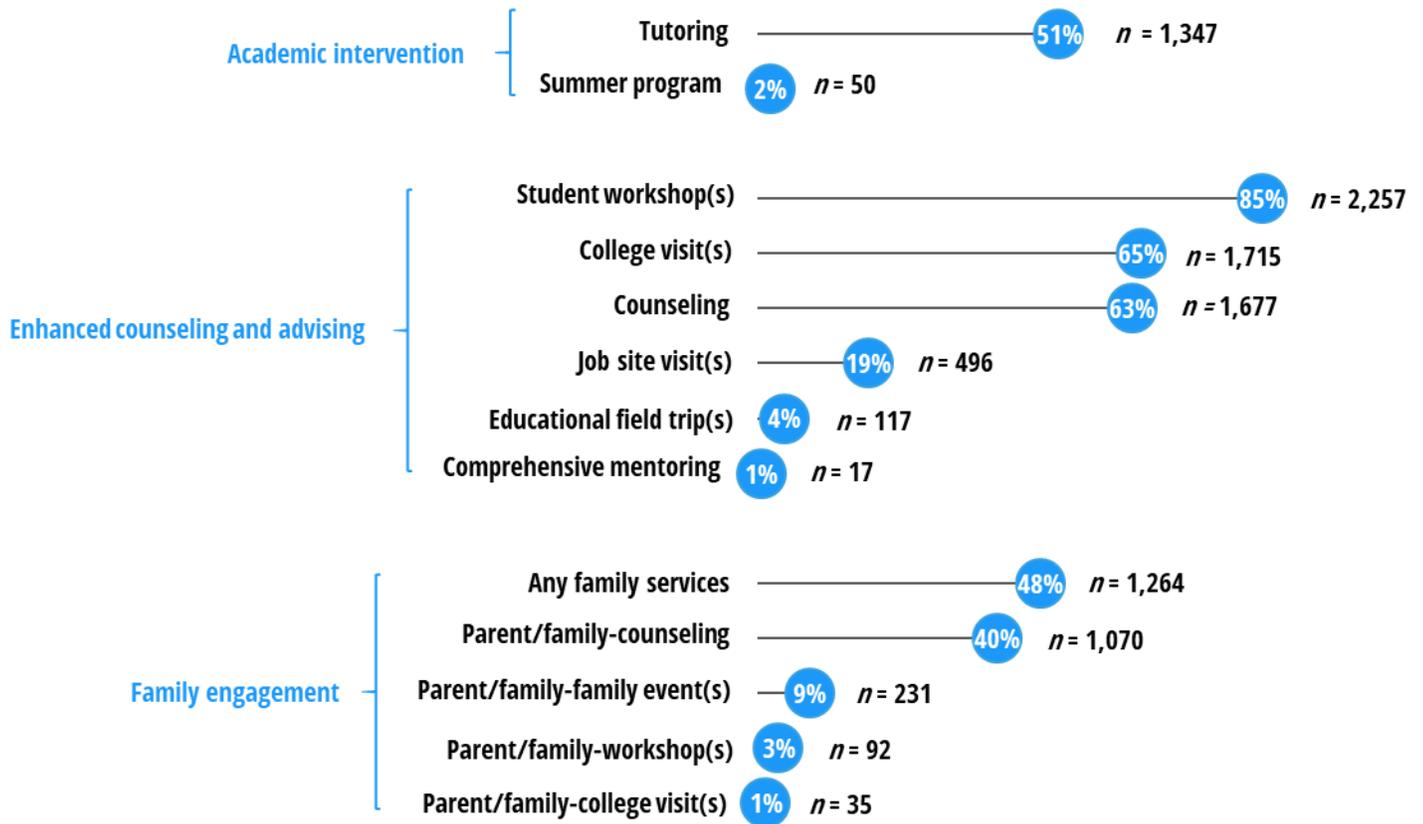
The GEAR UP program staff recorded services provided to students throughout the 2020–2021 school year. Almost all (97%) GEAR UP students participated in one or more services provided by the GEAR UP program. Overall, 51% of GEAR UP students participated in academic intervention activities, 92% of GEAR UP students participated in enhanced counseling and advising activities, and 48% of GEAR UP students' parents/families participated in family engagement opportunities. Also, findings demonstrated that 80% of GEAR UP students participated in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, or tutoring program.

More specifically, the majority of GEAR UP students participated in workshops, college visits, and counseling (Figure 2). The GEAR UP program staff monitored students with failing grades, based on report card records. By the end of the 2020–2021 school year, 56% 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.

Percentage of GEAR UP Students/Families Participating in Each Service

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



Source. AISD eCST data system, 2020–2021

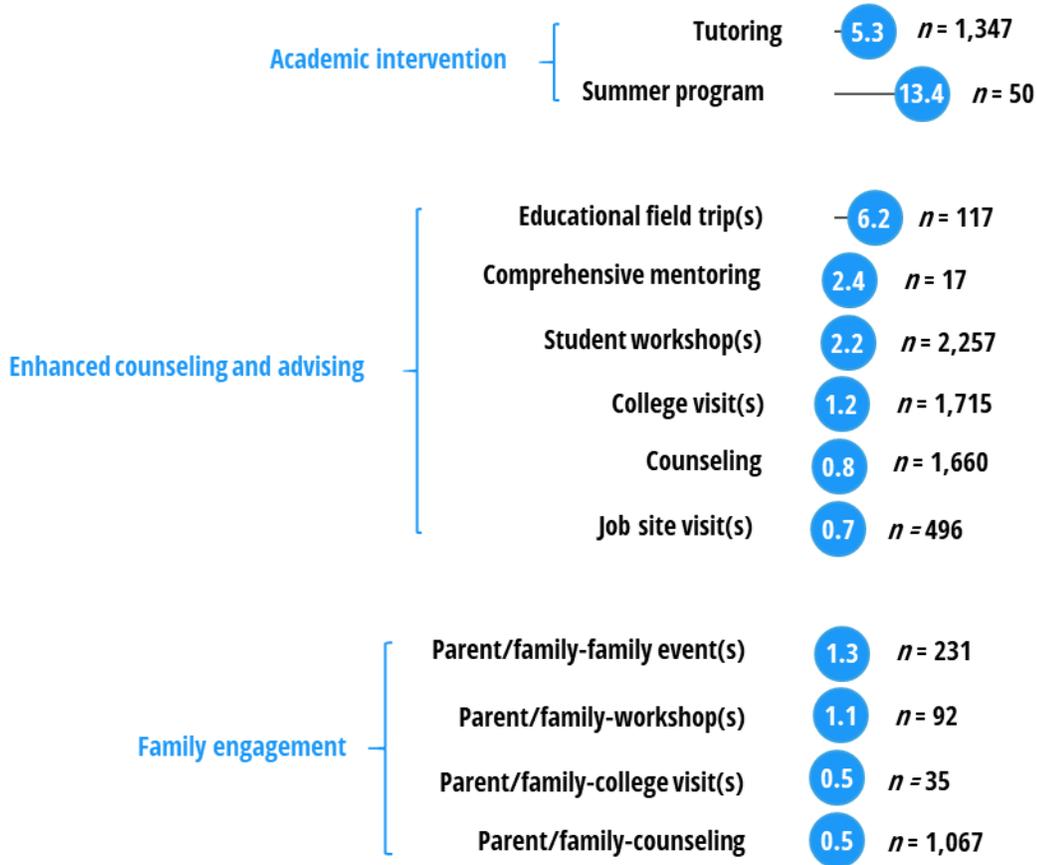
Note. Summer program incorporated tutoring, educational field trips, job site visits, and in-person college tours. Any family services include family counseling, family events, family workshops, and family college visits.

Overall, participating GEAR UP students had an average of 5.7 hours of academic intervention activities and 3.9 hours of enhanced counseling and advising activities. Each participating family had an average of 0.8 hours of family services. Many students participated in tutoring. Consistently, each participating student, on average, completed 5.3 hours of tutoring (Figure 3).

Figure 3.

Average Number of Hours per Participating GEAR UP Students in Each Service

The average number of hours per participating GEAR UP student ranged from 0.5 hour for parent counseling or parent college visits to 13.4 hours for a summer program.



Source. AISD eCST data system, 2020–2021

Note. Average number of hours was based on participating students with dosage records only. Summer program incorporated tutoring, educational field trips, job site visits, and in-person college tours.

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 at least 89% of GEAR UP students in enhanced counseling and advising (Appendix D). Specifically, at Eastside, almost all GEAR UP students participated in counseling, workshops, and college visits (Appendix E). Almost all GEAR UP students at Akins, Crockett, Eastside, and Travis participated in workshops.

Navarro, Travis, and Crockett provided participating students with at least 5.4 hours of academic intervention, and Travis, LBJ, and Crockett provided at least 4.9 hours of enhanced counseling and advising services (Appendix D). Although high percentages of GEAR UP students participated in college visits and counseling, the average number of hours each participating GEAR UP student received at most of the GEAR UP campuses remained low (Appendix F).

Navarro involved 72% of GEAR UP students in tutoring, and each participating student had 5.4 hours of tutoring, on average. Crockett and Travis involved approximately half of GEAR UP students in tutoring, and each participating student had at least 9.1 hours of tutoring, on average. Akins, Crockett, LBJ, Navarro, and Travis involved low percentages of GEAR UP students in educational field trips, and each participating student had between 4.8 and 10.1 hours of services, on average. Similarly, Crockett and Travis involved low percentages of students in the summer program, and each participating student had at least 16.5 hours of services, on average.

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

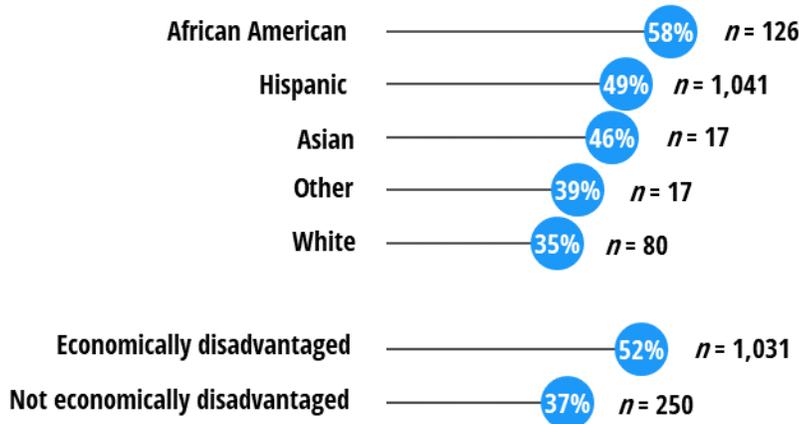
To further describe students' access to GEAR UP services, GEAR UP students' participation in APIE tutoring, college visits, counseling, and family services was disaggregated by ethnicity and by economically disadvantaged status. The percentages of GEAR UP African American students and of Hispanic students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

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

Figure 4.

GEAR UP Students' Participation in APIE Tutoring, by Demographics

Higher percentages of African American and economically disadvantaged students than of their peers participated in APIE tutoring.



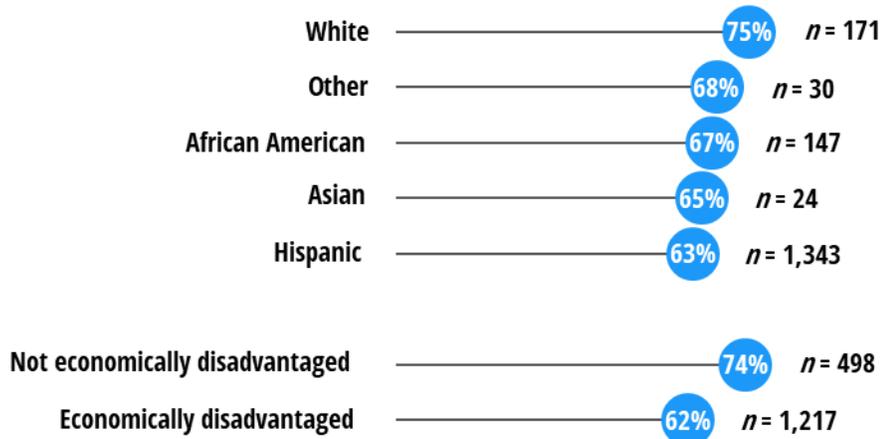
Source. 2020–2021 AISD student demographics records; AISD eCST data system, 2020–2021

Note. Other includes American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. 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 and between economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged groups ($p < .01$).

Figure 5.

GEAR UP Students' Participation in College Visits, by Demographics

The percentage of GEAR UP students who participated in college visits was greatest for White students and for those who were not economically disadvantaged.



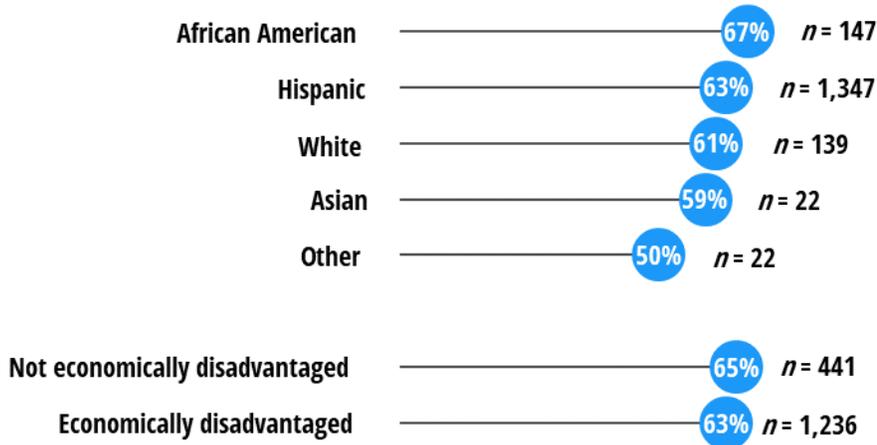
Source. 2020–2021 AISD student demographics records; AISD eCST data system, 2020–2021

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

GEAR UP Students' Participation in Counseling, by Demographics

Higher percentages of African American and non-economically disadvantaged students than of their peers participated in GEAR UP counseling.



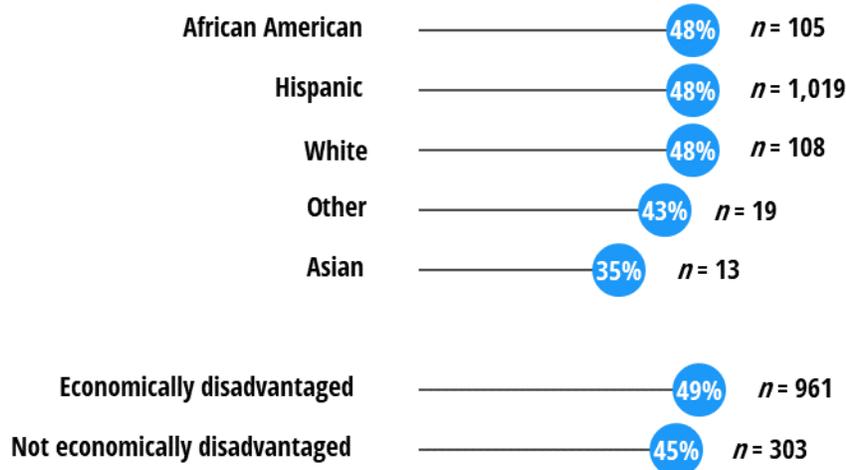
Source. 2020–2021 AISD student demographics records; AISD eCST data system, 2020–2021

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

Figure 7.

GEAR UP Students' Participation in Family Services, by Demographics

Lower percentages of Asian, other group, and non-economically disadvantaged students than of their peers had families who participated in GEAR UP family services.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD student demographics records; AISD eCST data system, 2020–2021

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

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

The comments provided by GEAR UP students and the campus staff in the surveys consistently reflected the helpful and resourceful nature of GEAR UP activities. Students reported GEAR UP facilitators helped them in a variety of ways, including academic preparation, college planning, college tours, confidence building, and emotional support. Campus staff commented that GEAR UP activities helped students gain a better understanding of college. Campus staff indicated GEAR UP facilitator were supportive to both students and teachers, and facilitators built a strong bond with students and families. They mentioned the critical role of GEAR UP facilitators in engaging students and families during the pandemic. Excerpts of **students'** and **campus staff's** comments included:

GEAR UP is the best program and helps you become a better student.

They are very helpful when it comes to school work, or if you simply want to talk to them.

GEAR UP has been very helpful; not only do they help you prepare for your future but they are very kind, and your success is important to them.

GEAR UP helped me learn more about colleges and what college I'm going to attend.

Our facilitator has been able to advocate and communicate with both students at home and students on campus so that the students, parents, and community feel involved, welcomed, and supported.

Better questions from GEAR UP freshmen and more thoughts about what happens after high school, which usually doesn't happen until junior or senior year.

GEAR UP facilitators form great bonds with students and families and collaborate with teachers. They are such an amazing support for our students, and I know they will make a huge positive mark on the lives of our students!

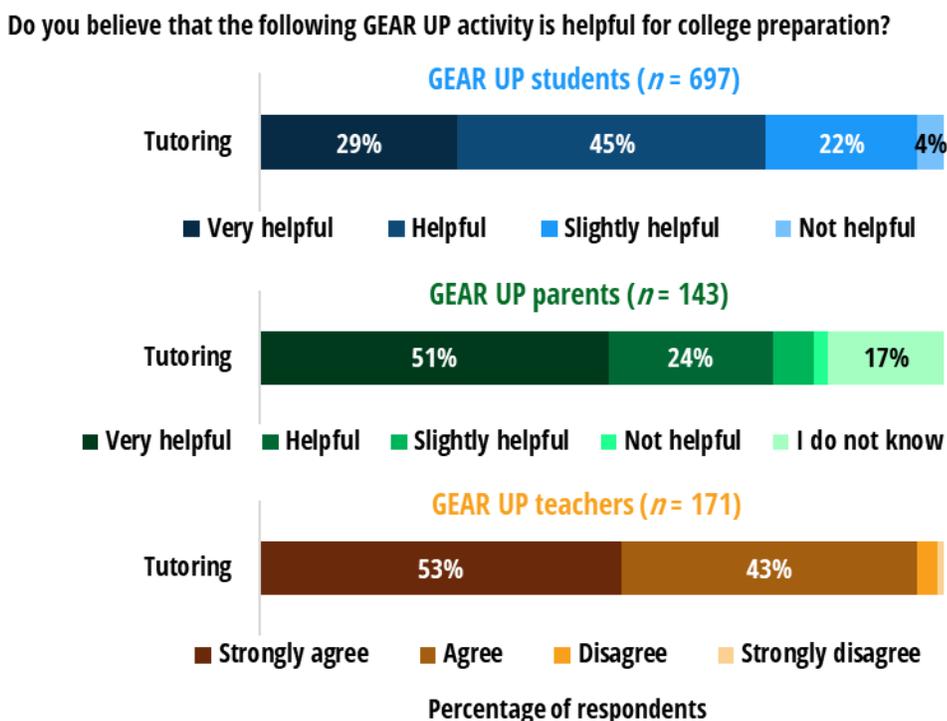
The GEAR UP staff are amazing because they always offer great information and support to students and staff.

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 perceptions about academic support provided by the program.

Results from participants' self-reported surveys revealed that students, parents, and teachers had highly positive perceptions 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. **GEAR UP Students', Parents', and Teachers' Perceptions About the Helpfulness of Tutoring**
The majority of GEAR UP students, parents, and teachers agreed that tutoring was helpful for college preparation.



Source. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Student Survey, 2020–2021 GEAR UP Family Survey, 2020–2021 AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey

Additionally, GEAR UP students who participated in tutoring services felt tutoring was helpful for college preparation. Of the 1,347 GEAR UP students who participated in

The 2020–2021 school year signaled the third full year of comprehensive data collection for the program. Due to COVID-19, most students were classified as remote learners all year. This section presents a description of outcomes for the 2020–2021 school year.

The GEAR UP Student and Family Surveys, AISD Student Climate Survey, AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey, and archival student records (e.g., students' attendance, course enrollment, STAAR and TSI testing) were used to describe outcomes.

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

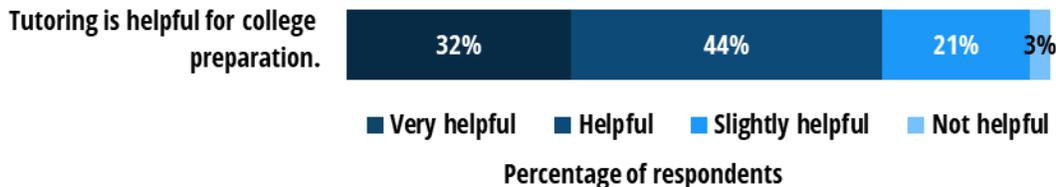


tutoring services, 368 provided feedback on the GEAR UP Student Survey about how they felt about tutoring services. Seventy-six percent reported that tutoring was very helpful or helpful for college preparation (Figure 9).

Figure 9.

Tutoring Participant Students’ Perceptions About the Helpfulness of Tutoring

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



Source. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Student Survey; AISD eCST data system, 2020–2021

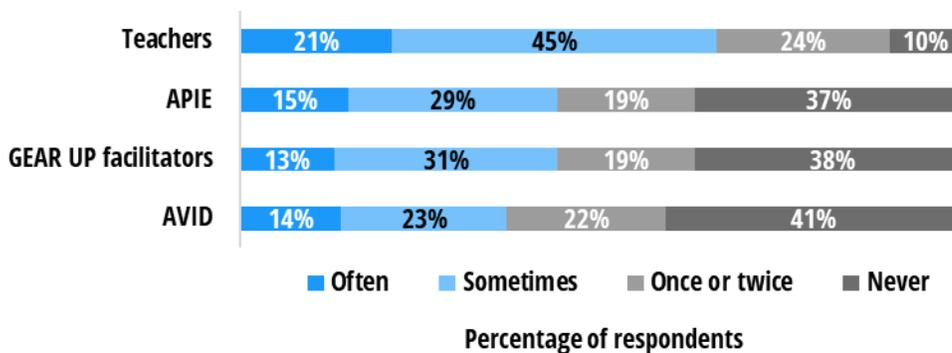
Academic intervention outcomes finding 2: Participants perceived tutoring received from teachers, APIE tutors, AVID tutors, and GEAR UP facilitators as helpful.

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

Figure 10.

GEAR UP Students’ Participation in Tutoring Services

The majority of GEAR UP students received tutoring services from teachers, APIE tutors, or GEAR UP facilitators.

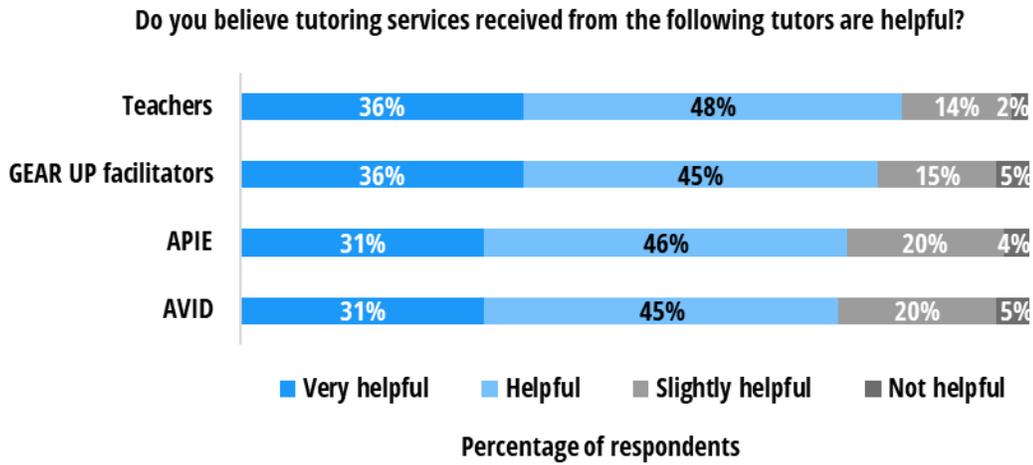


Source. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Student Survey

Figure 11.

GEAR UP Students' Perceptions About the Helpfulness of Tutoring

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



Source. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Student Survey

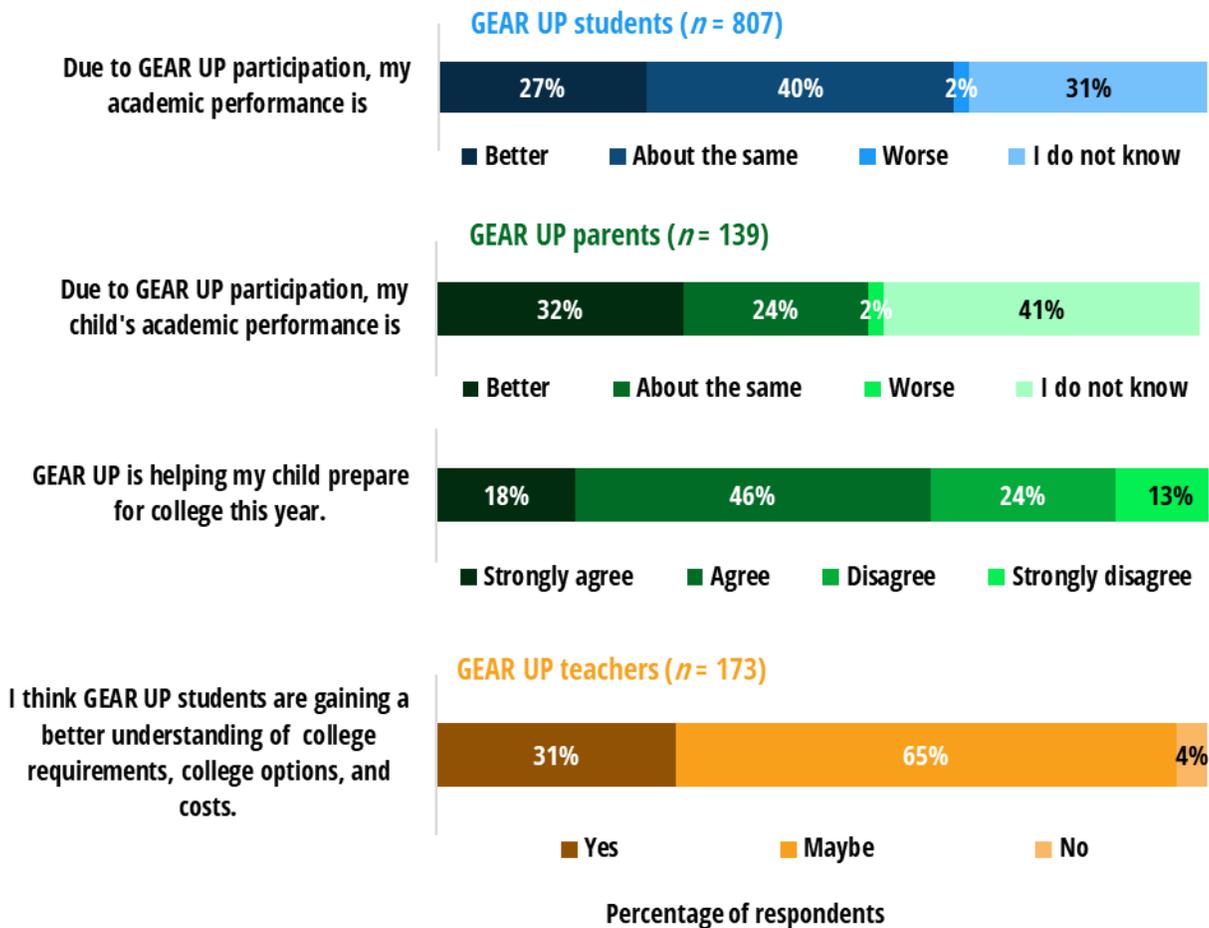
Academic intervention outcomes finding 3: Participants reported the GEAR UP program as a whole provided helpful academic support.

Across data sources, GEAR UP students, families, and teachers reported GEAR UP services provided helpful academic support. Comments drawn from the GEAR UP Student, Family, and Teacher Surveys consistently indicated students, families, and teachers recognized the GEAR UP program had a positive role in students' academic performance and preparing students for college. Also, results from the surveys revealed that 27% of students and 32% of parents indicated students' academic performance was better due to students' participation in the GEAR UP program (Figure 12). The majority of parents agreed the GEAR UP program helped students prepare them for college. Approximately one third of teachers thought GEAR UP students were gaining a better understanding of college requirements, college options, and costs.

Figure 12.

GEAR UP Students', Parents', and Teachers' Perceptions About the Program's Academic Support

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



Source. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Student Survey, 2020–2021 GEAR UP Family Survey, 2020–2021 AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey

Academic intervention outcomes finding 4: The percentage of GEAR UP students who passed advanced courses was lower than 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 again in the 2020–2021 school year. Seventy-three percent of GEAR UP students enrolled in advanced-level courses, and 80% of non-GEAR UP students enrolled in advanced-level courses (Figure 13). GEAR UP students had lower advanced-level course passing rates than did non-GEAR UP students. Eighty-seven percent of GEAR UP students

who enrolled in the advanced-level courses earned credit for the course, and 96% of non-GEAR UP students earned credit for the course.

Figure 13.

GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Students' Advanced-Level Course Completion

The percentage of non-GEAR UP students completing advanced-level courses was higher than that of GEAR UP students.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD course enrollment records

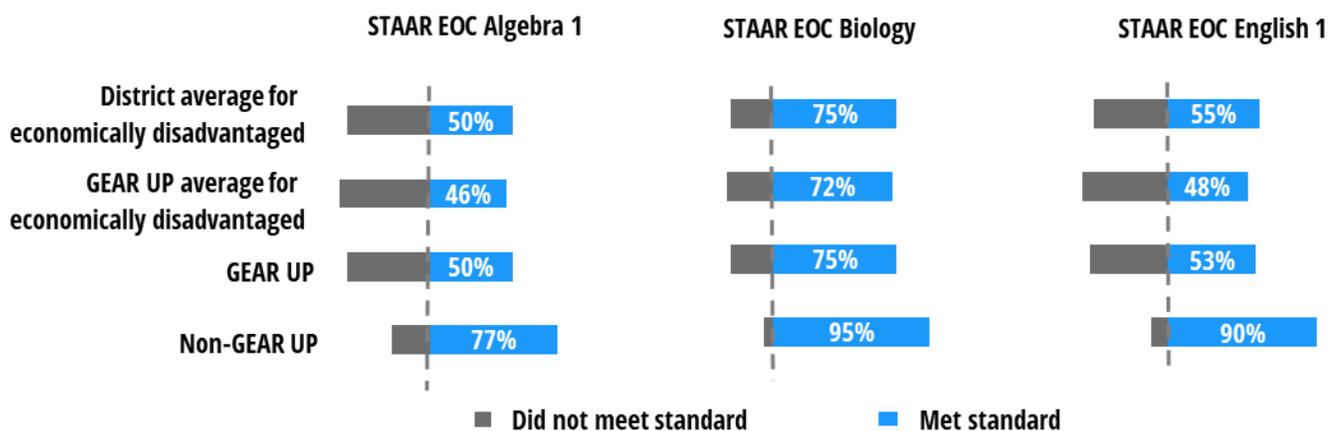
Academic intervention outcomes finding 5: Non-GEAR UP students performed better in STAAR EOC algebra 1, biology, and English 1 than did GEAR UP students.

There was a gap between GEAR UP students and non-GEAR UP students with respect to STAAR EOC passing rates (Figure 14). The GEAR UP program continues to address the educational disparities between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students in the district.

Figure 14.

Students' Passing Rates in STAAR EOC Algebra 1, Biology, and English 1

The percentages of GEAR UP students who met the STAAR EOC passing standard in algebra 1, biology, and English 1 were lower than those of non-GEAR UP students, and similar to the district average for economically disadvantaged students.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD student STAAR records

Note. Because 74% of GEAR UP students were economically disadvantaged, the STAAR EOC 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 performed better in TSI ELAR than did non-GEAR UP students.

The TSI assessment is designed to determine students' readiness for college-level work in the areas of ELAR and math. Students aspiring to enroll in dual-credit courses must meet college readiness requirements on the TSI, ACT, and/or the SAT.

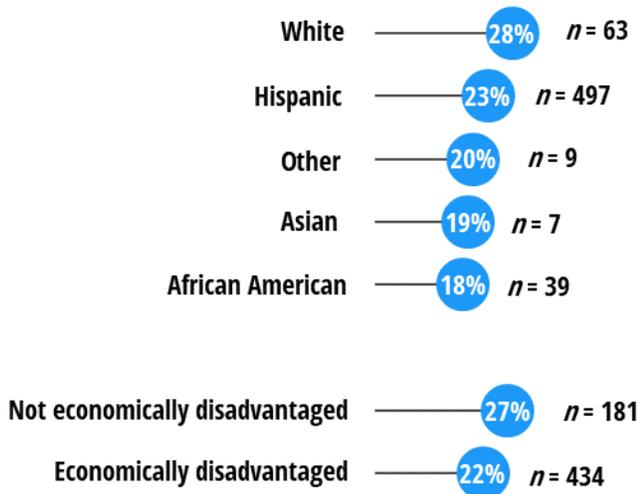
In 2020–2021, 24% ($n = 631$) of GEAR UP students took TSI ELAR or TSI math, and 3% ($n = 104$) of non-GEAR UP students took TSI ELAR or TSI math. Out of 2,650 GEAR UP students, 23% ($n = 615$) took TSI ELAR and 6% ($n = 166$) took TSI math.

The percentages of GEAR UP White and of Hispanic students taking TSI ELAR were higher than those of African American and Asian students (Figure 15). The percentages of GEAR UP Hispanic and African American students taking TSI math were higher than those of Asian and White students (Figure 16). A greater percentage of GEAR UP students who were not economically disadvantaged than of those who were economically disadvantaged participated in TSI ELAR or TSI math (Figures 15 and 16).

Figure 15.

GEAR UP Students' Participation in TSI ELAR, by Demographics

Higher percentages of White, Hispanic, and non-economically disadvantaged students than of their peers took TSI ELAR.



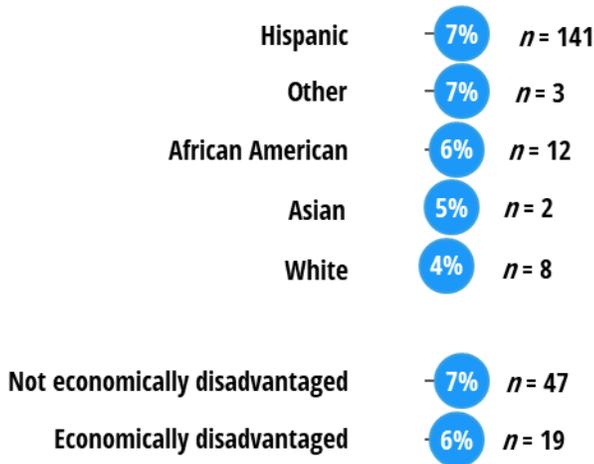
Source. 2020–2021 AISD student demographics records, 2020–2021 AISD student TEAMS records

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

Figure 16.

GEAR UP Students' Participation in TSI Math, by Demographics

Higher percentages of Hispanic, other group and non-economically disadvantaged students than of their peers took TSI math.



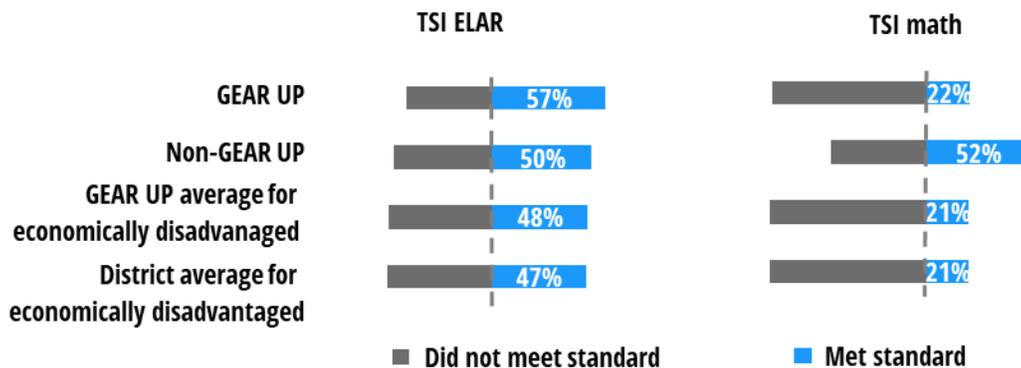
Source. 2020–2021 AISD student demographics records, 2020–2021 AISD student TEAMS records
 Note. Other includes American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

The TSI ELAR passing rate of GEAR UP students was higher than that of non-GEAR UP students (Figure 17). The TSI math passing rate of GEAR UP students was lower than that of non-GEAR UP students. The TSI ELAR and math passing rates were similar for the GEAR UP average for economically disadvantaged students and district average for economically disadvantaged students.

Figure 17.

The Passing Rates of Students Who Took TSI Assessments in TSI ELAR and TSI Math

The percentage of GEAR UP students taking TSI who met the TSI passing standard in ELAR was higher than that of non-GEAR UP students.



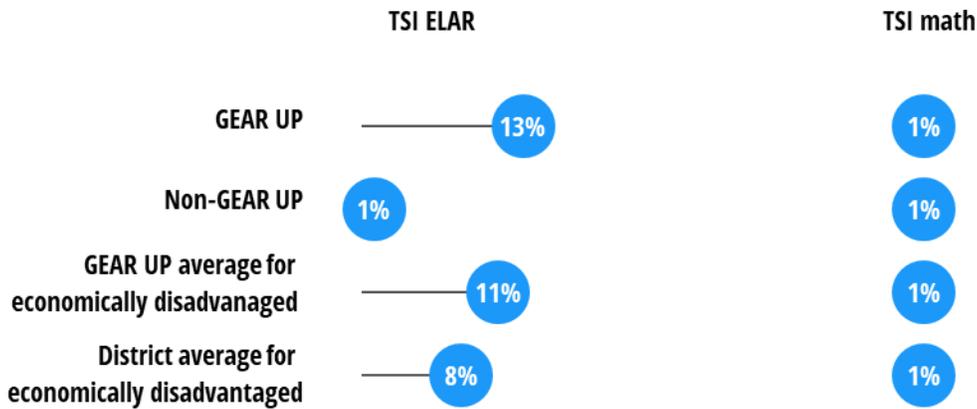
Source. 2020–2021 AISD student demographics records, 2020–2021 AISD student TEAMS records
 Note. The percentages were cumulative, including students who passed TSI assessments any time prior to the end of 2020–2021 school year. Because 74% of GEAR UP students were economically disadvantaged, the TSI results for economically disadvantaged students at the district level and at the cohort level are presented in the figure.

One of the GEAR UP program objectives was that by the end of each year, 75% of GEAR UP Austin students will be on-track to graduate college-ready as measured by college readiness benchmarks on the STAAR, SAT, ACT, and/or TSI exams. This objective was not met in the 2020–2021 school year. Data indicated that 13% of GEAR UP students met the TSI passing standard in ELAR and 1% met the TSI passing standard in math by the end of the fourth year of implementation (Figure 18).

Figure 18.

Students' Passing Rates in TSI ELAR and TSI Math

The percentage of GEAR UP students who met the TSI passing standard in ELAR was higher than that of non-GEAR UP students. This percentage was higher for the GEAR UP economically disadvantaged students than for the economically disadvantaged 9th-graders at both GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP campuses.



Note. The percentages were cumulative, including students who passed TSI assessments any time prior to the end of 2020–2021 school year. Because 74% 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.

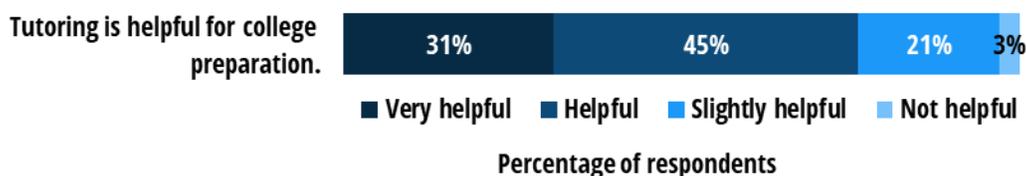
Academic intervention outcomes finding 7: GEAR UP students receiving APIE tutoring performed better than did GEAR UP students who did not receive APIE tutoring.

This year, 48% of GEAR UP students ($n = 1,281$) participated in APIE tutoring services in various subjects, including English language arts (ELA), math, science, and college readiness. In the spring of 2021, the AISD evaluation team administered a student survey to all GEAR UP high school students. The survey results indicated the majority of GEAR UP students who received tutoring services from APIE tutors agreed that tutoring was helpful in preparing them for college (Figure 19).

Figure 19.

GEAR UP APIE Tutoring Participants' Perceptions About the Helpfulness of Tutoring

The majority of GEAR UP students receiving any APIE tutoring services agreed that tutoring was helpful for college preparation.



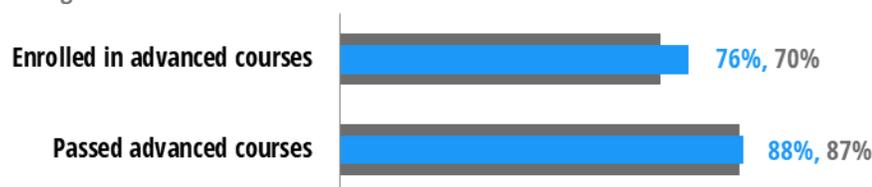
Source. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Student Survey, AISD eCST data system, 2020–2021

Additionally, GEAR UP students receiving any APIE tutoring had higher advanced-level course passing rates than did GEAR UP students who did not receive any APIE tutoring (Figure 20). GEAR UP students receiving any APIE tutoring performed better in grade-level promotion than did GEAR UP students who did not receive any APIE tutoring (Figure 21).

Figure 20.

Advanced Course Completion for Students Receiving Any APIE Tutoring and Students Who Did Not Receive Any APIE Tutoring

The percentages of GEAR UP students receiving any APIE tutoring who enrolled and completed advanced-level courses were higher than that of GEAR UP students who did not receive any APIE tutoring.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD course enrollment records

APIE aims to improve college and career readiness through student-centric tutoring and mentoring programs. GEAR UP continued to partner with APIE to provide tutoring to its students in all seven GEAR UP high schools. Learn more about APIE at <https://austinpartners.org>

GEAR UP students may have received APIE tutoring services in two areas:

- general tutoring in ELA, math, and science
- college readiness tutoring

Of the 1,281 GEAR UP students who received APIE tutoring, 97% ($n = 1,242$) received APIE general tutoring, and 10% ($n = 122$) received APIE college readiness tutoring.



Figure 21.

Grade-Level Promotion for Students Receiving Any APIE Tutoring and Students Who Did Not Receive Any APIE Tutoring

The percentage of GEAR UP students receiving any APIE tutoring who were promoted to the 10th-grade level in 2021–2022 was higher than that of GEAR UP students who did not receive any APIE tutoring.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD students records

Academic intervention outcomes finding 8: GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes performed better academically than did GEAR UP students who did not participate in AVID classes.

Thirty-seven percent of GEAR UP students ($n = 980$) participated in AVID classes. GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes had higher advanced-level course passing rates; higher STAAR EOC algebra 1, biology, and English 1 passing rates; and higher TSI ELAR and TSI math passing rates than did GEAR UP students who did not participate in AVID classes (Figures 22, 23, and 24). It is important to note that GEAR UP students participating in AVID classes were more likely than those who did not participate in AVID classes to take and pass advanced classes and STAAR EOC assessments. The reason for this is that GEAR UP students participating in AVID classes are most likely to be Early College High School (ECHS) students. ECHS students take advanced and college-level classes at higher rates than do students on non-ECHS campuses.

Figure 22.

Advanced-Level Course Completion for GEAR UP Students Participating in AVID Classes and Those Not Participating in AVID Classes

The percentage of GEAR UP students participating in AVID classes who completed advanced-level courses was higher than that of GEAR UP students who did not participate in AVID classes.

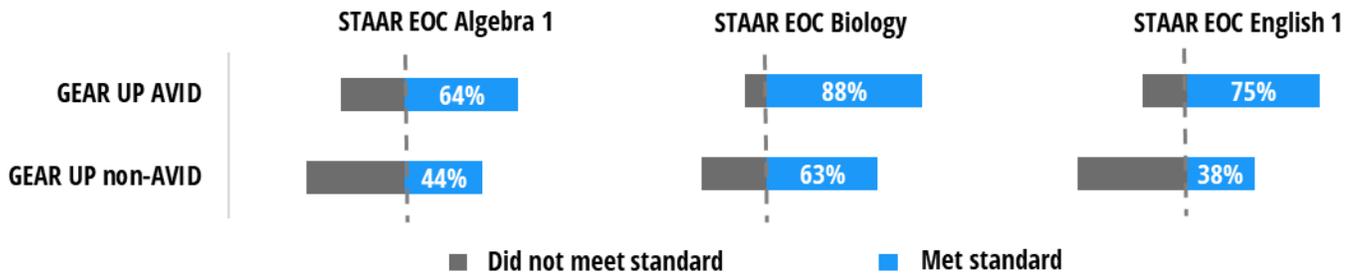


Source. 2020–2021 AISD course enrollment records

Figure 23.

STAAR EOC Algebra 1, Biology, and English 1 Passing Rates for GEAR UP Students Participating in AVID Classes and Those Not Participating in AVID Classes

The percentages of GEAR UP students participating in AVID classes who met the STAAR EOC passing standard in algebra 1, biology, and English 1 were higher than those of GEAR UP students who did not participate in AVID classes.

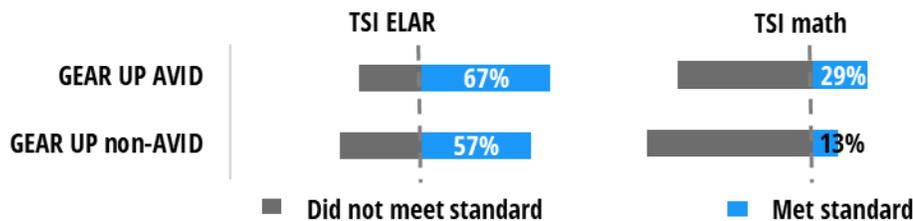


Source. 2020–2021 AISD student STAAR records

Figure 24.

TSI ELAR and Math Passing Rates for GEAR UP Students Participating in AVID Classes and Those Not Participating in AVID Classes

The percentages of GEAR UP students participating in AVID classes who met the TSI passing standard in ELAR and math were higher than those of GEAR UP students who did not participate in AVID classes.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD student TEAMS records

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

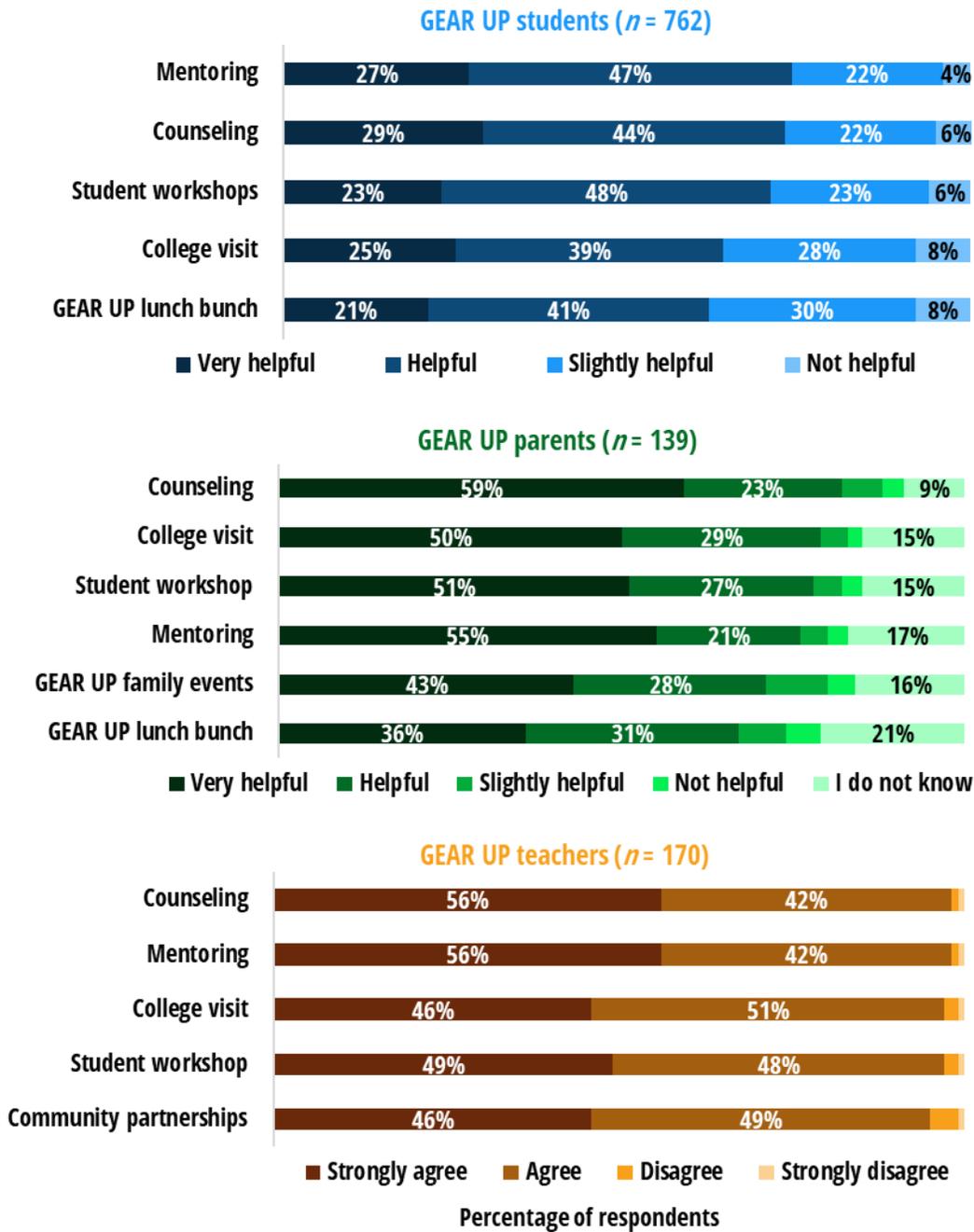
Counseling, mentoring, and college visits were the activities most highly rated as helpful to prepare students for college (Figure 25). For example, findings obtained from the GEAR UP Student Survey and the AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey indicated both students and teachers cited counseling and mentoring as the most helpful activities in preparing students for college. Parents who participated in the GEAR UP Family Survey indicated counseling and college visits were the most helpful activities. Moreover, teachers at GEAR UP campuses highly rated all other GEAR UP activities, including college visits, student workshops, and community partnerships.

Figure 25.

GEAR UP Students', Parents', and Teachers' Perceptions About the Helpfulness of GEAR UP Activities

GEAR UP students rated mentoring as the most helpful GEAR UP activity that prepares students for college; parents and teachers rated counseling as most helpful.

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



Source. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Student Survey, 2020–2021 GEAR UP Family Survey, 2020–2021 AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey

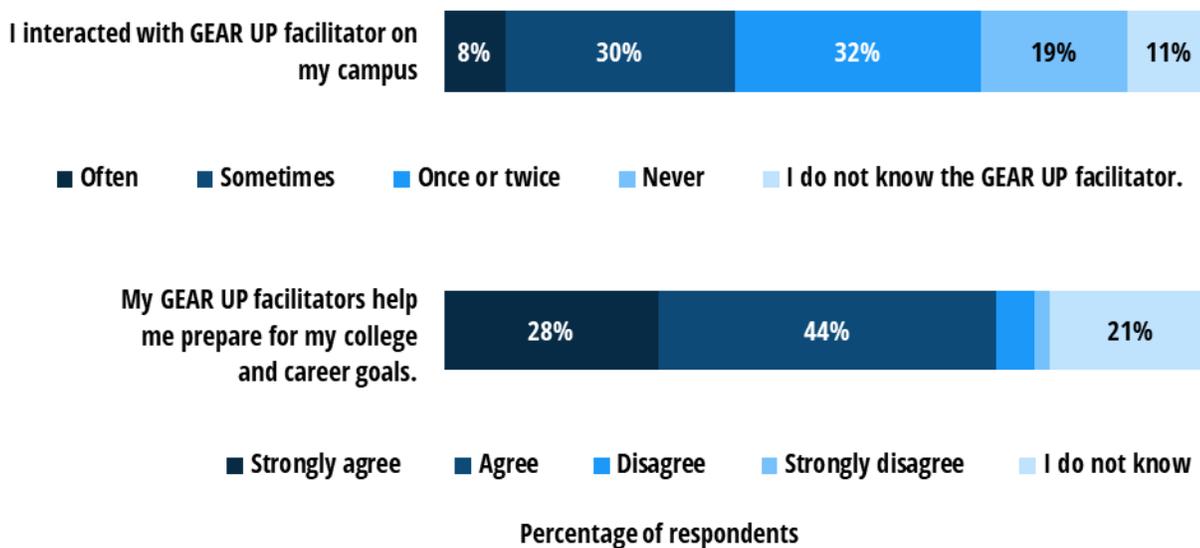
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 2: Participants highly rated the GEAR UP facilitators.

The majority (72%) of students stressed the positive role of GEAR UP facilitators in helping them prepare for college and career (Figure 26). GEAR UP facilitators reached out to almost all students, with 97% of students receiving GEAR UP services. The majority (70%) of students indicated they interacted with GEAR UP facilitators at least once (Figure 26).

Figure 26.

GEAR UP Students' Perceptions About College Preparation Support From GEAR UP Facilitators

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. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Student Survey

Students' comments collected from the GEAR UP Student Survey consistently demonstrated the GEAR UP facilitators were valuable supporters to students in school work, personal issues, and college information. Students expressed appreciation for their GEAR UP facilitators, who cared about both their academic progress and personal well-being and motivated them to succeed.

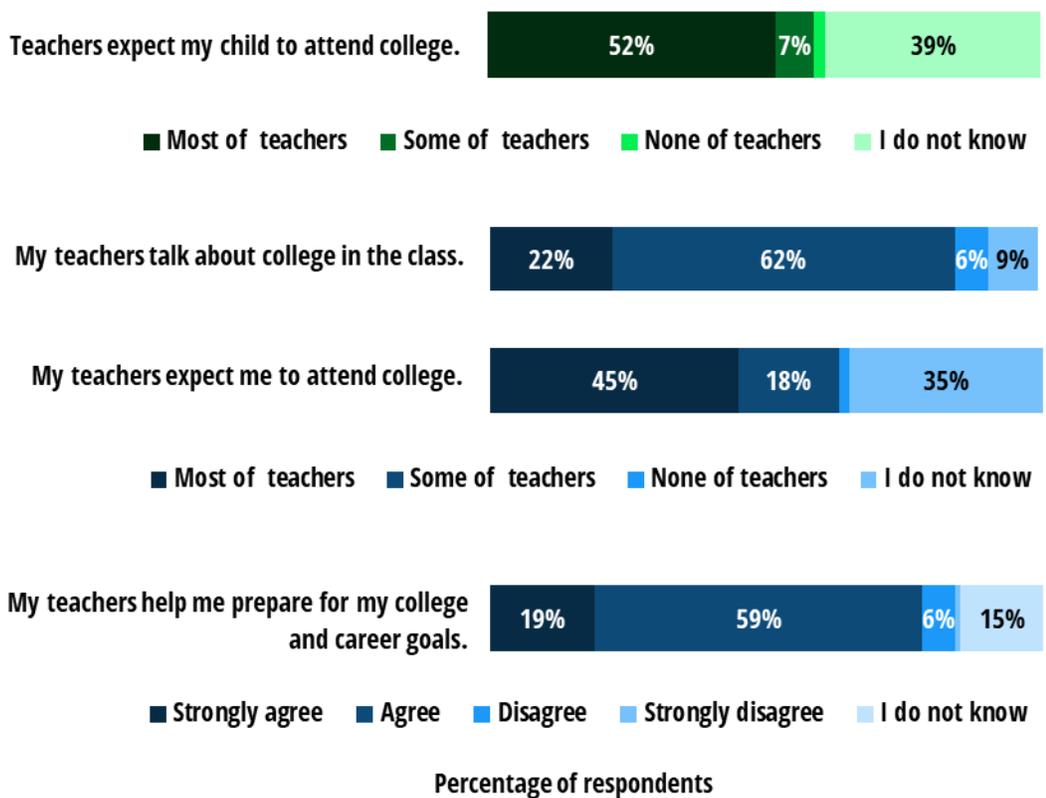
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 3: GEAR UP teachers were perceived as supportive for college preparation.

Students’ self-reports from the GEAR UP Student Survey revealed that the majority of students felt supported by their teachers, who talked about college in the class, expected them to go to college, and helped them prepare for college and career (Figure 27). Parents also agreed that most GEAR UP teachers expected students to attend college.

Figure 27.

GEAR UP Students’ and Parents’ Perceptions About Teacher Support in College Preparation

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. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Student Survey, 2020–2021 GEAR UP Family Survey

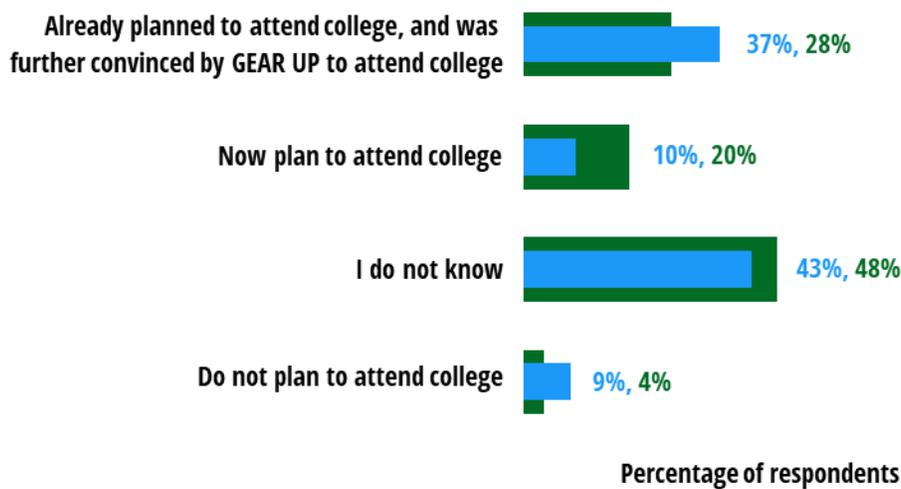
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 4: Participation in GEAR UP activities was inspiring for students’ college aspirations.

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 28). Findings from the AISD Student Climate Survey also indicated the majority of GEAR UP students reported yes or maybe they would go to college (Figure 29).

Students' comments in the GEAR UP Student Survey consistently indicated the GEAR UP program helped them learn about college and helped them feel motivated to go to college. Out of 886 students who commented on what they thought about students' success, many students focused their comments on good grades, goal achievement, and college and life readiness skills. Students reported good grades paved a path to high school graduation and thereafter college and career. Students commented attending college was important for them to succeed in the future and support their family. In addition, students reported success means achieving academic, personal, and professional goals. Students emphasized success entails college preparation such as academic achievement, college applications, college majors, and financial aid.

Figure 28.
GEAR UP Students' and Parents' Perceptions About Students' College Plan
 The majority of students and parents consistently indicated that students planned to attend college.



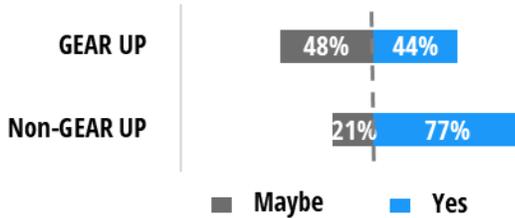
Source. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Student Survey, 2020–2021 GEAR UP Family Survey

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 2020–2021 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 29). However, the percentage of GEAR UP students who indicated they maybe would go to college was more than two times the percentage of non-GEAR UP students who indicated so.

Figure 29.

GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Students' Perceptions About Yes or Maybe They Would Go To College

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, almost half of GEAR UP students indicated they maybe would go to college after high school.



Source. 2020–2021 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 who received more than the average hours of overall GEAR UP services (> 7.36 hours) and who planned to go to college was significantly higher than that of GEAR UP students who received fewer than 7.36 hours of overall GEAR UP services (Figure 30).

Figure 30.

College Aspiration for GEAR UP Students Receiving a High Dosage of Overall GEAR UP Services and Those Receiving a Low Dosage

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. 2020–2021 AISD Student Climate Survey; AISD eCST data system, 2020–2021

Note. The overall average dosage of students' service participation was used to divide GEAR UP students into high-dosage (> 7.36) and low-dosage (< 7.36) groups.

Five hundred and ninety-seven GEAR UP students who received a low dosage of overall GEAR UP services responded to this college aspiration question, while 433 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 (97%) was higher than that at GEAR UP campuses (91%; Figure 31). A gap with respect to chronic absenteeism (i.e., less than 90% attendance during the academic year) existed between GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP campuses.

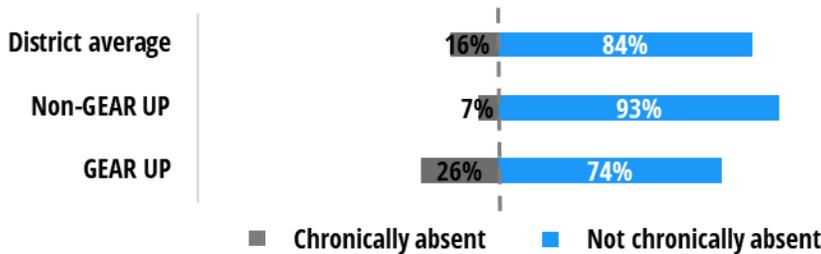
Figure 31.
GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Students' Attendance Rate
 GEAR UP students' attendance rate was lower than that of non-GEAR UP students.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD attendance records
Note. District average includes all 9th-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 2020–2021 school year. Seventy-four percent of GEAR UP students had an attendance rate greater than 90%, meaning 26% were chronically absent (Figure 32). In contrast, only 7% of non-GEAR UP students were chronically absent.

Figure 32.
GEAR UP and Non-GEAR UP Students' Attendance Rate Greater Than 90%
 The percentage of GEAR UP students who were chronically absent was higher than that of non-GEAR UP students.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD attendance records
Note. District average includes all 9th-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.

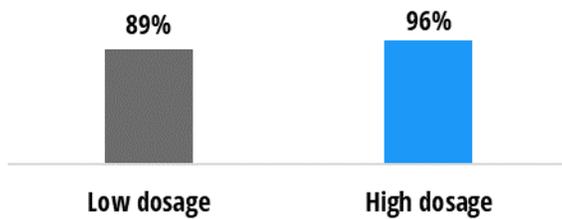
Of 2,577 GEAR UP students with a recorded dosage of overall service participation, 70% ($n = 1,796$) received fewer than 7.36 hours of overall GEAR UP services, and 30% ($n = 781$) received more than 7.36 hours of overall GEAR UP services. The average attendance rate was 96% for GEAR UP students who received more than the average hours of GEAR UP services (> 7.36 hours), as compared with 89% for GEAR UP students who received fewer than 7.36 hours of overall GEAR UP services (Figure 33).

Moreover, 11% of GEAR UP students who received more than the average hours of overall GEAR UP services (> 7.36 hours) were chronically absent, while 31% of GEAR UP students who received fewer than 7.36 hours of overall GEAR UP services were chronically absent (Figure 34).

Figure 33.

Average Attendance Rate for GEAR UP Students Receiving a High Dosage of Overall GEAR UP Services and Those Receiving a Low Dosage

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.



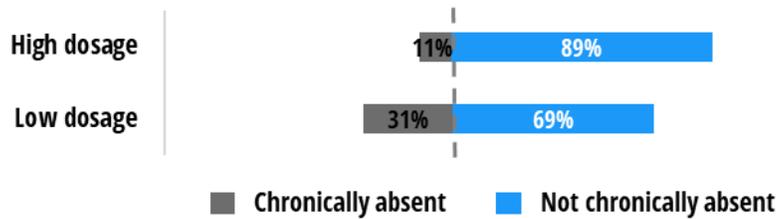
Source. 2020–2021 AISD attendance records; AISD eCST data system, 2020–2021

Note. The overall average dosage of students' service participation was used to divide GEAR UP students into high-dosage (> 7.36) and low-dosage (< 7.36) groups. The difference in GEAR UP students' attendance rates between the two groups was significant ($p < .01$).

Figure 34.

Average Attendance Rate Greater Than 90% for GEAR UP Students Receiving a High Dosage of Overall GEAR UP Services and Those Receiving a Low Dosage

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



Source. 2020–2021 AISD attendance records; AISD eCST data system, 2020–2021

Note. The overall average dosage of students' service participation was used to divide GEAR UP students into high-dosage (> 7.36) and low-dosage (< 7.36) groups. The difference in percentages of GEAR UP students whose attendance rate was greater than 90% between the two groups was significant ($p < .01$).

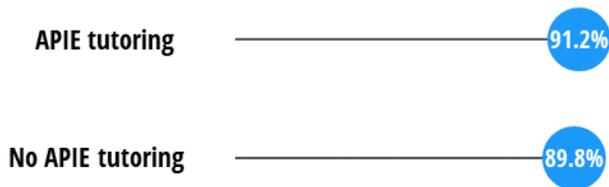
Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 7: GEAR UP students receiving APIE tutoring were more likely to attend school than were those not receiving APIE tutoring.

APIE staff focused on helping students' attendance during the virtual school year. Findings demonstrated that the average student attendance rate of GEAR UP students who received any APIE tutoring (91.2%) was higher than that of GEAR UP students who did not receive any APIE tutoring (89.8%; Figure 35).

Figure 35.

Average Attendance Rate for GEAR UP Students Receiving Any APIE Tutoring and Those Not Receiving Any APIE Tutoring

GEAR UP students who received any APIE tutoring had better attendance than did GEAR UP students who did not receive any APIE tutoring.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD attendance records

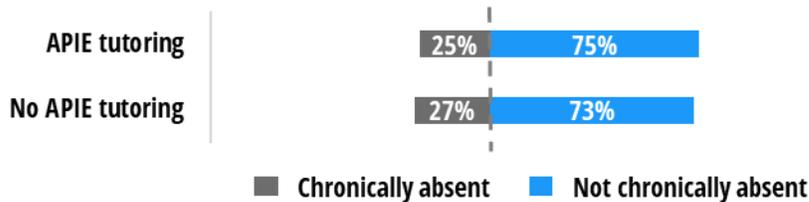
Note. The difference in GEAR UP students' attendance rates between the two groups was significant ($p = .02$).

Seventy-five percent of GEAR UP students who received any APIE tutoring had an attendance rate greater than 90%, meaning 25% were chronically absent (Figure 36). In contrast, 27% of GEAR UP students who did not receive any APIE tutoring were chronically absent.

Figure 36.

Average Attendance Rate Greater Than 90% for GEAR UP Students Receiving Any APIE Tutoring and Those Not Receiving Any APIE Tutoring

The percentage of GEAR UP students receiving any APIE tutoring who were chronically absent was lower than that of GEAR UP students not receiving any APIE tutoring.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD attendance records

Enhanced counseling and advising outcomes finding 8: GEAR UP students participating in AVID classes were more likely to attend school than were those not participating in AVID classes.

The average student attendance rate of GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes (94%) was higher than that of GEAR UP students who did not participate in AVID classes (88%; Figure 37). Fifteen percent of GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes were chronically absent, while 33% of GEAR UP students who did not participate in AVID classes were chronically absent (Figure 38).

Figure 37.

Average Attendance Rate for GEAR UP Students Participating in AVID Classes and Those Not Participating in AVID Classes

GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes had better attendance than did GEAR UP students who did not participate in AVID classes.



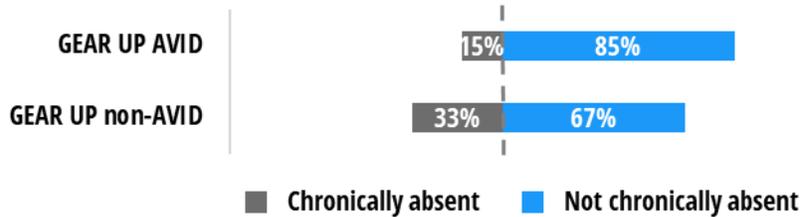
Source. 2020–2021 AISD attendance records

Note. The difference in GEAR UP students’ attendance rates between the two groups was significant ($p < .01$).

Figure 38.

Average Attendance Rate Greater Than 90% for GEAR UP Students Participating in AVID Classes and Those Not Participating in AVID Classes

The percentage of GEAR UP students participating in AVID classes who were chronically absent was lower than that of GEAR UP students not participating in AVID classes.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD attendance records

Note. The difference in percentages of GEAR UP students whose attendance rate was greater than 90% between the two groups was significant ($p < .01$).

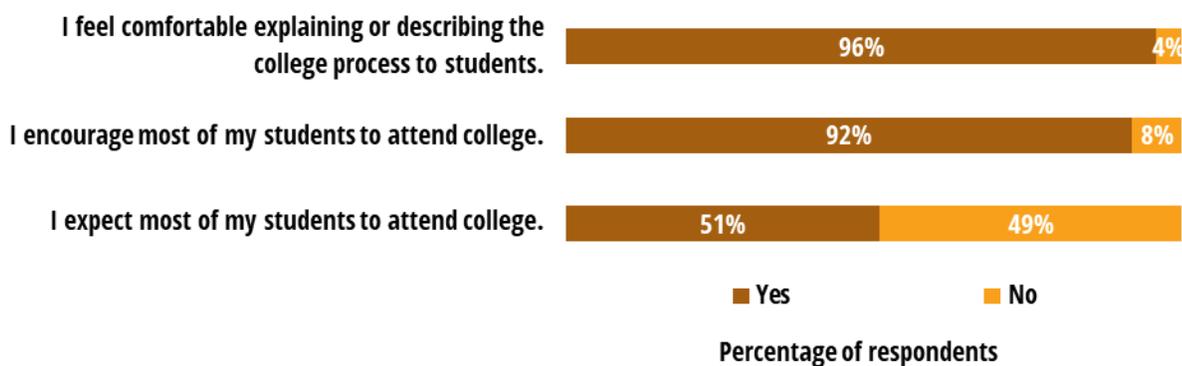
Teacher professional development training outcomes finding 1: GEAR UP teachers supported students' college preparation.

Teachers' self-report from the AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey demonstrated that the majority of educators at GEAR UP campuses felt comfortable explaining the college process to students (Figure 39). The majority of educators encouraged most of their students to attend college, although half of them expected most of their students to attend college.

Figure 39.

Teachers' Support in Students' College Preparation

The majority of teachers felt comfortable explaining the college process to students and encouraged most of their students to attend college.



Source. 2020–2021 AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey

When asked to provide comments in the AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey stating what they thought about students' success, approximately one third of 106 respondents reported that proficiency in soft skills enables students to succeed in their life. The soft skills cited by educators were various, including critical thinking, problem solving, responsibility, time management, independent thinking, organization, social and emotional maturity, resilience, communication, collaboration, self-care, discipline, self-advocacy, and persistence. Educators stressed that these soft skills can be transferred to students' school work and lead to a high level of achievement. Similarly, some educators emphasized the importance of life skills (e.g., financial management) in facilitating students' success in either college or the workforce. Some educators indicated academic preparation in core subjects (e.g., reading, writing, and math) as well as study skills and the ability to process information are critical for students to succeed after high school.

When asked in the AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey about what they do to prepare students for college, the majority of educators indicated academic preparation, conversations with students about college, and life and soft skill building activities as avenues by which they prepare students for college. Educators reported that providing students with rigorous academic experiences enables students to improve academic skills and prepares them thereafter to meet college requirements. Educators addressed the important role of communicating with students about college or college admission processes in encouraging them to pursue college and at the same time facilitating a better understanding of college and career options. Also, educators indicated they helped students develop life and soft skills important to success in college, career, and life.

**Teacher professional development training outcomes finding 2:
GEAR UP teachers reported increasing students' engagement and
trauma-informed practices as the top two areas of needed support.**

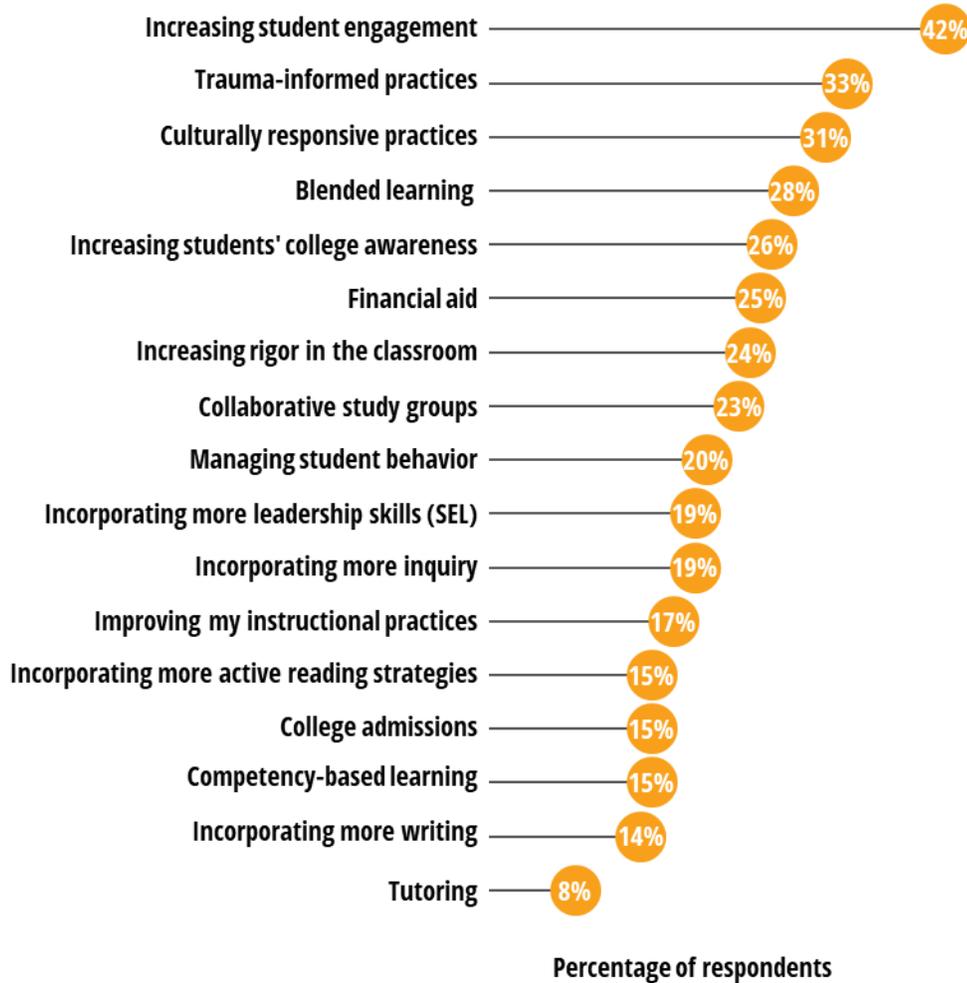
The GEAR UP program also provided teachers with professional learning activities to increase the rigor of instruction and increase students' engagement. Teachers' feedback from the AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey about GEAR UP professional learning support indicated that increasing students' engagement, trauma-informed practices, and culturally responsive practices were their top three concerns (Figure 40).

Figure 40.

Teachers' Concerns About Professional Support

Increasing students' engagement and trauma-informed practices were the top two areas of support requested by teachers.

In which area(s) would you like more feedback and support:



Source. 2020–2021 AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey

Note. This question was a “select all that apply” question, so the sum of response percentages is not 100%.

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 college readiness activities. This goal

was almost met this year, as 48% parents / family members participated in GEAR UP activities.

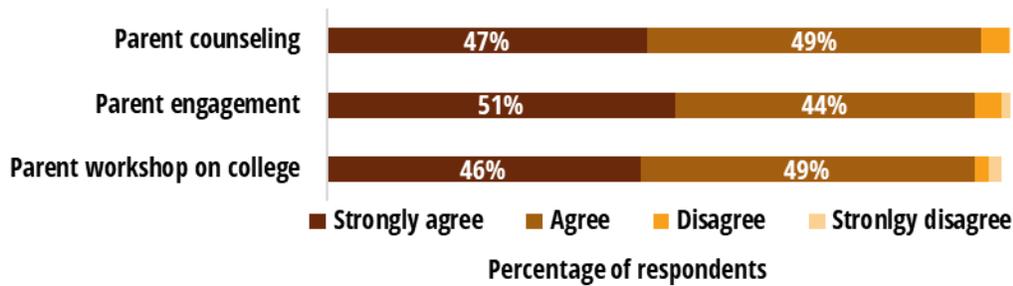
Information collected from teachers and parents / family members revealed that participants recognized the importance of family engagement in contributing to student outcomes. In the AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey, the majority of teachers reported parent counseling (96%), parent workshops on college (95%), and parent engagement activities (95%) were helpful to prepare students for college (Figure 41).

Survey results also indicated that many families were engaged in their child’s education in a variety of ways. Seventy-five percent of families desired their child to pursue at least a college degree. The majority of families (65%) reported they talked frequently with their child about attending college. Many families appeared to have a good sense of preparing their child for college financially, and 78% reported their child could afford to attend a public 4-year college, using financial aid, scholarships, and family’s resources. Many families reported they knew how to get financial aid for college (57%). In the GEAR UP Student Survey, 75% of students agreed that their families helped them prepare for college and career (Figure 42).

Figure 41.
Teachers’ Perceptions About the Helpfulness of Family Engagement Activities

The majority of teachers indicated parent counseling, parent engagement, and parent workshops on college were helpful to prepare students for college and career.

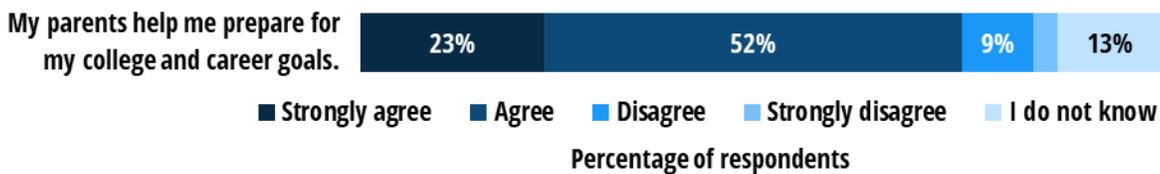
I think the following GEAR UP activities are helpful to prepare students for college and career:



Source. 2020–2021 AISD End-of-Year Multi-Program Survey

Figure 42.
Students’ Perceptions About Family Support in College and Career Preparation

The majority of students indicated their families helped them prepare for college and career.



Source. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Student Survey

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

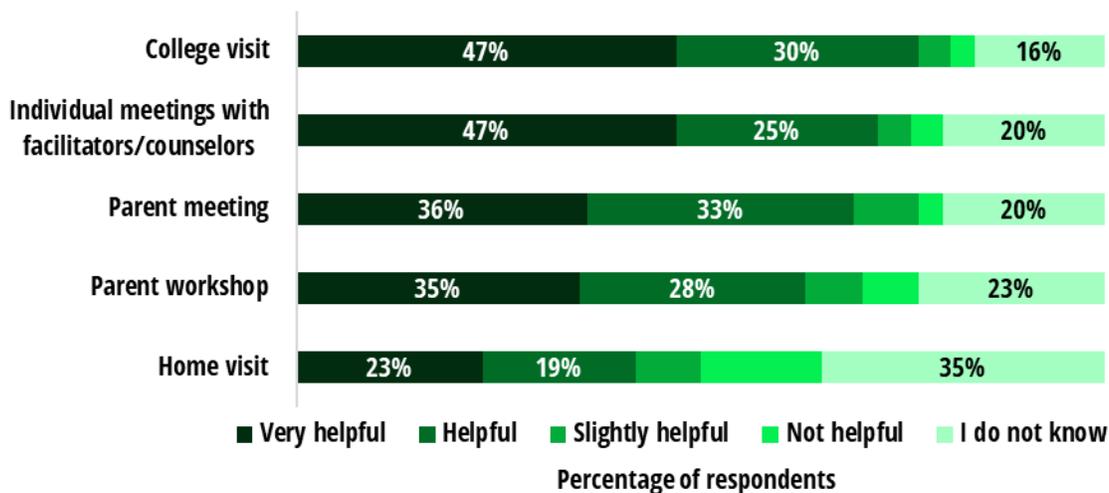
According to the GEAR UP Family Survey results, parents regarded college visits and individual meetings with facilitators/counselors as the activities most helpful in supporting them to prepare their child for college (Figure 43). However, the families' response rate was consistently low across years. This year, 7% of families ($n = 175$) participated in the GEAR UP Family Survey. Thus, parents' perceptions about the GEAR UP program may not represent all parents participating in the program's activities.

Figure 43.

Parents / Family Members' Perceptions About the Helpfulness of GEAR UP Activities for Family Support in College Preparation

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. 2020–2021 GEAR UP Family Survey

Eighty-six parents provided comments in the GEAR UP Family Survey about what they thought students need to know to become college, career, and life ready. Many parents valued education and thought college education paved a path for a better career and life. In addition to academic skills, parents listed various qualities and skills as essential for students to succeed, including commitment to hard work, good habits, self-motivation, independence, resilience, basic life skills, and higher-order skills (e.g., critical thinking, communication, and leadership). Some parents also emphasized the important role of educators and parents in supporting students' success.



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, college visits, and counseling. In the 2020–2021 school year, the GEAR UP program consistently met the objective that 80% 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 tutoring and counseling as most helpful for college preparation. A greater percentage of GEAR UP students than of non-GEAR UP students met the TSI passing standard in ELAR. 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 rates, and
- were more likely to have an attendance rate greater than 90%.

The GEAR UP program continued to meet the objective of at least 50% of its students enrolling in and passing an advanced-level courses. GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes showed more positive results than did GEAR UP students who did not participate in AVID classes, in the following aspects:

- A greater percentage of GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes than of those who did not participate in AVID classes completed advanced-level courses.
- Greater percentages of GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes than of those who did not participate in AVID classes met the STAAR passing standards in algebra 1, biology, and English 1.
- Greater percentages of GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes than of those who did not participate in AVID classes met the TSI passing standard in ELAR and in math.
- Greater percentages of GEAR UP students who participated in AVID classes than of those who did not participate in AVID classes attended school and had attendance rates greater than 90%.

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 students to go to college and were supportive in helping students prepare for college. Consistently, the majority of students reported their teachers expected them to attend college and helped them 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 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 future actions for program improvement.

- **Provide more information about college preparation.** Some students requested more information about college preparation, including college credits, advanced courses, college and career options, and financial aid. As GEAR UP students are at the high school level, topics about college and career preparation appear to draw increased attention. We recommend the program continue to spend more time informing students about college requirements, college options, and financial aid / scholarships.
- **Increase opportunities for family participation.** The program almost achieved its goal of involving at least 50% of families in GEAR UP services in the 2020–2021 school year. Data across years consistently demonstrated families' perceptions about the helpfulness of individual meetings with facilitators / counselors in supporting families for students' college preparation. Therefore, 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 how to support their children in college preparation.
- **Provide more consistent implementation of GEAR UP services across GEAR UP campuses.** This year, campus variations continued to exist in the implementation of GEAR UP services, such as tutoring, college visits, counseling, and job site visits. We recommend the program continue to work toward a more consistent implementation of GEAR UP services at all GEAR UP campuses.
- **Encourage more GEAR UP students to take and complete TSI assessments.** The program objectives expected that by the end of each year, the majority of GEAR UP students can demonstrate college readiness measured by STAAR, SAT, ACT, or TSI exams. Data indicated that only a handful of GEAR UP students have met the TSI passing standard in ELAR. GEAR UP students are entering into the second year

of high school in the 2020–2021 school year and might be more academically ready for TSI exams. Therefore, the program should continue to encourage more students to take TSI exams and prepare them to pass the exams. We recommend the program incorporate TSI preparation into the curriculum or take advantage of family outreach opportunities to advocate the importance of TSI exams.

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 1,095 students participated in the survey, representing a 40% response rate. The confidence interval was +/-2.3%, meaning we can be 95% certain the sample percentage was within 2.3 percentage points on either side of the actual population percentage. In other words, responses provided by the 1,095 students were representative of the population of 2,759 students.

The survey addressed the GEAR UP program, college preparation, financial aid, and perceived outcomes. Results showed that students had positive perceptions 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 tutoring, counseling, and mentoring as the top three GEAR UP activities that helped them prepare for college.

The GEAR UP program

	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Often	I do not know the facilitator.			
How often do you interact with your GEAR UP facilitator on your campus?	19%	32%	29%	8%	11%			
How often do you participate in tutoring services received from:	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Often				
Teachers	10%	24%	45%	21%				
APIE	37%	19%	29%	15%				
GEAR UP facilitators	38%	19%	31%	13%				
AVID	41%	22%	23%	14%				
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
	21%	21%	22%	11%	6%	4%	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				
Teachers	2%	14%	48%	36%				
APIE	4%	20%	46%	31%				
GEAR UP facilitators	5%	15%	45%	36%				
AVID	5%	20%	45%	31%				
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.	1%	6%	59%	19%	15%			
My GEAR UP facilitators help me prepare for my college and career goals.	2%	5%	44%	28%	21%			
My parents help me prepare for my college and career goals.	3%	9%	52%	23%	13%			
	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%	45%	35%				
My teachers talk about college in the class.	6%	62%	22%	9%				
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				
Tutoring	4%	22%	45%	29%				
Counseling	6%	22%	44%	29%				
Mentoring	4%	22%	47%	27%				
Virtual college visits	8%	28%	39%	25%				

Virtual student workshops	6%	23%	48%	23%
Virtual GEAR UP lunch bunch	8%	30%	41%	20%
	Yes		No	
Do you feel connected to your new high school campus?	55%		45%	
	Remote learning		On-campus learning	
What type of learning in which you are participating mostly?	77%		23%	

College preparation

	I do not plan to finish high school	High school only	Certificate or associate degree (2 year)	Bachelor's degree (4 year)	Graduate or professional degree	I do not Know.
What level of education do you plan to complete?	1%	14%	10%	29%	18%	28%

	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.
What is the main reason you might not continue your education after high school?	37%	25%	10%	7%	2%	2%	7%	10%

	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Often	
I have talked with my parent about attending college.	14%	28%	39%	18%	
	I do not know anything.	I know a few things.	I know a lot.		
Do you know which classes you should take to prepare for college?	35%	56%	9%		
	Pre-AP, AP or advanced courses	AVID	Career and technology education	None of these	I do not know.
I plan to take the following types of classes next year.	49%	31%	17%	7%	36%

Financial aid

	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Often	I do not know about it .
Have you talked with someone about the availability of financial aid to help pay for college?	30%	32%	15%	4%	19%
	I do not know anything.	I know a few things.	I know a lot.		
Do you know how to get financial aid for college?	53%	41%	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?	6%	17%	38%	7%	32%	
	Not sure		No		Yes	
Are you planning to apply for financial aid for college?	65%		11%		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 about it.
What might prevent you from seeking financial aid for college?	10%	20%	19%	12%	12%	61%

Perceived outcomes

		Worse	About the same.	Better	I do not know.
Due to my participation in GEAR UP, my academic performance is:		2%	40%	27%	31%
	No, I do not plan to attend college.	Yes, I already planned, and GEAR UP further convinced me to attend college.	Yes, I now plan to Attend college.	I do not know.	
My participation in GEAR UP activities has changed my plans about attending college.	9%	37%	10%	43%	

Note. Not all 1,095 survey participants responded to each survey item.

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 175 parents participated in the online survey, representing a 7% response rate. The confidence interval was +/-7.1%, meaning we can be 95% certain that the sample percentage was within 7.1 percentage points on either side of the actual population percentage. In other words, responses provided by the 175 family members were not representative of the population of 2,441 family members.¹

The survey addressed families' expectations, the GEAR UP program, students' college preparation, family participation, financial aid, and perceived outcomes. Results showed that families had positive perceptions about the program. The majority of families wanted their child to pursue a college education. Families regarded counseling, college visits, and student workshops as the top three 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. Many families reported they knew how to get financial aid for college.

¹ 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's degree (4 year)	Graduate or professional degree	I do not know.	
What level of school do you want your child to complete?	4%	14%	42%	33%	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 will provide training.	My child is not interested.
Why might your child not continue education after high school?	48%	20%	5%	11%	5%	9%
	Never	Once or twice	Sometimes	Often		
I have talked with my child about attending college.	4%	8%	24%	65%		

The GEAR UP program

	Text message	From my child	Phone call From GEAR UP staff	School website	Flyers sent home	Blend course
How do you prefer to receiving GEAR UP information this year?	45%	31%	27%	23%	18%	17%
	Most of his/her teachers	Some of his/her teachers	I do not know.			
My child's teachers expect him/her to go to college.	52%	7%	39%			
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.	
Counseling	3%	6%	23%	59%	9%	
College visits	2%	4%	28%	50%	15%	
Student workshops	3%	4%	27%	51%	15%	
Mentoring	3%	4%	21%	55%	17%	
Tutoring	2%	6%	24%	51%	17%	
GEAR UP family events	4%	9%	28%	43%	16%	
GEAR UP lunch bunch	5%	7%	31%	36%	21%	

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?	35%	45%	20%		
	AVID	Pre-AP, AP, advanced courses	Career and technology education	None of these	I do not know.
My child plans to take the following types of classes:	26%	50%	27%	7%	33%

	The importance of attendance	Courses my child will need to take in high school to prepare for college	Understanding of grades and/or GPA	The availability of college resources	The importance of having my child take entrance tests
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School staff have spoken with me about:	62%	40%	36%	26%	25%
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Parent participation

	% answered yes
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My participation in GEAR UP activities has changed my ideas about my child's attending college.	44%
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	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.
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Who has helped your family learn the most about preparing for college?	22%	8%	8%	12%	10%	2%	32%
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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.
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College visits	3%	4%	30%	47%	16%
Individual meetings with facilitators/counselors	4%	4%	25%	47%	20%
Parent meetings	3%	8%	33%	36%	20%
Parent workshops	7%	7%	28%	35%	23%
Home visits	15%	8%	19%	23%	35%

Financial aid

	I do not know anything.	I know a few things.	I know a lot.
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Do you know how to get financial aid for college?	43%	39%	18%
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	Definitely not	Probably not	Probably	Definitely
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Can your child afford to attend a public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	7%	14%	50%	28%
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Perceived outcomes

	Worse	About the same	Better	I do not know.
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Due to GEAR UP, my child's academic performance is:	2%	24%	32%	41%
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	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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GEAR UP is helping my child prepare for college this year. 13% 24% 46% 18%

	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.	4%	20%	28%	48%

Note. Not all 175 survey participants responded to each survey item.

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 186 teachers at GEAR UP campuses participated in the survey, representing a 33% response rate. The confidence interval was +/-5.9%, meaning we can be 95% certain that the sample percentage was within 5.9 percentage points on either side of the actual population percentage. In other words, responses provided by the 186 teachers were not representative of the population of 567 teachers at GEAR UP campuses.

Results showed that the majority had positive perspectives about the program. Teachers encouraged most of their students to attend college and felt comfortable explaining the college process to students. Teachers indicated students' engagement, trauma-informed practices, and culturally responsive practices 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

I think the following GEAR UP activities are helpful to prepare students for college and careers:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Counseling	1%	1%	42%	56%
Mentoring	1%	1%	42%	56%
Job site visits	2%	2%	53%	44%
College tours	1%	2%	51%	46%
Student workshops	1%	2%	48%	49%
Tutoring	1%	3%	43%	53%
Parent counseling / advising	2%	2%	49%	47%
Summer programs	1%	2%	53%	43%
Community partnerships	1%	4%	49%	46%
Parent engagement	2%	4%	44%	51%
Parent workshops on college	2%	4%	49%	46%

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
How often do you interact with GEAR UP facilitator(s)?	8%	25%	31%	17%

	No	Maybe	Yes
Do you think GEAR UP students are gaining a better understanding of college requirements, college options, and costs?	4%	65%	31%

Teacher support

In which area(s) would you like more feedback and support: (Please select all that apply.)	% selected
Increasing student engagement	42%
Trauma-informed practices	33%
Culturally responsive practices	31%
Blended learning	28%
Increasing students' college awareness	26%
Financial aid	25%
Increasing rigor in the classroom	24%
Collaborative study groups	23%
Managing student behavior	20%
Incorporating more leadership skills (SEL)	19%

Incorporating more inquiry	19%
Improving my instructional practices	17%
Incorporating more active reading strategies	15%
College admissions	15%
Competency-based learning	15%
Incorporating more writing	14%
Tutoring	8%
	% answered yes
I expect most of my students to attend college.	51%
I encourage most of my students to attend college.	92%
I talk to my students about college during class.	96%
I feel comfortable explaining or describing the college process to students	96%

Note. Not all 186 survey participants responded to each survey item.

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
Akins (n = 738)	33%	2.5	96%	3.3	30%	0.4
Crockett (n = 445)	50%	10.0	95%	5.1	52%	0.9
Eastside (n = 158)	63%	2.1	99%	3.2	56%	0.5
LBJ (n = 206)	79%	3.4	89%	4.9	78%	0.6
Navarro (n = 454)	72%	5.4	89%	3.6	39%	1.0
Northeast (n = 291)	48%	3.1	73%	1.4	82%	1.1
Travis (n = 358)	46%	12.1	98%	5.3	41%	0.6
Overall average (n = 2,650)	51%	5.7	92%	3.9	48%	0.8

Appendix E

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

Campus	Tutoring	Summer program	Student workshop	College visit	Educational field trip	Job site visit	Counseling	Comprehensive mentoring	Family event	Family college visit	Family workshop	Family counseling
Akins (n = 738)	33%	0.1%	93%	84%	0.1%	3%	69%	0%	0%	0%	1%	29%
Crockett (n = 445)	50%	3%	95%	55%	3%	1%	36%	0%	24%	0%	1%	36%
Eastside (n = 158)	63%	0%	93%	91%	0%	43%	96%	0%	15%	0%	9%	42%
LBJ (n = 206)	79%	0%	86%	65%	14%	39%	53%	0%	0%	0%	8%	71%
Navarro (n = 454)	72%	0%	75%	38%	12%	7%	68%	1%	4%	8%	2%	33%
Northeast (n = 291)	43%	6%	50%	39%	0%	0%	42%	0%	16%	0%	7%	79%
Travis (n = 358)	46%	6%	94%	80%	6%	82%	88%	3%	10%	0%	6%	29%
Overall average (n = 2,650)	51%	2%	85%	65%	4%	19%	63%	1%	9%	1%	3%	40%

Appendix F

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

Campus	Tutoring	Summer program	Student workshop	College visit	Educational field trip	Job site visit	Counseling	Comprehensive mentoring	Family event	Family college visit	Family workshop	Family counseling
Akins (n = 731)	2.4	6.0	1.6	1.5	8.0	1.0	0.7	0	0	0	1.0	0.4
Crockett (n = 437)	9.1	16.5	3.8	1.0	8.2	3.5	1.3	0	1.4	0	1.0	0.4
Eastside (n = 157)	2.1	0	2.0	0.5	0	0.7	0.5	0	0.5	0	0.6	0.4
LBJ (n = 204)	3.4	0	2.9	0.9	5.4	0.9	0.4	0	0	0	1.1	0.5
Navarro (n = 420)	5.4	0	2.1	0.4	4.8	1.0	1.2	0.6	1.3	0.5	1.6	0.9
Northeast (n = 277)	3.1	2.3	1.1	0.5	0	0	0.6	0	1.8	0	1.4	0.7
Travis (n = 351)	9.5	21.3	1.7	1.9	10.1	0.6	1.0	3.3	0.8	0	1.1	0.4
Overall average (n = 2,577)	5.3	13.4	2.2	1.2	6.2	0.7	0.8	2.4	1.3	0.5	1.1	0.5

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