



# GEAR UP Kentucky II Comprehensive Report

Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

Frankfort, KY

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# Part 1

## THE GEAR UP PROGRAM

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### The National GEAR UP Program

GEAR UP, an acronym for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, emerged as a new discretionary grant program in the 1998 reauthorization of the *Higher Education Act of 1965*. The purpose of GEAR UP is to “significantly increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.” (U.S. Department of Education, GEAR UP Program Regulations. 2004)

Beginning in 1999, the U.S. Department of Education offered two types of GEAR UP grants: 1) state grants and 2) partnerships grants. Each was a competitive six-year matching grant that included early college awareness and preparation activities. Additionally state projects would provide scholarships to eligible students so that they may attend postsecondary institutions.

### Structure

A primary difference between GEAR UP and other college access program is its focus on developing a pipeline of college ready students by serving cohorts of students in selected schools rather than offering selected students services to improve their academic and social skills. Early intervention is the emphasis of the program and projects using the cohort approach must begin serving students by the seventh grade, and continue to do so until those students complete high school or through the first year of attendance at a postsecondary institution if the GEAR UP project had included such an option in its application for funding.

GEAR UP grants are awarded to partnerships of schools, postsecondary institutions and community-based and business organizations to conduct college awareness activities for students and parents at high poverty middle and high schools while also providing support services to improve student academic performance. Additionally, GEAR UP projects support school improvement efforts to increase instructional efficacy and implement rigorous curricula, so that the cohorts following will benefit just as much as the first thereby creating a pipeline of more prepared students.

### Funding

GEAR UP projects are support equally from federal and non-federal funds. Funded projects must provide 50 percent of the total program costs from non-federal resources (match) which may be in the form of in-kind resources such as tutoring, counseling, tuition assistance or waivers, etc. or cash contributions.

Table 1a: National GEAR UP Funding Across Grant Cycles (1999 - 2012)

Funding Year	Total Program Funding	Total No. Awards
2012	\$302.2 Million	132
2011	\$302.8 Million	156
2005	\$306.5 Million	245
2000	\$200.0 Million	265
1999	\$120.0 Million	185

## Implementation

GEAR UP projects utilize a large array of methods to deliver the program and generally have included a variety of activities to promote awareness of postsecondary education opportunities, support services to increase student academic performance, and informational programs and activities to assist student and their families with planning for college. However, with the 2008 Reauthorization of the *Higher Education Opportunity Act*, all programs are now required to include comprehensive mentoring, outreach, and supportive services to students including the following four specific activities:

- a. Provide information regarding financial aid for postsecondary education to participating students in the cohort.
- b. Encourage student enrollment in rigorous and challenging curricula and coursework, in order to reduce the need for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level.
- c. Improve the number of participating students who obtain a secondary school diploma; and complete applications for and enroll in a program of postsecondary education.
- d. Must provide scholarships to all participating students (state grants).

## Audience

The GEAR UP program serves cohorts of students in high poverty schools. Participating schools have enrollments of students where at least 51 percent are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program. State programs also have the option to serve *priority* students, who are students enrolled in any grade level and meet four select criteria: eligible for free and reduced price lunch, eligible for benefits under the Social Security Act, eligible for benefits under the Homeless Assistance Act, and otherwise considered by the GEAR UP project to be a disconnected student. Most projects however, implement the program using the cohort model approach.

Research suggests that *all* students in high poverty schools are “at greater risk of poor academic performance and low rates of college attendance” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, Policy and Program Studies Service 2003) so the cohort approach increases the likelihood of sustained programming, integrated services, curriculum alignment, and education reform in GEAR UP schools. Following cohorts from middle school to high school graduation further stabilizes this likelihood.

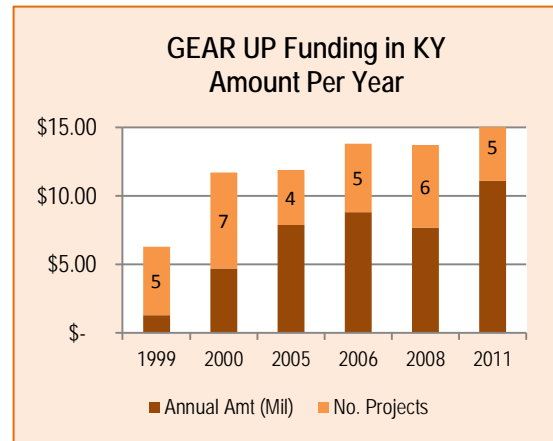
## GEAR UP in Kentucky

Kentucky has a long history in the GEAR UP program nationally; between 1999 and 2005 eight 5-year projects were funded in Kentucky including the funding of the first state GEAR UP grant administered by the Council on Postsecondary Education (2000-2005). A new cycle of six-year grants were awarded in 2005 and there was a shift statewide among the GEAR UP projects to focus more intentionally on the academic preparation of students for college. In the six ensuing years between 2005 and 2011, the period covered in this report, more than \$83.7 million dollars were awarded to the six GEAR UP projects in the Commonwealth and more than 75,000 students and their parents received college access and readiness services. The increases in funding are accounted by both an increased number of organizations receiving grants as well as increases in funding levels and appropriation amounts at the national level. However, in 2013, only three projects will continue through the third grant cycle which ends in 2017.

Table 1b: GEAR UP projects in Kentucky 2005 – 2011

Kentucky GEAR UP Projects	Type	Year Funded	Geographic Areas
Berea College GEAR UP	Partnership	2005	Eastern Counties
GEAR UP Kentucky	State	2005	Statewide
Green River Regional Education Coop	Partnership	2006	Near West Counties
Morehead State Regional GEAR UP	Partnership	2008	Rural Eastern Counties
So. Central GEAR UP	Partnership	2005	McCreary Counties
Western Kentucky Education Coop	Partnership	2005	Rural West Counties

Table 1c: GEAR UP Funding in Kentucky



### Kentucky GEAR UP Alliance

In addition to the professional relationship enjoyed among the staff in the Kentucky GEAR UP projects, working together provided an important expansion to the college access work in Kentucky. When combined with the Council's GEAR UP state program, these projects brought important resources to more than 125 middle schools and high schools across the Commonwealth.

In 2005, recognizing the benefits associated with working toward common goals and wanting to maximize resources, the directors of the five GEAR UP programs in Kentucky agreed to recognize their association and formalize a working relationship under the *Kentucky GEAR UP Alliance* (Alliance). Over the next six years, the Alliance operated as a learning network, meeting regularly to focus on leveraging those resources that would maximize college awareness and academic enrichment opportunities for students as well as increase professional growth for GEAR UP and school personnel. A long-term goal was to publish statewide outcomes to demonstrate the impact of GEAR UP in the Commonwealth, and to expand the use of promising research-based practices in college access and readiness programs.



institute is planned by an implementation team made up of representatives from each project and coordinated by the state grant. Each year, the Alliance member directors determined a theme and the general structure for the Institute, established a budget and outlined general parameters for the Institute. The theme for the Institute changed periodically throughout the project, however the primary goal remained focused on increasing student achievement and changing school culture (2007 to 2011). Featured themes included:

- College Access and the First Generation Student—featured speaker included nationally renowned Dr. Ruby Payne who addressed her framework for poverty.
- Transition to High School—assisted schools and provided resources to develop transition plans for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, focused on issues in academic preparation in mathematics, science and literacy.
- Practices for instilling a college going culture in schools—in 2010 students and parents were invited to participate in the Institute for the first time. Separate strands focused on the needs of students and their parents, as well as a strand on leadership and a fourth strand on improving classroom practice and infusing rigor.

- b. **KnowHow2GoKy** – KnowHow2Go is a national media campaign developed by the American Council on Education and originally funded in part by the Lumina Foundation. In 2008, Kentucky joined the nationally-based outreach campaign to increase college access and success. GEAR UP Kentucky was a primary sponsor of the campaign and, in cooperation with Alliance members, targeted “at risk” middle and high school students in this effort. The campaign used simple and relevant messages to reach students and their families. The Alliance provided the on-the-ground outreach connecting this audience to their own personal support system such as GEAR UP staff and school counselors, and through working with other local college access programs such as TRIO programs. Today, the campaign continues, adapting each year to reflect refinements in the messaging.
- c. **Great Kids Summits** –The Alliance, in partnership with the community-based organization Kentucky Child Now, sponsored six one-day summits for Kentucky high school students (2009). Each summit featured three workshops: Ready for Work, Ready for Life and Ready for College.

### Questions and Further Considerations

The Alliance made plans to continue and expand its collaboration into the third grant cycle (2011-2017). When the U.S. Department of Education released its application for the new round of funding in June 2011, ten applications were submitted by eight organizations, a few submitting more than one application. In spite of collaboration around service counties and regions, and submitting applications that demonstrated intentions to work on joint goals and an agreement to implement more cooperative programming, the Alliance was reduced to merely two organizations. The question remains whether the formalization of the Alliance and its cooperative work could have been better delineated to add more value to each application. Another question is whether the use of common application language and service descriptions by all Alliance members and a plan to conduct cooperative evaluation, as contemplated during discussions, would have resulted in more funded projects.

If those ten applications were approved, the impact on the full implementation of Senate Bill 1 in struggling Kentucky schools would have been great—some 150 middle schools and 100 high schools serving more than 75,000 students and their parents would have benefited from a more than \$200 million investment. Instead, at the writing of this report, a total of three programs were funded in 2011 and 2012—Berea College (two partnership grants) and the state grant administered by the Council on Postsecondary Education (approximately \$65 million over six years).



## Part 2

# GEAR UP KENTUCKY

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The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education received its first GEAR UP state grant in 2000, the first of three awards it would receive. This first grant was awarded for \$10.8 million and extended for five years; the second grant, and the subject of this report, was awarded in 2005 for \$21 million. The project concluded in 2011 though it continued to provide limited services through August 31, 2012, using monies that remained at the end of the grant period.

## SECTION 1: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

### Participating Schools

When the Council began its planning for the new grant, it looked to findings and lessons learned from the prior grant. A persistent problem in the first cycle GEAR UP grant was the level of disengagement exhibited by school staff and its impact on cooperation and implementation of activities. It appeared that schools joined the project to take advantage of funds to meet school needs without recognizing that GEAR UP itself could serve a central function in supporting school improvement. Therefore for the new cycle, GUK staff utilized a deliberative process to determine the most likely schools by expanding beyond the single federal requirement (that at least 51 percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch) and adding multiple other criterion including GEAR UP goals, state and federal requirements for achievement, and the Council's public agenda for postsecondary and adult education. Final school selection included reviewing a substantial list of eligible schools, rating and ranking the schools, and conducting informational meetings to gauge the interest and encourage commitment to program requirements and expectations. The list of eligible schools was prioritized using a weighted scale based on five criteria: free/reduced-priced lunch, CATS school performance accountability index, CATS student performance (percent of students at *proficient & distinguished* level), county with low socio-economic status, and county with low postsecondary education attainment.

Invitations were extended to 50 new schools (out of a semi-final list of 72); the exception being three schools that participated in the earlier grant. Of those three prior participants, one would eventually separate from the new project. Schools were invited to participate for the duration of project and included high schools working with corresponding middle schools from the beginning of the project. For a full list of GUK-II participating schools, see Appendix A.

**Table 2a: GEAR UP Kentucky II Counties**



## The GUK-II Audience

The GUK-II project used the whole cohort model, providing services to seventh grade students in high-poverty, lower performing schools and continuing as students matriculated through middle and high school. This project served a total of three cohorts, adding a new cohort in each of the first three years of the program. All services were offered to each student in the cohort in all schools. In addition, enhanced or targeted services, which provided greater depth of knowledge and offered more supervision, were also offered to higher-risk students who were statistically in greater jeopardy of not achieving educational success. Although the parameters used to recruit these high-risk students were based on the EPAS scores, most GUK sites defined a wider variety of indicators for identifying students, such as: low socioeconomic status/poverty, minority, first in family to attend college, lower school attendance, and *negative* leadership ability (referring to a group of students with influence in the student population often engaged in negative behaviors but with the clear ability to change their behaviors and influence others in doing the same.)

The following statewide GUK-II Student Profile reflects all entering 7<sup>th</sup> grade GUK students.

**Table 2b: GUK-II Student Profile**

Student Audience Profile	
Family Background	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 82% of mothers and 88% of fathers have no college degree</li> <li>▪ 51% of mothers and 66% of fathers never entered college</li> <li>▪ 18% of mothers and 28% of fathers have no high school diploma or GED</li> </ul>	
Student Profile	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 48% of the students were female and 52% were male</li> <li>▪ 80% of the students were White, 14% Black, 3% Latino and 1% Asian</li> <li>▪ 69% of students came from low-income households (F/RPL eligible)</li> </ul>	
Academic Preparation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 80% below ACT benchmark in mathematics</li> <li>▪ 52% below ACT benchmark in English</li> <li>▪ 71% below ACT benchmark in reading</li> <li>▪ 93% below Act benchmark in science</li> </ul>	

Table 2c shows the progression of students enrolled, as a new cohort was added over the course of the project. Additionally, it shows the trends in enrollment between grade levels. By the end of the project, GUK-II served 3,360 high school seniors, 3,728 junior, and 4,054 sophomores that began as GEAR UP students in the seventh grade. In 2005 (Cohort 1) and 2008 (Cohort 3), there was an unprecedented number of students joining the program at the eighth grade, although there are no documented reasons for such a change.

Enrollment then declined in all three cohorts as students transitioned from middle to high school, decreasing on average by 660 students, a loss that represents, on average, 12 percent of our 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Various reasons for this decline have been identified including the transient nature of low-income families and, in five counties, multiple high school choices, meaning the students were dispersed among several high schools rather than staying together as a cohort. Enrollment size further decreased between 2009-10 and 2010-11 academic years, which is believed to be due to the Kentucky Department of Education's significant efforts to bring greater accuracy to its data collection and reporting activities.

Table 2c: Student Cohorts –Growth and Progression

Grade Level	YEAR 1 05-06	YEAR 2 06-07	YEAR 3 07-08	YEAR 4 08-09	YEAR 5 09-10	YEAR 6 10-11
7 <sup>th</sup>	4,896	5,570	5,162	No new students served		
8 <sup>th</sup>	Cohort 1— Serving only 7 <sup>th</sup> grade	5,277	5,476	5,308	No new students served	
9 <sup>th</sup> <sup>1</sup>		Cohort 2 added  Serving 7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades	4,437	4,627	5,017	No new students
10 <sup>th</sup>			Cohort 3 added	4,032	4,624	4,054
11 <sup>th</sup>			Serving 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8, & 9 <sup>th</sup> grades	Serving 8, 9 <sup>th</sup> & 10 <sup>th</sup> grades	4,022	3,728
12 <sup>th</sup>			Serving 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> & 11 <sup>th</sup> grades	3,360		
<b>Total Students</b>	<b>4,896</b>	<b>10,847</b>	<b>15,075</b>	<b>13,967</b>	<b>13,663</b>	<b>11,142</b>

Data Source: Kentucky Department of Education

### Administrative Structure

Oversight and administration for the project was based in a central office in Frankfort, Kentucky with a small staff including an Executive Director and three Project Specialists. The Council provided additional support from technical, fiscal and research personnel. Additionally, seven host sites assisted the Council to administer the project across the state. Moreover, GUK-II was a complex partnership of schools, postsecondary institutions, education agencies, community organizations and business partners that, together with the Council, provided a wide range of resources for the program. Throughout the program, new partnerships were developed and others expired, however most partners remained for the duration of the project.

### Partners

GEAR UP Kentucky, like every other GEAR UP program, relies heavily on partners to provide at least half of the resources of the program. This can add a level of insecurity when resources that are promised are not provided. For that reason, this project categorized partnerships by groups or types. Such an array of partners was important because each was identified to bring a different component or service to the project thereby adding to the comprehensiveness of the services provided. The strongest GEAR UP Kentucky partners shared mutual goals with the program and developed a well-defined plan for working collaboratively to meet those goals. Furthermore these partners had similar business functions, were advocates for college access and devoted significant financial resources to the program.

<sup>1</sup> Attrition is largely due to students in three districts that move into multiple high schools and a decision that only a selected number of those schools (where the majority of GEAR UP students transitioned) would be served by the program.

GUK-II defined its partners in five categories: core, primary, cooperating colleges, participating schools and general partners (a category that included vendors and contractors).

Table 2d: GUK-II Partners by Category

GUK Partners by Category
<p><b>Core Partners</b></p> <p>Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, Kentucky Virtual Campus and Kentucky Virtual Library, Kentucky Broadcasters' Association, Lumina Foundation and KnowHow2GoKY</p>
<p><b>Primary Partners (Host Institutions):</b></p> <p>Elizabethtown Community &amp; Technical College/Western Kentucky University, Fayette County Public School District, Hazard Community &amp; Technical College, Morehead State University, Murray State University, Northern Kentucky Council of Partners, University of Louisville</p>
<p><b>General Partners</b></p> <p>ACT, Area Health Education Centers, CBS Television, CBW Associates, Collaborative for Teaching and Learning, Eastern Kentucky University, Kentucky Child Now, Kentucky College Access Network, <i>Lexington Herald Leader</i>, <i>Louisville Courier-Journal</i>, Louisville Science Center, Premier Publications, and YMCA Black Achievers</p>
<p><b>Cooperating Colleges &amp; Universities</b></p> <p>Transylvania University, Thomas More College, Spencerian College, University of Louisville, Eastern Kentucky University, Kentucky State University, and Kentucky Community &amp; Technical College System</p>
<p><b>Participating Middle &amp; High Schools</b></p>

1. **Core partners** committed significant financial and in-kind resources to the program, identifying the mutual goals around which they partnered with the program to provide services and advocate for a public agenda that aligned with both national and state policies related to college access and preparation. The *core partners* were: Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA), Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), KnowHow2GOKy, Kentucky Virtual University and Virtual Library (KYVU/KYVL). Additionally, the Kentucky Broadcasters' Association and Lumina Foundation were partners at large with the Council in the KnowHow2GOKy statewide media campaign and provided additional support to the program. Over the duration of the grant, the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority provided the largest contribution in matching funds through the Drive the Dream Scholarship program.
  
2. **Primary partners**, which include **host institutions** described below, provided at least one of the following services: fiscal management of grant funds, monitoring and purchasing of goods and services; support for local program staff and coordination of activities; support of data collection, evaluation and research activities; and advocacy for postsecondary education. The Education Professional Standards Board and the State P-16 Council were primary partners but those relationships did not materialize into fully developed partnerships until after the project began. The GUK-II host sites represent the diversity of Kentucky's geography, population, and culture.
  - a. **Fayette County Public Schools (FCPS)** is a school district serving the Lexington metro area in north central Kentucky. Three of the districts' twelve middle schools met eligibility requirements and participated in the program: Tates Creek Middle, Crawford Middle and Leestown Middle schools. In this region, GUK continued to provide services to students that attended the following high schools: Bryan Station High, Henry Clay High, and

Tates Creek High. Lexington is one of three areas served by the project where there was more diversity of ethnicity in the demographics of students served. A total of 1,465 FCPS students were served in the three cohorts: One full-time project associate and seven part-time (10 months) school liaisons operated in this region.

- b. **Hazard Community & Technical College (HCTC)** is a campus in rural southeast Kentucky within the state-sponsored Kentucky Community and Technical College System. The largest region in GUK-II, HCTC provided services to 23 middle schools in seven of the state's most rural counties. Middle schools served by this site included: A.B. Combs, Beaver Creek, Breathitt County Middle, Big Creek, Buckhorn, Carr Creek, Chavies, Emmalena, Hindman, Jones Fork, Leatherwood, Lost Creek (closed 2009), Robinson, R.W. Combs, Viper, Willard, Cordia, Jackson City Independent, Clay County Middle, Leslie County Middle, Sebastian Middle, Whitley County Middle, and Wolfe County Middle schools. These middle schools fed into nine high schools: Breathitt County High, Buckhorn, Clay County High, Knott County Central High, Cordia High, Leslie County High, Perry County Central High, Whitley County High, and Wolfe County High. A total of 5,093 students were served in three cohorts. One full-time project associate and up to four full-time (10 months) site coordinators operated in this region.
- c. **Morehead State University (MoSU)** is a public liberal arts university in northeast Kentucky. Each of the four districts/counties in this region has one middle school and one high school with a direct feeder pattern: Powell County Middle/Powell County High, East Carter Middle/East Carter High, Simons Middle/Fleming County High, and Bath County Middle/Bath County High. In this region, GUK II served 2,514 students in three cohorts, with one full-time project associate and two full-time (10 months) site coordinators.
- d. **Murray State University (MSU)** is a public, liberal arts institution in far west Kentucky. In this region, GUK-II served five elementary/middle schools including Sebree Elementary, Mayfield, Hopkinsville, Adairville and Olmstead, and four high schools including Webster County, Mayfield, Hopkinsville, and Logan County. Through MuSU, GUK-II provided services to 1,343 students in three cohorts. One full-time project associate along with one full-time (10 months) site coordinator and two part-time (10 months) site liaisons operated in this region.
- e. **Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services (NCKES)** was a non-profit organization and the regional P-16 Council. During the grant period, NCKES was administered under the aegis of the Northern Kentucky Education Cooperative which provides educational services to school districts primarily in the northern Kentucky area. GUK-II served two districts/counties and five schools through this site: Newport Middle/High (renamed Newport Junior High), Two Rivers Middle (now closed), Holmes Junior/Senior High (renamed Holmes High), Newport High, and Covington. GUK-II provided services to 1,244 students in the region. One full-time project associate and two full-time equivalent site coordinators staff the program in this region.
- f. **University of Louisville (U of L)** is a public research institution located in Jefferson County, the state's largest metropolitan area. Jefferson County is the largest school district in the state; GUK-II served three of the district's 24 middle schools: Lassiter, Thomas Jefferson and Olmstead Academy South (formerly Southern Middle). Services were provided to these schools and continued in three of the district's 21 high schools—Southern High, Fairdale High and Iroquois High, although GUK-II middle school students transitioned into many more high schools. GUK-II served 1,744 students in three cohorts in Jefferson County, where the enrollment of students between middle and high school made a substantial dip. Project staff did not monitor or document the progress of students not attending the schools served by the program. One full-time project associate and two full-time site coordinators managed this region.
- g. **Western Kentucky University (WKU) /Elizabethtown Community and Technical College (ECTC)** ECTC, another of the 16 colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, coordinated the services of the 14 elementary/middle and high schools in five districts/counties in this central Kentucky region for the first three years of the project. In the latter half of the project, through mutual agreement ECTC opted out of the

project. One full-time project associate and three full-time (10 months) site coordinators operated in this region. For the remainder of the project, Western Kentucky University became the host site for this region.

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is a public liberal arts institution located in south central Kentucky. Picking up where ECTC left off, WKU served nine elementary/middle schools including Memorial Elementary, Bonnieville Elementary, Cub Run Elementary, Legrande Elementary, Mundfordville Elementary, Metcalfe County Middle, Green County Middle, Butler County Middle, and Monroe County Middle. Five feeder high schools were served including Hart County High, Metcalfe County High, Green County High, Butler County High, and Monroe County High. In this region, GUK II served 2,431 students in three cohorts. One project associate and three full-time site coordinators staffed the program in this region until the end of the grant.

**Table 2e: GUK Student Profile by Host Institutions**

Ethnic Group	Fayette	HCTC	MoSU	MSU	NKCES	U of L	WKU/ ECTC
White	76.0	97.0	97.0	86.0	93.0	73.0	96.0
African American	14.0	1.0	1.0	9.0	4.0	21.0	2.0
Hispanic	7.0	≤1.0	1.0	5.0	2.0	4.0	2.0
Asian or Native American	3.0	≤1.0	≤1.0	<1.0	<1.0	2.0/<1.0	<1.0
Other	2.0	≤1.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0
F/RPL	Entire Region Free/Reduced Lunch						

### 3. Cooperating Colleges

GUK-II partnered with all of the regional public and selected independent postsecondary institutions to provide ancillary services to GUK-II schools and students. Institutions included: Transylvania University, Thomas More College, Spencerian College, University of Louisville College of Health Sciences, Eastern Kentucky University, and Kentucky State University. Throughout the region, GUK staff also partnered with many other local colleges and universities including the Kentucky Community and Technical College campuses. The primary service provided by these partners was the organization of campus visits for middle and high school students and their parents, and the coordination of summer programs for GUK-II high school students. Additionally, Eastern Kentucky University, under contract with the program, developed an online curriculum and training for GUK's e-mentoring program.

### 4. General Partners

Kentucky Broadcasters Association, the Lexington Herald-Leader and the Louisville Courier-Journal were the leading partners with GUK in the Council's KnowHow2GOKy public outreach campaign to promote college awareness. Additional partners in this campaign also included the American Council on Education, and the Lumina Foundation. The partners through the Council on Postsecondary Education provided well-needed matching contributions toward the campaign that has been sustained well past the end of the grant.

Although they did not provide cost share to the grant, several non-profit organizations entered into agreements with the Council on Postsecondary Education to provide services for GUK-II schools, including the convening of the annual Institute for a College-Going Culture. Among these partners were organizations such as the

Collaborative for Teaching and Learning (CTL)—a Louisville-based professional development organization; ACT—the national publisher of the EPAS assessments, the Area Health Education Centers managed by the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville, and Premier Publications, national publisher of the Steven Covey *Seven Habits* books materials and agenda books. For a full list of all partners engaged over the duration of the GUK II program, see Appendix B: GUK-II Partners.

## SECTION 2: PROJECT STRATEGY

When the first GEAR UP Kentucky program (2000 – 2005) ended, the message left behind in those schools was the implicit expectation that if they were to continue the growth experienced while in the program, school staff and administrators would need to create school environments that focused on sustaining a college-going culture that supports success for all students. Among the lessons learned from the first grant was that there was a generally inadequate support system for a GEAR UP Kentucky school to change culture and classroom practices. Further complicating the matter, many of the schools in the first grant exhibited a clear lack of engagement in GEAR UP Kentucky program goals, in large part because they did not see the alignment nor understood the commonality that existed between school goals, state mandates and GEAR UP Kentucky.

Therefore in designing the 2005-2011 program structure, the GUK-II project would employ several strategies to identify and create consensus around these common goals. The effort to create consensus and communicate the commonalities between GEAR UP Kentucky and school goals began with the school selection process and was reinforced by convening the annual Institute for a College-Going Culture. Furthermore, by observing ineffectiveness in conducting random activities and services, GUK-II moved toward standardizing practice, which led to establishing a set of *Standards for a College-Going Culture* that schools would begin to use in assessing their current status and progress toward establishing a college-going culture.

### The Five Priority AREAS

The *Standards for a College-Going Culture* are based on a set of principles described in unpublished white papers that define the GEAR UP Kentucky Five Priority AREAS: Awareness, Rigor, Engagement, Access, and Support. The standards themselves describe a high level of practice identified within each of the five strategic Priority AREAS.

- **Awareness** - focuses on providing counseling and information for students about the value of college, pre-college preparation, career exploration, college admissions requirements, costs, and financial aid. GUK-II activities designed to increase awareness included college campus tours, career exploration opportunities, and general information workshops.
- **Rigor** - focuses on ensuring that all students have access to rigorous coursework, improving teaching practices, and enriching instruction. GUK-II activities designed to increase rigor include improving academic programs in specific content areas, action planning aligned to curriculum, and focused professional development.
- **Engagement** - focuses on involving parents in setting high expectations for students and providing information about college planning. GUK-II activities designed to increase parent engagement include developing dialogue about course selection and graduation planning, workshops focused on sharing the importance of higher education, and print resources to provide parents with strategies to assist their children in preparing for postsecondary study.
- **Access** – focuses on providing information about financial aid resources and ensuring that no student is denied college for financial reasons. GUK-II activities designed to increase access include financial aid workshops, providing application and admission information, and locating Internet resources for students.
- **Support** – focuses on preventing students from failing by providing academic and developmental support. GUK-II activities designed to increase support include mentoring, tutoring, service learning, and social/cultural enrichment experiences.



## What We Did - Program Activities

### **Activities for Students and Parents**

GEAR UP Kentucky-II established a standard of practice that required host sites to provide each student, regardless of location in the state, the following six essential and *specific* activities. Each host site could supplement with additional services depending on local resources and needs; however all services and activities were to be embedded in the Five Priority AREAS described above.

- 1) **GEAR UP Orientation.** All first-time, seventh-grade students were provided an assembly or meeting to give them an overview of the program's services and opportunities. These meetings were designed to help students learn about GEAR UP Kentucky and understand the program activities available to them.
- 2) **College Readiness Assessment.** GUK-II utilized ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) as a primary tool for determining a student's readiness for college and aligning interventions to students' need. In middle schools, GUK-II staff used information available from the *EXPLORE* (given to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades) test results to help students understand their performance in mathematics, science, English and reading and show them the specific areas for improvement. In high schools, results from the *PLAN* (given to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades) were used to identify which students needed the most help in mathematics, science, English and reading and what academic support could help students improve. When students took the ACT in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, GUK-II staff worked with students who did not meet benchmark scores and, when appropriate, provided funds for extra instruction or tutors. This effort was also coupled with encouraging and assisting students who were ready for college-level classes to enroll in college classes while still in high school. In working with the college readiness assessment, GUK-II staff also provided students with guidance and supervised the use of college and career planning tools on the college planning website [www.GoHigherKY.org](http://www.GoHigherKY.org).
- 3) **College Awareness Events.** GUK-II students participated in college and career fairs and other kinds of activities to interest them in many kinds of careers. These activities opened up another dimension of information about careers and how to prepare for them; many events featured hands-on activities and opportunities to speak with professionals, college students or college faculty. GUK-II gave special attention to careers in education, engineering and health sciences such as medicine, nursing, and dentistry.
- 4) **College Campus Visit.** Every GUK-II student was provided the opportunity to visit a college campus at least once by the end of middle school. Additionally, high school students also visited college campuses, which helped them visualize themselves as college students. These visits provided more opportunities to participate in workshops designed to dig into the details of the college application process including discussions about certain college majors and life on the college campus. These visits often engaged college students in less formal small group discussions with high school students.
- 5) **Academic Planning and Advising.** GUK-II staff helped students learn about setting high expectations of themselves. Information from the *EXPLORE*, *PLAN* and ACT assessments were used to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses and how to prepare for college-level work. Within this context, GUK-II staff helped students understand the importance of taking certain courses in high school and how to set goals for their education. To track the courses they needed to prepare for college and the ones they took in high school, staff supervised students' use of the Individual Learning Plan, Kentucky's free electronic

academic planner.

- 6) **College Planning—Financial Aid.** GUK-II staff worked with the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority along with Kentucky colleges, universities and other organizations, to provide information about college costs and personal financial literacy. These activities helped students and their parents learn more about state and federal financial aid programs and how to apply for them. Activities took various forms including large group events such as College 101 and College 102, small group sessions with students and parents/families, and hands-on workshops designed to guide parents and students through the application process.

### ***Activities for Schools & School Improvement***

With guidance from GUK-II partner, the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning (CTL), participating schools made efforts to adopt the GEAR UP Kentucky Standards for a College-Going Culture and targeted an area of improvement to address with supplemental resources provided through mini-grants. The process began with the publication of a rubric to help schools objectively gauge their own progress on college-going efforts in their schools (*The GUK School Performance Guide for a College-Going Culture* is a rubric organized by stages of development toward a college-going culture as defined by the Five Priority AREAS).

Working with CTL, all schools engaged in a benchmarking process using the Performance Guide to rate progress and document gaps in the college-going culture of the school before and after GUK-II resources were introduced. With the data collected and evidence to support decisions, GUK-II school improvement efforts focused primarily in two key areas.

1. **School Benchmarking: The GUK School Performance Guide for a College-Going Culture.** Using the performance guide as the assessment tool, classroom walkthroughs were conducted at each middle school in 2006 and 2010 to document (a) the extent to which schools addressed the ACT College Readiness Standards, (b) the presence of rigor, relevance, and differentiation of instruction; and (c) the presence of a college-going culture. Additionally, the same process was followed in the high schools during 2010, to give them feedback on instructional strengths and needs and help them set goals for increasing their college-going culture. The high school data also served the purpose of informing the planning for the next cycle of GEAR UP funding.
2. **Professional Development.** Reflecting the findings of the walkthroughs, GUK-II offered professional development opportunities for teachers and school administrators that included: how to use EPAS data to improve student achievement; creating and sustaining a college-going culture; team building for more effective school planning; technical training/ support in developing the annual Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP); using student transition benchmarks to gauge student readiness for high school; using classroom assessment and instructional intervention effectively; implementing research-based instructional strategies; and improving the teaching of mathematics through mentoring/coaching. For more information, see Appendix C: GUK-II Professional Development Offerings.

### Rubric for the Performance Guide for a College-Going Culture

Priority AREAS: Statement of Standards	Status Quo: <i>College-Going Culture for Some</i>	First Steps: <i>Transitioning to a College-Going Culture</i>	Making It Happen: <i>Achieving a College-Going Culture for All</i>
<p><b>AWARENESS:</b></p> <p>Providing counseling and information for students about the value of college, pre-college preparation, college admissions requirements, costs and financial aid.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There aren't school norms for ensuring that all students are prepared for college or see college as a possibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of awareness activities are scheduled but there is not a system in place to make sure that all students or their parents are engaged or have access to information about college.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All students are engaged in meaningful college awareness experiences. Student course planning integrates college opportunities into the regular curriculum.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information about college and preparatory coursework is made available in the counseling office and in annual information sessions for the most motivated students and parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an increase in the number of school communications to students and their parents, about college preparation, admissions, and possible careers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school communicates the expectation that students will go to college and the ways in which learning experiences will support students' college aspirations.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally the school does not expect that large numbers of students will pursue postsecondary education nor does it have as its mission making sure that college is an option for all students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic counseling includes college preparation in a more intentional way. Course selection forms ask questions about college going.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school provides ongoing specific feedback to all students about their interests, aptitudes, coursework, career choices and relationship to learning requirements.</li> </ul>
<p><b>RIGOR:</b></p> <p>Ensuring that all students have access to rigorous coursework; improving teaching practices; and enriching instruction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tracking and ability grouping limit rigorous coursework to the highest achieving and/or most motivated students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tracking and ability grouping are minimized or eliminated, so that increasing numbers of students are engaged and supported in rigorous, challenging courses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students have the option to enroll in any classes, and they are prepared and supported to succeed in those classes.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a different set of standards for high and low performing students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers' expectations increase as students meet higher standards, resulting in more challenging coursework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All classes provide challenge and opportunity for all learners.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The faculty does not communicate expectations that students can and will learn at high levels or that it is important to acquire the academic and study skills needed for college, except for the most advanced students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is not yet a systematic means for ensuring all students are prepared for college, and the master schedule does not reflect availability of college-required courses for all students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school provides instruction that is academically rigorous and offers all requisite preparatory coursework for students to enter and succeed in college, without need for remediation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instruction does not take into</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers design instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instruction is culturally</li> </ul>

### Rubric for the Performance Guide for a College-Going Culture

Priority AREAS: Statement of Standards	Status Quo: <i>College-Going Culture for Some</i>	First Steps: <i>Transitioning to a College-Going Culture</i>	Making It Happen: <i>Achieving a College-Going Culture for All</i>
	account a diversity of learner needs.	to make some accommodations for diverse student needs.	responsive, drawing on student backgrounds and experiences and taking into account diverse student needs.
<b>ENGAGEMENT:</b>  Involving parents in setting high expectations for students and providing information about college planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact with parents is limited to general information about course selection and requirements, grades and school rules.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school faculty expresses openness to parent engagement around academics and college going but doesn't consistently involve parents or communicate the importance of holding high expectations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school creates a welcoming atmosphere that eliminates barriers to parent engagement in all dimensions of the community and works with parents to create a culture of high expectations for college going.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is not a good match between student aspirations for college and the courses they are enrolled in.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is greater congruence between student aspirations and their courses but not all students are aware of what they need to take to gain college admission.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' aspirations for college are reflected in their courses, and the school encourages all students to take college preparatory courses to increase options.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school articulates that preparation for college is largely the students' and parents' responsibility, in terms of selecting courses, studying, and learning about college planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school articulates the role of teachers in preparing students for college in those instances where students are motivated and committed to college.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is able to articulate the role of teachers in preparing students for college, and to help students and parents recognize the experiences needed for postsecondary study.</li> </ul>
<b>ACCESS:</b>  Providing information about financial aid and ensuring that no student is denied college for financial reasons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is limited in its information resources regarding financial aid.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school works with students identified for college to ensure they have scholarship and financial aid information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school makes information on college aid available to all students, and provides financial aid information to parents and students in a variety of venues.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school doesn't demonstrate the belief barriers to college going can be removed nor does it recognize of how much information and support are needed for families that do not have a history of college going.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some information is shared with the entire student population and parents via principal newsletters and PTA, but this effort is not systematic or wide-ranging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school assists families in obtaining critical information about financial aid for post-secondary study, and facilitates communication between families and access organizations.</li> </ul>

Rubric for the Performance Guide for a College-Going Culture			
Priority AREAS: Statement of Standards	Status Quo: <i>College-Going Culture for Some</i>	First Steps: <i>Transitioning to a College-Going Culture</i>	Making It Happen: <i>Achieving a College-Going Culture for All</i>
<b>SUPPORT:</b>  Preventing students from failing by providing academic and developmental support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an emphasis on students taking responsibility for their learning but a less clear focus on what the school should do when students are not successful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school has implemented tutoring and mentoring support for students and is still working on how to connect all students with the help they need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school responds to the learning needs and styles of all students and connects them with mentoring, tutoring and other services they need.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources to support students outside of classroom instruction are limited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some external resources provide support, but these are just beginning and their roles are not clearly delineated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school utilizes all available resources to provide support services and obtain additional resources as necessary.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of student data and work samples is limited and not used to advantage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers are beginning to examine student work as a source of data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School faculty analyzes evidence of student learning and needs, and makes curricular and instructional changes.</li> </ul>

## Goals and Objectives

Three national GEAR UP goals focus on increasing the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary courses. Recognizing that schools and parents play an important role in supporting student success, all GEAR UP projects are evaluated on progress toward each of the following three national goals.

- a. Increase academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education of GEAR UP students.
- b. Increase the rate of high school graduation and participation for postsecondary education for GEAR UP students
- c. Increase GEAR UP students' and their families' knowledge of post-secondary options, preparation and financing

Six specific statewide objectives steered the GUK-II project toward achieving these national goals. Working directly with students, parents/families, teachers and schools, these objectives focus on measurable improvement in student enrollment and performance in rigorous coursework; high school graduation and college-going rates; and knowledge of postsecondary funding options.

- 1) The percent of GUK 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who score at or above the national benchmark on the PLAN assessment will be at least 5 percent greater than the percent who score at or above the national benchmark on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade EXPLORE assessment.
- 2) The percent of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students who score at or above the national benchmark on the ACT assessment will be at least 5 percent greater than the percent that score at or above the national benchmark on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN assessment.

- 3) The number of GEAR UP students who follow the course-taking pattern outlined in the Kentucky Pre-College Curriculum (described in appendices) will be within 10 percent of the state average in 2012.
- 4) By 2011, the graduation rate of targeted students will be within 10 percent of the state average.
- 5) By 2011, the college-going rate of targeted students will be within 10 percent of the in-state, college-going rate of Kentucky students.
- 6) By 2011, at least 50 percent of all targeted students will demonstrate adequate literacy and knowledge about the costs of attending college in the Commonwealth and about the various forms of financial aid that are available to pay for different types of colleges.

## SECTION 3: PROJECT OUTCOMES

This section outlines the outcomes for six GUK-II project objectives. An examination of each objective includes a summary of relevant data, a discussion of contributing factors, strategies GUK-II employed to achieve the objective, and featured activities relevant to the objective. Objectives 1 and 2 are discussed together.

**OBJECTIVE 1: The percent of GUK 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who score at or above the national benchmark on the PLAN assessment will be at least 5 percent greater than the percent who score at or above the national benchmark on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade EXPLORE assessment.**

### Objective 1 Outcome: Making Progress

All three cohorts improved their performance from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade EXPLORE to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN in English, reading, and science and all of these performance improvements were substantially greater than 5%. Mathematics was a different story. While cohort 2 made notable improvement in mathematics, cohorts 1 and 3 saw declines in their performance in mathematics from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade EXPLORE to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN.

Table 3a: Cohort Improvement from EXPLORE to PLAN Assessment

EPAS Subject Areas	Student Outcomes: Improvement from EXPLORE to PLAN Assessment								
	% of GUK Students at or above 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade EXPLORE Benchmark			% of GUK Students at or above 10 <sup>th</sup> Grade PLAN Benchmark			% Improvement Above Performance on EXPLORE		
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3
English	49	48	48	59	59	57	20	23	19
Mathematics	18	20	20	15	23	18	-17	15	-10
Reading	30	27	30	33	41	39	10	52	30
Science	8	7	7	11	13	10	38	86	43

The table below compares the performance of GUK-II students with all students in the state. Because GUK-II schools have high concentrations of low-income students, there is a gap with the general population that GUK strives to close through direct student services and overall efforts at school improvement. That gap was reduced between administration of the EXPLORE test in middle school and the PLAN test in high school.

Table 3b: Closing the Performance Gap

Assessment Subject Area	Closing the Performance Gap (All Cohorts)					
	% GUK Students at EXPLORE Benchmark* (2006-08)	% Kentucky Students at EXPLORE Benchmark* (2006-08)	GAP EXPLORE	% GU Students at PLAN Benchmark (2008-10)	% Kentucky Students at PLAN Benchmark (2008-10)	GAP PLAN
English	48	55	7	58	60	2
Math	20	27	7	19	23	4
Reading	29	34	5	38	41	3
Science	7	10	3	12	16	4

**OBJECTIVE 2:** The percent of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students who score at or above the national benchmark on the ACT assessment will be at least 5 percent greater than the percent that score at or above the national benchmark on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN assessment.

**Objective 2 Outcome:** Decline from Baseline

Rather than the desired improvement, we saw performance decline from the 10th grade PLAN to the 11th grade ACT in all four subject areas for both cohorts 1 & 2. (ACT scores were not collected for cohort 3 since the project ended before cohort 3 took the ACT.) Perhaps it was simply unrealistic to expect an improvement in performance from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN to the considerably more challenging 11<sup>th</sup> grade ACT in just a year and a half.

Table 3c: Cohort Improvement from PLAN to ACT Assessment

EPAS Subject Areas	Student Outcomes: Improvement from PLAN to ACT Assessment								
	% of GUK Students at or above 10 <sup>th</sup> Grade PLAN Benchmark			% of GUK Students at or above 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade ACT Benchmark			% Improvement Above Performance on PLAN		
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3
English	59	59	NA	42	45	NA	-29	-24	NA
Mathematics	15	23	NA	14	18	NA	-7	-22	NA
Reading	33	41	NA	28	29	NA	-15	-29	NA
Science	11	13	NA	9	12	NA	-18	-8	NA



## Contributing Factors

Merely 23 percent of all GUK students in 2009 (and only 18 percent in 2010) performed at or above the benchmark in mathematics on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN and even fewer students reached benchmark on the ACT. However, early completion of Algebra is also a key indicator of both high school and college success. GUK-II data show that by the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 87 percent of GUK-II students had taken Algebra I; most of the remaining 13 percent completed it in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Such a large percentage of students enrolling in this course should be a strong factor; however, course taking is not sufficient. The course needs to be taught rigorously, addressing the ACT College Readiness Standards and students need to master course content, demonstrating their mastery on the PLAN and ACT. It would be interesting to compare student grades with their benchmark score. To further complicate the matter, GUK found on student surveys only 25 percent responded in the affirmative when asked whether they participated in tutoring in mathematics.

It should also be noted that overall, less than one-quarter of all Kentucky students perform at or above the benchmark in mathematics on either the PLAN or ACT assessment. Nonetheless, there was no evidence gathered to document specific reasons GUK-II students might be performing poorly in mathematics but these issues offer some insight.

Looking to instruction and curriculum, benchmarking data gathered by GUK-II to assess the extent to which the curriculum in mathematics, science, reading and English align with the ACT College Readiness Standards provides another dimension into this issue of student performance. In both mathematics and science, the findings demonstrate that rigor, relevance and differentiation were not consistently observed. It is true that these standards were introduced to Kentucky schools in 2006 and the first cohort of students to be measured by these assessments and teachers to be held accountable on these Standards took the PLAN in 2007 and the ACT in 2008. These data forecast the distance GUK schools must go to fully prepare all students to be college and career ready. (See Appendix D: GUK-II School Walkthroughs Final Report).

## GUK-II Strategies to Achieve Objectives 1 and 2

The strategies designed to achieve these objectives primarily fall in the AREAS described under *Rigor* and *Support*, which focus on ensuring that all students have access to rigorous coursework, improving instruction and teaching practices, and providing learning supports for students.

### *Strategy 1: EPAS Assessment and Advising*

ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) is the suite of assessments used nationwide to gauge student progress toward readiness for college and careers. EPAS consists of three assessments—EXPLORE offered in middle school, PLAN offered early in high school and the ACT administered in the junior year. The use of the EPAS system in GUK-II schools served as an important benchmark activity that refined the way in which the project provided academic support for students. Beyond benchmarking, EPAS was also the driver for student level advising and monitoring progress, providing a longitudinal, systematic approach to college and career planning.

ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks within EPAS have long been the key indicator of improved academic performance in GUK as the data clearly show that more students perform at or above the threshold with each assessment. In the GUK-II project, the program made the administration of the EXPLORE in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and the PLAN in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade a requirement for participation. At the same time, the state had also adopted EPAS as part of its new student assessment system and now required schools to administer the EXPLORE in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the PLAN in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and the ACT in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. This meant that GUK-II schools were using EPAS at every grade

level beginning with 7<sup>th</sup> grade, thereby reinforcing school practices to align interventions with student needs. Furthermore, the administration of EPAS offered a mechanism for a longitudinal analysis of the program's impact and provided the scaffolding around which all academic planning activities were conducted for GUK students and families.

The data collected through administration of EPAS in GUK-II schools was invaluable not only in identifying whether students were on track to graduate high school college and career ready, but also in affirming the need for schools to offer more rigorous coursework. Recognizing the importance of such data in intervention strategies, GUK-II staff made a noble effort in coaching parents, teachers, and school leaders on advising models that use EPAS data. Students and parents received high quality, content-specific academic guidance, individual performance feedback, and tools essential to college and career planning. Additionally, educators and schools were presented with data to drive academic planning and assisted in using the data to make plans to address achievement gaps.

In response to underperforming students, GUK-II purchased the instructional supplement, PLATO for students. PLATO is an online course system and instructional technology that offered rigorous interactive subject area content to either enrich students' academic experience or move them to grade level in core subject areas. Cognitive Tutor, the companion technology to courses in PLATO, is a research-based math intervention that was among those recommended to schools by Kentucky's statewide Committee on Mathematics Achievement (a body appointed by the state legislature to review middle school mathematics curricula and student intervention programs).

**Lessons Learned:** While project staff monitored the participation of individual students through the EPAS assessments, this project did not consistently provide individualized advising for every student. The nature and structure of staffing did not allow for such one-to-one advising; however many sites provided small and large group advising. At least one site in Northern Kentucky worked with students on a case management basis and conducted individual advising sessions with every student in the cohort. The progress and quality of advising efforts, however, could not be validated as central office staff did not monitor nor observe conducted activities at the local level. Recent research, such as that by the Consortium of Chicago School Research (CCSR) at the University of Chicago, demonstrates that improving college enrollment and success requires two efforts: (1) fostering a college-going culture; and (2) providing students with adequate support and guidance. To be effective, a fully implemented comprehensive advising program is needed beginning at the middle school level and continuing through to high school graduation.

### *Strategy 2: The Math and Science Partnership Initiative*

Through a partnership between GUK-II and the University of Louisville and its sponsor the Kentucky Department of Education, twenty-one teachers from 12 GUK-II schools participated in a two-year initiative to implement new curriculum which included new textbooks and accompanying software supplemental materials developed by Carnegie Learning, Inc. (CLI). Project schools adopted a new curriculum in which middle school teachers taught pre-Algebra classes using the *Bridges to Algebra* textbook; and 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>-grade teachers taught algebra classes using the *Algebra I* textbooks. All teachers also received the CLI software *Cognitive Tutor*<sup>®</sup> to accompany the textbooks.

Teachers participated in an eight-day professional development during the summer preceding the implementation of the new curriculum. PD was extended over the summer to provide teachers with guided support in aligning their instructional practices to more effectively implement this standards-based curriculum. The focus of the first two days was on use of the standards-based instructional strategies and effectively integrating the technology provided. The

following five days were focused on the teachers' conceptual understanding of mathematical operations in which Carnegie Learning staff used the new curricula to help teachers develop understanding of the appropriate mathematical knowledge and pedagogy needed at each level of the curriculum. Further, this portion of the PD also prepared the participating teachers for the graduate level mathematics course they would take in the subsequent semester. These two professional development experiences were paired with two "fidelity" visits to each of the participating teachers. During these visits, CLI staff observed classrooms and labs, documented teaching behaviors, debriefed with the teachers, and provided an onsite assessment of the extent to which teachers were adhering to the curriculum.

As a third component of this PD activity, participating teachers completed a 12-week graduate course offered through the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB). This course, entitled *Number and Algebra* was designed to (1) connect advanced mathematics topics to number and algebra topics taught in middle school classrooms, (2) examine current research in teaching and learning algebra, and (3) explore how algebra is taught in standards-based curricula. Two-thirds of the course is devoted to mathematics content, and one-third is devoted to mathematics pedagogy. The course was offered online and used the web-based *Centra* platform which provides two-way audio, video, and text communication. Instructors and participating teachers were provided the necessary technology including web cameras and mobile PC note takers to participate in the courses along with online tutors from the University of Louisville. The final component of this PD was the follow-up meetings of learning communities conducted during the school year where university facilitators and the participating teachers discussed specific lessons, analyzed student work, and shared instructional and assessment strategies.

**Lessons Learned:** Perhaps the important lesson to note however was the limited nature of this initiative in which only 25 percent of all GUK schools participated and even fewer teachers. The cost is prohibitive; the average cost of this project was approximately \$7,000 per teacher each year (or \$25,000 per school over the two-year period). A lingering assumption is that with more computer accessibility for students there may have been greater overall achievement. Additionally, studies of hybrid instruction demonstrate that teachers also need support blending online learning with classroom instruction to support increased student achievement.

### *Strategy 3: Teacher Professional Development – Creating a College-Going Culture*

To support school change and teach acquisition of new skills, GUK-II provided a variety of professional development resources. Staff and faculty in GUK-II schools participated in activities and exercises focused on changing school culture and improving instruction and teaching practices to ensure students had more access to rigorous coursework (see Appendix C for a complete list of GUK-II Professional Development Offerings). The annual Institute for a College-Going Culture also engaged teachers in rigorous, interactive lessons emphasizing literacy applications, standards-based mathematical practices, technology integration and use of the arts to promote and demonstrate learning.

**Lessons Learned:** Professional development in 50 different schools is a challenging undertaking. The alternative of selecting a few schools for specialized PD works well only if there is advance planning to extrapolate what is learned from the smaller sample and apply the lessons to a larger group. This requires significant research strategies and planning and in a large project this is quite an undertaking. The new grant application process provided the ideal circumstance in which GUK 3.0 project will be working closely with five select schools for just such a purpose.

## Featured Activities: Objectives 1 and 2

[School Benchmarking](#) - In 2006, classroom walkthroughs were conducted in nearly all (36) participating GUK-II middle schools, using the GUK School Performance Guide rubric previously described. Walkthroughs are a benchmarking exercise to collect data on (a) the extent to which the schools were addressing the ACT College Readiness Standards; (b) the presence of rigor, relevance and differentiation of instruction; and (c) the presence of a college-going culture in the school building. Conducted by GUK-II partner CTL, walkthroughs focused on recording each instance that a College Readiness Standard was observed in the classroom and yielded both raw data and a percentage of time the standards were observed. Data were also derived from observations of teaching/learning and samples of student work, with interviews of randomly selected teachers and students contributing to walkthrough reports. Evidence of every indicator for any or all standards were not expected in any single class period. Rather, classroom walkthrough evaluation tools were designed to capture a snapshot in time to yield patterns that suggest all or most standards are being addressed or that there are gaps in the curricula. These data were triangulated with state assessment results and EPAS scores. In 2009, the walkthroughs were repeated in the same schools to determine the progress schools were making.

The resulting data collected showed that while examples of excellent classroom instruction exist, overall GUK-II schools were lacking in consistently offering rigor, relevance and differentiation to their students. Under guidance provided by GUK-II experts, these data were used by school leadership teams to develop goals for the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) and to leverage program resources and services to meet achievement targets and prepare students for postsecondary education.

[Institute for a College-Going Culture](#) - The overall intent of the symposium-style conference was to foster an environment of success and high achievement in all schools in the GUK-II project. The Institute's primary goal was to increase student achievement and change school culture. Over the course of the project, the annual Institute was a key forum for discussions on how to reduce the barriers to successful high school transition, graduation and college readiness. GUK-II provided instruction, resources and tools along with samples of promising practices about the use of these tools.

The Institute was an idea born in the first GEAR UP state grant and quickly became one of two non-negotiable points if schools were going to participate in the new project. Attendance at the Institute was mandatory and school participation was defined as the attendance of a school team, not individuals. Overall, schools participated in teams of five or more staff consisting of a principal, counselor, one or two teachers, the Family Resource and Youth Service Center (FRYSC) director (optional) and a representative from the district. Many schools had full participation by the district, including the superintendent or assistant superintendents.

The desired outcomes of the Institute were:

- **Change student achievement outcomes** by supporting activities and services using GUK-II funds, especially those described as strategies for achieving a college-going culture and defined in the GUK Five Priority AREAS. Speakers and presenters shared information and discussed ways in which to define need, thereby creating urgency for change.
- **Introduce planning strategies to achieve change.** In this area, presenters in smaller groups/workshop settings challenged participants to design activities that were specifically aimed at cultivating a culture of success and focused on college-going as a goal for *all* students. Expert educators offered presentations and discussions to help schools understand the characteristics of a college-going culture.

In addition, GUK-II schools were offered opportunities to showcase some of their efforts to change school culture, while others examined the strategies presented with intent to replicate them. Institute follow-up activities were conceived to build the capability of schools to sustain the change or shift in the school's culture. It became immediately clear that the Institute provided a forum for consensus both within school buildings and across the project. It helped to create a support system for schools through the intermingling of educators across the state, while also allowing uncluttered time for school teams to discuss instructional ideas that were more strategic than the school day often allowed. The Institute also included opportunities for embedded professional development as it was often followed by regional professional development sessions to support or expand the concepts introduced at the Institute. By developing school teams around the concept of change and enhancing leadership skills to build capacity for change, the outcomes were revisions and improvements in curricula, more instances of high quality instruction, and examples of best practices on how to comprehensively address student needs.

In 2009, the Institute was combined with a scholarship award ceremony and parent summit to announce more than 200 Drive the Dream scholarship winners and offer a series of workshops and presentations for parents of the winners. This expanded Institute also was offered to the members of the Kentucky GEAR UP Alliance, which effectively doubled the attendance from that point on. More than 500 participants attended, doubling participation from prior years. By the end of the grant cycle (2011) participation had increased to more than 700 participants.

The response to these institutes through post attendance surveys was extraordinarily highly praised. Educators found a sense of accountability from the presence of parents; students engraved on the minds of educators the reminder that all students are worthy and capable of learning and gave the entire audience inspiration to try harder. Other evidence of the success of the Institute is more anecdotal, but it is nonetheless noteworthy. Staff and participants reported seeing the connection made when school staff recognized some bit of just-in-time information about a resource, or clarified their understanding about some component of instruction. For example, some educators were surprised to learn waivers were available through an application process for schools to provide extra support through Extended School Services (ESS) to students during the school day instead of limiting that resource to after-school hours (See Appendix E: Institute for a College-Going Culture Agendas & Participant Evaluations, 2007 – 2012). Based on this success, the Institute has continued into the third grant cycle.

**Lessons Learned:** The Institute highlighted a number of areas where school personnel needed guidance. While many related to instruction and curricula, many others centered on student support and resources to support student aspiration that would build a long-lasting college-going culture. Therefore, the Institute continued to focus on building a college-going culture. In 2009, the Institute emphasized the transition of students between school levels, especially that from middle to high school—this effort by far was reported as the most productive for attendees. A number of examples were showcased and resulted in a plethora of schools implementing transition activities such as freshman academies. Participants reported having clearer understandings of the critical factors to address in any transition support activity and the Institute provided real ideas of how it can be done. Lesson: if done well, the exchange between peers about effective strategies can be as effective as any professional development.

### **Project Results: Highlights Linked to Objectives 1 and 2**

- a. In a formal research-based evaluation conducted of the Math and Science Partnership (MSP) initiative (by University of Louisville researchers), results indicated a positive impact on teachers from their participation in the project. Accordingly, results demonstrated that involvement in the MSP is related to improvements in teachers' mathematics

knowledge. However, results on teachers' fidelity to the Carnegie Learning Curriculum in both the classroom and the computer lab were incomplete. Fidelity was mostly missing in schools where there was limited or no accessibility to computers for students. In the area of student content knowledge, five schools saw increases in math EXPLORE scores over the two-year period; in four schools scores decreased and in one scores remain unchanged.

- b. On the follow-up survey of school staff completing the rubric regarding school culture, GUK-II schools showed improvement across all indicators on the *Performance Guide*. On average, schools now were rated at **First Steps** (*Transitioning to a College-Going Culture*), with several at **Making It Happen** (*Achieving a College-Going Culture*). In other words, all schools had begun to change the culture in their buildings. In several instances, schools were already demonstrating the desired standard in *Awareness, Rigor, Engagement, Access* or *Support*. The table below shows improvement using the rubric's three-point scale, with three being the highest rating, keyed to the indicators under each GUK Priority AREA.

**Table 3d: Walkthrough Data: Overall Rate of Improvement in School Culture**

School Performance Guide: Overall Rate of Improvement		
	Values	
Row Labels	Average of 2006	Average of 2009
Access1	1.31	2.25
Access2	1.75	2.17
Awareness1	1.69	2.33
Awareness2	1.31	2.28
Awareness3	1.69	2.44
Engagement1	1.81	2.42
Engagement2	1.53	2.25
Engagement3	1.67	2.36
Rigor1	1.94	2.36
Rigor2	1.94	2.53
Rigor3	1.83	2.25
Rigor4	2.11	2.61
Support1	1.92	2.58
Support2	2.00	2.58
Support3	2.06	2.75
Grand Total	<b>1.77</b>	<b>2.41</b>

Moreover, these data were also sorted to determine which priority AREA and indicators were most consistently addressed by GUK-II middle schools throughout the project. While awareness indicators were perhaps the easiest to address, with changes in classroom practice coming more slowly and with greater effort, there was a distribution for improvement across indicators. The following table reflects that distribution. For a complete summary of the findings, see Appendix F: Summary of GUK-II Middle School Walkthroughs Participation and Progress.

Table 3e: Distribution of Improvement

Performance Guide Indicators with Most Improvement	
Indicator	# Schools Showing Improvement
Awareness2	27
Access1	25
Engagement2	23
Support1	23
Awareness1	20
Support3	20
Awareness3	19
Rigor2	19
Engagement1	19
Engagement3	19
Rigor3	17
Support2	17
Rigor4	16
Access2	14
Rigor1	13

GUK-II staff also reported anecdotal information that supports the findings above—there were fewer instances observed of the *tracking* of students into ability groups based on teachers' assumptions regarding whom would go to college and those who would not. Changes were observed in the language used by school personnel with students, changing from "if" you go to college to "when" you go to college and articulating specific steps to actively encourage students to plan for college. A documented example occurred in Northern Kentucky where there was an increase in the number of students taking Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses.

- c. GUK provided a greater number of professional development activities than in the previous grant. These activities were organized in schools, by region and statewide. The regional activities were offered on a first-come, first-served basis and while attendance was not mandatory, GUK-II staff was to actively encourage participation for each school in their region. The table below indicates the level of participation overall in PD. The institute was the only mandatory activity. Schools were instructed to attend in teams of three to five which much include the principal and at least one other key administrator, and at least one teacher. With the addition of parents and students to the Institute, this activity became the most widely attended by far.

Table 3f: Participation in Professional Development Activities

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
GUK-II-Sponsored PD	1,493	240	240	206	439
Institute for a College-Going Culture	NA	389	316	624	650

**OBJECTIVE 3: The number of GEAR UP students who follow the course-taking pattern outlined in the Kentucky Pre-College Curriculum (Pre-CC) (see Appendix E: Kentucky Pre-College Curriculum) will be within 10 percent of the state average in 2012.**

**Objective 3 Outcome: Unable to Report**

When the GUK-II project was getting started and the first cohort was entering the seventh grade, the Kentucky Department of Education had a defined Pre-College Curriculum (See Appendix F: Kentucky Pre-College Curriculum) and the Department regularly reported the number of Kentucky students who had completed the Pre-CC by the time they graduated from high school. By the time that same initial cohort was ready to graduate from high school nearly six years later, the Kentucky Department of Education was no longer reporting any Pre-CC numbers. Starting with the high school graduating Class of 2011 (cohort 1), the Kentucky Department of Education replaced the Pre-CC with a measure of college-readiness based on ACT test scores and college placement test scores.

**Contributing Factors**

In 2005, Kentucky did not have a common curriculum for schools and the pre-college curriculum was only generally linked to national standards for college readiness. However, during the grant period CPE adopted a system-wide standard to determine college readiness (2009) by Kentucky public colleges and universities, using the ACT sub-score in mathematics, English, reading to determine course placement in credit bearing or remedial courses. During this time, high school graduation requirements were also strengthened, mirroring ACT's recommended college preparation curriculum with all students needing four years of mathematics to graduate high school including Algebra I and II and Geometry. A fourth year of English was added along with an arts and humanities requirement, technology and other courses aimed at preparing students for postsecondary education. Then in 2010, the Kentucky General Assembly adopted Senate Bill 1, an omnibus bill to reform Kentucky educational system which included adoption of the Common Core State Standards (KCAS in Kentucky), new assessments, articulation with postsecondary institutions, expanded advisement, and opportunities for all students to take accelerated learning opportunities such as Advanced Placement or dual credit courses, and to recover credit as needed. Effectively, these reforms replaced the pre-college curriculum with a new set of *college and career readiness standards* which stipulate what students should know and be able to do upon completion of high school.

**Lessons Learned:** This objective has remained even though the method for collecting these data no longer exists. It is to GUK's credit that the project quickly shifted to embrace the series of reforms embarked upon by the state and continued to promote rigorous coursework for GUK-II students. As SB 1 was signed into law, GUK did much to inform its schools about the implications and to prepare them for more rigorous standards. At the same time, the project began crafting its new approach to the next grant cycle to reflect the reforms contained in SB 1 and build upon the resulting statewide momentum.

**Strategies Employed to Achieve Objective 3**

The strategies designed to achieve these objectives primarily fall in the AREAS described under *Awareness* and *Support*, which focus on providing counseling and information for students about the value and steps to college, and on providing academic and developmental supports for students.



### *Strategy 1: College and Career Planning and Guidance*

GUK-II employed a strategy focused on increasing advising to students to ensure they understood the need for taking a rigorous curriculum in high school. This was perhaps the single most promising strategy in this project for reaching students early, used to encourage students to enroll in rigorous high school courses. Providing college planning and financial aid information to middle school and early high school students and parents had a big impact on the college-going culture in school and in homes because, based on survey results, it appeared to reduce early on the limiting belief that "we can't afford college" or that "college is too expensive." By demonstrating the connection between academic achievement and financial aid (e.g. the merit-based Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship and GUK Drive the Dream Scholarship), GUK-II staff also helped parents and students see the practical value of early and sustained academic effort and achievement.

### *Strategy 2: Mentoring-4-A-Purpose*

To further enrich and expand college and career planning, GUK-II worked in cooperation with Eastern Kentucky University to create the *Mentoring-4-A-Purpose* program, an online college planning curriculum. The program was delivered through pairing college student mentors with middle and high school students. The initiative was initially launched in a limited number of middle schools and later expanded to high schools. College student mentors were carefully screened and trained to work with students through a series of college planning exercises. Mentors encouraged and worked with students to complete four levels of specific college and career readiness curriculum in a secure online environment through Blackboard. The discussion community was monitored by staff to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and that students were progressing in the curriculum as planned.

Evidence of success was reported in the form of students who improved attendance and class performance as well as students who corrected behavior problems that they had before getting a mentor. During the grant, the project was sustained by student mentors, many of whom sought out mentoring as a way giving back for the support they received or were part of a service learning program as a college student. Initiated in 2008-09, the Mentoring-4-A-Purpose program served 737 GEAR UP students over the course of three years and the curriculum has been adapted in a number of ways, including being used in face-to-face mentoring at two postsecondary institutions. Additionally, the program is set to be expanded statewide as an extension of this grant over the next five years.

### **Featured Activities: Objective 3**

*KnowHow2GOKy College Access Outreach Campaign* - In May 2008, the CPE launched *KnowHow2GOKy*, a multiyear, public service media outreach campaign designed to encourage more Kentuckians to plan, enroll, and succeed in college. It was an effort welcomed in the GEAR UP program because grant resources alone would have been insufficient to provide the multimedia resources and placements brought to the table by corporate partners such as the Lumina Foundation and the Kentucky Broadcasters Association. The implementation of this media campaign created by the American Council on Education was planned with GEAR UP at the table and would eventually expand existing outreach efforts into multiple state agency collaboration. The campaign focused on simple, audience-specific messaging that summarized the steps to college and the requirements for enrollment, and provided links to resources around the state. It included print materials, direct mail, media events, radio, television, promotional items, viral e-mail campaigns, special events, and the KnowHow2GOKY.org website. Content on the KnowHow2GOKY.org website was customized and organized by grade level—from middle school through high school freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years, as well as adult learners and transfer students. The initial campaign's key message was encouraging students to take the "tough" classes, reinforcing one of GUK-II's key objectives to

encourage students to take a pre-college curriculum. The GEAR UP Gazette, a four-page newspaper insert in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* written specifically for the GEAR UP community, was the campaign's primary print vehicle. More than 100,000 copies were distributed once per month across the state providing encouragement and passive guidance for all students. It also was used by staff in individual or small group advising with students. An example of the Gazette in an online format is available for view <http://gearupky.org/about/services/statewide-services/gazette/>. The KnowHow2GOKY.org website has remained live beyond this grant cycle and GEAR UP program messaging will continue in the new grant project.

### Project Results: Highlights Linked to Objective 3

The data provided below attempts to align aggregated data collected in those subjects reported in the Department of Education's (ED) Annual Performance Report (APR) with the pre-college curriculum that was in place during most of the grant period. Although there are some overlaps between the two, the APR may not have reported on all subjects included in the Kentucky Pre-CC; only those subjects that appear both in the APR and Pre-CC have been included in the table. With no statewide data available, a comparison of GUK student enrollment could not be compared to the state as a whole. The following table shows instead numbers and percentages of GEAR UP Kentucky students taking pre-college subjects by grade level.

**Table 3g: Pre-College Courses Taken By GUK Students**

Pre-College Subjects	GUK Students Completing Subjects Included in the Pre-College Curriculum <u>No. Students By Grade Level</u>				GUK Students Completing Subjects Included in the Pre-College Curriculum <u>Percent by Grade Level</u>			
	(all three cohorts for grades 7-9; first two cohorts for grade 10)				(all three cohorts for grades 7-9; first two cohorts for grade 10)			
	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>
Pre-Algebra	1,975	4,110	940	286	12.6	25.6	6.7	3.3
Algebra I	581	1,748	10,290	997	3.7	10.9	73.1	11.5
Geometry	63	12	1,625	4,410	0.4	0.1	11.5	50.9
Algebra II	0	27	1,148	2,406	0.0	0.2	8.2	27.8
Biology	0	0	2,352	3,517	0.0	0.0	16.7	40.6
Chemistry	178	0	214	1,772	1.1	0.0	1.5	20.5
Physics	0	0	218	98	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.1
≥1 AP/IB Class	593	305	583	631	3.8	1.9	4.1	7.3

**Lessons Learned:** Achievement on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN assessment in mathematics confirms the need for greater improvement. An analysis of the course-taking pattern of GUK students indicates that 87 percent of GUK students (in all three cohorts) had taken algebra I by the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, but merely 23 percent of GUK students perform at or above benchmark on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN assessment in the second cohort (and only 18% in the third cohort). This finding further supports the walkthrough findings regarding rigor and the extent to which classroom teachers address the ACT College Readiness Standards.

**OBJECTIVE 4: By 2011, the graduation rate of targeted students will be within 10 percent of the state average.**

**Objective 4 Outcome: Goal Met**

The high school graduation rate of the Class of 2011 was 75%. This is very close to the Kentucky state-wide graduation rate for the Class of 2011, which was 78%.

### **Contributing Factors**

A strength of the GEAR UP program is that it not only changes expectations for student achievement, but that it causes schools to take specific actions to increase college going. A subset of school activities involves monitoring student progress toward course completion and high school graduation, with graduation viewed as an essential step to college preparation. The changes in the School Performance Guide self-assessment show that schools made real gains in establishing a college going culture across the five priorities, including Engagement and Support which are highlighted below. These changes contributed to an increase in the high school graduation rate greater than anticipated.

### **Strategies Employed to Achieve Objective 4**

The strategies designed to achieve these objectives primarily fall in the AREAS described under *Engagement* and *Support*, which focus on engaging parents/families in setting high expectations and support for their children, and on preventing students from failing by providing academic and developmental support.

#### **Strategy 1: Focus on Transition Support**

As the first cohort moved into high school in 2007, GUK-II began to emphasize transition support, making the focus of the 2008 Institute for a College-Going Culture exclusively on students' transition to the ninth grade. Held in early March in collaboration with the Kentucky GEAR UP Alliance, more than 400 school staff participated representing more than 75 GEAR UP schools statewide. The Kentucky Department of Education and Collaborative for Teaching and Learning were also key members of the planning committee.

The Institute evolved out of numerous discussions within the Alliance regarding the challenges GEAR UP schools were experiencing with students transitioning to high school which were significantly impacting high school graduation and college enrollment rates. The primary goal was for the high schools to walk away with strategies and tools to develop or refine a high school transition program. This Institute content focused on five standards under three strands. With both long term and short term evidence identified for each standard, high schools were expected to demonstrate very specific measurable behaviors at the completion of the Institute. Institute sessions included: Understanding Freshman Developmental Needs, Learning from Freshmen Academies, and Improving Academic Instruction. The impact of this collaboration was evident at the Institute—the sharing among a broader group of schools across the state and the pooling of resources to provide such a needed resource. Subsequent professional development sessions aimed at changing the culture in high schools to one of high expectations of all students were provided by GUK-II partner the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning, including workshops titled *Creating and Sustaining a College-Going Culture* and *Comprehensive School Improvement Plans: Technical Support Training*.

### *Strategy 2: Supervised Use of Individual Learning Plan*

An important tool in the college and career advising process was the online Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Hosted by the Kentucky Department of Education and adopted by GUK-II as a key resource in the advising process, the ILP serves as one location where students can document their progress, explore careers, and mark critical accomplishments. Students were supported by GUK-II staff in the Individual Learning Plan through an advising and guidance process that fosters meaningful, supportive relationships with peers, highly qualified educators and postsecondary education and business communities to foster success in high school and beyond. Each year beginning in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, students reviewed and revised their ILP. The ILP assisted students in translating their career and educational exploration into concrete plans for course-taking in high school. In addition to charting academic coursework, this site allows students to track their progress toward earning Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) awards at the end of each term – the visual of seeing the dollars earned gave some motivation to students to get better grades. The use of the ILP tool also enables staff to identify and target students regarded as being at risk of dropping out and then work individually with these students to develop customized interventions.

### *Strategy 3: Parent Engagement Activities*

As parents are viewed as being a key influencer in reducing the barriers to high school graduation, GUK-II site staff worked earnestly with parents and families to help them understand the school environment and how they could encourage or help their children to succeed in school. Parents participated in workshops and information meetings where discussions took place on what subjects students need to take to prepare for college and how students who take more demanding courses are more successful in college. One successful example was in the NKCES host site, where GEAR UP Family Fun Nights were hosted throughout the year that focused on EPAS – what it is, why it's important, how their student performed, and how they can help them improve or excel in specific ways. These evening events were available for parents throughout the year, with each one better attended than the last as word spread. The success of the evening events caught the attention of school and district staff and GUK-II site staff worked with the schools on how to continue these activities after GUK-II left their building.

### *Strategy 4: GEAR UP Student Ambassadors*

GEAR UP activities also support the healthy development of students as responsible, productive citizens and leaders. The GEAR UP ambassador club was implemented in three GUK regions: NKCES, University of Louisville and Western Kentucky University (specifically Green County). Student ambassadors were challenged to set examples among their peers in academic performance, character development and leadership. One example, at the NKCES host site, monthly GEAR UP Student Leaders meetings were held where students were provided individual support, academic counseling and encouragement along with leadership and character development. Student Leaders then in turn took on the role of change agents within their buildings. For example, a 2007 GEAR UP Student Leader mural project, a painting covering the entire entryway to the Bulldog Academy (8<sup>th</sup> grade wing), had the outcome of additional murals promoting student achievement painted throughout the halls of Holmes High School. While not specifically focused on academics, this tangible evidence indicates positive change in the culture of the building formerly viewed as dark and unwelcoming. Overall, being a part of the GEAR UP Student Leaders group in a school appeared to have positive impact on student aspirations for high school success and college planning.

## Featured Activities: Objective 4

Great Kids' Summits – Through a partnership with the community-based organization Kentucky Child Now and in continuing collaboration with the KnowHow2GOKy campaign, GUK-II sponsored six regional one-day summits for high school students in 2009. Over 1,400 GUK-II students participated in a series of learning experiences focused on life skills in Ready-for-School, Ready-for-Work, and Ready-for-Life workshops. GUK-II staff and local community leaders designed the curriculum for the Summit and also facilitated the Ready for Work sessions, which highlighted the importance of marketable and social skills training. Kentucky Child Now led the Ready for Life session that addressed the barriers to high school graduation for Kentucky students. Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority facilitated the Ready for College sessions, focused on the essentials of planning for college both in academic and financial terms.

## Project Results: Highlights Linked to Objective 4

- As a result of the focus on supporting transition to high school at the Institute and subsequent professional development workshops, many GUK-II high schools developed 9<sup>th</sup> grade transition programs and Freshman Academies that are currently still in place. While evidence of success is largely anecdotal, it is noteworthy. For example, at the Western Kentucky University host site, Freshman Academies were established in all five high schools in the region after administrators at the schools learned about Freshman Academies at the Institute. These schools reported that the Academies facilitated teacher/student relationships, decreased discipline problems, and reduced failure rates. For example, at Monroe County High School, no student in the freshman academy failed more than one core course in the ninth grade. GUK-II staff also reported that student behavior improved and students were more conscious of high school requirements. These schools continued the Freshman Academies through the rest of the grant cycle and reported they will be sustained without GUK assistance.
- In part due to the GEAR UP Student Ambassadors program, student awareness of and enthusiasm for the GUK-II program increased over the life of the grant. As the end of this grant period drew near, GUK-II site staff reported increasing numbers of students inquiring about “how they could join GEAR UP” because of the remarkable ambassadorship of the GEAR UP student leaders. GUK-II staff at one site reported that over 70% of their students actually voiced to their peers that the reason they are graduating, the reason they knew how to apply for financial aid, and the reason they knew how to get into college is the GEAR UP program.
- According to the annual GEAR UP Parent Survey, parents felt that GUK-II had an impact on their children's interest in college. They reported the following:
  - From Grade 7 to 11, the percentage of parents who indicated that GEAR UP increased their desire for their child to go to college increased (65% to 75%); and the percentage of parents who indicated that GEAR UP increased the likelihood that their child would go to college increased slightly (64% to 72%).
  - From Grade 7 to 11, the percentage of parents who indicated that GUK improved their awareness about their child's college education increased (70% to 81%).
  - From Grade 7 to 11, there was a substantial increase in the percentages of parents who indicated that they watched programs about college planning and preparation (22% to 37%), accessed websites on academic and financial college planning (28% to 42%), and engaged in other college planning activities (25% to 39%).

## **OBJECTIVE 5: By 2011, the college-going rate of targeted students will be within 10 percent of the in-state, college-going rate of Kentucky students.**

### **Objective 5 Outcome: Goal Met**

The immediate college-going rate of the GUK-II Class of 2011 was 67%. This is equal to the most recently reported Kentucky statewide college-going rate, which was 67% for the Class of 2011.

### **Contributing Factors**

As noted under Objective 4, participation in GEAR UP changes the conversation of school faculties, from viewing college as the intended path for some students to college preparation for all. In addition to school culture changes, GEAR UP intervenes directly with students, providing them with opportunities to see themselves as future college students, whether through college visits, summer residency programs or participation in conferences and college workshops. A third contributing factor is the contact GEAR UP promotes with parents, through GUK and school staff, to engage parents in planning for their student's college education. For first in family college attendees, the college preparation and application process is not a familiar one nor can their parents fully advise them on how to navigate it, having never done it themselves. The importance of the personalized support and guidance offered to families in securing financial aid and exploring scholarship options, completing the application process, and understanding what courses students in high school cannot be overestimated. In short, GEAR UP provides a *system of support* for college-going.

### **Strategies Employed to Achieve Objective 5**

Strategy for these objectives focused on **Awareness, Rigor & Support**

#### ***Strategy 1: Campus Visits***

One of the six essential activities, all GUK students visited a college campus before they left middle school, which GUK-II staff across the board reported to be a high-impact activity. For GUK-II students, many of whom will be the first in their family to attend college, this allowed them to take the abstract concept of "college" and actually "see" themselves as potential college students, perhaps for the first time in their lives. College visits sparked dreams for the first time for some, and placed a tangible, visual image to a dream for others. One GUK-II Site Coordinator reported, "students were galvanized as they spoke to admissions representatives, toured facilities that were shinier and vaster than anything in their neighborhoods, and saw and spoke to college students that looked just like them." Students, parents, teachers, and administrators all reported each year that campus visits were the thing that kept students talking year after year. Furthermore, GUK-II staff found that these visits had more impact if they were more than just a walking tour and instead also included some highly visual demonstrations or hands-on activities. From a staff perspective, building on each year's component allowed GUK-II staff to continually hone the target student population and focus in on areas of interest for their particular group of students, so that they came away from these campus visits with new information and new experiences each time.

The influence of these visits was not lost on GUK-II schools, and had a decided effect on school practice. While some schools at first resisted the whole class visits, once they saw the impact on individual students, they began to accept the value of instilling the vision of college-going among middle school students. When the project started, teachers wondered why we were taking middle school students to college visits--now college visits are a part of many of the annual departmental budgets at GUK-II middle and high schools.

### **Strategy 2: College 101**

The discussions between students and admissions, financial aid, and other university staff about postsecondary preparation and financing are central to students' understanding of the college application process. GUK-II worked with postsecondary partners to provide College 101 and 102 workshops for families to get important information about college preparation, ask urgent questions and take a campus tour. For example, at the NKCES host site, Northern Kentucky University conducted College 101 and 102 workshops and tours. Parents and students participated in a day of well-planned workshop activities. Some of the topics covered included: Understanding the Test: EPAS; The Private Victory: Q&A with NKU Admissions and Student Financial Assistance Offices; Presentation Skills: Q&A with NKU College Students; and a personal enrichment session entitled Maximizing Self, which was conducted in groupings by gender.

### **Strategy 3: College Access Centers**

GUK-II worked with schools to dedicate permanent space in their school building for a College Access Center which provides specific college planning, career exploration and financial aid information and resources to parents and students on an ongoing basis. Among the seven host sites, in-school GEAR UP College Access Centers have been established in 36 middle and high schools spanning Kentucky, offering a sustainable college planning resource after the GUK-II project was complete. Partners affiliated with the centers include the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA), Family Resource and Youth Service Centers, local colleges, and various school counselors, librarians and curriculum specialists. All sites provide written KHEAA materials and information on college and financial aid planning, while most also offer KnowHow2GO booklets, study skills resources, and materials designed specifically for parents. Seventeen sites provide internet access, 16 include stock materials for teachers and school staff, and seven offer college access videos/DVD's. All sites report that materials are checked and replenished on a regular basis. Additional types of materials available at GEAR UP College Access Centers include copies of the GEAR UP Gazette, EXPLORE/PLAN/ACT score report explanations, information on Adult Education, and sample college and financial aid applications.

### **Featured Activities: GEAR UP Kentucky Summer Academies**

[GEAR UP Kentucky Summer Academies](#)—GUK-II sites hosted a variety of summer programs that proved to be highly successful activities. A brief description of selected summer programs follows.

*Eastern Kentucky University GEAR UP Summer Academy* – Created through a partnership with Eastern Kentucky University, the ECU GEAR UP Summer Academy took place in 2009 and 2010 and focused on helping students develop an understanding of college culture, academic programs and campus activities. The intended audience targeted for the Academy was recent eighth grade graduates who were preparing to enter their first year of high school. The students selected were brought to the ECU campus for an intensive, one-week residential program designed to introduce them to college life. A competitive application process required documentation of student's past participation in GUK-II activities, school attendance, eligibility for F/RPL, and other factors including an essay of 100 words or less on "Why I want to attend the College Awareness Academy." The Academy agenda included daily components in math, science, quantum strategies, life skills and team building concepts. Special programs were added to inform the participants about scholarships and financial aid available to them to help pay for college. To give them a true feel for college life, the participants were lodged in a college dormitory and all meals were in the college food service area.



*University of Louisville GEAR UP Pre-Professional Academy* – GUK-II also initiated a partnership with the University of Louisville to expand their existing Pre-Professional Academy to include a summer session exclusively for GUK-II students. Juniors and seniors who attended GUK high schools and were interested in pursuing a career in medicine and/or dentistry were eligible to attend a residential academic enrichment and career exploration program hosted on the University campus. In addition to gaining exposure to college campus life, students met peers with similar aspirations, learned the importance of planning for a successful future, participated in hands-on math and science activities, observed medical and dental labs, and toured healthcare facilities. The students engaged in team building, community service, cultural awareness and personal and professional development exercises.

*The Hazard Community and Technical College Health Career Enrichment Summer Camp* - The HCTC host site hosted a Health Career Enrichment Summer Camp as a collaborative effort with the University of Kentucky Center for Excellence in Rural Health and the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC). First launched in 2008, the 7th and 8th graders who were interested in health care careers were vetted through an extensive application process and accepted into the three week summer program. During the three-week camp, students participated in numerous lectures and hands-on activities in biology, anatomy and chemistry. Students spent hours completing job shadowing and observation in area hospitals and clinics, and listened as numerous guest speakers spoke of their occupations. This event evolved into an official club – the Future Healthcare Leaders of Eastern Kentucky (FHLEK) serving three of GUK-II counties: Leslie, Knott and Clay. The program gained enough enthusiasm from participating students for permanency. The three week camp and the extended FHLEK program will continue to be sustained through grants, donations and the work of the UKREC and Southeast AHEC.

*Morehead State College Knowledge Conference* - Another successful activity was the Morehead State University College Knowledge Conference. This conference provided seniors who are planning to attend Morehead State University with the opportunity for an in-depth orientation experience prior beginning their first semester of college. Students participated in sessions conducted by MSU students and staff and learned success strategies for their freshman year and beyond. The goal of the conference was to provide students with needed information and contacts and to increase the comfort level of students so that they will feel better prepared for college. The evaluation forms completed by students indicated that this goal was met. The outcomes will be sustained as students matriculate, persist, and graduate.

#### **Project Results: Highlights Linked to Objective 5**

- An additional analysis of the college-going rate of participating schools before and after participation in the GUK-II program (Class of 2004 v. Class of 2011) showed an increase of 22 percentage points. Before participating in the program, the college-going rate in GUK-II high schools was 13 percent below the statewide college-going rate. In 2011, this gap was completely closed.
- On the annual GEAR UP Student Surveys conducted over the three-year period (2006-07 through 2009-10), an increasing percent of students affirmed that their schools were helpful in expanding their knowledge about college. Survey results show that 88 percent of GUK-II students in grade 10 indicate that they “think their school has helped them to improve awareness about college education.”
- In 2009, 55 students participated in the 2009 ECU GEAR UP Summer Academy, and 63 participated in the 2010 Academy. A survey completed by participants indicated an increased level of comfort with the idea of being away from home on a college campus, and an increase in the enjoyment of core subject areas (math, science, reading and writing). An additional 53 students completed the U of L GEAR UP Pre-Professional Academy.

Follow up data indicates a high rate of college enrollment among this group.

- According to the findings of the annual GEAR UP School Survey, there was a significant increase in the percentage of administrators/counselors who indicated that in the current school year parents of children in their schools accessed websites for college planning (38% to 71%), sent students to summer college awareness programs (32% to 60%), visited a college campus (57% to 89%), attended college access sessions (53% to 77%), and engaged in other college planning activities (36% to 63%).

**OBJECTIVE 6 – By 2011, at least 50% of all targeted students will demonstrate adequate literacy and knowledge about the costs of attending college in the Commonwealth and about the various forms of financial aid that are available to pay for different types of colleges.**

**Objective 6 Outcome: Goal Exceeded**

GUK-II conducted a number of financial aid counseling/advising workshops, and all students were strongly encouraged to attend. By the fifth year of the project, more than 98% of all GUK-II students had attended one of these hands-on workshops. Survey data indicated that more than 80 percent of grade 10 students report they are knowledgeable about college costs and the specific types of financial aid.

**Table 3h: Student Survey Results Regarding Knowledge of College Costs and Affordability**

More informed about College Costs and Affordability				
	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
Awareness of College	83%	88%	92%	88%
<b>Knowledge About Costs</b>				
Ways to pay for College	76%	82%	86%	85%
Confidence to Do Well	87%	88%	89%	84%
<b>Affordability</b>				
Definitely Afford	26%	24%	25%	31%
Probably Afford	41%	45%	46%	44%

**Table 3i: Student Survey Results Regarding Knowledge of Programs to Pay for College**

Knowledge of Programs to Pay for College				
	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
Grants	64%	73%	86%	85%
Loans	77%	82%	89%	91%
Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES)	59%	68%	83%	80%
College Access Program (CAP)	39%	44%	46%	44%
<b>KEES Specific Information</b>				
Good Grades	69%	74%	87%	84%
Financial Need	41%	46%	53%	55%
Good Athlete	47%	46%	48%	50%

**Contributing Factors**

Students of poverty may aspire to college, but their daily reality is that funds are short for the necessities of life so it is difficult to picture paying for college. GEAR UP works diligently through GUK staff and partners to communicate the

message to families that finances should not be a barrier to college-going. To make this message meaningful, GEAR UP also provides the necessary support to walk families through the process of securing needed funds for college (filling out the FAFSA, applying for scholarships, etc). Particularly for first in family attendees, this kind of information is essential. GEAR UP staff and school partners have worked diligently through workshops, information sessions and individual counseling to reduce barriers and connect families with specific sources of funding, reflected in the survey figures above regarding significant increases in financial literacy, especially regarding knowledge of programs to pay for college.

## **Strategies Employed to Achieve Objective 6**

### ***Strategy 1: Financial Aid and FAFSA Workshops for Students and Parents***

GUK-II benefited from a very successful partnership with the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA). The GUK-II staff worked closely with regional KHEAA Outreach Counselors to provide workshops and presentations for middle and high school students, parents, and staff on postsecondary education preparation and financing, including FAFSA assistance workshops. The Outreach Counselors were instrumental in working with schools to increase utilization of the GoHigherKy.org website which makes both student and parent financial planning resources available. GUK-II staff also worked with local college admission and financial aid offices to offer information sessions on strategies and options to pay for college. While GUK-II did not offer a project-wide financial literacy intervention or curriculum, GUK site staff worked with groups of selected students and schools to ensure students developed skills in financial literacy, providing activities such as College Reality Store, Financial Foundations in Personal Finance or Success Prep courses, Financial Fiesta Night for families, or participation in College Goal Sunday. Financial aid options and financial literacy topics were also integrated into statewide activities such as the Great Kids Summits and parent and student sessions at the Institute for a College-Going Culture.

## **Featured Activity: Objective 6**

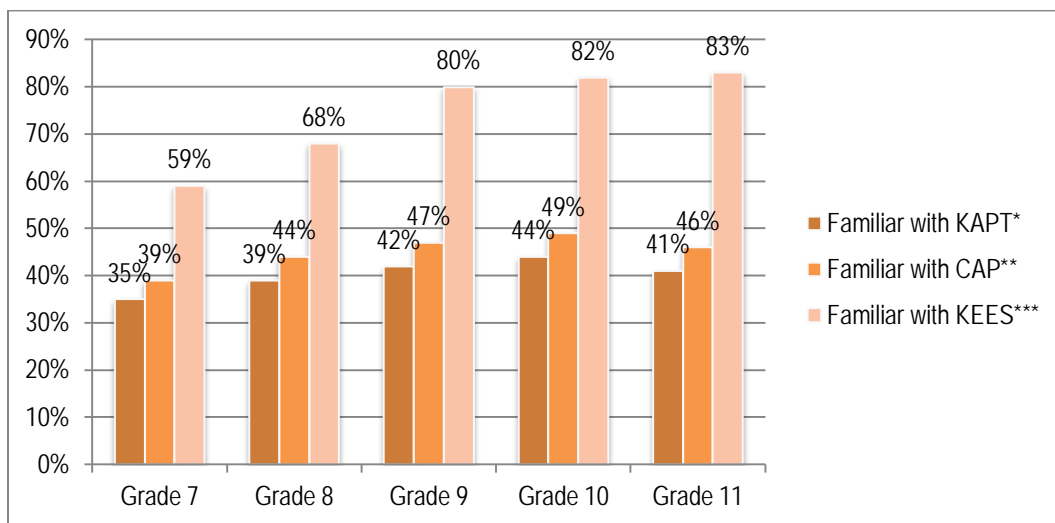
**Drive the Dream Scholarship** - As of fall 2012, 1,481 high school juniors across the state were awarded \$1,000 college scholarships in the "Drive the Dream" scholarship program, sponsored by GUK-II and the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA). KHEAA was a core partner in the GUK-II grant, initially providing one-third of the required match for the grant through scholarships, staffing resources, outreach materials, and other resources that supported the implementation of the grant. The total matching resources provided by KHEAA including scholarships totaled \$4.87 million over the duration of the grant. To be eligible to compete for the scholarship, a student must have been an active GUK-II cohort participant since the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. They must have participated in all the EXPLORE and PLAN assessments and made progress towards college readiness by meeting the benchmarks in at least two of the subject areas of the PLAN assessments. They also must have maintained at least a 2.5 grade point average, demonstrated community and school involvement, as well as submitted an essay and references. Students received the scholarships as they enrolled in accredited Kentucky two- or four-year colleges (public or private). Scholarships were one-time-only awards to be used within the first year of high school graduation (\$500 a semester).

## **Project Results – Highlights for Objective 6**

- Of 1,481 students named as Drive the Dream scholarship recipients, 80 percent claimed their award upon enrollment at a Kentucky postsecondary institution to date. The final cohort of recipients (n=535) are currently in their senior year, so the enrollment data on that group will not be available until fall 2013.

- Based on findings of annual Student Surveys, students' awareness of options to pay for college increased significantly over the grant period, including the following:
  - Students' awareness of grant and scholarship programs for Kentucky residents and of other ways to pay for college increased across grades, with a 17% increase in students understanding how KEES money can help them pay for college.
  - From Grade 7 to 11, the percentage of students who indicated they had heard of grants as ways to pay for college showed a large increase (64% to 87%).
  - From Grade 7 to Grade 11, the percentage of students who indicated they had spoken with a school or GEAR UP representative about financial aid to pay for college increased (58% to 68%). This increase was more substantial from Grade 7 to 9 (58% to 72%).

**Table 3j: Student Survey Results Regarding Familiarity with Financial Aid Options**



- With regard to KEES, there was a large increase in the percentage of students who correctly indicated that the scholarship would help pay for college based on good grades received in high school (69% to 86%) or financial need (41% to 62%). Furthermore, from Grade 7 to 11, the percentage of students who indicated they had heard of grants as ways to pay for college also increased (64% to 87%).
- While comprehensive data about total scholarship dollars received by GUK-II students is not available, some instances of great success were reported by GUK-II site staff. For example, in the first graduating GUK-II cohort at Mayfield High School in 2011, only 10 of 89 students did NOT continue on to some form of higher education. This same group of 89 students earned a total of \$3,226,220 in scholarships, an average of \$36,249 per degree-seeking graduate. This amount of money broke the school record by more than \$1 million dollars. This class also had 26 (of 89) students with a 3.5 GPA or higher, as well as 10 students who scored above a 28 on the ACT and one National Merit Scholar. In this same region, Hopkinsville High School also broke school records in 2011 for scholarship dollars earned by graduating seniors. With a class size of 259 students, total scholarship money for

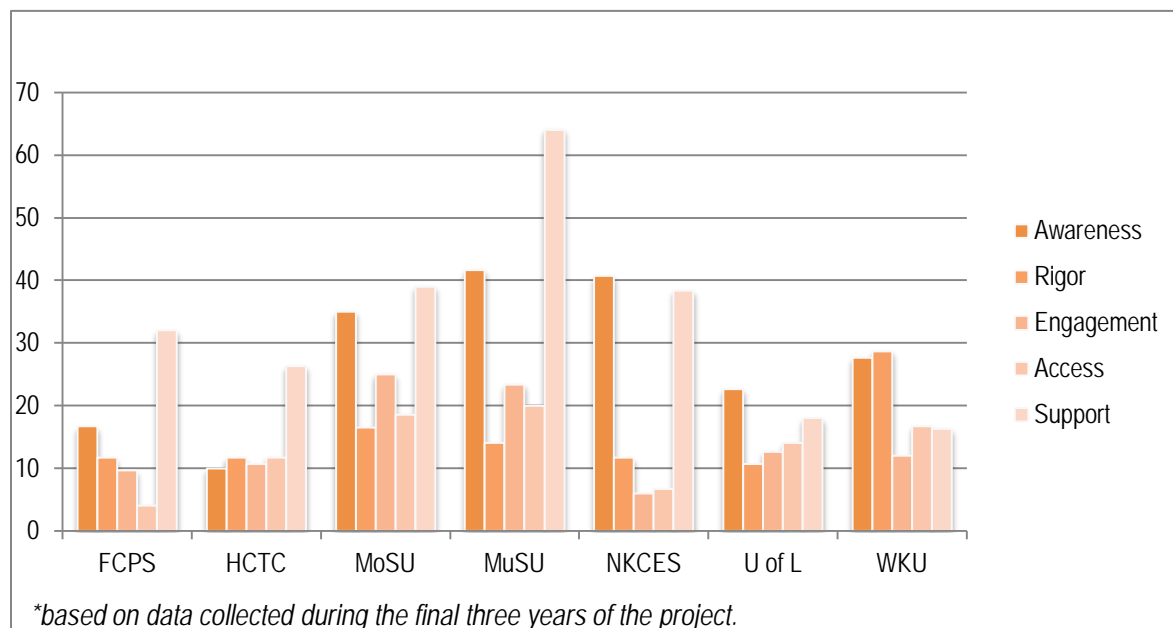
this year was \$3.5 million, surpassing the previous school record by nearly \$1.5 million. This graduating class also had 22 students who earned 28 or higher on the ACT.

## SECTION 4: PROJECT PARTICIPATION

Each of the seven regional host sites submitted a proposed plan of services along with a budget request at the beginning of each program year. These proposals were reviewed by central staff and revised and approved accordingly. Project associates and site coordinators then carried out the plans of services, reporting activity progress each month. By the third year of the project, the GUK Tracking and Information Management System (TIMS) database had been internally developed as a mechanism for consistent collection of standard, detailed activity data. Regional services data were then reported in two ways: 1) according to Priority AREA and; 2) according to audience, including students, parents, and teachers/school staff.

Because the dates that each school year begins and ends vary by region, (generally August – June), activity data is reported by various timeframes. For example, the APR requires activity data from April 1 to March 31 of the following year, which combines data from the end of one school year to the start of another. GUK central office reviews data by program/grant year, or September 1 to August 31, in order to follow cohort activity by grade level. Still other reports review data on a calendar year. For purposes of this report, and to coincide with fiscal analyses, annual activity data averages refer to program/grant years (September 1 – August 31). The chart below illustrates the average annual number of activities in each priority AREA by regional host site.

**Table 4a: Regional Host Site Annual Activity Average by Priority AREAS**



The following tables illustrate regional activities as reported on annual performance reports. A crosswalk was developed to align GUK-II Objectives, the Five Priority AREAS and the APR categories listed in the table (See Appendix G).

Table 4b: Number of Student Participants Per Service Type					
	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Tutoring/homework assistance/academic enrichment	3929	3448	7893	3414	3967
Computer assisted lab**	1797	8247	658		
Rigorous academic curricula*				2908	49
Comprehensive Mentoring	115	3892	186	2194	3499
Financial aid counseling/advising*				13513	3254
Counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling	9552	14383	10657	13663	6954
College visit/college student shadowing	7390	9706	3424	2715	3110
Job site visit/job shadowing	0	284	20	37	0
Summer programs	0	0	0	80	113
Educational Field Trips	0	4271	0	139	0
Workshops	3813	6699	11222	4603	3788
Family events**	10897	4406	2916		
Cultural events**	0	3041	0		
Family/cultural events*				2803	535

\*category added in Year 5

\*\*category removed in Year 5



Table 4c: Number of Parent Participants Per Service Type

Type of Service	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Workshops on college preparation/financial aid	3625	2209	1358	477	505
Counseling/advising	923	2447	1939	3646	59
College visits	86	139	64	7	2
Family events	5826	3307	2213	990	200

Table 4d: Number of Teacher Participants

Type of Service	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
GEAR UP-sponsored Professional Development	1493	240	240	206	439

## SECTION 5: FISCAL ANALYSIS

GUK follows the fiscal year designated by the original grant award notification of September 1 – August 31. The \$21 million federal award was divided over six fiscal years, and the annual budget proposed for GUK-II was \$3.5 million in federal costs per year and \$3.5 million in matching costs.

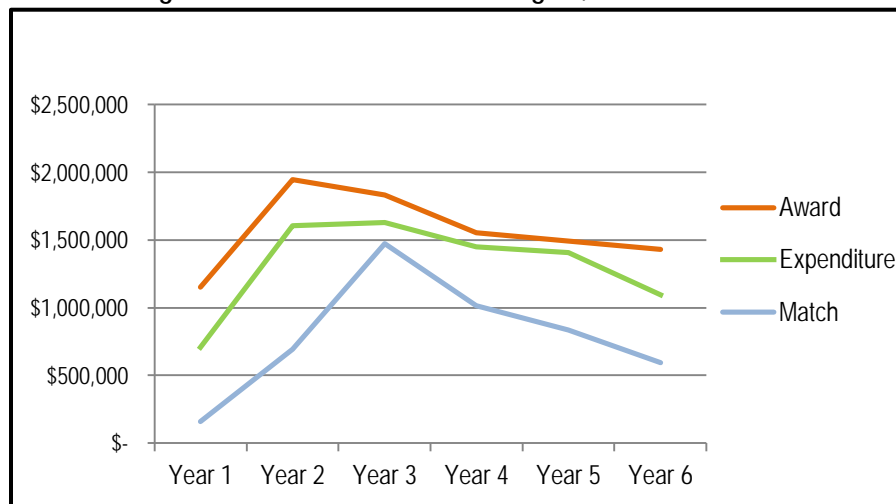
When the GUK-II proposal was written, the project was intentionally designed to select a few core partnerships that would provide substantial matching resources to support the grant. The major contributing core partner was Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority—the matching resources promised represented one-third of the total annual match required in the grant totaling \$6.6 million. These funds included \$3 million to provide scholarships for students. In the spring 2006, shortly after GUK-II was awarded, KHEAA replaced its executive director, the individual who negotiated and facilitated approval by the Board of Director for the match documented in the grant proposal.

Over a period of the next year, confirmation of the match commitment made to GUK-II would prove unattainable and subsequently unravel in the midst of this leadership change and other unforeseen state fiscal constraints. However, with the help of KHEAA's new executive director and other senior leaders at the agency, and the active support and guidance of the CPE President and Vice President for Academic Affairs, a new agreement was reached in May 2007 which had the full approval of the KHEAA Board of Directors. But the damage had already been done: the overall match in the grant would be reduced from 6.78 million to \$4.87 million over the life of the grant (including a reduction in scholarships) and the grant had gone two years without meeting the match requirement. As a result, in the third year of the grant the U.S. Department of Education withheld \$2.5 million of previously awarded grant funds as a penalty for not meeting match requirements, reducing the overall award to \$18.5 million.

Approximately 51 percent of these funds, or \$9,410,221.00, which includes an indirect cost rate of 5 percent, was distributed to the seven host sites for regional administration and programming costs. CPE retained the remaining 49 percent of federal funds, including 3 percent for indirect costs, for central office administration and travel, external contracts, and statewide programming such as the annual Institute for a College-Going Culture, e-Mentoring program development, and professional development for teachers and staff.

Summarized in Table 5a below are the combined awards, expenditures, and matching contributions of regional host sites over the grant period.

Table 5a: Regional Host Sites Combined Budgets, 2005- 2008



### Awards

The average annual amount appropriated to the seven regional host sites throughout the grant period was \$1,568,370, based upon program and budget plans submitted to and approved by central office staff. Table 5b below shows the awards for each regional host site for each year. Amounts in year one were lowest due to unavoidable delays in program start-up such as hiring new staff, modifying biennial contracts, transitioning from schools served in the original grant to schools selected to serve in the new grant, and collecting data on new students to be served. Awards for all sites increased the most between years two and three, which coincides with an increase in activities as transition services were delivered in both middle and high schools<sup>2</sup>. Award amounts then leveled out or fell accordingly in years five and six as GUK II delivered services in high schools only.

Table 5b: Regional Host Site Annual Appropriation Amounts

Name	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
FCPS	\$ 138,453	\$ 194,524	\$ 150,474	\$ 143,059	\$ 150,000	\$ 140,450
HCTC	\$ 138,453	\$ 441,076	\$ 370,500	\$ 370,500	\$ 320,000	\$ 295,058
MoSU	\$ 200,000	\$ 250,702	\$370,500	\$ 207,500	\$ 195,000	\$ 194,066
MuSU	\$ 150,000	\$ 244,347	\$ 210,102	\$ 207,500	\$ 200,000	\$ 162,406
NKCES	\$ 149,715	\$ 176,678	\$ 152,086	\$ 150,176	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000
UL	\$ 200,000	\$ 267,505	\$ 202,465	\$ 192,600	\$ 190,556	\$ 176,242
ECTC/WKU*	\$ 173,566	\$ 372,985	\$ 378,269	\$ 284,972	\$ 285,000	\$ 312,736
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,150,187</b>	<b>\$1,947,817</b>	<b>\$1,834,396</b>	<b>\$1,556,307</b>	<b>\$1,490,556</b>	<b>1,430,958</b>

\* includes ECTC awards for years 1 through 3 and WKU awards for years 3 through 6.

### Expenditures

Combined regional host site expenditures remained under 95 percent of the awarded amounts in any given year. The average annual expenditure among the sites throughout the grant period was \$1,317,517. The table below shows the total percentage of the awards expended at each host site. Funds carried over were used to extend the project's sixth year services for an additional ten months.

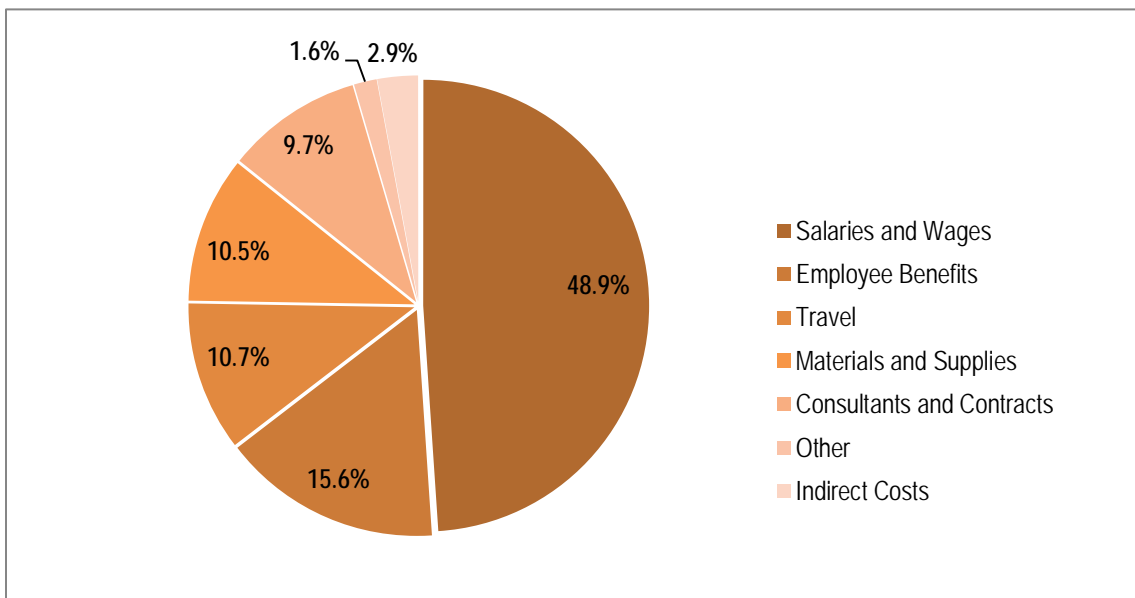
<sup>2</sup> The project includes 8 middle schools consisting of grades 6-8; 7 middle schools consisting of grades 7-8; 2 middle schools consisting of seventh through ninth grades; 18 K-8 schools; and 1 school that is K-12.

**Table 5c: Percentage of Award Expended by Host Site**

Name	% Expended
Fayette County Public Schools	72.4 %
Hazard Community & Technical College	89.1 %
Morehead State University	90.3 %
Murray State University	78.7 %
Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services	85.9 %
University of Louisville	86.7 %
Elizabethtown Community & Technical College*	71.9 %
Western Kentucky University*	86.9 %
<i>*includes ECTC expenditures for years 1 through 3 and WKU expenditures for years 3 through 6.</i>	

As shown in Table 5d, the combination of salaries, wages and employee benefits accounted for about 65 percent of all host sites' expenditures, while costs for travel and materials/supplies each accounted for slightly over 10 percent.

**Table 5d: Combined Host Sites' Expenditures by Category**



Costs across regions are fairly consistent with noted differences in percentages between the rural and urban areas. For example, personnel costs (salaries, wages, and benefits) accounted for a higher percentage of all expenditures in the urban regions of the University of Louisville and Northern Kentucky Cooperative of Educational Services, while the host sites in the rural regions of Hazard Community and Technical College and Western Kentucky University showed the lowest. In contrast, Western Kentucky University spent a greater percentage of its budget on travel costs, followed by Murray State University, Hazard Community and Technical College, and Morehead State University. Expenditures varied widely in both materials/supplies and consultants and contracts as these items were based on the needs of students and individual schools within the various regions.

**Table 5e: Percentage of Host Site Expenditures per Budget Category**

Host Site	Salaries, Wages, & Benefits	Travel	Materials & Supplies	Consultants & Contracts	Other
FCPS	61.5	9.7	11.0	11.0	3.9
HCTC	56.8	11.9	10.7	16.7	1.1
MoSU	61.6	10.9	9.1	13.9	1.7
MuSU	68.6	12.9	7.2	6.8	1.6
NKCES	73.4	10.7	5.5	6.6	.9
UL	76.8	7.9	7.1	2.1	3.2
ECTC*	66.6	5.2	11.9	12.3	1.1
WKU*	58.10	13.5	23.2	2.2	0.0

*\*includes ECTC expenditures for years 1 through 3 and WKU expenditures for years 3 through 6.*

**Matching Contributions**

Per contractual agreement with CPE, each regional host site was required to provide at least 25 percent of its annual award in matching contributions. The average annual match provided by all host sites throughout the grant period totaled \$795,798, or about 51 percent of total awards. Table 5f below disaggregates matching contribution amounts of the regional host sites. All sites exceeded the requirement with the exceptions of Murray State University and Elizabethtown Community and Technical College.

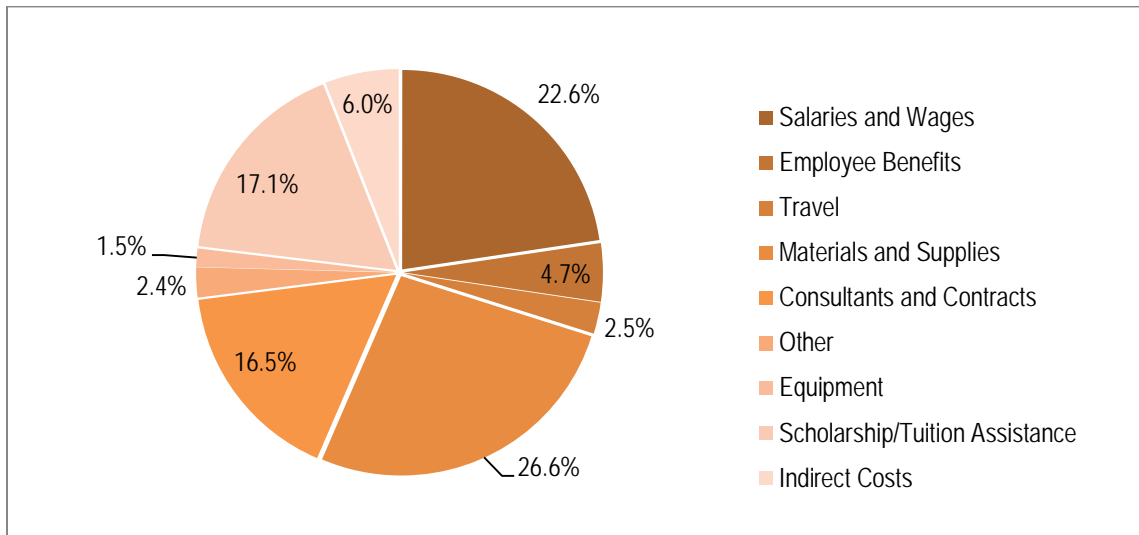
**Table 5f: Matching Contributions and Percentage of Award per Host Site**

Host Site	Total Match	Percentage of Total Award
Fayette County Public Schools	\$ 680,526	74.2 %
Hazard Community & Technical College	\$ 1,457,946	75.3 %
Morehead State University	\$ 762,095	53.8 %
Murray State University	\$ 235,527	20.1 %
Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services	\$ 599,988	64.6 %
University of Louisville	\$ 625,027	50.8 %
Elizabethtown Community & Technical College*	\$ 61,434	7.5 %
Western Kentucky University*	\$ 352,243	35.8 %

*\*includes ECTC awards for years 1 through 3 and WKU awards for years 3 through 6.*

Interesting to note are the budget categories from which matching contributions were derived. As shown in Table 5g, costs for personnel and materials/supplies accounted for almost half of all matching contributions, while scholarships/tuition assistance provided to GUK-II students by both Hazard Community and Technical College and Morehead State University amounted to approximately 17 percent.

Table 5g: Total Host Site Match by Category



Such detailed financial analysis is important for several reasons. First, the allocation of dollars reflects project priorities. If the goals and dollars spent are not in alignment, it undercuts the project's ability to make an impact on student achievement and college readiness. When the goals and dollars are aligned, resources can be used effectively and efficiently to reach desired outcomes. Second, federal oversight of GEAR UP requires each project to secure substantial match from partners, whether in dollars or in-kind services. These match dollars or services are not a bonus but rather are included in the overall award and support the essential activities named in the grant.

## Part III

# CONCLUSION—Looking Ahead to GEAR UP Kentucky 3.0

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A reading of the more than 50 pages of this report suggests the complexity of the GEAR UP Kentucky II project. This ambitious project tackled at once school improvement, student readiness for college, statewide collaboration across a variety of entities including higher education, and efficient use of resources including securing a significant match of funds and in-kind services. Rather than conduct random activities, GUK-II attempted a systemic approach to affecting the three critical dimensions of schooling: academic, organizational, and normative/cultural. The report's discussion of the six project objectives demonstrates the project's strategic design and the variety of approaches implemented to achieve deep and lasting change. It is important to note that of the six objectives, the project met or exceeded four, did not meet one, and was not able to report on one (due to unavailable data resulting from a state level change in high school graduation requirements).

Overall, the GUK-II project resulted in solid gains in student college readiness demonstrated by increased rates for high school graduation and college going. In a few short years, GUK-II students demonstrated improved performance on meeting college readiness benchmarks from 7<sup>th</sup> grade EXPLORE to final ACT, with the greatest improvement seen between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade in English, reading and science. Survey data indicate that GEAR UP students were not only focused on college, but their participation in the project led them and their parents to a deeper understanding of the financial realities of paying for college. They came out with a better understanding of the options for applying for financial aid and scholarships, thereby reducing barriers that may have stood in the way of pursuing postsecondary education.

Since the inception of the GUK-II program, the national landscape of college access has shifted. While college outreach programs and advocates still seek to increase student understanding of the value and steps to college, the focus on college and career readiness and success has increased significantly. Not only is it necessary to help students understand the path to college, but we need to ensure they are ready—academically, financially, socially, and emotionally—to meet the increased demands of college so they are successful in completing their degree. It's not just about getting in, it's about getting through.

Additionally, the college access community, and the GEAR UP program specifically, is seeking to define common measures to guide and assess their work, moving beyond anecdotal evidence toward a statistically valid evaluation of outcomes. This effort not only helps support data-driven improvements to student services, it informs expectations of stakeholders regarding program effectiveness. New ground is being developed for collaboration among programs to share proven practices and widely report evidence of success based on a common language and definition of what effective practice looks like.

This shift is playing out in Kentucky in a big way. With the adoption of the ground-breaking Senate Bill 1 by the Kentucky General Assembly in 2009, Kentucky now has the infrastructure to support systemic changes to improve college readiness and completion. As a result of this legislation, Kentucky was the first state to adopt internationally benchmarked Common Core Standards (AKA Kentucky Core Academic Standards) for the statewide educational system. Additionally, SB-1 required all three education agencies in the state: the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE); the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE); and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to develop a unified plan to reduce college remediation rates of high school graduates and to increase college completion. The plan was developed around four key strategies to promote college and career

readiness: a) accelerated learning opportunities (focused on expanding access to early credit opportunities); b) secondary intervention programs (focused on transition coursework); c) college and career readiness advising; and d) postsecondary college persistence and degree completion (focused on bridge programming and student support and intervention systems).

Given these major advances, GUK has a new level of influence and impact. The potential for sustainability of efforts and long-term high achievement in GUK 3.0 schools is at an all-time high. Driven by this widespread momentum and the key lessons garnered from the GUK-II project, the third grant cycle provided an opportunity for GEAR UP Kentucky to carry forward those practices and partnerships that proved successful and invent new ones to target areas where emerging needs were identified. These refinements and new approaches characterize GEAR UP Kentucky 3.0 in the following aspects:

- A clear delineation of a standardized set of student services, reflected in the five strategies that focus on embedding college knowledge and learning skills at both the middle and high school levels. The new project will provide individualized advising for all students and e-mentoring for those most in need of support, and engage increased numbers of students in a summer enrichment program to help them develop a vision of themselves as college students. Additional services include academic interventions for students not meeting ACT benchmarks, and written and online materials for students to develop college and career readiness skills.
- An accompanying delineation of school improvement services aimed at supporting schools in implementing SB 1 provisions for implementation of the Kentucky Core Academic Standards and related assessments. School improvement services support schools in implementing expanded advising and accelerated learning opportunities for all students, as well as fostering increased classroom rigor and a college-going culture. These services include both professional development and technical assistance, and also bring together schools leaders in a real and virtual network to develop their capacity for instructional leadership.
- A decision to engage high schools in school improvement services from the beginning of the project to increase the likelihood that they will be more prepared to support middle school students as they transition to high school, and that efforts to increase rigor and raise expectations will have already had a positive effect on creating a college-going culture when those students walk through the high school doors.
- A set of statewide services aimed at supporting students and their families in college and career planning, and engaging their communities in putting in place the necessary conditions for all students to graduate from high school ready for college and career.
- New staffing patterns, including College and Career Advisors assigned to each school and working directly with students on college readiness issues, and a new leadership structure to ensure tight alignment with project goals and the highest levels of accountability.
- A research project within the larger GEAR UP Kentucky 3.0 initiative that provides a set of five treatment districts with more in-depth services and support from partners ACT and CTL, in the hopes of boosting



student achievement and readiness in these schools while also contributing to what is known about school improvement in the larger GEAR UP context.

- A more extensive effort to recruit and select schools based on an expressed commitment to all project requirements and an assessment of their capacity to effectively implement the GEAR UP strategies for student learning, instructional improvement, and strengthening school culture.

In summary, GEAR UP Kentucky 3.0 represents not only an evolutionary but a revolutionary step in conceptualizing how the federal GEAR UP project can serve as a driver for school improvement and increased college readiness. The design of the new project puts it in the front and center of school efforts to meet the requirements of comprehensive state reform legislation, and in effect, is designed to change the way schools do business. A truly holistic project, GUK 3.0 engages schools in comprehensive data collection and analysis, planning, monitored implementation and reflection on action to ensure that all students in GUK 3.0 schools graduate from high school ready for college and their eventual career.