West Virginia **GEARUP** Evaluation

2011-2012 Evaluation Summary

July 2012

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Introduction

The West Virginia Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (West Virginia GEAR UP) project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is designed to increase the number of low-income students in southwestern, central, and southern regions of West Virginia prepare to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. During Year 4 of the project (2011-2012 school year), the project served student, parent, and teacher stakeholders at 14 high schools throughout the state.[1] The West Virginia GEAR UP project contracts with Edvantia, Inc. to conduct an evaluation of the program. This report is a formative evaluation report based on data collected throughout the fourth full implementation year of the West Virginia GEAR UP project (August 1, 2011 to July 31, 2012). For more information about the evaluation participant groups, the data collected, and the evaluation questions, refer to Appendices A and B.

Summary of Activities

During the 2011-2012 school year, the West Virginia GEAR UP program delivered services to students, parents, and personnel in 14 participating high schools. Site coordinators continued to plan and implement services for students and parents in the 2014 Cohort[2] and students in the Priority Cohort[3] (Grades 11 and 12). Edvantia staff engaged in various planning, management, communication, data collection, data analysis activities, and reporting activities throughout the year. Further, Edvantia and HEPC staff presented information and findings about the West Virginia GEAR UP project to various audiences throughout the year (e.g., GEAR UP Advisory Board, national conferences).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for the fourth year of the West Virginia GEAR UP evaluation were collected from several sources including extant data, stakeholder surveys, and group interviews. Information about the participant groups is included in Appendix A.

Student and Parent Surveys

As in previous years, in-depth student and parent surveys served as a major source of data during Year 4 of the West Virginia GEAR UP evaluation. Surveys were administered to students in the 2014 and Priority Cohorts as well as to parents of 2014 Cohort students. The surveys measured

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[1] The West Virginia GEAR UP project serves 10 counties in three primary regions throughout the state, centered around partner institutions of higher education: Central (Clay, Roane, Webster, and Wirt counties; Glenville State College), Southern (McDowell, Summers, and Wyoming counties; Concord University), and Southwestern (Boone, Lincoln, and Mingo counties; Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College).

[2] 2014 Cohort students are those in the graduating class of 2014 who are tracked each year of the grant. They were 7th-grade students during the first year of the grant (2008-2009 school year) and were 10th-grade students during Year 4. Previous reports may have referred to these students at the "GEAR UP Cohort." The evaluation team, acting under advice from West Virginia GEAR UP staff, changed the name to eliminate confusion because other students also receive services and can be considered GEAR UP students.

[3] Priority Cohort students are those who are enrolled in Grades 11 and 12 each year.

knowledge, awareness, and perceptions of key factors among the stakeholder groups. The survey instruments were nearly identical to those used in Year 3 (2010-2011) of the evaluation. In collaboration with GEAR UP staff at the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC), the Edvantia evaluation team made some minor refinements, primarily consisting of the deletion of items evaluators and HEPC personnel deemed unnecessary or duplicative.

The Year 4 evaluation surveys were administered between November 2011 and February 2012. Survey administration procedures in Year 4 were substantially different than those used in previous years. In an effort to facilitate more efficient and effective data collection, evaluators and GEAR UP project staff collaborated with project partner Xcalibur's staff to transition the surveys into an online format using the survey portal of the Standardized Collection and Reporting of Information Benefiting Education (SCRIBE) system. As in previous years, however, paper-based survey materials were made available for each school based on preliminary needs and additional requests from site coordinators. To prevent duplication of surveys, log-in protocols and controls within the SCRIBE system automatically disqualified respondents from completing the survey multiple times.[4]

Online and paper-based survey data collection occurred concurrently. Site coordinators arranged data collection activities that were most feasible and most likely to be effective for their own school contexts (e.g., scheduling computer lab time during the school day; distributing paper surveys at GEAR UP or other school events; asking students to complete surveys on bus trips). Site coordinators returned completed paper surveys to the evaluation team, which then entered the data, conducted preliminary data cleaning, and converted the data files into a format appropriate for uploading into the SCRIBE system. The survey portal was fully integrated with the SCRIBE databases to allow for immediate tracking of student and parent survey completion, including the completion of paper surveys after the data were successfully imported into the system. Student data were collected by February 1, 2012, and the majority of parent survey data were collected by the end of February. All data were collected, entered, and available in the SCRIBE system by the end of March 2012.

In all, 1,445 students in the 2014 Cohort (about 89% of those with consent) completed the student survey in Year 4, representing the highest response rate yet achieved. The number of respondents represented about 77% of all enrolled students in the cohort. The 1,741 Priority Cohort respondents represented about 87% of students with consent (and about 60% of all enrolled students). A total of 959 parents responded to surveys, representing 51% of families in the 2014 Cohort. Figure 1 presents the trends in survey response rates by group.

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[4] The SCRIBE survey portal tracked and controlled survey completion based on information specifically identifying individuals, such as school, grade level, and unique identifier (i.e., the student's 5-digit lunch number or the 9-digit WVEIS [West Virginia Education Information System] number, used for both students and their parents). If a respondent completed a survey online, paper-based responses were treated as duplicates and not imported.
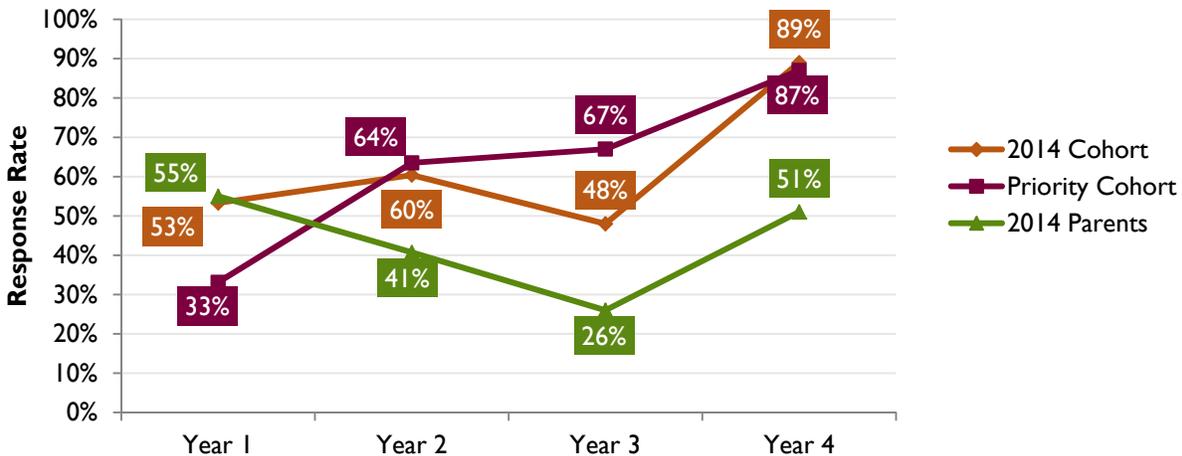
Figure 1. Student and Parent Annual Survey Response Rates, Years 1–4

In addition to using the data to inform the federally-required annual performance report (APR), the evaluation team summarized the survey data by creating profiles for each school, region, and county, as well as the program level overall. A narrative examination of selected survey findings was also written and serves as a companion report to this overall evaluation summary. Analyses of Year 4 student and parent survey data consisted primarily of descriptive statistics, including frequencies and measures of central tendency. Comparisons of identical survey items in Years 1 through 4 provide evidence about how much progress the West Virginia GEAR UP project is making toward improving student and parent outcomes. Where appropriate, tests of statistical significance (e.g., one-way analyses of variance [ANOVAs]) were conducted to examine and describe changes over time.

School Personnel Survey

At the close of the fourth year of the West Virginia GEAR UP project, the evaluation team again surveyed the personnel at GEAR UP schools. The school personnel survey has been conducted each year of the grant to gather information about school staff members' perceptions of the implementation and impact of the program. The 34-item survey instrument used in Year 4 was identical to the questionnaire used in the previous year. The majority of questions on the survey focused on services and resources offered to school staff during the year; some questions also assessed staff members' perceptions of the services and impact for students and parents. The concluding items of the questionnaire asked about the extent to which GEAR UP project goals aligned with the goals of respondents' own schools and counties.

The evaluation team, with assistance from key HEPC personnel, worked with the staff at Xcalibur to establish the school personnel survey in the SCRIBE survey portal. The survey was administered via the SCRIBE portal in May through June of 2012 to West Virginia GEAR UP school personnel. Site coordinators helped manage the administration of the survey to staff at their schools by sharing the survey link and following up with their colleagues to encourage participation. As with the student and parent surveys, site coordinators were able to track responses from their school through the SCRIBE system. HEPC personnel also sent site coordinators multiple reminders and updates about the response rates overall and for each school to motivate and encourage increased participation in the survey. A total of 330 out of approximately 595 staff members (55%) working at

the 14 GEAR UP high schools completed the School Personnel Survey in Year 4. Figure 2 presents survey response rates for each year.
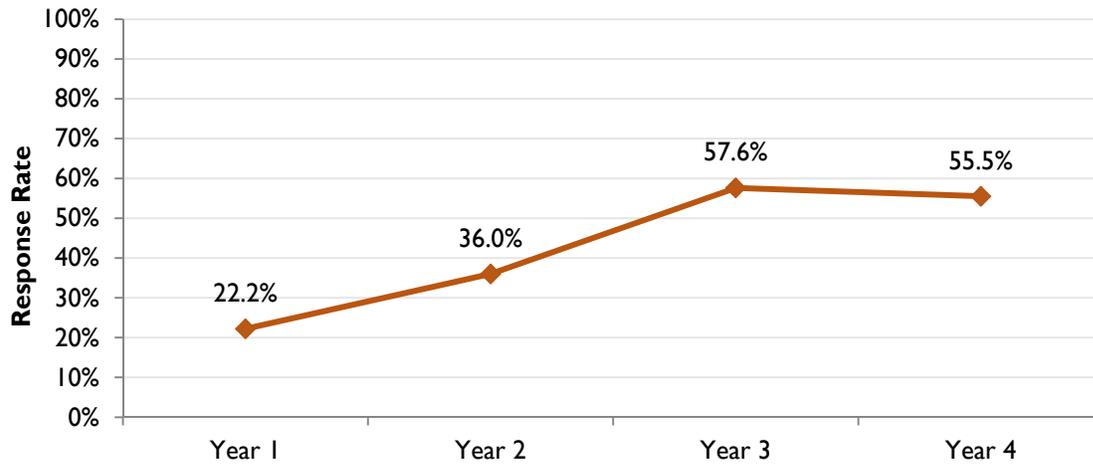
Figure 2. School Personnel Survey Response Rates, Years 1–4

Analyses of Year 4 school personnel survey data consisted primarily of descriptive statistics, including frequencies and measures of central tendency. Where appropriate, comparisons of identical survey items over time were conducted via relevant tests of statistical significance (e.g., one-way analyses of variance [ANOVAs]) to describe the significance and magnitude of changes. A narrative summary of survey findings was written and serves as a companion report to this summary.

Site Coordinators Focus Group Interview

At the close of the fourth year of the West Virginia GEAR UP project, Edvantia evaluators again conducted group interviews with site coordinators.[5] The group discussions were conducted following the coordinators' regularly scheduled meeting on June 12, 2012. Three groups of site coordinators, assembled according to their region[6], spoke with evaluators about the reach of GEAR UP services, dissemination of information, perceptions of service quality, problems with implementation, and other relevant topics. Interview questions were the same as those used in the previous year and were aligned with applicable foci of the evaluation. Specifically, site coordinators spoke with evaluation team members about the reach of GEAR UP services, dissemination of information, perceptions of service quality, challenges in implementation, and so on.

Each of the group interviews ranged from four to six participants, and each discussion lasted between 40 and 45 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded, and transcripts produced from those recordings formed the basis for thematic analyses. Each theme that emerged through the discussion

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[5] GEAR UP site coordinators are hired by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission to plan, implement, monitor, and track program services and activities at each participating school. Site coordinators can be teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, or others who apply for the position (although most are staff members at the school for which they coordinate services). In Year 4, most site coordinators had served in the role during the previous school year.

[6] The West Virginia GEAR UP project serves 10 counties in three primary regions throughout the state, centered around partner institutions of higher education: Central (Clay, Roane, Webster, and Wirt counties; Glenville State College), Southern (McDowell, Summers, and Wyoming counties; Concord University), and Southwestern (Boone, Lincoln, and Mingo counties; Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College).

data was summarized for each applicable evaluation question in a narrative report of findings (a companion to this summary).

Service and Activity Data

The evaluation team also examined GEAR UP service data , which site coordinators entered into SCRIBE, the online data management system maintained by Xcalibur, on an ongoing basis throughout the year. These service data, relevant to the examination of project implementation, were downloaded from the online system for analysis to provide project staff with a comprehensive picture of services delivered during the fourth year of implementation. The federal reporting year (March 16 through March 15) does not align with the academic year (mid-August through early June). Because the data for the federal reporting year have been presented in the project's APR, evaluation staff have chosen to present data for the academic year (2011-2012), encompassing the dates of August 1, 2011 through July 31, 2012. Analyses of service data are descriptive in nature, including primarily frequencies, sums, and means; comparisons include the presentation of Year 4 service data as a percentage of Year 3 service data.

Summary of Implementation Data

The GEAR UP services provided to students, parents, and teachers in participating schools were continuously recorded in the SCRIBE system by the site coordinators. The categories of services included in county and school work plans encompassed several kinds of events and activities designed to improve students' knowledge of and preparation for postsecondary education and career options. Although the broad service categories are determined by the scope and purposes of the federal grant, each participating site designs locally customized activities to suit the larger purposes. During Year 4, activities supported and promoted by GEAR UP included

- family events, including "kick offs" and end-of-year events
- in-state college visits
- tutoring, primarily in math and English
- other academic enrichment activities (e.g., test preparation, dual enrollment, credit recovery)
- college preparation and financial aid workshops and events
- College Application Week
- College Goal Sunday
- career-focused events (e.g., career fairs)
- job site visits
- mentoring
- HEROs (Higher Education Readiness Officers) student activities
- on-site and off-site professional development for teachers

GEAR UP funds are also used to provide equipment or classroom enhancements, to hire substitute teachers in some situations, and to provide for travel expenses for site coordinator and county staff attendance at GEAR UP events and professional development. Although the general types of activities to be offered are mandated by the program, site coordinators have flexibility in determining the exact nature, structure, and focus of activities and services offered at their schools. This flexibility is intended to increase the likelihood that local activities will be contextually appropriate and as impactful as possible.

Services During the Academic Year

Using service and activity data recorded in SCRIBE, evaluators examined service delivery and participation for students, parents, and teachers during the fourth year of the West Virginia GEAR UP program. SCRIBE provides reports detailing statistics related to service delivery in each of the federally-defined service categories as well as instances of service delivery by participating site. Using those reports, evaluators calculated the total instances of GEAR UP service delivery, the total number of service hours, and the average hours per instance of service delivery for each of the three groups served. Table 1 displays these statistics.

Table 1. Total Instances and Hours of GEAR UP Service Delivery

Group	Instances of Service Delivery				Total Service Hours				Avg. Hours/Instance			
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4
Students	9,680	111,062	69,768	61,736	31,086	171,182	116,519	81,940	3.21	1.54	1.67	1.33
Parents	784	4,176	3,225	2,617	2,132	10,341	8,269	5,924	2.72	2.48	2.56	2.26
Teachers	416	2,189	1,005	711	1,362	6,584	2,579	2,459	3.27	3.01	2.57	3.46
Total	10,880	117,427	73,998	65,064	34,579	188,107	127,366	90,322	3.18	1.60	1.72	1.39

Because some service and activity data were not fully entered or verified as of the end of July 2012, evaluators expect that Year 4 service delivery is greater than the instances reported in the current summary. Interpretations presented herein should, therefore, be considered tentative. Year 4 service data indicate that GEAR UP services were delivered to students more than 65,000 times, for more than 90,000 contact hours of service. The total instances of GEAR UP service initially appears to be slightly lower than in the previous year, with Year 4 activities representing about 88% of the service activities delivered in Year 3. A slight decrease will not be entirely unexpected, given the consolidation of four high schools into one (Mingo Central Comprehensive High School) at the start of the 2011-2012 school year.

Service delivery to teachers and parents also appears to have declined slightly in Year 4 relative to Year 3. The total number of GEAR UP services provided for parents was 2,617 in Year 4 (or 81% of the parent service instances in Year 3). The total hours of service offered to parents also declined to about 5,900 (or about 72% of the Year 3 hours offered). Because of programmatic changes eliminating the requirement for parents to attend college visits and making family or cultural events optional rather than mandatory, it is not unexpected to see a decline in service participation for parents. The number of Year 4 GEAR UP services offered to teachers also declined slightly, with the 711 service instances representing about 71% of the Year 3 service instances; however, the average hours per service instance increased in Year 4, and the total number of service hours (2,459) was comparable to the service hours delivered to teachers in Year 3.

Table 2 presents participation in GEAR UP services by service category. Data presented in the table represent the total number of students, parents, or teachers who participated in each type of service during the school year (defined, in this report, as August 1 through July 31).

Table 2. Average and Total Hours Students and Parents Received GEAR UP Services

GEAR UP Services	# of Participants				Average Service Hours				Total Service Hours			
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4
Services for Students												
College visit/college student shadowing	1,268	2,395	2,385	1,703	4.12	4.44	3.62	2.78	5,225.00	10,627.00	8,630.25	4,735.63
Counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling	1,168	3,887	3,864	3,418	2.78	4.84	4.61	2.83	3,243.25	18,812.66	17,796.55	9,676.02
Educational field trips	91	537	224	15	13.05	5.75	4.38	11.98	1,188.00	3,080.53	982.00	179.75
Family/cultural events	933	2,667	2,807	2,291	5.01	3.73	4.23	2.68	4,673.75	9,984.98	11,856.00	6,136.00
Financial aid counseling/advising	17	771	988	1,164	1.71	1.60	1.57	3.06	29.00	1,234.89	1,547.86	3,564.84
Job site visit/job shadowing	49	19	502	701	3.14	1.63	3.01	1.87	154.00	31.00	1,512.25	1,308.00
Mentoring	66	990	1,911	2,055	2.26	2.58	2.16	3.34	151.50	2,549.87	4,126.30	6,859.57
Rigorous academic curricula	0	259	223	177	0.00	92.10	69.75	73.73	0	23,763.00	13,949.00	13,050.00
Summer programs	96	134	57	88	86.15	69.22	170.91	33.00	8,270.11	9,275.50	16,065.50	2,904.00
Tutoring/homework assistance	848	3,275	2,830	2,148	9.55	27.47	14.16	15.61	8,105.95	89,867.15	40,053.49	33,526.05
Workshops	33	1,058	0	0	1.36	1.85	0.00	0.00	45.00	1,955.07	0.00	0.00
Other	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Services for Parents												
College visits	43	132	65	65	4.69	2.90	2.89	3.02	201.50	383.00	187.75	196.00
Counseling/advising	326	1,490	888	473	2.80	3.44	2.92	2.49	911.81	5,131.58	2,591.00	1,176.50
Family events	353	1,574	1,561	1,480	2.81	2.72	3.19	2.72	992.75	4,281.25	4,984.50	4,019.00
Workshops on college preparation/financial aid	25	268	247	284	1.04	2.03	2.05	1.87	26.00	545.00	505.50	532.00
Other	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Services for Teachers												
Curriculum development	33	29	32	0	11.42	6.49	8.03	0.00	377.00	188.25	257.00	0.00
Professional development	216	601	317	290	4.56	10.64	7.32	8.48	984.50	6,396.10	2,321.50	2,458.50
Other	0	0	0	27	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

As in previous years, Year 4 data indicate that the greatest number of students who participated in counseling services (counseling, advising, academic counseling, and/or career planning), with 3,418 students participating in those services at least one time during the year. Students spent the greatest amount of time—more than 33,000 hours—participating in tutoring services; services included in the tutoring category accounted for about 41% of all student service hours offered during Year 4. Declining participation in some services (e.g., educational field trips, family/cultural events) is somewhat expected, due to changes in programmatic requirements and emphases. Likewise, increased participation in activities like job site visits is also expected. Year 4 marked the first year that job site visits were required activities; they had previously been an option in conjunction with cultural events (i.e., the work plan required one cultural event or one job site visit, planned at site coordinators' discretion). Relative to Year 3, increased participation in financial aid counseling and mentoring are evident; decreased participation is evident for college visits, tutoring, and counseling. Data for participation in summer programs and rigorous academic curricula (e.g., dual credit courses) are not yet available.

As in previous years, parents tended to participate most in family events and counseling or advising services. Services in the family events category accounted for roughly 68% of all service hours provided to parents; counseling and advising services accounted for 21% of all parent service hours offered. Participation in workshops on college preparation and financial aid increased slightly relative to Year 3; however, participation in counseling or advising decreased, with Year 4 participation and service hours representing about half of the Year 3 participation in these services. Parent participation in college visits declined dramatically, as expected due to the elimination of required parental attendance. See Table 2 for more information about parent participation by GEAR UP service category.

During Year 4, teachers participated nearly exclusively in professional development provide by the GEAR UP program. The number of teachers served was slightly lower than in Year 3, but the hours of service provided was slightly higher, resulting in a higher average time per instance of service delivery. The "other" activity in which teachers participated was an end-of-year softball game involving a whole school community (teachers, students, parents). Table 2 presents the details of service participation for teachers in each of the two service categories.

Table 3 presents the instances of service delivery by participating school for each of the three years of the West Virginia GEAR UP program. These data represent the total number of services and activities provided to students, parents, and teachers at each site. For example, at Clay County High School, the program offered GEAR UP services for students 23,705 times during the 2011-2012 school year—a total representing about 39% of all student service instances for the program during the year. The 386 instances of GEAR UP parent services at Mingo Central High School account for about 15% of all parent services during the year, and the 166 instances of service delivery for teachers at Lincoln County High School represent about 22% of all teacher services during the year.

Table 3. Instances of GEAR UP Service Delivery by Participating School

County	School	Service Delivery: Students				Service Delivery: Parents				Service Delivery: Teachers			
		Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4
Boone	Scott High School	—	—	3,498	2,321	—	—	161	55	—	—	82	53
Boone	Sherman High School	25	4,025	1,612	1,120	33	131	175	124	1	32	42	52
Clay	Clay County High School	221	1,713	3,705	23,705	58	111	283	268	0	43	190	63
Lincoln	Lincoln County High School	437	3,749	4,280	3,135	45	354	392	228	34	68	87	166
McDowell	Mount View High School	31	1,603	641	3,357	13	7	81	43	7	27	23	33
McDowell	River View High School[a]	94	1,170	818	5,042	16	89	10	66	6	47	68	53
Mingo	Mingo Central High School[b]	916	16,845	25,010	2,647	86	268	479	386	18	131	114	72
Mingo	Mingo County Career & Technical Center	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	27	18	0
Mingo	Tug Valley High School	95	506	1,232	1,797	14	61	106	143	0	32	27	20
Roane	Roane County High School	130	718	3,662	3,769	39	137	291	256	17	118	63	31
Summers	Summers County High School	51	1,329	8,312	3,795	28	90	81	196	0	42	46	21
Webster	Webster County High School	52	575	7,335	3,837	23	99	327	63	12	55	86	100
Wirt	Wirt County High School	—	—	3,083	2,664	—	—	69	136	—	—	21	14
Wyoming	Westside High School	306	1,160	2,953	1,233	34	144	546	198	13	76	54	13
Wyoming	Wyoming County Career & Technical Center	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	2
Wyoming	Wyoming County East High School	411	1,306	3,627	3,123	18	132	224	370	26	45	84	50
All	All Middle Schools[c]	6,911	76,363	—	—	377	2,553	—	—	278	1,445	—	—
		9,680	111,062	69,768	61,545	784	4,176	3,225	2,532	416	2,189	1,005	743

a. The 2010-2011 school year marked the first year of operation for River View High School, created from the consolidation of Big Creek and Iaeger High Schools. Data presented for Years 1 and 2 represent the sum of services provided at the two separate schools prior to consolidation.

b. The 2011-2012 school year marked the first year of operation for Mingo Central Comprehensive High School, created from the consolidation of Burch, Gilbert, Matewan, and Williamson High Schools. Data presented for Years 1 through 3 represent the sum of services provided at the four separate schools prior to consolidation.

c. In Year 3, the West Virginia GEAR UP program transitioned from serving both middle and high schools to serving high schools only. All data for services provided in middle school settings during Years 1 and 2 has been aggregated for this table.

During Year 4, 313 of 608 teachers of GEAR UP students received professional development sponsored by the GEAR UP program. In Year 3, 341 teachers (out of 611) participated in GEAR UP-sponsored professional development. A slight decrease in the number of participating teachers was expected, given the consolidation of four high schools into one (Mingo Central). The percentage of teachers in GEAR UP schools who participated in GEAR UP-sponsored professional development during Year 4 (48%) was smaller compared to Year 3 (58%). Table 4 lists the rates with which teachers who taught GEAR UP students participated in professional development offered by the program.

Table 4. Teachers Professional Development Participation Rates by School

County	School	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Boone	Scott High School	---	---	76.9%	72.2%
Boone	Sherman High School	3.4%	19.4%	66.7%	67.7%
Clay	Clay County High School	0.0%	44.0%	100.0%	13.2%
Lincoln	Lincoln County High School	16.9%	63.4%	28.8%	62.0%
McDowell	Mount View High School	2.9%	8.7%	10.7%	10.0%
McDowell	River View High School[a]	5.3%	50.0%	66.7%	60.0%
Mingo	Mingo County Career & Technical Center	80.0%	16.7%	100.0%	0.0%
Mingo	Mingo Central High School[b]	21.4%	46.1%	44.8%	77.8%
Mingo	Tug Valley High School	0.0%	29.0%	18.2%	27.0%
Roane	Roane County High School	34.0%	87.3%	47.9%	48.9%
Summers	Summers County High School	0.0%	75.7%	48.5%	10.3%
Webster	Webster County High School	24.2%	72.7%	97.5%	91.3%
Wirt	Wirt County High School	---	---	13.0%	8.3%
Wyoming	Westside High School	37.1%	67.4%	70.7%	7.0%
Wyoming	Wyoming County Career & Technical Center	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Wyoming	Wyoming County East High School	70.3%	39.5%	76.2%	52.3%
All	All Middle Schools[c]	26.7%	51.9%	---	---
	Total	**22.4%**	**50.0%**	**55.8%**	**47.7%**

a. Year 3 (2010-2011 school year) marked the first year of operation for River View High School, created from the consolidation of Big Creek and Iaeger High Schools. Data presented for Years 1 and 2 represent the total participation at the two separate schools prior to consolidation.

b. Year 4 (2011-2012 school year) marked the first year of operation for Mingo Central Comprehensive High School, created from the consolidation of Burch, Gilbert, Matewan, and Williamson High Schools. Data presented for Years 1 through 3 represent the total participation at the four separate schools prior to consolidation.

c. In Year 3, the West Virginia GEAR UP program transitioned from serving both middle and high schools to serving high schools only. All data for participation in middle school settings during Years 1 and 2 has been aggregated for this table.

Summary of Outcome Data

Student and Parent Surveys

Findings from the student and parent surveys present a modest picture of continued progress and sustained success for the West Virginia GEAR UP program. Thousands of students and hundreds of parents and teachers have received services through GEAR UP, and a clear majority of students and parents are satisfied with the program overall. Several key indicators have continued to show positive growth in Year 4 of the project, although the gains were less dramatic than those seen in earlier years. Other indicators neither increased nor decreased appreciably in Year 4. Highlights of the progress reported by students and parents include the following:

- The West Virginia GEAR UP project is continuing to reach a greater number of students and parents to increase their knowledge and awareness of postsecondary options. In a continuing positive trend, more 2014 Cohort students and parents in Year 4 had talked with school staff or GEAR UP representatives about college entrance requirements and the availability of financial aid than in previous years. Priority Cohort students' rates of discussions about college entrance requirements were stable from Year 3 to Year 4, while their rates of discussions about financial aid increased in Year 4. Parents reported the highest rates of these key informational discussions yet measured during the West Virginia GEAR UP project, and about eight out of 10 students in Grades 10 through 12 have been reached by GEAR UP or school staff sharing this kind of key information.

- More than two thirds of students participating in the GEAR UP program reported in Year 4 that they had discussed the academic requirements for college with an adult in their households. The rates at which Priority Cohort students have been having these discussions has been fairly stable over time; however, more 2014 Cohort students each year have reported having these discussions in their homes.

- About 90% of students in both cohorts plan to continue their education beyond high school, and a similar number believe that they have the ability to go to college. Just less than two thirds of GEAR UP students (in both cohorts) expected to obtain at least a four-year college degree. Priority Cohort students' expectations were fairly stable from Year 3 to Year 4, although there was a small increase in the percentage who expected to earn a four-year degree. The 2014 Cohort students' expectations for their educational attainment continued to decline slightly. Although about 90% of 2014 Cohort students expect to earn at least some college credits (a figure that is relatively similar to that observed in previous years of the evaluation), only 65%—the lowest percentage in four years—expect to earn a four-year degree.

- About two thirds of parents expected their child to obtain at least a four-year college degree. Parents' expectations for their children's academic attainment stabilized from Year 3 to Year 4 and were fairly well-aligned with the expectations expressed by 2014 Cohort students. As in previous years, nearly all parents (95%) indicated that they had talked with their children about attending college.

- During Year 4, the West Virginia GEAR UP program experienced particular success in influencing students' and parents' knowledge and perceptions about the costs and affordability of college, with survey data collected in Year 4 suggesting that more 2014 Cohort students and parents believe that college is *definitely* affordable. The percentage

of 2014 Cohort students and parents indicating that students could *definitely* afford college was the highest yet recorded for the West Virginia GEAR UP project. The percentage of Priority Cohort students who believe that college is *definitely* affordable declined from 23% to 22%, the lowest level in four years and a continuation of the negative trend first observed in Year 3.

- Estimates of the cost of one year's tuition have improved greatly in Year 4 compared to previous years. The highest percentages to date of students and parents (roughly one third of those surveyed in each group) were able to give the correct range of tuition costs in response to the survey item, and far fewer were likely to indicate that they did not know the cost of tuition for one year. Year 4 findings represent the greatest level of accuracy in estimating or recalling tuition costs observed in the West Virginia GEAR UP evaluation. However, approximately two thirds of students and parents continue to overestimate the costs or indicate that they do not know the cost of one year of tuition at a West Virginia public four-year college or university.

- Almost half of 2014 Cohort students reported that the GEAR UP program had influenced them to change their college plans, most often by influencing them to get more education or a higher degree than they had originally planned. About one fifth of students in the Priority Cohort also reported changes in their college plans (primarily, the decision to get more education than originally planned) as a result of the GEAR UP project.

- The influence of the West Virginia GEAR UP project on students' academic preparation is unclear. A little more than half of the 2014 Cohort students reported that the program has helped them academically; however, the Year 4 results represent a decline from previous years. Parents were slightly more likely than students in the 2014 Cohort to report that the GEAR UP program has improved their children's academic preparation.

- Recipients of GEAR UP services continue to be satisfied with the services they receive and appear to find the services helpful. As in previous years, students and parents tend to be *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the West Virginia GEAR UP project overall. Parents and students showed high levels of satisfaction with the specific GEAR UP services in which they participated, with college visits in particular being viewed as high quality and beneficial. Priority Cohort students also found career planning to be very helpful in Year 4.

- Although students' aspirations have varied slightly over time, changes tend to be small, even when they are statistically significant. Among the four aspiration scales (*achiever orientation*, *leader orientation*, *positive environment*, and *teacher support*), students in both cohorts groups rate themselves highest in *achiever orientation*. In Year 4, an increase in *leader orientation* was observed among both groups after three years of stability in the measure. Students in both cohorts tended to give the lowest ratings to *positive environment*, and the data for that measure are trending downward. It is important to remember, however, that even the most negative findings in the student aspiration scales are still high ratings on the scale (with scale means exceeding the midpoint).

- As in previous years, the parent and student surveys found that large proportions of student respondents reported not participating in several of the GEAR UP services such as tutoring, mentoring, financial aid workshops, test preparation workshops, and so on. Although the timing of the surveys (administered during the middle of the school year) may have resulted in artificially depressed reports of participation for summer programs and services offered later in the school year (e.g., awards and recognition events, financial

aid incentive awards), some services offered throughout the year (e.g., tutoring, mentoring, various workshops) may be underutilized.

In previous years, attaining adequate survey response rates and meeting federal expectations has been a substantial challenge. Transitioning the surveys—particularly the student survey—into the SCRIBE survey portal as the primary mode of administration has proven to be a good change that has helped the evaluation team and the project achieve success in obtaining adequate response to the survey. The response rates for the student and parent surveys continued to increase in Year 4 among the targeted cohorts (2014 Cohort students and parents; Priority Cohort students), meeting and exceeding federal expectations. In past years, lower-than-expected response rates may have resulted in limited generalizability due to small or skewed samples. However, such concerns do not appear to be applicable for 2014 Cohort and Priority Cohort student surveys in Year 4, wherein more than 80% of eligible students responded to the survey. In fact, the number of student survey respondents in Year 4 represent two thirds of all students enrolled in Grades 10 through 12 in the participating GEAR UP schools during the 2011-2012 school year. Likewise, stronger confidence in the findings of the parent survey may be warranted in Year 4 than in previous years due to the greater than 50% response rate.

More details of the findings from the student and parent surveys are available in the narrative summary of the Year 4 survey effort and in the survey summaries prepared for the program, counties, and schools each year.

School Personnel Survey

Findings from the School Personnel Survey indicated that the West Virginia GEAR UP program experienced a successful implementation and made improvements in several areas during the program's fourth year. Highlights of the successful implementation and improvements include the following:

- West Virginia GEAR UP resources were distributed in schools and were being used by school personnel.

- School personnel continued participating in various GEAR UP activities, and in Year 4, they were less likely than in other years to report that they "never" participated in GEAR UP events. They were most likely to have participated in professional development activities at least once during the year.

- As in previous years, the activities in which Year 4 survey respondents were most likely to report frequent participation were tutoring, counseling, and computer-assisted labs—activities that are likely to be scheduled on a regular basis throughout the school year. School personnel tended to report that they participated in most of the other various activities only one or two times in the year, which corresponds to the frequency with which those activities tended to occur (e.g., College Goal Sunday occurs only once).

- Compared to previous years, GEAR UP sites appear to be using a broader variety of communication strategies, continuing a trend begun in previous years. Sites are less likely than ever to rely on only one or two methods of distributing information about the program and its activities.

- In Year 4, compared to previous years, school personnel were more likely to report that GEAR UP-sponsored professional development prepared them a great deal to engage in the various activities or practices addressed on the survey. Since the beginning of the

grant period, the West Virginia GEAR UP program has made significant improvements in helping school staff feel prepared to address various topic areas and undertake particular practices.

- The West Virginia GEAR UP program has also been steadily increasing the quality, relevance, and usefulness of services it offers to school staff, students, and parents. Although ratings for these indicators have always tended to be positive, Year 4 ratings were more likely to be *good* or *very good* than in any other year and were also significantly greater on average than ratings observed in most of the previous years

- School personnel generally have very positive perceptions about the impact of the GEAR UP program. Compared to all previous years, school personnel were more likely to say that students had *better* or *much better* interest and involvement in school and *better* or *much better* career awareness and interest; they were also more likely to report that parent interest and involvement in school was *better* or *much better* compared to the previous year. The average rating on these indicators in Year 4 were significantly higher than the average ratings in either of the two previous years; for student interest and involvement in school, the ratings were higher than in any previous year. Since Year 2, however, the percentage of school personnel reporting that students' college awareness was *somewhat better* or *much better* has remained fairly stable, and there have been no significant changes in the average rating over time.

- Additionally, school personnel are increasingly likely to agree strongly that the GEAR UP program is having a positive impact in their schools, counties, and communities, with higher average agreement in Year 4 than in the first three years of the program.

- The majority of respondents (about 62%) reported that West Virginia GEAR UP had been implemented fully in their school and was running smoothly; another 26% indicated that the program had been partially implemented. These figures represent an improvement from Year previous years when 28% (Year 1), 53% (Year 2), and 52% (Year 3) of survey respondents indicated full implementation of the program. The improvement in implementation since the first year has been significant, as expected. Importantly, fewer school personnel than ever indicate that they do not know enough about the GEAR UP program to estimate its level of implementation.

- Compared to Year 3, school personnel in Year 4 are slightly more likely to report that the goals of the GEAR UP program are fully aligned with their school or county goals. Year 4 respondents are also much more likely to indicate that they were very familiar with the goals of the program before seeing them in the survey.

- Most school staff who responded to the survey are somewhat or very familiar with GEAR UP; however, about one in 10 school staff members continue to indicate that they are not familiar with the program.

- A relatively small number of school staff reported that they saw challenges with GEAR UP implementation at their schools. Many of the challenges that respondents reported were similar to those reported in previous years and by other stakeholders (e.g., difficulty engaging parents, time constraints, concerns about the population served—and not served—by the grant). Although there were not a large number of challenges reported, they were not likely to be completely resolved during the school year. Improved communication was the most frequently mentioned strategy for resolving issues.

- School personnel generally continue to be unsure about whether GEAR UP activities are sustainable beyond the end of the grant.

More details of the findings from the School Personnel Survey are available in the narrative summary of the Year 4 survey.

Site Coordinator Group Interviews

Generally, as in previous years, site coordinators continued to be satisfied with West Virginia GEAR UP and reported believing that students benefit greatly from the services offered through the program. Services were typically well received, although attendance and participation were not always as extensive as site coordinators desired. Focus group discussions suggest that the program is finding some successes in the schools (e.g., offering high quality, relevant, and useful services) but continues to struggle with a small number of persistent challenges (e.g., lower attendance than desired at some events).

- Site coordinators are implementing their work plans and providing required services and activities. Students continue to be the easiest stakeholder group to reach with program services, with parents and teachers being more difficult to reach. Some sites may experience a "spillover effect" for student services that may be expanding the program's reach beyond intended participants, as when all students in a school are able to participate in GEAR UP-sponsored activities (e.g., seminars or speakers).

- Awareness and recognition of GEAR UP continues to improve, although there is not yet universal understanding of the program. Some sites are still struggling to cultivate widespread faculty knowledge of and support for GEAR UP, while others have full support from local and district-level stakeholders.

- Attendance at and participation in GEAR UP sponsored events is uneven across schools and across types of events. Student participation in events and activities generally continues to be better than participation from teachers or parents. In general, participation in events that occur during the school day tends to be better than participation in events after school or on the weekend. Some site coordinators reported seeing improvements in attendance at events since the previous year. In general, however, site coordinators mentioned far more challenges than successes in achieving the desired level of attendance and participation at GEAR UP events.

- Activities and services are being very well received and are perceived to be of high quality, relevance, and utility. Site coordinators also continue to report receiving high-quality services themselves from project staff at HEPC. Year 4 discussions included a greater focus on the quality and utility of program-provided technological resources than had been apparent in previous years.

- College visits were again perceived as particularly beneficial for students. Site coordinators reported that students tended to be excited about activities like college visits, often talked about these experiences long after they are completed, and often asked their site coordinators where they will get to go next. These activities—as well job site visits—are perceived as being very high quality, useful, and relevant experiences that are helping students decide what they want to do after high school and where they want to attend college. However, site coordinators universally believe that their schools will be unable to sustain these kinds of visits in the absence of GEAR UP funding.

- GEAR UP funding continues to be used to provide technology resources for participating sites—whether the program funds the full cost or provides funding to supplement district or other monies in making the purchases. The technology, and the professional development trainings that often accompanied the purchases, were perceived as very useful in helping teachers enhance their instructional knowledge and skills.

- In addition to providing funding for technology-related training, GEAR UP resources continue to be used to provide other types of professional development to teachers and to provide enhanced academic opportunities to students (e.g., dual credit courses). Thus, evidence suggests that site coordinators are making appropriate use of GEAR UP resources to provide richer and more rigorous academic opportunities for students.

- Site coordinators continued to describe their sites' relationships with partnering institutions of higher education in very positive terms. The colleges and universities—both official partners and others—were perceived to be good resources; enthusiastic about working with the GEAR UP sites; open, cooperative, and receptive to GEAR UP students; and accommodating for the groups during visits. Relationships with official partners (Glenville State College, Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College, and Concord University) were typically described as strong, positive, and mutually beneficial. In only one county was a challenge mentioned in the higher education partner relationship; schools in the county were experiencing some changes with respect to how dual credit courses were conducted and administered.

- Although participating sites do not have other official partners beyond the designated higher education institutions, some schools do receive support from entities and organizations within their communities. Some sites may also be creating partnerships among different grants and programs that enable site coordinators to leverage and coordinate resources provided by GEAR UP and other grants to expand, enhance, or maximize services provided to schools and students.

- When asked what problems they have encountered in implementing project activities, site coordinators generally mentioned a two major types of challenges: administrative issues and issues related to attendance and participation. Several other minor or unique challenges were also mentioned. Responses to this discussion item appear to suggest that site coordinators are experiencing fewer challenges than in previous years. However, some of the challenges with which they must contend (e.g., stakeholder involvement in activities, bureaucratic hurdles, transportation) appear to be persistent and have not been sufficiently resolved by previous years' efforts. Site coordinators did not offer many new strategies for resolving challenges beyond what they have tried in previous years..

More details of the findings from the site coordinator focus groups are available in the narrative summary of the Year 4 discussions.

Discussion and Recommendations

Data from SCRIBE, surveys, and group interviews indicate that implementation of GEAR UP services and appropriate use of GEAR UP resources have continued in the participating schools during the fourth year of the project. However, as in previous years, the findings from the data sources also revealed some challenges to the GEAR UP program. Based on the findings of the Year 4 evaluation data collection, several recommendations can be made to continue improvements in the

implementation of the West Virginia GEAR UP project. The recommendations should be considered formative suggestions rather than absolute solutions. While some may be easy to implement during the last two years of the program, others may require more planning or lack feasibility due to funding or logistical requirements and constraints. The following discussion is organized by applicable evaluation topic; recommendations and considerations are highlighted. A complete list of evaluation questions is found in Appendix B.

Implementation of West Virginia GEAR UP

The West Virginia GEAR UP project is being implemented throughout the state at each service site. Site coordinators are planning and hosting a variety of goal-focused services and activities for students, parents, and teachers in their schools during the school year. These services and activities are included in annual work plans, and site coordinators routinely report implementing all required activities. GEAR UP funds are also being used to purchase technological tools, software, books, and other equipment and resources to enhance instruction and academic capabilities of the schools. Further, GEAR UP site coordinators and the program as a whole are using a variety of communication strategies (e.g., letters, fliers, brochures, posters, website announcements, emails, advertisements) to disseminate information and announcements about the program and the various activities, services, and opportunities GEAR UP offers.

Service Reach. Thousands of students and hundreds of parents and teachers have received services through GEAR UP. It appears that school personnel awareness of GEAR UP and buy-in to the goals and purposes of the program continues to improve. The majority of school personnel who responded to the survey reported that West Virginia GEAR UP had been fully implemented in their school and was running smoothly. Site coordinators, too, reported that GEAR UP is well implemented and that all work plan requirements are met. Several key indicators (including the proportion of students and parents who have spoken with school personnel about financial aid and college entrance requirements) have continued to show sustained or positive growth over time, indicating that parents and students are receiving crucial information about postsecondary information. Further, students' and parents' knowledge about key aspects of postsecondary education—such as the cost of one year's tuition at a public college or university—has improved greatly during the course of the past year, further suggesting that GEAR UP services are reaching their intended targets.

Participants in GEAR UP events typically appreciate the information and assistance they receive; students and parents routinely report high levels of satisfaction, both with the program overall and with the individual services in which they participate. Teachers, also, indicate that GEAR UP professional development services are helping them become more prepared for key instructional and support activities. However, although site coordinators are providing these high-quality and relevant services, events, and resources for students, parents, and teachers, it is not clear whether the services are reaching as many people in each group as GEAR UP staff may hope. Data from student and parent surveys, school personnel surveys, and site coordinator group interviews suggest that stakeholders may not make as much use of GEAR UP services as they could. Large portions of students and parents report not participating in specific GEAR UP services (although timing of the surveys at the mid-point of the year may deflate reports of participation in activities that occur later during the year). Likewise, many school personnel do not report participating in GEAR UP services, and site coordinators continue to express concern that attendance at GEAR UP events does not always rise to the level of their expectations, particularly for family or parent-focused events and teacher professional development. Staff at GEAR UP schools, although generally familiar with the GEAR UP program, may not always be certain about what services and resources are provided by GEAR UP and

which are provided by other sources. Students continue to be very familiar with the program, although parents' level of familiarity with GEAR UP is unclear—due, perhaps, to limited parental involvement in GEAR UP activities.

Site coordinators should be encouraged to continue their efforts to share information about the program and ensure that staff and school stakeholder are aware of the services, activities, and resources provided through GEAR UP funding. GEAR UP staff may also want to expand on the sharing processes that occur during site coordinator meetings . For instance, information about successful events or strategies at individual sites can be included in the site coordinator resources available on the GEAR UP website. Site coordinators could then easily access ideas and materials for planning and implementing (or changing their current processes for) similar events at their own sites.

Because lower-than-desired attendance at events—particularly for parents and school staff—is a persistent problem with no easy solutions, GEAR UP stakeholders (including project staff, regional coordinators, site coordinators, and key school personnel) could be encouraged to form a community of practice, reaching out to each other and to GEAR UP staff and stakeholders in other areas to discuss strategies for increasing participation and attendance. Including other key school personnel in the group may help build local communities of practice that might be sustainable in the future; it may also help to continue the positive trends observed in school staff members' awareness of and buy in to the program.

Although there were substantial rates of nonparticipation reported in student, parent, and school personnel surveys, it is possible that some survey respondents actually did participate in GEAR UP services but were not aware that they were sponsored by GEAR UP or forgot about them by the time of survey administration. In collaboration with site coordinators, program staff may choose to examine participation in these programs to determine whether students, parents, and school personnel truly did not participate, if they participated but do not remember, or if they did not realize an event was sponsored by GEAR UP. In cases of actual nonparticipation, site coordinators may need to consider methods for expanding or advertising those services to involve more stakeholders. GEAR UP site coordinators could also follow up with participants to ascertain the main reasons they do or do not participate in services; that information could then be used to redesign advertising or marketing efforts to improve participation rates. To ensure that recipients of services remember that GEAR UP sponsored an activity, site coordinators may want to consider the feasibility and utility of providing some follow up to expand on the activity and to provide another opportunity to show case the GEAR UP program (e.g., sending additional information home to parents or students, sharing an additional related resource or weblink to teacher participants).

Quality. Activities and services are being very well received by students, parents, and teachers and are perceived to be of high quality, relevance, and utility. Recipients of GEAR UP services are satisfied with the services they receive and find the services helpful. Parents and students showed high levels of satisfaction with the GEAR UP services in which they participated, with college visits continuing to be perceived as especially beneficial. School personnel tended to agree that GEAR UP services were of high quality, relevant, and useful for students and parents. They also found GEAR UP-sponsored professional development to be helpful in preparing them to deal with various college access, instructional, and other issues. Overall, site coordinators stated that the services offered by the program to stakeholders provide tremendous help and benefits to those who take advantage of them. As in previous years, the site coordinators also continued to praise the quality of the assistance and support they received from program staff at HEPC.

Challenges and Resolutions. Although the program is experiencing some successes in implementing required activities, sites continue to struggle with persistent challenges in providing services and activities and achieving the desired results. However, fewer concerns emerged in Year 4 than in previous years. Most of the concerns to emerge in the Year 4 findings were challenges that have persisted through all years of the project. Sites continue to face the challenge of attendance and participation levels that fall below their hopes and expectations. Issues contributing to poor attendance for students and parents, such as limited transportation options to and from afterschool events in rural areas, seem to be enduring challenges that many sites are not able to resolve. Similarly difficult issues contribute to poor participation among teachers, including burnout and unwillingness to participate without compensation. Some sites have teachers who are willing to participate but are not always able to do so during the school day due to administrative requirements concerning coverage of their classes. Other administrative issues (e.g., difficulties communicating or coordinating with district offices) also posed some challenges during Year 4, although they tended to arise in specific contexts, with sites generally experiencing their own unique challenges in this area.

Site coordinators in Year 4, however, did start to explicitly mention the challenge of managing parental concerns and attitudes—a challenge that had only been briefly alluded to in previous years. According to site coordinators, some parents are particularly worried about and resistant to students moving away from home; some parents do not want their children to move more than an hour away, and others may worry about being perceived as inferior to their children if the students go away to college and earn degrees. One suggestion for managing parents' concerns was to make a concerted effort to include them on college visits so they could see and experience the college environment and learn first-hand how far away their child will be from home. However, given the difficulties some sites have in generating parental involvement in GEAR UP events, implementing such a solution may be difficult on a wide scale.

Site coordinators in Year 4 did not spend much time discussing how they worked to resolve the challenges they faced, and school personnel did not typically offer responses to a survey item asking how challenges they observed were resolved. Site coordinators' limited discussion and the few responses offered by school personnel indicate that sites tend to continue relying on strategies used in previous years (e.g., scheduling activities during the school day or in conjunction with other well-attended school events, improving communication or collaboration). As in the past, it is likely that site coordinators try to navigate challenges and the solutions to them in ways that are contextually appropriate and most likely to be productive for their specific circumstances.

Given the persistent concerns about limited attendance at events through the years, HEPC staff may want to work with site coordinators to reexamine the strategies site are using to promote events and encourage attendance—particularly for family/parent and teacher activities. Intractable problems related to infrastructure (e.g., limited transportation options) are not likely to be overcome during the life of the grant. However, site coordinators may need additional advice or tools to help them plan and communicate effectively with parents and teachers. Additionally, they may need additional ideas or resources for motivating school personnel to participate in professional development. Continued use of site coordinator meetings for sharing of effective practices may be helpful, as would the posting of successful ideas or strategies to the site coordinator resources page on the GEAR UP website.

Site coordinators may also need some additional assistance and support in finding ways to address parents' concerns about their children going away to college or earning college degrees. For instance, for parents concerned about feeling or being perceived as inferior to their college-educated children, site coordinators may be able to share stories of parents in similar situations who take pride in their

children's achievement rather than feeling threatened by it. Finding such stories (or parents/personal connections in the area) might require additional support, personal references, or advertising.

Resources and Partnerships. As in the preceding three years, program resources in Year 4 appear to have been utilized for appropriate purposes and in appropriate ways. Site coordinators are using funds to deliver services and purchase various resources to benefit students and educators in their schools. Purchases of technology equipment are common, although site coordinators also purchase software and textbooks as needed. In some cases, GEAR UP funds are also being used to pay for students' dual credit courses and textbooks. All GEAR UP-funded resources and services are designed and intended to improve students' knowledge of and access to postsecondary options, and to bolster the academic capabilities of students and educators. Further, site coordinator group discussions and school personnel survey responses indicate that teachers are making use of the resources that GEAR UP provides for their schools and may particularly appreciate the enhanced technological capabilities the program enables at their schools.

Participation in GEAR UP-funded professional development, however, may be received less enthusiastically at some sites in comparison with the physical resources the project provides. Service data recorded in SCRIBE indicate that, on average, about half of teachers at GEAR UP schools participated in GEAR UP-sponsored services; the data also indicate that six of the 14 high schools had participation rates that fell substantially below that average (ranging from 7% to 27%). In only three schools did approximately three fourths or more of the GEAR UP students' teachers participate in program-sponsored professional development. School personnel survey data also suggest that teachers did not participate at high levels in GEAR UP-sponsored professional development, although those findings could be reflective of teachers not knowing or being confused or mistaken about the organizations or entities sponsoring the activities. These findings, taken together, suggest that some sites may continue to need extra assistance in making the most effective and efficient use of GEAR UP funds and resources allocated to teacher professional development.

Partnerships with institutions of higher education appear to be functioning well and are mutually beneficial for schools and their postsecondary partners. Site coordinators indicate that institutions of higher education, whether or not they are official project partners, are familiar with the GEAR UP project and are eager to help participating schools and students. School sites are appreciative of the attention and assistance they receive from the colleges and universities, particularly for college visits. Regular college visits and participation in dual enrollment courses may be helping to strengthen these relationships. At this time, it is unclear how these relationships may change when GEAR UP funding ends and both college visits and dual enrollment are likely to decline.

It may be helpful to continue considering how relationships and partnerships may change following the end of project-funded events and activities in 2014. Project staff may want to consider whether technical assistance or advice may be necessary from both the secondary and postsecondary perspective to ensure sustainable, positive relationships.

As in previous years, sites do not appear to have partnerships with entities other than the identified colleges and universities. If it is a HEPC goal for sites to develop further community or business partnerships, further assistance seems to be needed in this area. If site coordinators are to help their schools develop such partnerships, they may need guidance or discussion about the types of partnerships that best meet the goals of GEAR UP, state or regional resources or organizations that might be long-term partners, how sites can develop those partnerships, how HEPC can provide

support to nurture those relationships, and how such partnerships can help sustain the activities and goals of the program after grant funding ends.

Preliminary Outcomes

After Year 4 of the project, preliminary data related to outcomes suggest that the program is continuing to build on its successes and make progress toward meet project goals and objectives.

Student Interest and Involvement in School. Student interest and involvement in school may be increasing. School personnel report continue to report that student involvement and interest in school has improved since the previous school year. In fact, in Year 4, school personnel were more likely than ever to indicate that students' interest and involvement were better or much better than the previous year. About half of students report participating in school activities like sports and clubs, which is generally consistent with Year 3 findings, although there was an increase—particularly among the 2014 Cohort—in reports of participating in clubs. In addition to reporting improved student interest and involvement, school personnel also tend to report that parent involvement and interest in school is better compared to the previous year, with Year 4 results representing an improvement from Year 3 perceptions. However, the challenges that school personnel and site coordinators both mentioned in getting parents engaged and involved suggest that substantial difficulties in raising parental involvement still remain.

Student Career Awareness and Interest. Survey evidence also suggests some improvements in students' career awareness and interest. Survey results suggest that school personnel perceived a greater level of career awareness and interest among student in Year 4 than they did in any previous project year. Student survey results also suggest that students may be making greater use of career-related GEAR UP services than some other services. In Year 4, about 33% of 2014 Cohort students and 42% of Priority Cohort students reported that they did not participate in career planning services offered by GEAR UP. This finding actually suggests a higher rate of participation in career planning than in several other GEAR UP services (e.g., tutoring, mentoring); in fact, only college visits has a lower rate or reported nonparticipation. However, although it may be reasonable to assume that participation in career planning services may have had a positive effect on students' awareness or interest in various careers, the data do not speak to any such effect. It is difficult to draw further conclusions about students' career awareness and interest from the available data because the student survey is more focused on college than on career awareness or training.

Students' College Knowledge. The GEAR UP project does seem to be having a positive impact on some aspects of students' college awareness and knowledge. Site coordinators continue to report that students who attend college visits find them to be very valuable experiences in cultivating experiential learning about life on a college campus. Student and parent survey results corroborate site coordinators' perceptions that college visits are very helpful for students; college visits are routinely perceived to be the most beneficial services offered through GEAR UP. Students who participate in such activities, then, seem to be developing knowledge about college life (in addition to the application and admission processes and requirements, financial aid, and so on).

In a continuing positive trend, more 2014 Cohort students and parents in Year 4 had talked with school staff or GEAR UP representatives about college entrance requirements and the availability of financial aid than in previous years. About eight out of 10 students have been reached with this kind of key information. Further, about 9 out of 10 students have heard of the three different types of postsecondary institutions listed on the survey (two-year, four-year, and vocational schools). These

findings strongly suggest that the GEAR UP program is achieving its goals of disseminating information about college entrance requirements and financial aid to students and parents. The continuing increases observed in parents' responses are particularly encouraging given the difficulties some sites have had in engaging parents in GEAR UP activities.

Nearly all students in each year of the program (90% or more) have planned to continue their education beyond high school (with most students—60% or more—expecting to obtain a four-year degree). Similarly, about 90% of the students each year have indicated that they believe they have the ability to go to college. Further, they tend to be consistent in their perceptions that a person with a college degree generally earns more than a person without a college degree.

The majority of students and parents thought they could *probably* or *definitely* afford to attend a public four-year college using all available funds. The perceptions of 2014 students and parents appear to have improved in this area during Year 4, with a slightly higher percentage in both groups indicating that they believed college was *definitely* affordable. However, there were still fairly high rates of uncertainty, with about one fifth of the students and parents being unsure about college affordability. Further, students were most likely to indicate that the main barrier to postsecondary education was that it cost too much or they could not afford it (although fewer than 20% of students indicated that this was a barrier for them). The uncertainty about affordability may be somewhat related to a continuing lack of definitive knowledge about the actual costs of tuition.

Most students still overestimate or do not know the cost of one year's tuition at a public college or university in West Virginia. However, in Year 4, about one third of students were able to correctly identify the actual cost of tuition. The finding represents the highest level of accuracy yet observed among GEAR UP students and is a tremendous improvement from Year 3, when only 20% or less of students were able to correctly estimate tuition costs. About half the students continued to overestimated tuition costs, although 2014 Cohort students were least likely to do so. It could be that students simply do not know how much tuition costs; alternately, they may continue to misinterpret the term "tuition" (i.e., they could be offering estimates of the cost of tuition, all fees, room and board, and so on). Misunderstanding or lack of awareness about the actual costs of tuition may be contributing to students' lack of certainty about whether or not they can afford to attend a four-year college. However, the improvement in students' tuition knowledge is very promising.

Tuition awareness seems to have been a special emphasis in Year 4 of the GEAR UP program. Site coordinators and project staff may want to continue building on the successes observed in Year 4 to bolster such knowledge even more in Years 5 and 6. Site coordinators could combine tuition discussions with financial aid to further improve students' (and parents') knowledge of postsecondary costs and how they can be paid for.

Academic Development and Capacity. As with most other outcomes, evidence about changes in students' academic development and capacity are mixed. Year 4 students are no more likely to think that they work harder in school than their peers than they were in previous years; neither are they more likely to consider themselves good or excellent students. However, the majority of students in the GEAR UP and Priority cohorts do perceive that they are good or excellent students. About half of students participating in GEAR UP report that the program is helping to improve their academic preparation for college, representing a slight decline from Year 3. More detailed conclusions about students' academic development and capacity can be drawn when student

outcomes data (e.g., course completion, standardized test performance, ACT scores) become fully available[7].

Parent Knowledge. Parents' awareness of postsecondary issues appears to be increasing, continuing a positive trend first observed in Year 3. A greater percentage of parents in Year 4 reported having conversations about college entrance requirements and the availability of financial aid than in any of the previous years. In fact, for the first time, more than half of parents indicated having such conversations. About 60% of parents indicated being familiar with the entrance requirements for each of the three basic types of postsecondary schools. Further, the majority of parents had heard about most of the various types of financial aid sources listed on the survey, although federal work-study and institutional scholarships tended to be least familiar to the parents. In Year 4, two thirds of parents—more than in previous years—expected that their children would obtain a four-year college degree or higher. They held this expectation even though only 16% had earned a college degree themselves, and about half had a high school diploma or less. In Year 4 for the first time, 2014 Cohort students' and parents' perceptions regarding educational attainment were nearly identical.

Year 4 did see tremendous improvements in parents' understanding of the cost of one year of tuition at a public college or university in West Virginia. About 30% of parents correctly identified tuition costs—the highest percentage of correct estimates yet observed. However, about half of GEAR UP parents continued to overestimate the costs. The causes and effects of this lack of knowledge about tuition costs may be the same for parents as they are for students (e.g., misunderstanding of the term "tuition"; overestimates leading to decreased confidence that students can afford college). In fact, 27% parents said that the main reason their child might not continue education after high school was that it costs too much.

Taken together, these findings suggest that parents' awareness and expectations may be increasing as a result of GEAR UP services. It is a bit more difficult to ascertain whether their knowledge about college and related issues (e.g., financial aid) is increasing, although improvements in parents knowledge of tuition costs are very promising. Further, it is reasonable to expect that increased awareness and repeated exposure to high quality, highly credible, and valid information (as that provided through GEAR UP and CFWV) may serve to increase parents' knowledge.

Project staff and site coordinators may want to continue building on the successes observed in Year 4 to continue improving parents awareness and knowledge about postsecondary opportunities for their children.

Activities' Relation to Goals. Activities and services provided during Year 4 are focused on promoting the goals of the West Virginia GEAR UP project. Site coordinators' discussion of their activities and service data recorded in SCRIBE reveal that Year 4 services and activities relate well to the goal of increasing students'

West Virginia GEAR UP Goals

Goal 1: To significantly increase the academic performance and rigorous preparation of students for participation in postsecondary education.

Goal 2: To significantly increase the number of high poverty, at-risk students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

Goal 3: To significantly increase the rate of high school graduation and participation of students in postsecondary education.

Goal 4: To significantly increase cohort students' and families' knowledge of postsecondary educational institutions, admission requirements, and financial aid.

Goal 5: To ensure effective, efficient, and most appropriate use of resources through intentional collaboration with identified partners that are committed to GEAR UP goals.

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[7] Student outcomes data are reported by the participating counties and given to HEPC personnel who share them with evaluators, typically well after the school year has ended (allowing time to gather and report achievement test results, etc.). These data will be reported when they are available.

and parents' awareness and familiarity with postsecondary topics (e.g., financial aid, college options, campus life). Activities and resources are also designed and intended to enhance students' academic performance and preparation for the academic demands of postsecondary education (e.g., tutoring, ACT and other exam preparation). Structures and processes established by West Virginia GEAR UP staff are also designed to ensure efficient, effective, and appropriate use of resources.

Sustainability

Although sustainability will be more explicitly addressed in reporting for Year 5, program staff and site coordinators seem to have begun thinking about which project elements may be sustainable beyond the life of the project. Site coordinators and school staff appear to be uncertain about the sustainability of the program's efforts in the absence of grant funding. Given the use of GEAR UP funds to purchase technology and other relatively durable resources for schools (e.g., software, books), the project may leave behind tools and resources that schools can use for a few to several years after project funding ends. Other elements that would not be possible without GEAR UP funding (e.g., payment for dual enrollment courses and books, fully funded college visits) may not be sustainable when GEAR UP funding is no longer available. Although most schools and districts participating in the West Virginia GEAR UP project appear to be supportive of the work and intentions of the project, fiscal challenges may limit their abilities to continue the kinds of activities and work GEAR UP is helping them do at present.

Although not discussed in detail in this report, West Virginia GEAR UP staff and partners are making efforts to disseminate information about and findings from the project to various audiences, including local stakeholders (e.g., site coordinators, district and school personnel, state advisory board, other HEPC personnel) and national GEAR UP stakeholders (e.g., those attending the national GEAR UP conference). Dissemination efforts have included convening meetings for advisory board members and other local audiences; sharing information, reports, and announcements via the GEAR UP website; sharing updates and reports with district and school personnel via e-mail and phone calls; and attending and presenting at national conferences for GEAR UP project staff and other college access project personnel (e.g., the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships [NCCEP]/GEAR UP Annual Conference). Conference presentations seem to be well attended and received; advisory board members and local stakeholders also appear to be receptive to the information shared with them. At this time, it appears that the West Virginia GEAR UP project is experiencing some success in sharing information about the project with various stakeholders and is gaining national attention for certain aspects of the program (e.g., GEAR UP U!, HEROs).

Program staff may want to consider encouraging site coordinators to begin explicitly including a sustainability focus in their planning. For instance, as site coordinators plan services and activities for Year 5 and beyond, they could invite other school or district stakeholders into parts of the planning and implementation process in an effort to build greater organizational support for and experience with services that will help attain both GEAR UP and school or district goals. Given that the majority of school personnel believe that GEAR UP's goals are fully aligned with their own school and district goals, co-planning of activities to meet both kinds goals could be relatively easy and productive.

Project staff should continue efforts to disseminate information about the program broadly to many different stakeholders. Staff may want to consider whether new or expanded audiences may be interested in learning more about the West Virginia GEAR UP project. It may be particularly helpful to share information about the work of the project with other entities within the state, particularly legislative, civic, or business partners who may be able to provide funding, resources, or support to

continue the work after federal funding ends. Helping generate or build on local interest and support—particularly with business partners—to ensure students receive and are successful in their postsecondary education or training may help to ensure that the goals of the GEAR UP project become a permanent part of the mindset in the GEAR UP counties and West Virginia as a whole.

Other Considerations

Response rates for the student and parent surveys were better Year 3 to Year 4 in terms of representing the population of students served by GEAR UP. Response rates for both the parent and student surveys met federal expectations (50% of parents served and 80% of students). The improvements in student and parent survey response rates during Year 4 was due in large part to the transition of the survey to a primarily online format and the integration of the survey tracking with the SCRIBE system. Although many surveys—particularly those for parents—were still completed in paper form, evaluators were able to upload those data into the SCRIBE system for inclusion with other data collected online. SCRIBE functionality also prevented duplicate entries, whether through attempted online submission or through uploading of duplicate data. Using the survey and tracking/reporting capabilities of SCRIBE to implement and monitor completion of the surveys saved a great deal of time and enabled evaluation staff to focus efforts on helping site coordinators determine which students and parents to target for follow up in order to attain the required response rate. Another likely contributor to improvements in the survey response rates was the inclusion at many sites of HEROs clubs in the survey collection process. Many site coordinators encouraged their HEROs students to help collect or encourage the return of surveys. Incentives for HEROs clubs and site coordinators with the highest response rates were also offered by the evaluation team. Although the program did meet federally required response rates, efforts to encourage parent survey completion continued to be challenging for site coordinators. It could be that parents in the GEAR UP Cohort are experiencing some survey fatigue (e.g., from completing the same survey every year).

The annual GEAR UP evaluation surveys should continue to be hosted online within the SCRIBE survey portal to maximize the evaluation and project teams' abilities to track survey completion in real time. In addition to incentives offered to site coordinators and HEROs clubs for high response rates, other strategies for increasing should continue to be explored (e.g., an incentive such as a trophy or plaque for the school with the highest response rate). Evaluators should continue to work closely with GEAR UP staff and site coordinators to identify potential barriers to achieving the required response rate and to plan for contextually appropriate strategies for ensuring adequate response rates from students and parents served by the program.

Although students' aspirations have varied slightly over time, changes tend to be small, even when they are statistically significant. Among the four aspiration scales (*achiever orientation*, *leader orientation*, *positive environment*, and *teacher support*), students in both cohorts groups rate themselves highest in *achiever orientation*, and an increase in *leader orientation* was observed among both groups after three years of stability in the measure. These findings are positive, suggesting that the program may help students develop or maintain positive views of their own agency and efficacy. However, students in both cohorts tended to give the lowest ratings to *positive environment*, and the data for that measure are trending downward. Since the GEAR UP program tries to influence at least some aspects of the school environment, program staff may want to explore these findings in collaboration with site coordinators to determine what factors may be influencing students' perceptions of the school environment. Program and school staff may be able to work together to determine what, if anything, the program or other resources could change to influence perceptions in

a positive way. It is important to remember, however, that even the most negative findings in the student aspiration scales are still high ratings on the scale (with scale means exceeding the midpoint).

The West Virginia GEAR UP program should continue to explore opportunities to offer training, assistance, or support for initiatives aimed at fostering better or more supportive relationships among teachers and students. The mentoring component of the GEAR UP program may be a good starting point for further development and evaluative analysis. Because the development of good relationships with teachers is important for student success and the cultivation of a rigorous and supportive school culture, this area seems to be an important one on which to focus.

APPENDIX A

Year 4 Evaluation Participants and Data Collected

Year 4 Evaluation Participant Groups and Data Collected

Participant Group	Description	Year 4 Data
Priority Cohort	Students in Grades 11 and 12 at GEAR UP schools. These students receive GEAR UP services for two years (during both Grade 11 and Grade 12). These students are surveyed each year; although they may complete surveys twice, they are not tracked longitudinally.	Participation data (via SCRIBE, ongoing); student survey (winter)
2014 Cohort	Students in the graduating class of 2014. These students were enrolled in Grade 7 when the GEAR UP program began and were enrolled in Grade 10 during Year 4 (2011-2012 school year). Students in this group receive intensive GEAR UP services every year and will continue receiving such services until they graduate from high school. These students are surveyed each year and are tracked longitudinally.	Participation data (via SCRIBE, ongoing); student survey (winter)
2014 Cohort Parents	Parents of students in the 2014 Cohort. These parents are eligible to receive services through the GEAR UP program. Parents in this group are surveyed each year; they are tracked longitudinally.	Participation data (via SCRIBE, ongoing); parent survey (winter)
School Personnel	Professional staff (teachers, administrators, counselors, and others who work directly with students) at GEAR UP schools. School personnel are eligible to receive professional development, training, other services, and resources through the GEAR UP program.	Participation data (via SCRIBE, ongoing); school personnel survey (spring)
Site Coordinators	Site Coordinators, contractors for the West Virginia GEAR UP project, plan and implement GEAR UP services at each participating school.	Focus group discussions (end-of-year)

APPENDIX B

West Virginia GEAR UP Evaluation Questions

West Virginia GEAR UP Evaluation Questions

Implementation questions. The central question for the formative evaluation is the degree to which the West Virginia GEAR UP activities are being implemented as planned. This is referred to as the formative question, or "F." The evaluators also will examine the degree to which the activities are producing the outputs intended.

F1. Are project activities being implemented with fidelity to the design?
F2. Are services to students, parents, and schools/teachers achieving the desired reach?
F3. How do stakeholders perceive the quality of project activities, interventions, products, and outputs?
F4. What problems have emerged in implementing project activities and interventions, and how are they being resolved by those responsible for delivery?
F5. How effectively, efficiently, and appropriately are (a) resources being used, and (b) partners collaborating toward GEAR UP goals?

Outcome questions. The evaluation includes a number of questions relating to the outcomes the West Virginia GEAR UP project is intended to achieve. These are organized by project objective (O), with the addition of O9, which aligns with all objectives.

O1. To what extent does GEAR UP increase student interest and involvement in school?
O2. To what extent is student academic achievement increasing?
O3. To what extent does GEAR UP promote student academic progression?
O4. To what extent does GEAR UP promote student career awareness and interests?
O5. To what extent does GEAR UP promote students' "college knowledge"?
O6. Does student participation in postsecondary opportunities increase?
O7. To what extent do GEAR UP activities promote academic development and capacity of GEAR UP schools and educators?
O8. To what extent does GEAR UP increase parent knowledge of college admissions and financial aid?
O9. How do activities and interventions, and other variables, relate to the above goals?

Sustainability questions. Through reviews of the development and use of the college information Web portal, project staff interviews, site coordinator focus groups, school personnel surveys, and project documentation review, the evaluation team will examine the degree to which this GEAR UP model shows promise to be sustainable and transferable.

S1. How, to whom, and how successfully is project information being disseminated?
S2. Which, if any, project elements appear to be sustainable beyond the life of the grant?