West Virginia GEAR UP Year 4 Annual Evaluation Report

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I. Introduction

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) is midway through its second consecutive Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant, which began in 2014 and ends in 2021. GEAR UP is designed to help high school students access and succeed in postsecondary education (PSE).

Such goals are ambitious for the 10 counties currently served by West Virginia (WV) GEAR UP, in a state where many face a stagnant economy, pervasive poverty, low rates of educational attainment, and an accelerating opioid epidemic that threatens families and entire communities with disintegration.

According to the most recent available data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2017a), West Virginia's per capita income was $24,002 in 2016, and median household income between 2012 and 2016 was $42,644. The poverty rate was 19% in 2016 and there was a 1.2% decline in total employment in the state between 2015 and 2016. Based on a comparison of county-level data for three economic indicators—three-year average unemployment rate, per capita market income, and poverty rate—with national averages, in 2018, the Appalachian Regional Commission (2018) classified 15 counties in West Virginia as economically distressed for FY2019 (see Figure 1). Another 15 counties in the state were considered "at-risk." Of the 10 counties participating in the GEAR UP program, six counties were classified as economically distressed and the other four counties were classified as at-risk.

West Virginia's educational attainment rates are below the U.S. average, which has real economic impacts in terms of future job and wage-earning prospects of West Virginians and the ability of the state to attract employers. According to the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau, compared to the national average, West Virginia has a higher share of adults with no education beyond a high school degree and a lower share of adults with PSE. Specifically, of West Virginians who are aged 25 years and older, 40.5% had a high school degree (compared to 27.5% nationally), 18.5% had some college (compared to 21.0% nationally), 6.8% had an Associate's degree (compared to 8.2% nationally), and 19.6% had a Bachelor's degree or higher (compared to 30.3% nationally) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017b). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) 10-year job growth projections released in 2017 (and updated in 2018), of the 30 fastest growing occupations, 18 generally require some level of PSE (Gonser, 2017; BLS, 2018a). In addition, jobs that require postsecondary credentials, such as a certificate, an Associate's degree, or a Bachelor's degree, are projected to grow twice as

quickly; jobs that require a Master's degree are projected to grow three times as quickly as those requiring only a high school diploma (BLS, 2018b).

The difficult economic circumstances of many West Virginians are only compounded by the opioid crisis that dominates current media coverage of the state. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported in 2016 that West Virginia has the highest rate of death due to drug overdose in the nation (52.0 per 100,000), substantially ahead of the next most afflicted state, Ohio (39.1 per 100,000). Additionally, the drug overdose rate in West Virginia has increased to a statistically significant degree since 2015 (41.5 per 100,000), when it also had the highest rate in the U.S.

The CDC also provided county-level data on drug overdose deaths and categorized those data into 10 categories, ranging from 12–13.9 deaths per 100,000 population (the lowest category) to 30+ deaths per 100,000 population (the highest category). As shown in Figure 2, out of West Virginia's 55 counties, 19 counties (or 35%) fell into the highest category. In addition, of the 10 GEAR UP counties, 8 counties fell into the highest category and two other counties were substantially high as well (26–27.9 deaths and 20–21.9 deaths per 100,000 population, respectively).

Especially notable is the impact of the opioid crisis on children. The opioid epidemic only further compounds the educational challenges already faced by children in the state. Children growing up in families with parents or guardians struggling with opioid addiction are far more likely to be neglected and removed from their homes (University of South Florida, 2018). One study found that there is a direct correlation between opioid use and parental neglect where "for every additional 6.7 opioid prescriptions per 100 people, the removal rate for parental neglect increased by 32%" (University of South Florida, 2018). This displacement puts a strain on the foster care system, where children are frequently moved and not given a stable family life (Simon, 2017). In West Virginia, the number of children in foster care grew by 24% between 2012 and 2016, according to the state's Department of Health & Human Resources (Whalen, 2016). The number of children removed from parental care in West Virginia because of drug abuse rose from 970 in 2006 to 2,171 in 2016 (Talbot, 2017).

When children are officially removed from their homes and placed in foster care or even when they unofficially move into the homes of family members or friends, among other impacts there are implications related to the process of applying for financial aid, which may further hinder college access and education attainment. Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is more complicated for nontraditional families; students are expected to report their parents' income—even if they may not be living with their parents (Nerd Wallet, 2018). Grandparents, foster parents, and legal guardians are not considered parents on the FAFSA and the process for students in these situations is not clear. Ultimately, this poses extra hurdles to accessing financial aid for those students who may need it the most.

In the midst of these challenges, there has been uncertainty in the state political landscape as it pertains to education. West Virginia teachers went on strike in February 2018 due to rising healthcare costs and low wages, which shut down schools in all 55 counties and impacted approximately 275,000 students (Rhodan, 2018). Teachers ultimately received a pay raise, which ended the strike in March 2018 (Bidgood, 2018).

The incredible economic, educational, and public health challenges in West Virginia underscore the importance of the WV GEAR UP grant, the important work of the WVHEPC to solidify the state's access to and success in higher education, and the achievements that have been accomplished thus far. For example, the state's four-year high school graduation rate in 2016–2017 was 89.4%, nearly 14 percentage points higher than the 2008–09 rate of 75.5% (West Virginia Department of Education, n.d.). In addition, the 2017 West Virginia Higher Education Report Card found that the total number of degrees and credentials awarded at the state's public postsecondary institutions increased by 23.5% from 2007 to 2016 (WVHEPC, 2018). Not only does GEAR UP aim to support these trends in the 10 counties participating in the grant, but WVHEPC, the West Virginia Community and Technical College System, and the College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV), with support of the Lumina Foundation, have put forth a new campaign to boldly increase college access and success statewide. West Virginia's Climb aims to ensure that at least 60% of West Virginians have a postsecondary credential by 2030 (West Virginia's Climb, 2018).

1. GEAR UP Evaluation Design

WVHEPC contracted with ICF to provide an external program evaluation of WV GEAR UP. ICF's evaluation framework includes four components: (1) a program **implementation study** to assist the WVHEPC in determining the fidelity with which program activities were delivered and to inform the WVHEPC of any facilitators or barriers to implementation; (2) a summative **outcomes study** to ascertain the extent to which data-informed benchmarks, identified in concert with the WVHEPC, are achieved; (3) various **impact studies** with quasi-experimental (QED) and randomized control trial (RCT) designs to address selected program outcomes and impacts; and (4) a **sustainability study** to inform WVHEPC about how the GEAR UP program could continue to have an impact after the grant ends.

2. Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on evaluation findings from the analysis of data collected through surveys and interviews through Year 4 and to translate those findings into evidence-informed recommendations for program improvement.

As of Year 4, the ICF evaluation team has collected survey outcome data from three separate groups of students. These groups of students are referred to as "non-priority groups" and include (1) the class of 2019, who do not receive direct GEAR UP services and serve as a retrospective comparison group for the evaluation (R-Comp); (2) the class of 2020, who receive direct, sustained support through GEAR UP from grade 7 through the first year of college and represent the "treatment" group for the purposes of the evaluation (cohort), and (3) the class of 2021, who do not receive direct GEAR UP services, an serve as a future comparison group for the evaluation (F-Comp). Table 1 depicts the survey schedule for these three groups for the first four years of the evaluation of WV GEAR UP.

Table 1. Years 1–4 Survey Collection Schedule for R-Comp, Cohort, and F-Comp Student Groups

Group	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Class of 2019 (R-Comp)	Grade 08	N/C	Grade 10	N/C
Class of 2020 (Cohort)	Grade 07	Grade 08	Grade 09	Grade 10
Class of 2021 (F-Comp)	N/C	N/C	Grade 08	N/C

N/C = Data not collected this year

One of the evaluation team's objectives for the summative outcome study of WV GEAR UP is to provide annual comparisons of grade-alike students and their parents/guardians across the R-Comp, cohort, and F-Comp groups. These cross-sectional comparisons allow for some insights into how outcomes differ across groups who vary in their exposure to GEAR UP services. As noted in Table 1, in Year 4, the evaluation team had the opportunity to compare the Year 4 cohort group with the Year 3 R-Comp group—which includes 10th graders and their parents/guardians in both groups. Examining key differences between the cohort and R-Comp groups estimates potential impact of GEAR UP across a range of outcomes.

In addition to this cross-sectional comparison, the evaluation team also examines changes in cohort students and their parents/guardians over time. In Year 4, the evaluation team primarily focused on comparing selected outcomes between Year 4 and Year 3. While it is considered favorable for the cohort to become increasingly knowledgeable about and prepared for PSE, it is also important to sustain any successful outcomes achieved in prior years; the longitudinal comparison helps to show the degree to which the cohort is accomplishing both objectives.

The evaluation team also collects data annually from all school personnel in WV GEAR UP schools, with the primary goal of measuring the adoption and use of practices that support a positive college-going culture (CGC) among faculty and staff. This includes adherence to high standards or academic rigor and high expectations for students and the presence of visual cues and provision of material resources and support that reinforce the view that PSE is possible for all students. Thus far, the evaluation team has measured these concepts in Years 1–4 using an annual survey administered to all personnel in GEAR UP schools. In Years 1–2, while the

cohort was still in middle school but the grant was also serving priority seniors, the survey was designed and administered to personnel serving students in grades 6–12. In Year 3, when the cohort transitioned to high school, the survey was modified and administered to all personnel serving grades 9–12, as was the case again in Year 4. This report primarily focuses on longitudinal comparisons among school personnel between Years 3 and 4 and also between Years 1 and 4.

Gathering ground-level perspectives about the program, facilitators and barriers to successful implementation, and bringing to the surface the experiences of program staff in their own words, are critical components of the implementation study of WV GEAR UP. The primary information source for collecting this information is a series of annual face-to-face interviews conducted with site coordinators who are tasked with implementing GEAR UP in participating sites. In addition to these interviews, in Year 4, the evaluation team also conducted interviews with another key stakeholder group—mentors. A description of these data sources and evaluation methods, along with a summary and interpretation of findings from these interviews, are included in this report. Recommendations based on evaluation findings through Year 4 are provided at the end.

II. Data Sources

This report draws on data collected from students, parents, and program personnel through surveys and interviews. The instruments used to collect these data are described in further detail in this section.

1. Year 4 Surveys

In collaboration with WVHEPC, ICF developed student, parent/guardian, and school personnel surveys to be administered in Year 4 of the program. Appendix A includes a reproduction of these surveys.

1.1 Year 4 WV GEAR UP Student Survey

The Year 4 WV GEAR UP Student Survey included 25 items organized across five sections. Ten were demographic items designed to gather background information about respondents and their families. Seven items measured students' perceived academic ability, educational goals, and college-going self-efficacy (CGSE) and college-going outcomes-expectations (CGOE). Eight items measured students' knowledge and awareness about college-related topics, the perceived cost of attending college, and various financial aid options. Of those, one item measured the importance of various information sources in helping students gather information about their PSE options. One multi-part item was also added in Year 4 to measure student-reported grit.[1]

[1] In the Year 4 Interim Evaluation Report, the evaluation team reported on findings related to grit. In addition, the team noted the unreliability of the instrument. For these reasons, results related to grit are not discussed in this report. In addition, the evaluation team and WVHEPC decided jointly to remove the grit question from future surveys.

1.2 Year 4 WV GEAR UP Parent/Guardian Survey

The Year 4 WV GEAR UP Parent/Guardian Survey included 22 items organized across three sections. Eleven were demographic items designed to gather background information about respondents and their children. Four items measured parent/guardian perceptions of their child's educational goals and their own expectations for their child. Six items measured parent/guardian knowledge and awareness of college-related topics, the perceived cost of attending college, and various financial aid options. One item measured the importance of various information sources in helping parents/guardians gather information about their child's PSE options.

1.3 Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Survey

In Year 4, the School Personnel Survey included 14 items. Five items were demographic questions designed to gather information about respondents' primary roles, school location, grade level(s) served, and number of years employed in school personnel. Two subscales measured faculty member perceptions of CGC in their schools and classrooms, with 10 prompts examining the rigor and expectations dimension of CGC, and 9 measuring the visual cues/material resources dimension. These items were consistent with Year 3 survey items.

Additional items asked school personnel survey respondents to rate their level of involvement in college-related activities in their school and their level of comfort with their knowledge to assist students with various college-related topics. Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements about the overall experience provided through GEAR UP, how often they participated in GEAR UP activities, and to rate how effective GEAR UP activities were in helping students to succeed in school and prepare for college. A series of items was also asked to measure school faculty members' perceptions of the college-going efficacy of the students in their schools. Lastly, school members were asked about the likelihood that various GEAR UP activities would be sustained after the grant ends.

2. Year 4 Interview and Focus Group Protocols

2.1 Year 4 WV GEAR UP Mentor Interview Protocol

With substantial input from the WVHEPC, ICF developed an interview protocol for the mentor interviews that occurred in spring 2018. This protocol featured a script for the interviewer and an informed consent form. Appendix A provides a reproduction of the interview protocol. This protocol consisted of 12 prompts with a series of sub-questions and probes. Prompts included mentor responsibilities, training, on-going support for mentors, student selection, challenges facing students, successes/challenges in delivering the curriculum, perceptions of workshops, use of resources/websites, success in conducting one-on-one check-ins, use of deep dive and booster sessions, student involvement, and impact.

2.2 Year 4 WV GEAR UP Site Coordinator Focus Group Protocol

The evaluation team developed a revised site coordinator focus group facilitation protocol for the Year 4 evaluation of WV GEAR UP. The protocol included a facilitator script and informed

consent form. Appendix A provides a reproduction of the focus group protocol. The Year 4 protocol included nine prompts with a series of sub-questions and probes. Prompts included implementation and buy-in, interaction with the WVHEPC, partnerships, parent involvement, priority students, college visits/preparation, coordinator roles, impact and sustainability, and closing.

III. Methods

The following section describes the WV GEAR UP evaluation participants, instrument administration methods, and analytic approaches used in the development of this report.

1. Evaluation Participants and Data Collection Methods

1.1 Students

Student surveys in Year 4 were administered online to all grade 10 students who were enrolled in WV GEAR UP schools during the 2017–18 school year. Also included in the analysis are students in the R-Comp group who responded to the survey in Year 3 when they were in grade 10.

Depending on their needs, individual schools utilized different settings for student survey administration. Some students completed surveys on their home computers and others on school computers or mobile devices. Survey links and scannable Quick Response (QR) codes were made available for the student survey and promotional materials/reminders were sent home to parents/guardians and publicized on the WV GEAR UP website. Paper/pencil versions of the student surveys were offered as an accommodation for students who could not access content using a computer and for any students whose parent/guardian explicitly requested that the student not be allowed to access a computer. The Year 4 student response rate was 84%.

1.2 Parents/Guardians

The evaluation team administered parent/guardian surveys in Year 4 in both online and in paper/pencil formats to a single parent/guardian for each student that was enrolled in grade 10 at the participating schools during the 2017–18 school year. Also included in the analysis are parents/guardians of students in the R-Comp group who responded to the survey in Year 3 when their students were in grade 10. The Year 4 parent/guardian response rate was 37%.

1.3 School Personnel

The WV GEAR UP school personnel survey is administered from May to June of each academic year. In Year 4, the survey was administered online to all grade 9–12 teachers, counselors, site coordinators, and school administrators employed in WV GEAR UP schools. For each year, the evaluation team utilized the Standardized Collection and Reporting of Information Benefitting Education (SCRIBE) system to administer the surveys. Each year, site coordinators were provided with a link to the survey during a regularly scheduled site

coordinator meeting and instructed to distribute the link to school personnel. The link was also embedded on the WV GEAR UP website.

Ultimately, 800 school personnel members completed the Year 1 survey, 805 completed the Year 2 survey, and 563 completed the survey in Year 3. A total of 600 completed the survey in Year 4. Unique respondent IDs were only collected in Year 1. As a result, it is not possible to assess the number of school personnel who completed the surveys in multiple years.

1.4 Mentors

In spring 2018, the evaluation team conducted one-to-one telephone interviews with 15 mentors responsible for implementing the Student Success Societies (SSS) program at their schools. Seven of these mentors were at three schools where ICF conducted an RCT study of mentoring during the 2016–17 school year. As the Year 4 Interim Evaluation Report covered mentors' views of programs during that period, this report focuses on perceptions of implementation during the 2017–18 school year, after the period of the RCT. In addition, ICF interviewed eight other mentors from non-RCT schools in spring 2018.

1.5 Site Coordinators

Site coordinators from all GEAR UP schools were invited to participate in one of three focus groups during Year 4. Overall, 23 site coordinators from 19 high schools participated. Focus groups were conducted in three groups with two groups having eight site coordinators and one group having seven site coordinators. All focus groups were conducted in person during a regularly scheduled site coordinator meeting in May 2018.

2. Analytic Approach

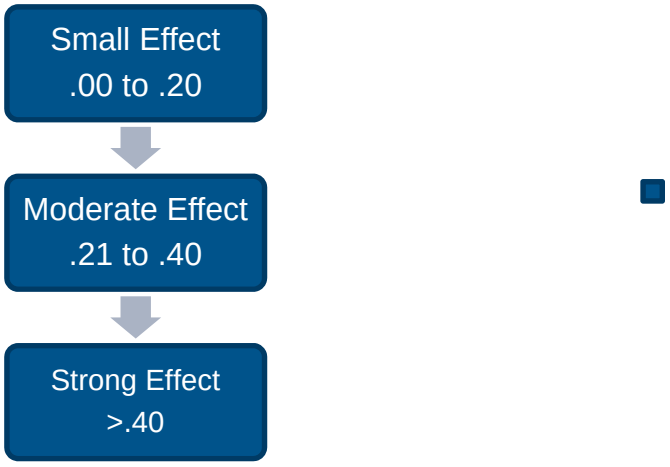
2.1 Student and Parent Surveys

To examine changes in survey outcomes for program participants from Year 1 to Year 4 of WV GEAR UP, the evaluation team conducted longitudinal analyses of cohort survey responses from all four years, with a particular focus on changes between Years 3 and 4. For this report, the evaluation team did not require that each survey respondent had both a Year 1 and Year 2 survey record. Additionally, survey outcomes from Year 4 cohort group respondents and Year 3 R-Comp group respondents, when both were in grade 10, were compared.

The evaluation team used descriptive and comparative statistical analyses when examining trends in survey outcomes across time. Mean values for continuous outcomes and the frequency of responses for categorical outcomes are presented. When looking for significant differences across years of cohort respondents, the evaluation team focused on the transition from Year 3 to Year 4. The evaluation team used independent samples t-tests for continuous outcomes and chi-square analyses for categorical outcomes. For these analyses, the evaluation team interpreted statistically significant differences using common effect size calculations.

For chi-square analyses, the evaluation team interpreted *Phi* or *Cramer's V*, as appropriate depending on the number of degrees of freedom in the categorical data. For independent samples t-tests, the evaluation team used Cohen's *d*. See Figure 3 for the interpretations used.

Figure 3. Effect Size Interpretations for Cohen's d, Cramer's V, and Phi



2.2 School Personnel Surveys

The evaluation team used descriptive statistical analyses when examining differences in survey outcomes across groups of students and across years of time. For all groups and time periods examined, the evaluation team presents sample sizes, mean values, and standard deviations for continuous outcomes, and the frequency count and percentages of responses for categorical outcomes. For any significance tests, the evaluation team used independent samples t-tests and analyses of variance (ANOVA) for continuous outcomes and chi-square analyses for categorical outcomes. When overall tests showed statistically significant differences, the evaluation team then conducted separate post-hoc comparisons and interpreted the differences across various groups of respondents using a common effect size estimate, Cohen's *d*.

2.3 Mentor and Site Coordinator Interviews

After conducting interviews with 15 mentors, the evaluation team analyzed interview transcripts and coded results under six themes:

- **Roles and responsibilities**, including the responsibilities of each mentor and their other roles within the school (i.e., teacher, assistant principal);
- **Mentor training and ongoing support**, such as mentors' feedback on SSS training provided by the WVHEPC and ongoing support from WV GEAR UP regional program directors and school site coordinators;
- **Student recruitment and selection**, with primary focus on the selection process at all schools, mentors' views of this selection process, and the commonalities/differences they perceive in characteristics of the selected students;
- **Implementation**, including the frequency of SSS meetings, mentors' access to students, and other school-level implementation factors affecting the success of the project;
- **Use of curriculum and resources**, such as the successes and challenges in implementing the formal curriculum plus mentor use of resources/web sites, one-to-one check-ins, and deep dives/group projects; and

- **Impact/lessons learned,** including mentors' perceptions of the program's impact on students' grades, attendance, disciplinary referrals, and social-emotional health.

For the site coordinator focus groups, ICF coded all data using three primary themes: Implementation, Impact/Outcomes, and Sustainability. The review of implementation included analysis by prominent sub-themes to emerge from these focus groups including partnerships with colleges and universities, FAFSA completion initiatives, college acceptance programming, and the stability/evolution of GEAR UP programs. For both mentor interviews and site coordinator focus groups, the evaluation team describes the results in narrative form supported by illustrative quotes.

IV. Results

To examine changes in survey outcomes for program participants from Year 1 to Year 4 of WV GEAR UP, longitudinal analyses of cohort survey responses from all four years were conducted for both parents/guardians and students. Additionally, survey outcomes from Year 4 cohort respondents and Year 3 R-Comp respondents, when both were in grade 10, were compared to help assess impact of GEAR UP services on cohort students. Comparing parent/guardian responses in Year 4 to responses in Year 3 should be done with extreme caution due to low response rates from Year 3 cohort and R-Comp parents (21% and 17%, respectively).

1. Student and Parent Survey Outcomes

1.1 Characteristics of Respondents

1.1.1 Survey Response Rates

Response rates of cohort students and parents from Year 1 to Year 4 as well as Year 3 R-Comp students and parents are reported in Table 2. As noted in the table, the parent response rates in Year 3 for R-Comp and cohort groups were quite low, 17% and 21%, respectively, and so caution should be exercised when making comparisons between those groups and Year 4 cohort parents/guardians.

Table 2. Survey Response Rates

Group	Total Respondents	Total Surveys Administered	Percentage Responding
Year 4 Cohort Student	2,323	2,720	85%
Year 3 R-Comp Student	2,069	2,882	72%
Year 3 Cohort Student	2,401	2,912	82%
Year 2 Cohort Student	2,504	2,847	88%
Year 1 Cohort Student	2,489	2,892	86%
Year 4 Cohort Parent	1,000	2,720	37%
Year 3 R-Comp Parent	483	2,882	17%
Year 3 Cohort Parent	616	2,912	21%
Year 2 Cohort Parent	1,323	2,847	46%
Year 1 Cohort Parent	1,388	2,892	48%

1.1.2 Student Demographics

Table 3 provides information on student-reported demographics, including race, ethnicity, gender, language spoken at home, family income, highest level of education of mother or female guardian, and highest level of education of father or male guardian. Because nearly half of students still did not know or elected not to report their family income in Year 4, the evaluation team also examined the distribution for the subset of students who provided a response other than *I don't know or I'd rather not say.* It should be noted that these subsamples from cohort students in Year 3 and Year 4 include 54% and 58% of students, respectively, as well as 53% of the Year 3 R-Comp students. The distribution of responses for race, ethnicity, gender, language spoken at home, and family income among Year 3 cohort and R-Comp students was not statistically different when compared to Year 4 cohort students.

The distribution of student-reported highest level of education of mothers/female guardians and fathers/male guardians was statistically significant; however, when comparing Year 3 and Year 4 cohort student responses with only a small effect size, differences between R-Comp and Year 4 cohort students were not significant.[2] The largest difference in responses was for *Don't know* for mother/female guardian (five percentage points) and less than a two-year degree for father/male guardian (five percentage points). One potential explanation for this difference is that the older students (grade 10) in the Year 4 cohort and R-Comp groups may have started to have more conversations with their parents/guardians regarding PSE—in comparison to the younger students (grade 9) in the Year 3 cohort group—and so had learned the education of their parents/guardians.

Additionally, when comparing the Year 4 cohort and Year 3 R-Comp distribution of responses for family income, the difference was statistically significant; differences between Year 4 and Year 3 cohort students were not significant.[3] The response option with the largest difference was *More than $100,000.*

[2]Mother/female guardian's highest level of education X^2 (2) = 24.56, p<.001 (V = .07); Father/male guardian's highest level of education: X^2 (2) = 13.40, p<.01 (V = .05)
[3]X^2 (4) = 14.40, p<.01 (V = .06)

Table 3. Student Demographics

	Year 4 Cohort	Year 3 R-Comp	Year 3 Cohort
Race			
Asian	0%	1%	0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	1%	0%
Black or African American	4%	4%	4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%	<1%	0%
White	91%	91%	91%
Two or more races	4%	4%	4%
Ethnicity			
Hispanic or Latino	5%	5%	5%
Gender			
Female	50%	50%	47%
Male	50%	49%	52%
Other	1%	0%	1%
Language Spoken at Home			
English	99%	99%	100%
Spanish	<1%	1%	<0%
Other	0%	0%	0%
Family Income			
(*Including Those Who Did Not Report*)*			
$30,000 or less	16%	14%	16%
$30,001-$60,000	18%	17%	19%
$60,001-$100,000	17%	14%	16%
More than $100,000	7%	8%	5%
I don't know/ I'd rather not say/ Not reported	42%	47%	45%
(*Including Only Those Who Did Report*)			
$30,000 or less	28%	27%	28%
$30,001-$60,000	32%	32%	34%
$60,001-$100,000	29%	27%	28%
More than $100,000	12%	14%	10%
Highest Level of Education of Mother or Female Guardian**			
Less than a 2-year degree	52%	61%	51%
2-year degree or higher	34%	23%	30%
Don't know	15%	16%	20%
Highest Level of Education of Father or Male Guardian***			
Less than a 2-year degree	63%	66%	58%
2-year degree or higher	18%	12%	18%
Don't know	20%	22%	24%

Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Student Survey and Year 3 WV GEAR UP Student Survey
Note: The numbers are rounded to the nearest integer and may not add up to 100%.
*Differences in Year 3 R-Comp and Year 4 cohort students were statistically significant (p<.01).
**Differences in Year 3 and Year 4 cohort students were statistically significant (p<.001).
***Differences in Year 3 and Year 4 cohort students were statistically significant (p<.01).

1.1.3 Parent/Guardian Demographics

Table 4 provides information on parent/guardian-reported demographics, including relationship to student, race, ethnicity, language spoken at home, family income, highest level of education of student's mother or female guardian, and highest level of education of student's father or male guardian. Distribution of responses for relationship, race, ethnicity, language spoken at home, family income, and father/male guardian's highest level of education among Year 3 cohort and R-Comp students was not statistically different when compared to Year 4 cohort students. However, the distribution of highest level of education of mothers/female guardians

was statistically significant when comparing both Year 3 cohort and R-Comp parents/guardians with Year 4 cohort parent/guardian responses with only a small effect size.[4,5]

Table 4. Parent/Guardian Demographics

	Year 4 Cohort	Year 3 R-Comp	Year 3 Cohort
Relationship			
Parent or guardian	92%	92%	93%
Grandparent	6%	6%	5%
Step/foster parent	2%	3%	2%
Race			
Asian	0%	<1%	<1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	<1%	1%
Black or African American	3%	2%	5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%	<1%	0%
White	95%	96%	92%
Two or more races	1%	1%	2%
Ethnicity			
Hispanic or Latino	3%	5%	2%
Language Spoken at Home			
English	99%	100%	99%
Spanish	1%	<0%	1%
Other	0%	0%	0%
Family Income			
(*Not Including Those Who Did Not Report*)			
$30,000 or less	29%	30%	31%
$30,001-$60,000	33%	34%	34%
$60,001-$100,000	27%	25%	25%
More than $100,000	11%	11%	10%
Highest Level of Education of Mother or Female Guardian*			
Less than a 2-year degree	63%	68%	54%
2-year degree or higher	33%	27%	41%
Don't know	5%	5%	5%
Highest Level of Education of Father or Male Guardian			
Less than a 2-year degree	72%	78%	67%
2-year degree or higher	21%	16%	25%
Don't know	7%	7%	7%

Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey and Year 3 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey.
Note: The numbers are rounded to integer and may not add up to 100%.
*Differences in Year 3 R-Comp and Year 4 cohort as well as Year 3 and Year 4 cohort parents/guardians were statistically significant (p<.01).

1.2 Educational Goals, Aspirations, and Academic Confidence

1.2.1 Plans to Continue Education after High School

All students were asked to indicate whether or not they planned to continue their education after high school. Ninety percent of cohort students responded that they plan to continue their education after high school in Year 4, which is statistically unchanged from Year 3 (91%). Of the 10% of students who reported they do not plan to continue their education, the most commonly

[4] Cohort: X^2 (2) = 12.16, p<.01 (V = .09); R-Comp: X^2 (2) = 9.45, p<.01 (V = .08)
[5] Statistically significant differences between the parent/guardian samples in Year 3 and Year 4 should be interpreted with caution due to low response rates.

reported reason for not doing so was *I want to work* (45%), which was the same in Years 2 and 3, as well. Cohort students selected *family issues* as the least often reason in all four years.

Like cohort students, most R-Comp students (89%) reported that they plan to continue education after high school. Of the remaining 11% of R-Comp students who do not plan to continue their education after high school, the most frequently selected reason was, as it was with the cohort students, because they *want to work* (42%). There were no statistically significant differences in the responses selected by Year 3 R-Comp students and Year 4 cohort students.

1.2.2 Academic Confidence

Students next rated their academic confidence across seven content areas (i.e., math, English/language arts, science, study skills, ability to pass end-of-year tests [test taking], ability to do well in college-level courses in the future [college courses], and ability to pass college entrance exams in the future [college entrance exams]) using a four-point scale (i.e., *1 = Not Confident, 2 = Confident, 3 = Very Confident*, and *4 = Don't Know*). When calculating the mean score for each of the survey items, the evaluation team excluded the option *Don't Know*.

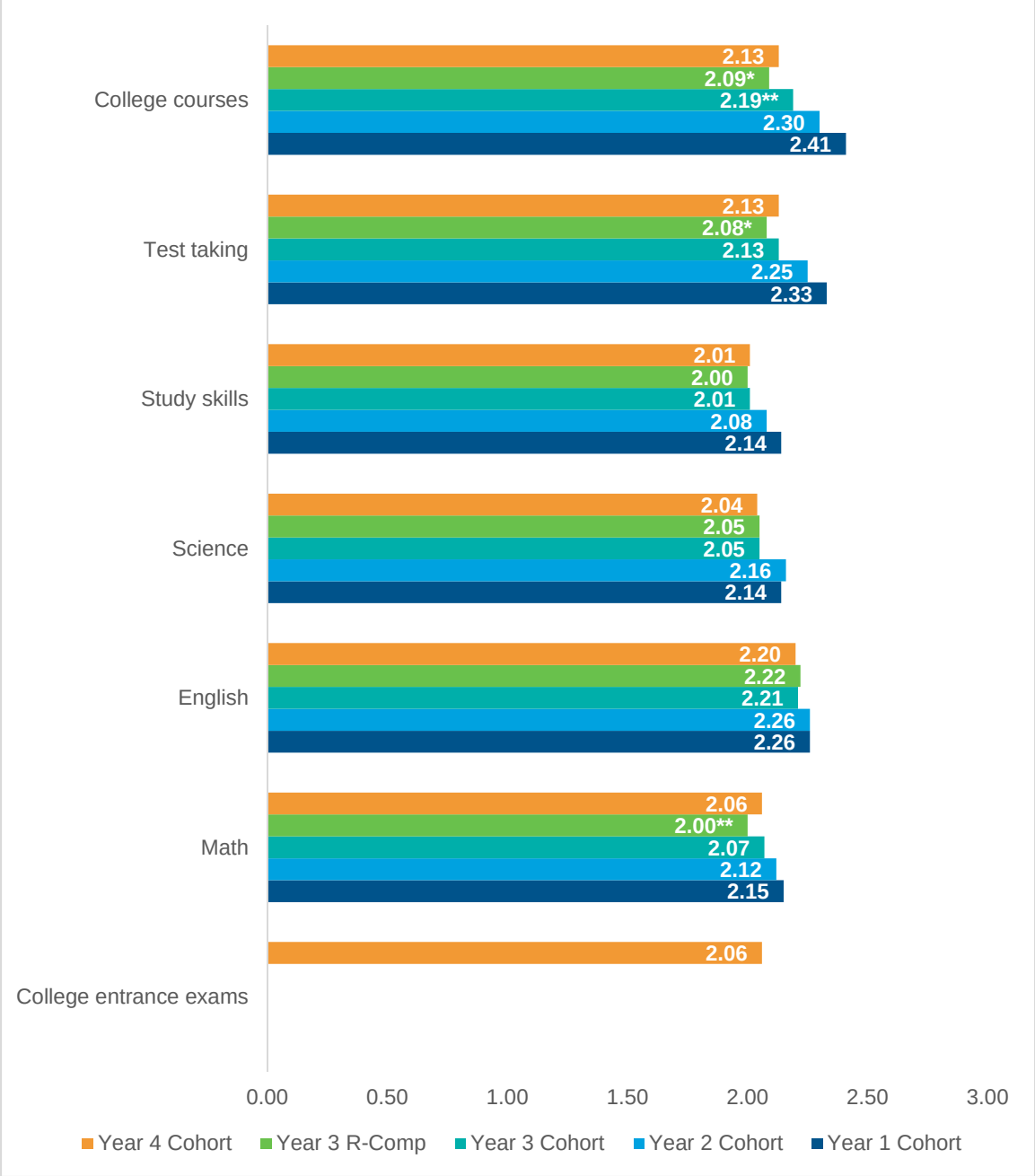
Overall, as shown in Figure 4, cohort students exhibited statistically similar self-confidence in Year 4 as they did in Year 3, with a couple exceptions. College entrance exams were not asked about in Year 3, so no longitudinal comparisons can be made. In addition, cohort students had a statistically significant decrease in self-confidence from Year 3 to Year 4 regarding the general ability to do well in college courses in the future; however, the effect size was small (d = -.09).[6]

Results from an ANOVA showed that Year 4 cohort students had significantly higher mean confidence scores than Year 3 R-Comp students in math (d = .08), ability to do well in college courses (d = .06), and ability to pass end-of-year tests (d = .08).[7] The effect sizes for each of the significant differences were small.

[6] $t(4{,}036.83) = 2.63$, $p < .01$

[7] Math: $t(4{,}119.74) = -2.80$, $p < .01$; College courses: $t(3{,}767) = -2.00$, $p < .05$;Test taking: $t(3{,}882.39) = -2.36$, $p < .05$

Figure 4. Students' Academic Confidence in Content Areas



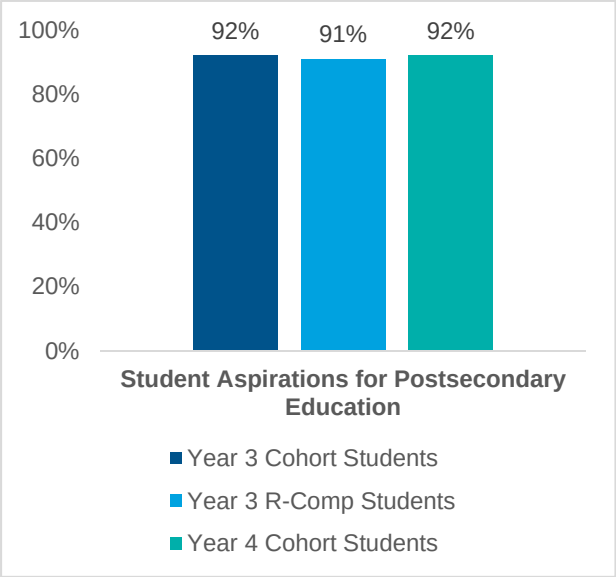
Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 3 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 2 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, and Year 1 WV GEAR UP Student Survey.
*Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.05).
**Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.01).

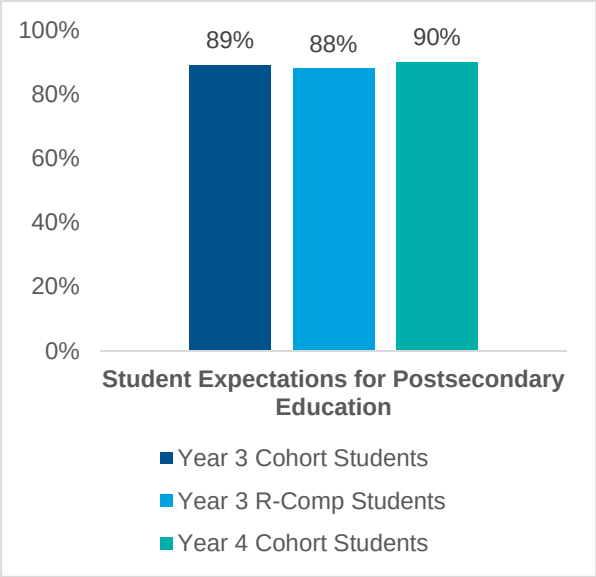
1.2.3 Educational Aspirations/Expectations

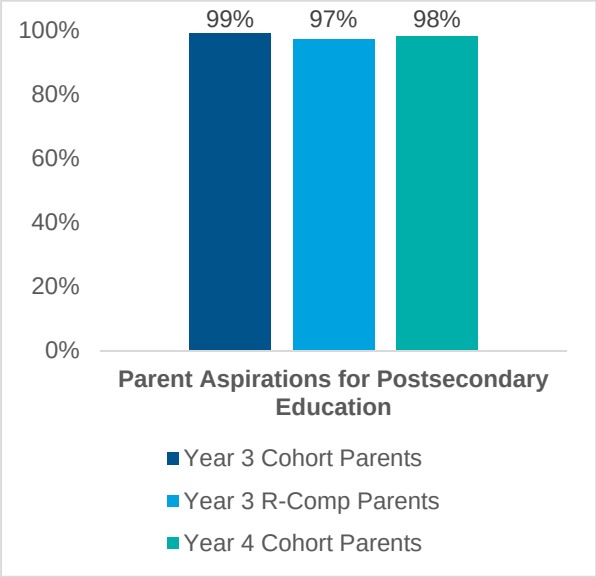
Students and parents/guardians were next asked to indicate the levels of education to which they, or their child, aspired and expected to achieve. For these items, the survey included five response options: *(1) high school or less, (2) some college, (3) a two-year college degree, (4) a four-year college degree*, and *(5) more than a four-year college degree*. To ease interpretation of the findings, the evaluation team combined the last four options into a category labeled, "postsecondary education." "Postsecondary education" may include certificates, skill sets, or

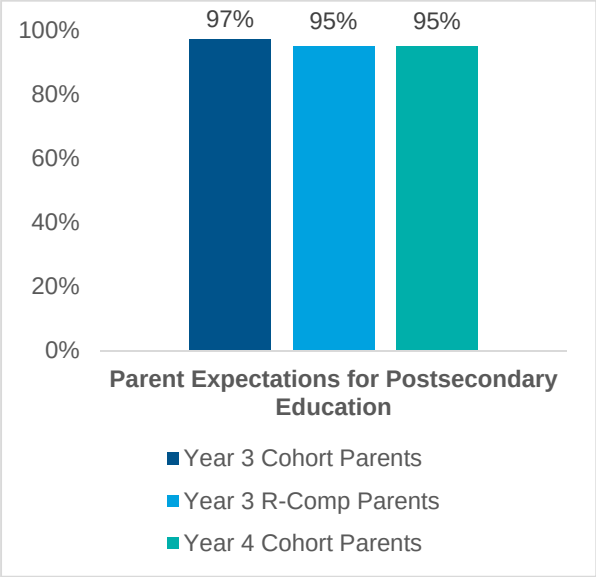
degrees as well as college courses that do not lead to a credential. Figure 5 presents parents'/guardians' and students' educational aspirations and expectations.

Figure 5. Students' and Parents' Educational Aspirations and Expectations









Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 4 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey, Year 3 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 3 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey, Year 2 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 2 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey, Year 1 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, and Year 1 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey.

The majority of cohort students aspired and expected to attain postsecondary education in Year 4 (92% and 90%, respectively), which is relatively unchanged from Year 3. Similarly, the majority of R-Comp students aspired and expected to attain at least a two-year degree (91% and 88%, respectively). There were no significant differences between Year 4 cohort students and the R-Comp group regarding expectations.

The evaluation team found cohort parents' expectations continued to be more reserved than aspirations. In Year 4, 98% of parents/guardians aspired for their child to attain postsecondary education, which was relatively unchanged from Year 3. In addition, 95% of parents/guardians expected their child to do so, which was also relatively unchanged from Year 3.

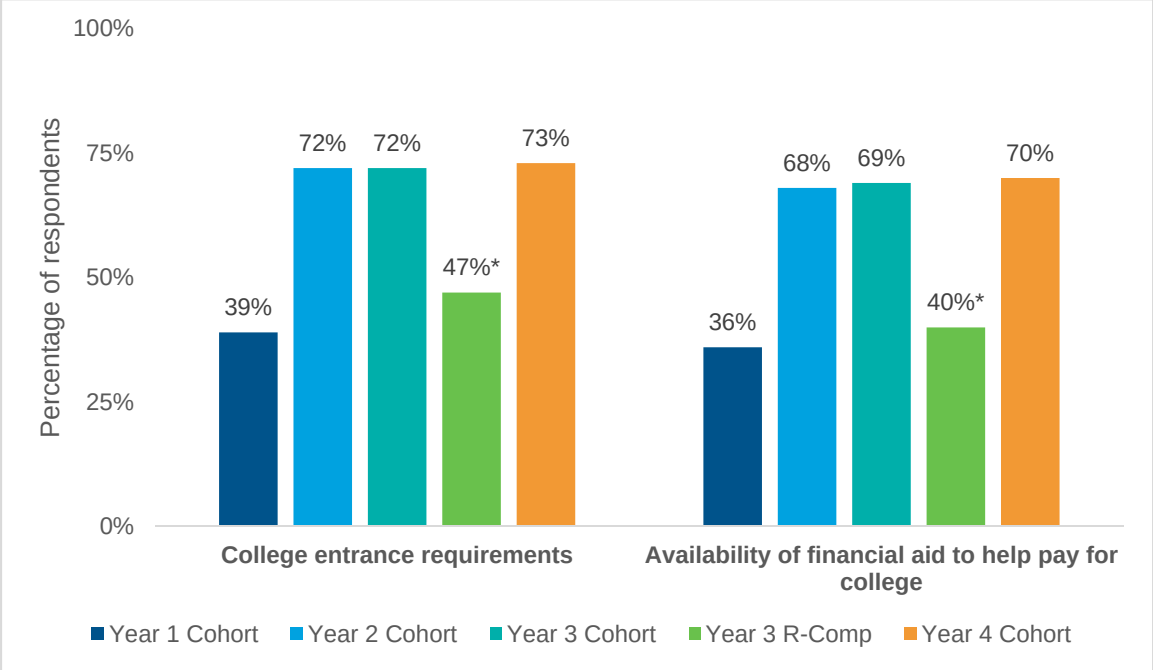
R-Comp parents/guardians reported statistically similar educational aspirations and expectations to Year 4 cohort parents/guardians. Almost 97% of R-Comp parents/guardians reported that they aspired for their child to attain postsecondary education and 95% expected their child to attain the same level of education.

1.3 College Entrance Requirements, Cost, and Financial Aid

1.3.1 Beliefs about College and Interactions with GEAR UP Staff

The evaluation team asked students and parents/guardians whether they had spoken with anyone from GEAR UP or their school about college entrance requirements or the availability of financial aid to help pay for college. Additionally, parents/guardians were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that (a) attending college is important to their child's career goal and future and (b) that it is too early to think about their child going to college as well as if they had talked to their child about attending college.

Figure 6. Percentage of Students Who Have Spoken with Someone about College Entrance Requirements and the Availability of Financial Aid to Help Pay for College

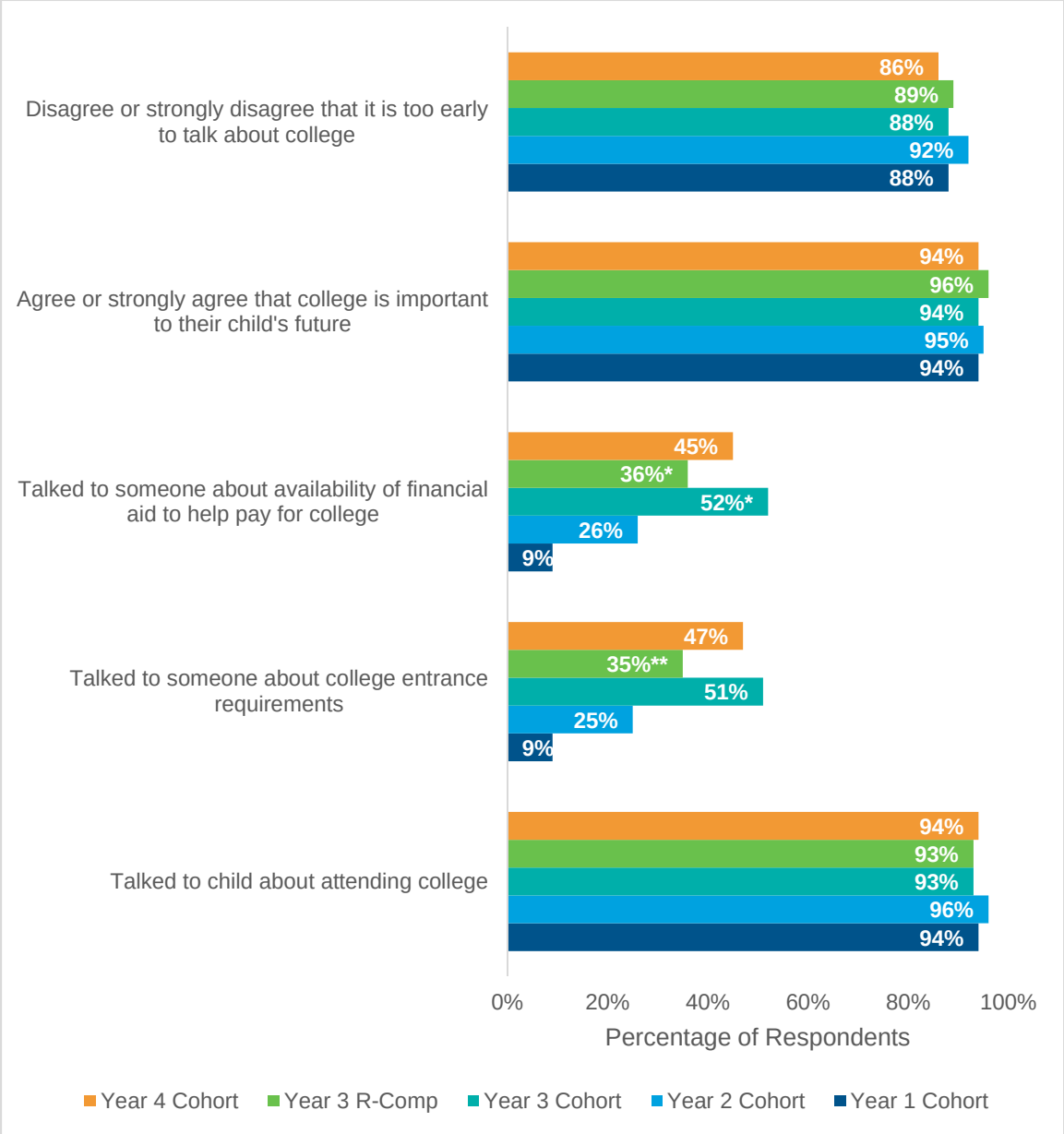


Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 3 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 2 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, and Year 1 WV GEAR UP Student Survey.
*Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.001).

As displayed in Figure 6, the percentage of cohort students who reported speaking with someone about college entrance requirements and the percentage who reported speaking with someone about the availability of financial aid remained statistically unchanged from Year 3 to

Year 4. The evaluation team found Year 4 cohort group students were significantly and far more likely than Year 3 R-Comp students to have spoken with GEAR UP staff or someone at their school about these topics, with a medium effect size.[8]

Figure 7. Parent/Guardian Responses to Beliefs About College and Interactions with GEAR UP Staff



Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey, Year 3 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey, Year 2 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey, and Year 1 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey.
*Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.01).
**Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.001).

[8] College entrance requirements: X^2 (1) = 315.09, p<.001 (*Phi* = .27); Availability to use financial aid to help pay for college: X^2 (1) = 399.10, p<.001 (*Phi* = .31)

As shown in Figure 7, almost all Year 4 cohort parent/guardian respondents (94%) indicated that they had talked to their child about attending college, which was statistically unchanged from Year 3 and relatively the same as the R-Comp group. In addition, almost all (94%) Year 4 cohort parents/guardians either agreed or strongly agreed that attending college is important to their child's future, which is statistically unchanged from those in Year 3 and the R-Comp group who reported the same. Eighty-six percent of Year 4 cohort parent/guardian respondents either *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* that it was too early to think about their child attending college, which is statistically unchanged to cohort parents/guardians in Year 3 and the R-Comp group.

Almost half of Year 4 cohort parent/guardian respondents reported speaking with GEAR UP staff or someone at their child's school about college entrance requirements (47%) and/or the availability of financial aid to help pay for college (45%). There was a statistically significant decrease, with a small effect size, in the percentage of cohort parents/guardians who indicated that they had spoken with GEAR UP or school staff about the availability of financial aid to help pay for college between Year 3 and Year 4 (from 52% in Year 3 to 45% in Year 4).[9,10] The nearly half of cohort parents (45%) who reported speaking with GEAR UP or school staff about college entrance requirements was statistically unchanged from Year 3. In comparison to the R-Comp group, there was a greater percentage of Year 4 cohort parents/guardians than R-Comp parents/guardians who reported speaking with someone regarding college entrance requirements (47% vs. 35%, respectively) as well as the availability of financial aid to help pay for college (45% vs. 36%, respectively). These were statistically significant differences with small effect sizes.[11,12]

1.3.2 Perceived Knowledge of Financial Aid/Costs and Benefits of College

Students and parents were asked whether or not they felt knowledgeable about financial aid and the cost and benefits of going to college. Approximately 70% of cohort students in both Year 3 and Year 4 responded affirmatively that they were knowledgeable about financial aid and the costs and benefits of going to college. The percentage of cohort parents/guardians who responded the same decreased from Year 3 to Year 4, from 77% to 71%; the difference in distribution of responses was a statistically significant change.[13,14]

Cohort students were also more likely than R-Comp students to respond affirmatively that they were knowledgeable about financial aid and the costs and benefits of going to college (70% vs. 54%). The overall difference was statistically significant, but the effect size was small.[15] There were no significant differences between Year 4 cohort parents/guardians and the R-Comp

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[9] X^2 (1) = 7.85, p<.01 (*Phi* = .07)
[10] Statistically significant differences between the parent/guardian samples in Year 3 and Year 4 should be interpreted with caution due to low response rates.
[11] College entrance requirements: X^2 (1) = 19.12, p<.001 (*Phi* = .11); Availability of financial aid to help pay for college: X^2 (1) = 10.08, p<.01 (*Phi* = .08)
[12] Statistically significant differences between the parent/guardian samples in Year 3 and Year 4 should be interpreted with caution due to low response rates.
[13] X^2 (1) = 6.50, p<.05 (*Phi* = .06)
[14] Statistically significant differences between the parent/guardian samples in Year 3 and Year 4 should be interpreted with caution due to low response rates.
[15] X^2 (1) =107.49, p<.001 (*Phi* = -.16)

parents/guardians regarding being knowledgeable about financial aid and the costs and benefits of going to college.

1.3.3 Perceptions of Affordability and Cost

Next, students and parents/guardians were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt they could afford to attend any of three public PSE options: (1) a public four-year college, (2) a public community/technical college, and (3) a public career/technical college. Respondents used a five-point Likert-type response scale (i.e., *1 = Definitely Not, 2 = Probably Not, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Probably, 5 = Definitely*). Using independent samples t-tests, the evaluation team compared the average ratings among students on this scale for all three options across Years 3 and 4 of implementation.

As shown in Table 5, most Year 4 cohort students reported that they believed they could probably or definitely afford a public career/technical center (70%), followed by a public community/technical college (69%) and a four-year college (64%). There were some significant increases between Year 3 and Year 4. Specifically, there was a four-percentage-point increase for students' perceptions of affordability of a public career/technical center and a three-percentage-point increase for students' perceptions of affordability of a public community/ technical college between Year 3 and Year 4; both of these differences had small effect sizes (d = .04 and d = .03, respectively).[16]

The percentage of Year 4 cohort students who reported that they believed they probably or definitely could afford to attend a public four-year college was higher, to a statistically significant degree, than the R-Comp group by four percentage points; this was a small effect size (d = .07).[17] There were no significant differences between the Year 4 cohort and the R-Comp group for the other PSE options.

A larger percentage of Year 4 cohort parents/guardians indicated they could either probably or definitely afford a community/technical college or a career/technical school (76% and 79%, respectively) than the percentage who thought that they could probably or definitely afford a four-year public college (66%). These responses were relatively unchanged from Year 3 cohort parent responses and there were no significant differences between Year 4 cohort parents/guardians and the corresponding R-Comp group.

Table 5. Perceived Affordability of Public PSE Options

	Probably or Definitely Could Afford to Attend…		
Topic	**Public Four-Year College**	**Public Community/ Technical College**	**Public Career/ Technical Center**
Year 4 Cohort Students	64%	69%	70%
Year 3 R-Comp Students	60%*	67%	69%
Year 3 Cohort Students	61%	66%*	66%**
Year 4 Cohort Parents	66%	76%	79%
Year 3 R-Comp Parents	63%	74%	75%
Year 3 Cohort Parents	66%	75%	76%

[16] Public Community/Technical College: X^2 (1) = 6.03, p<.05; Public Career/Technical Center: X^2 (1) = 7.70, p<.01.
[17] X^2 (1) = 5.245a, p<.05.

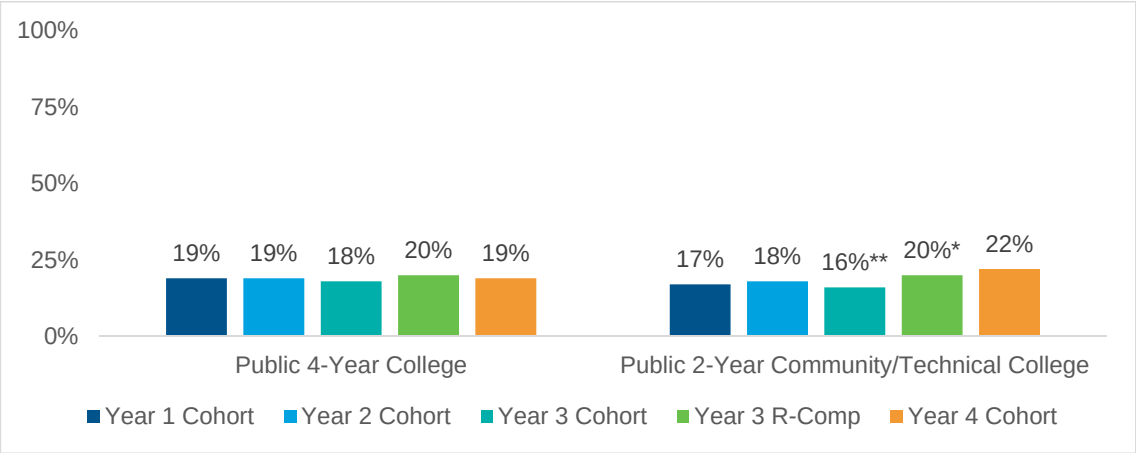
Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 4 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey, Year 3 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, and Year 3 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey.
*Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (*p*<.05).
**Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (*p*<.01).

Students and parents/guardians were next asked to estimate the average cost of tuition, excluding the cost of food, housing, and books, for two public college options in West Virginia: (a) a four-year public college/university, and (b) a public community/technical college. Seven response options were offered, ranging from 1 = *up to $4,000* to 7 = *more than $26,000.* According to the CFWV (2018), the correct estimates for the 2017–18 school year and actual costs were as follows:

- **Four-year public college/university:** $4,001-$8,000 ($7,225)
- **Public community/technical college:** Up to $4,000 ($3,936)

Overall, the evaluation team found that 19% of cohort students in Year 4 could accurately estimate costs associated with attending a four-year public college/university and 22% could accurately estimate the costs associated with attending a public community/technical college, as displayed in Figure 8. The Year 4 cohort's estimation of a public community/technical college was a statistically significant increase, of six percentage points, from Year 3.[18] This was a small effect size (*d* = .16). In addition, the Year 4 cohort's estimation of a public community/technical college was also higher, to a statistically significant degree, than the R-Comp group by two percentage points.[19] This was a very small effect size (*d* = .06).

Figure 8. Percentage of Students Who Correctly Estimated the Cost of Attending a Public Four-Year College and a Public 2-Year Community/Technical College



Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 3 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 2 WV GEAR UP Survey, and Year 1 WV GEAR UP Student Survey.
*Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (*p*<.05).
**Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (*p*<.001).

In Year 4, 24% of cohort parents/guardians correctly estimated the cost of a two-year public community/technical college, and 21% reported an accurate estimate of attending a four-year public college/university. The percentage with correct estimates was statistically unchanged from Year 3, however the percentage of cohort parents/guardians who correctly estimated the

[18] Public community/technical college: X^2 (1) = 5.73, p<.001
[19] Public community/technical college: X^2 (1) = 3.85, *p*<.05

cost of a two-year public community/technical college was higher, to a statistically significant degree, than the R-Comp group by seven percentage points.[20] This was a small effect size (d = .16).

Another item on the surveys asked students to indicate the maximum amount of money per academic year they thought was available to help pay for college through three programs: (1) Federal Pell grants, (2) the WV Higher Education Grant Program (HEGP), and (3) the WV PROMISE Scholarship. Respondents had eight response options ranging from *1 = up to $1,000* to *8 = more than $7,000*. According to the U.S. Education Department (2017) and the CFWV (2018), the correct estimates and actual costs were as follows:

- **Federal Pell grant:** $5,001 to $6,000 ($5,920)
- **WV HEGP:** $2,001 to $3,000 ($2,700)
- **WV PROMISE Scholarship:** $4,001 to $5,000 ($4,750)

The percentage of cohort students who could accurately estimate the maximum amount of money that is available via a Federal Pell Grant was 12% in Year 4. This is lower, to a statistically significant degree, than the percentage of cohort students in Year 3 and the R-Comp group (by two percentage points for each).[21] The effect sizes for both decreases was extremely small (*d* = -.08 for each). These differences may be due to the change in amount of aid available from a Federal Pell grant from year to year.

Regarding the HEGP, 19% of cohort students in Year 4 knew the maximum amount available, a statistically significant increase of six percentage points from Year 3.[22] This increase had a small effect size (*d* = .16). A greater percentage of Year 4 cohort students also knew the maximum amount available for the grant when compared to the R-Comp group (19% to 15%, respectively). This was a statistically significant difference with a small effect size (*d* = .09).[23]

For the WV PROMISE Scholarship, 17% of cohort students knew the correct amount. This was not statistically different from the cohort in Year 3 or the R-Comp group.

In Year 4, the percentage of parents/guardians who accurately estimated the maximum amount of money available from Federal Pell grant was 15%. This represented a statistically significant decrease from Year 3 by eight percentage points.[24,25] The effect size was low (*d* = -.21). In addition, the percentage of Year 4 cohort parents/guardians who knew the maximum amount was also lower, to a statistically significant degree, than the R-Comp group—by five percentage points.[26,27] The effect size for this difference was also low (*d* = -.14).

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[20] X^2 (1) = 7.61, p<.01
[21] Year 3 Cohort students: X^2 (1) = 0.01, p<.01; Year 3 R-Comp students: X^2 (1) = 7.24, *p*<.01
[22] X^2 (1) = 27.48, p<.001
[23] X^2 (1) = 8.21, p<.01
[24] Federal Pell Grants: X^2 (1) = 1.59, *p*<.001
[25] Statistically significant differences between the parent/guardian samples in Year 3 and Year 4 should be interpreted with caution due to low response rates.
[26] X^2 (1) = 6.29, p<.05
[27] Statistically significant differences between the parent/guardian samples in Year 3 and Year 4 should be interpreted with caution due to low response rates.

Approximately 20% of cohort parents/guardians knew the maximum amount for the HEGP and 24% knew the amount available for the WV PROMISE scholarship in Year 4. These percentages were not statistically different when compared to Year 3 or the R-Comp group.

1.3.4 Awareness of PSE Topics and Importance of Various Sources in Gathering Information about PSE Options

The student survey asked students to indicate their awareness of 11 PSE topics. The Year 4 survey, like previous surveys, asked about the importance of 17 resources in providing information about PSE options; however, social media was added as an additional resource in Year 4. In all four years, the items in both questions used four-point Likert-type response scales (*1 = Not at all, 2 = Slightly, 3 = Moderately, 4 = Extremely*). The evaluation team calculated average awareness/importance ratings for both scales by averaging responses to the individual scale items.

As shown in Table 6, Year 4 cohort students provided an overall mean score rating of 2.48 (between slightly and moderately aware) regarding their awareness of PSE topics, which was not a statistically significant difference from Year 3. Cohort students reported higher average awareness ratings than R-Comp students (2.48 vs. 2.32); the difference was statistically significant with medium effect size (d = .21).[28]

Looking at individual PSE topics, the evaluation team found that cohort students showed statistically significant increases in their awareness of three topics from Year 3 to Year 4: (1) FAFSA (d = .15), (2) ACT/SAT (d = .13), and (3) Federal Pell grants (d = .10).[29] Cohort students showed one statistically significant decrease, however, in their awareness of scholarships between Year 3 and Year 4 (d = -.08).[30] The effect sizes for all differences were small.

When comparing ratings between Year 4 cohort students and Year 3 R-Comp students within individual topics, we found cohort students reported being more aware than R-Comp students, to a statistically significant degree, for 7 of the 11 PSE topics: (1) Federal work-study (d = .22), (2) WV Higher Education Grant (d = .32), (3) Federal Pell grants (d = .31), (4) Federal loans (d = .21), (5) FAFSA (d = .20), (6) college savings plans/529 (d = .16), and (7) requirements for college acceptance (d = .07).[31] R-Comp students were more aware than Year 4 cohort students for one topic, high school graduation requirements (d = -.08).[32]

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[28] $t(4,137.41) = -6.71$, $p < .01$

[29] FAFSA: $t(4,571.81) = 1.14$, $p < .001$; ACT/SAT: $t(4,563.66) = -4.12$, $p < .001$; Federal Pell grants: $t(4,562) = -3.04$, $p < .01$

[30] Scholarships: $t(4,566) = -3.04$, $p < .01$

[31] Federal work-study: $t(4,199) = -7.30$, $p < .001$; WV Higher Education Grant: $t(4,207) = -10.412$, $p < .001$; Federal Pell grants: $t(4,210) = -10.15$, $p < .001$; Federal loans: $t(4,205) = -6.97$, $p < .001$; FAFSA: $t(4,170.85) = -6.80$, $p < .001$; College savings plans/529s: $t(4,147.82) = -5.48$, $p < .001$; requirements for college acceptance: $t(4,086.62) = -2.56$, $p < .05$

[32] $t(4,092.04) = 2.58$, $p < .01$

Table 6. Difference in Awareness Ratings for Students

Topic	Year 3 Cohort			Year 3 R-Comp			Year 4 Cohort		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Overall awareness	2,368	2.46	0.76	2,000	2.32**	0.80	2,251	2.48	0.76
FAFSA	2,348	2.06***	0.95	1,991	2.01***	0.93	2,232	2.20	0.93
College savings plan/529	2,339	2.01	0.96	1,986	1.87***	0.93	2,231	2.02	0.92
ACT/SAT	2,341	2.58***	1.00	1,978	2.71	0.97	2,230	2.70	0.92
WV Higher Education Grant	2,341	2.24	0.97	1,977	1.96***	0.95	2,232	2.26	0.94
Federal Pell grants	2,336	2.00**	0.96	1,984	1.80***	0.91	2,228	2.09	0.94
Federal student loans	2,338	2.43	0.96	1,978	2.20***	0.96	2,229	2.40	0.92
Federal work-study	2,337	2.08	0.97	1,971	1.87***	0.95	2,230	2.08	0.94
Scholarships (e.g., PROMISE or institutional)	2,337	2.85**	0.99	1,988	2.73	0.97	2,231	2.77	0.94
Requirements for college acceptance	2,337	2.65	0.98	1,982	2.53*	0.99	2,228	2.60	0.93
The importance/benefit of a college education	2,338	2.96	1.03	1,982	2.92	1.05	2,222	2.91	1.00
High school graduation requirements	2,331	3.02	0.96	1,970	3.07**	0.98	2,224	2.99	0.94

Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Student Survey and Year 3 WV GEAR UP Student Survey.
*Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.05).
**Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.01).
***Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.001).

As shown in Table 7, in terms of cohort parents/guardians awareness of PSE topics, in Year 4, cohort parents/guardians repeated an overall mean effectiveness score of 2.69, which was not significantly different from Year 3. There were only a couple notable differences between Year 3 and Year 4 when examining individual PSE topics. Cohort parents/guardians reported greater awareness of high school graduation requirements (d = .11) and less awareness of college savings plans/529s (d = -.11) in Year 4.[33] Both of these differences had small effect sizes.

Table 7. Difference in Awareness Ratings for Parents

Topic	Year 3 Cohort			Year 3 R-Comp			Year 4 Cohort		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Overall awareness	608	2.72	.81	476	2.71	0.82	993	2.69	0.77
FAFSA	606	2.73	1.05	472	2.68	1.06	991	2.63	1.02
College savings plan/529	603	2.36*	1.07	470	2.37*	1.05	987	2.25	1.02
ACT/SAT	605	2.90	0.94	473	2.93	0.91	986	2.95	0.92
WV Higher Education Grant	607	2.43	1.06	473	2.41	1.03	986	2.35	1.03
Federal Pell grants	604	2.57	1.01	473	2.53	1.03	989	2.48	1.01
Federal student loans	604	2.65	1.02	472	2.67	0.99	986	2.68	1.00
Federal work-study	605	2.33	1.06	473	2.41	1.03	987	2.30	1.61
Scholarships (e.g., PROMISE or institutional)	607	2.71	1.01	472	2.73	0.99	986	2.71	1.01
Requirements for college acceptance	602	2.74	0.98	472	2.75	1.00	988	2.75	0.98
The importance/benefit of a college education	602	3.31	0.93	472	3.23	0.95	988	3.29	0.90
High school graduation requirements	604	3.13*	0.89	471	3.13	0.88	987	3.22	0.84

Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Parent Survey and Year 3 WV GEAR UP Student Survey.
*Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.05).

[33] High school graduation requirements: t(1,589) = 1.98, p < .05; College savings plans/529s: t(1,223 79) = 2.14, p < .05

There were no significant differences in the overall mean effectiveness scores between Year 4 cohort parents/guardians and the R-Comp group. The only individual topic for which Year 3 R-Comp parents/guardians had greater awareness, in comparison to the Year 4 cohort parents/guardians, was awareness of college savings plans/529s, which had a small effect size (d = -.12).[34]

In terms of the importance that cohort students placed on resources for providing information about PSE options, as shown in Table 8, in Year 4, cohort students rated the resources an overall mean effectiveness score of 2.48, which was statistically unchanged from Year 3. Examining the resources individually, there were several statistically significant increases in importance between Year 3 and Year 4 for the following resources: (1) text messages (d =.15), (2) college fairs (d = .10), (3) e-mail (d = .10), (4) mail (d = .09), and (5) brochures (d = .06). The only statistically significant decrease in importance ratings between Year 3 and Year 4 was for family members (d = -.08). All effect sizes were very small.[35]

The Year 4 cohort group had statistically significant higher importance ratings for all resources—besides family members—than the R-Comp group. All of the effect sizes were small except for the difference between Year 4 cohort and R-Comp group regarding the importance of GEAR UP staff. The effect of this difference approached the threshold for a medium effect.[36]

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[34] t(1,455) = 2.04, $p < .05$

[35] Text messages: t(4,571) = -5.14, $p < .001$; College fairs: t(4,579.13) = -3.64, $p < .001$; E-mail: t(4,577.90) = -3.37, $p < .001$; Mail: t(4,579) = -2.69, $p < .01$; Brochures: t(4,578) = -1.97, $p < .05$; Family members: t(4,569) = 2.52, $p < .05$

[36] Overall mean: t(4,4,134.82) = -6.81, $p < .001$ (d = .21) GEAR UP staff: t(4,074.28) = -19.29, $p < .001$ (d = .60); College admissions representatives: t(4,069.77) = -8.21, $p < .001$ (d = .25); Text messages: t(4,213) = -7.80, $p < .001$ (d = .24); College fairs: t(4,104.53) = -7.49, $p < .001$ (d = .23); CFWV.com: t(4,079.55) = -5.76, $p < .001$ (d = .18); School counselor: t(4,088.88) = -4.76, $p < .001$ (d = .15); Other college planning websites: t(4,112.20) = -4.15, $p < .001$ (d = .12); Brochures and pamphlets: t(4,115.63) = -4.11, $p < .001$ (d = .12); E-mail: t(4,090.01) = -3.58, $p < .001$ (d = .11); Direct mail: t(4,109.30) = -3.06, $p < .01$ (d = .10); Signs, posters, or billboards: t(4,211) = -3.40, $p < .001$ (d = .10); Magazines/newspapers: t(4,216) = -2.95, $p < .01$ (d = .09); College or university websites: t(4,089.36) = -2.65, $p < .01$ (d = .08); Radio: t(4,200) = -2.84, $p < .01$ (d = .08); Television: t(4,210) = -2.56, $p < .05$ (d = .07)

Table 8. Difference in Students' Importance Ratings for Resources that Provide Information on PSE Options

Topic	Year 3 Cohort			Year 3 R-Comp			Year 4 Cohort		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Overall importance	2,368	2.46	0.76	2,000	2.32***	0.80	2,251	2.48	0.76
College or university websites	2,352	2.62	0.99	1,989	2.56**	1.02	2,240	2.64	0.95
College Foundation of WV Website (CFWV.com)	2,346	2.54	1.02	1,985	2.37***	1.04	2,238	2.55	0.97
Other college planning websites	2,338	2.41	0.98	1,986	2.30***	1.00	2,220	2.42	0.96
College fairs	2,350	2.40***	1.03	1,980	2.27***	1.04	2,234	2.50	1.00
Television	2,352	2.44	0.96	1,982	2.32*	0.97	2,230	2.39	0.94
Radio	2,349	2.21	1.00	1,972	2.12**	1.00	2,230	2.20	0.97
Direct mail	2,345	2.24**	1.04	1,986	2.23**	1.06	2,236	2.33	1.01
E-mail	2,349	2.27***	1.05	1,979	2.26***	1.05	2,231	2.37	1.00
Brochures and pamphlets	2,347	2.45*	0.97	1,984	2.39***	0.98	2,231	2.51	0.95
Magazines/newspapers	2,345	2.27	1.00	1,983	2.17**	0.99	2,235	2.26	0.97
Signs, posters, or billboards	2,343	2.41	0.97	1,980	2.29***	0.98	2,233	2.39	0.94
Text messages	2,340	2.17***	1.06	1,982	2.08***	1.05	2,233	2.33	1.02
School counselor	2,339	2.76	1.00	1,978	2.57***	1.03	2,228	2.72	0.98
Family members	2,343	2.86*	.098	1,979	2.75	1.02	2,228	2.78	0.95
GEAR UP staff	2,344	2.78	1.00	1,976	2.15***	1.04	2,227	2.75	0.98
College admissions representatives	2,333	2.57	1.06	1,982	2.32***	1.08	2,223	2.58	1.01
Social media	-			-			2,228	2.53	0.98

Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Student Survey and Year 3 WV GEAR UP Student Survey.
*Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.05).
**Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.01).
***Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.001).

Cohort parents/guardians reported a mean importance rating of 2.33 in Year 4, which is displayed in Table 9. The importance of five resources decreased, to statistically significant degree for five items between Year 3 and Year 4: (1) College Foundation of WV website (d = -.16), (2) GEAR UP staff (d = -.16), (3) family members (d = -.12), (4) radio (d = -.12), and (5) magazines (d = -.10).[37] Cohort parents/guardians in Year 4 placed higher importance, to a statistically significant degree, on two items when compared to the R-Comp group: (1) school counselor (d = .16) and (2) GEAR UP staff (d = .32).[38]

[37] College Foundation of WV website: t(1,559) = 3.05, p < .01; GEAR UP staff: t(1,344.02) = 3.27, p < .001; Family members: t(1,293.58) = 2.51, p < .05; Radio: t(1,561) = 2.30, p < .05; Magazines: t(1,564) = 1.98, p < .05

[38] High school counselor: t(1,429) = -3.00, p < .01; GEAR UP staff: t(1,431) = -5.70, p < .001

Table 9. Difference in Parents' Importance Ratings for Importance Ratings for Resources that Provide Information on PSE Options

Topic	Year 3 Cohort			Year 3 R-Comp			Year 4 Cohort		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Overall importance	605	2.39	0.80	469	2.30	0.80	982	2.33	0.81
College or university websites	602	2.72	0.98	467	2.66	0.98	976	2.68	0.97
College Foundation of WV Website (CFWV.com)	590	2.60**	1.03	463	2.45	1.02	971	2.43	1.04
Other college planning websites	589	2.26	1.01	460	2.30	0.97	962	2.28	1.02
College fairs	593	2.35	1.03	460	2.35	1.00	968	2.40	1.06
Television	592	2.22	0.97	460	2.16	0.97	967	2.20	0.99
Radio	593	2.07*	1.01	464	2.02	0.98	970	1.95	1.00
Direct mail	595	2.17	1.01	461	2.25	0.99	970	2.20	1.04
E-mail	591	2.13	1.03	460	2.21	1.02	967	2.15	1.04
Brochures and pamphlets	592	2.38	0.97	464	2.32	0.94	968	2.40	0.99
Magazines/newspapers	596	2.14*	1.01	463	2.06	0.97	970	2.04	0.99
Signs, posters, or billboards	594	2.20	0.99	459	2.07	0.96	970	2.14	0.99
Text messages	592	2.02	1.03	463	1.94	0.99	970	2.03	1.07
School counselor	598	2.71	1.02	463	2.48**	1.05	968	2.65	1.06
Family members	595	2.84**	0.94	462	2.69	0.98	971	2.72	0.98
GEAR UP staff	596	2.80***	1.00	461	2.28***	1.09	972	2.63	1.09
College admissions representatives	594	2.50	1.09	458	2.36	1.08	962	2.39	1.09
Social media	-			-			969	2.36	1.05

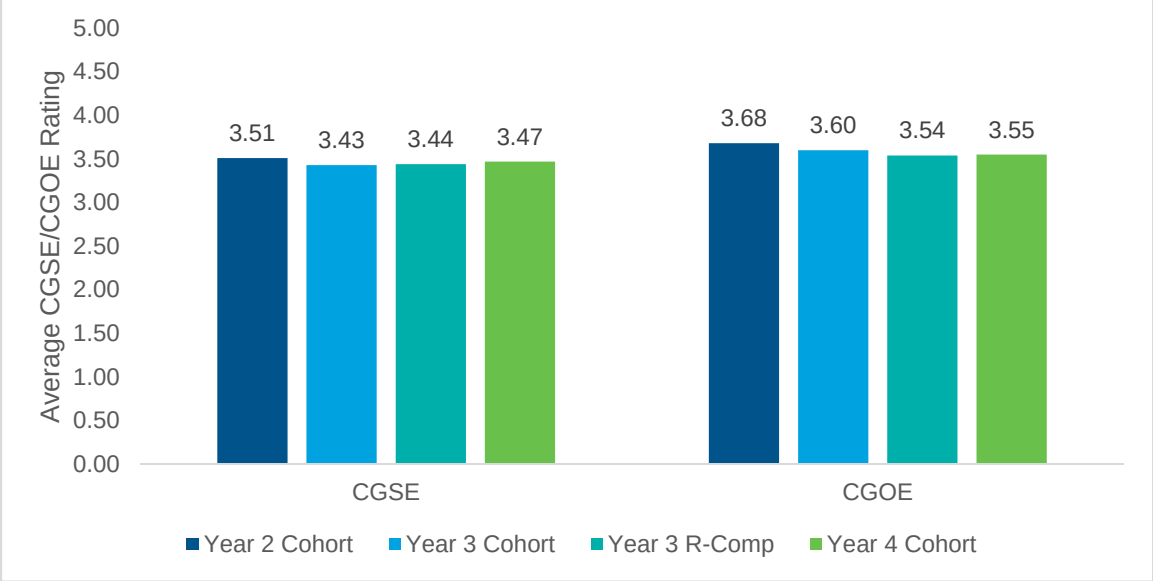
Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Parent/Guardian Survey and Year 3 WV GEAR UP Parent/Guardian Survey.
*Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.05).
**Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.01).
***Statistically significant compared to Year 4 cohort (p<.001).

1.4 College-Going Self-Efficacy and Outcomes-Expectations

In Years 2–4, students were asked to respond to two multi-part items to measure their level of CGSE related to 14 items (e.g., *I can find a way to pay for college*, *I can choose a good college*) and 16 CGOE items (e.g., *I could get good grades in college*, *I could fit in*). Both scales came from Gibbons (2005) and utilized a five-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 = *Don't Know* to 5 = *Very Sure*. To analyze differences in these outcomes across the cohort and R-Comp groups, we first developed average CGSE and CGOE scales by calculating each respondent's average rating across all 14 CGSE items and all 16 CGOE items.

When comparing the average ratings for the two scales in Year 4, we found students generally reported more certainty about their outcomes expectations than self-efficacy. When comparing results between Year 4 cohort students and Year 3 R-Comp students, we found no significant differences in average CGSE or CGOE ratings (see Figure 9). However, when examining individual items for each subscale, we found cohort students rated themselves more certain than did their R-Comp counterparts on 10 of 14 CGSE items, and 9 of 16 CGOE items.

Figure 9. Students' Self-Reported CGSE and CGOE



Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 3 WV GEAR UP Student Survey, Year 2 WV GEAR UP Survey, and Year 1 WV GEAR UP Student Survey.

2. School Personnel Survey Outcomes

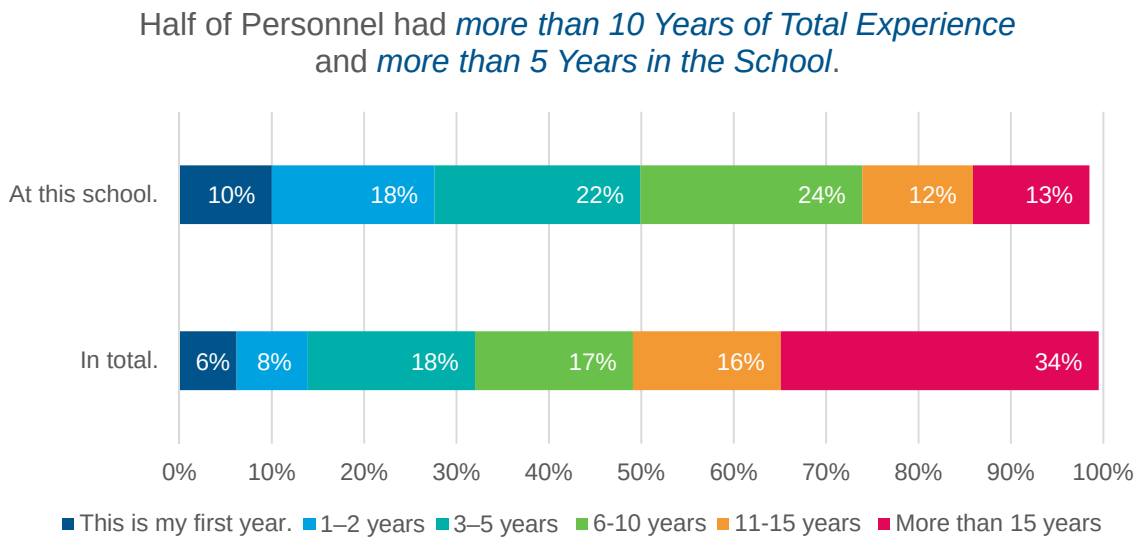
2.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Seventy-three percent of the estimated 854 possible faculty and staff members responded to the Year 4 school personnel survey. The majority of the total 600 individuals representing 23 WV GEAR UP schools were teachers (89%) and the remaining 11% were equally split between administrators and counselors. Approximately 5% indicated that, in addition to their primary role, they also served as a GEAR UP site coordinator. We found no significant differences across Years 1–4 in the distribution of their primary roles or in the percentage who also served as site coordinators.

The survey asked respondents to indicate which grade level(s) they serve. The majority of the 600 respondents indicated they served 11th (79%) grade students. Most of the individuals also indicated they served 10th (76%) and 12th grade students (75%) as well. Lastly, 70% indicated that they served freshman students.

This year the evaluation team also asked respondents to indicate how many years of experience they had working in their current role in the school and how many years they have working in that role in total. Figure 10 displays these results, highlighting that nearly half of all personnel respondents had more than 10 years total experience in their role. In addition, nearly 90% of all respondents had been in their current school for at least a year and more than half had more than 5 years of experience in their current school.

Figure 10 School Personnel Experience



2.2 Trend Data for Years 1 Through 4

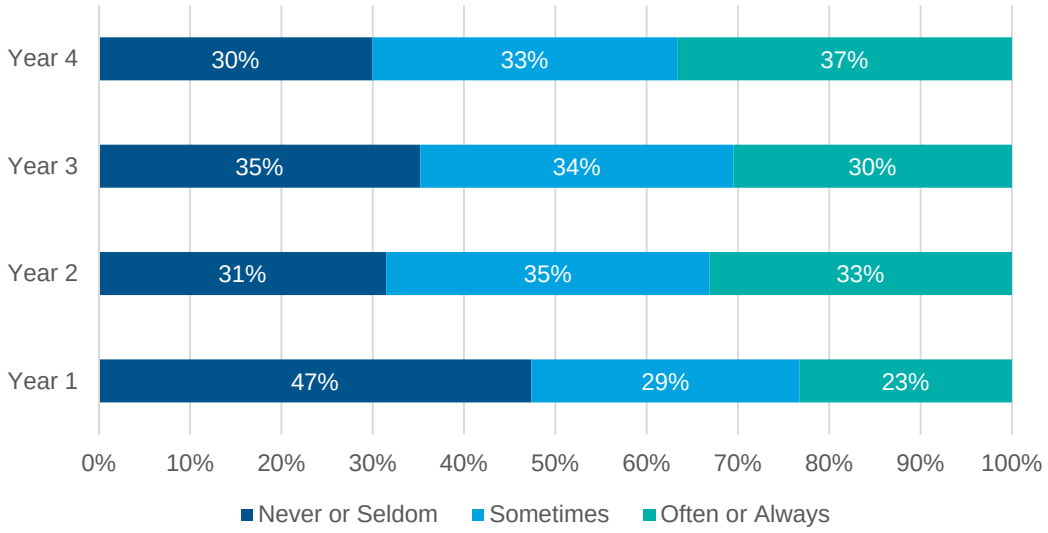
2.2.1 Participation/Satisfaction with GEAR UP and Perceptions of Program Effectiveness

Participation. We asked school personnel how often they had participated in GEAR UP activities. Five response options were provided (i.e., 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Always*). A total of 584 respondents answered the question in Year 4 (97%). Of those, 30 (compared to 35% in Year 3) indicated that they "never or seldom" participated in GEAR UP events, 33% (compared to 34% in Year 3) indicated that they "sometimes" participated, and 37% (compared to 30% in Year 3) indicated that they "often or always" participated. We found a statistically significant difference in the distribution of responses across time.[39] Fewer than 10% of respondents indicated that they had never participated in GEAR UP events in Year 4, compared with 29% in Year 1.

The effect size for the difference in the proportions of respondents who selected this option (i.e., never) was small when comparing Year 4 and Year 1 (*phi* =.24) and not significant for the comparison between Year 3 and Year 4 (*phi* =.08). See Figure 11 for more details.

[39] $X^2(12) = 124.65$, $p < .001$

Figure 11. Frequency of School Personnel Participation in GEAR UP Activities by Year



The survey included an open-ended item asking respondents to describe the types of GEAR UP activities in which they participated. More than one-third of all Year 4 survey respondents (i.e., 202 of 584) provided a response. We coded comments into one or more of the following eight themes: (1) when possible/when asked (N=57), (2) field trips/college visits (N=37), (3) academic support (N=22), (4) college fairs/other school-wide activities (N=20), (5) not involved/informed (N=18), (6) planning and implementation (N=17), (7) mentorship (N=15), and (8) financial aid/FAFSA activities (N=12). Examples of comments organized under each of these themes are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Sample Comments about School Personnel Participation in GEAR UP Activities

Topic	Sample Comment
a. Whenever asked/possible	*I participate in GEAR UP activities whenever the opportunity is available.*
b. Academic support	*We often partner our after school academic enrichment with the Gear Up tutoring sessions.*
c. Field trips and/or college visits	*I have accompanied students on field trips with emphasis on career exploration.*
d. College fairs	*I am usually in the building during FAFSA workshops, I participate in College Decision Day with my students, and I have chaperoned numerous college visit field trips.*
e. Financial aid	*I have chaperoned GEAR UP trips. I help with FAFSA and other college awareness activities.*
f. Mentorship	*As a mentor and tutor, I am working with some aspect of GEAR UP weekly.*
g. Planning and Implementation	*I am the site coordinator! I am ALWAYS in GEAR UP activities.*
h. Not included/informed	*I have only participated once all year; otherwise I have not been asked.*

Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Survey

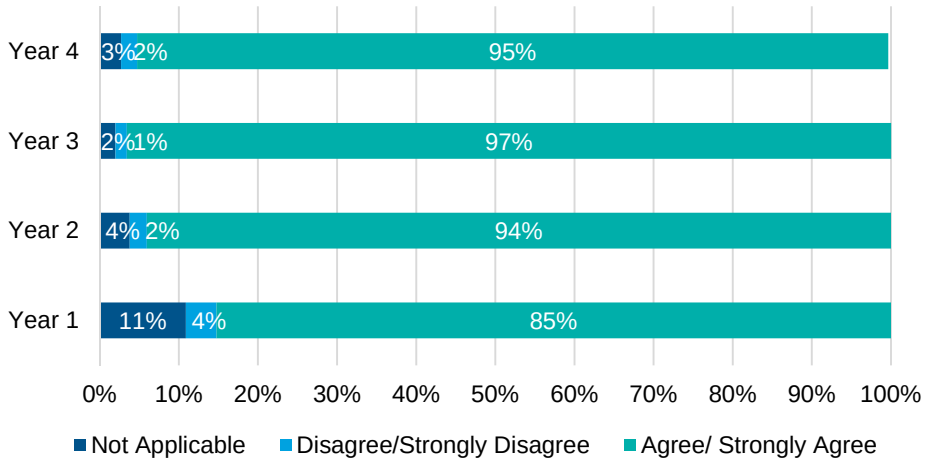
In Year 4, respondents were most likely to discuss having participated in some type of student activity, whenever asked or whenever possible; this was followed by the number of participants who mentioned participation in college visits or field trips. Several respondents in Year 4 also shared concerns that they had not yet participated in an event because they were either not included or informed about GEAR UP activities at their school.

Additionally, several Year 4 respondents expressed their involvement in GEAR UP by displaying posters, wearing t-shirts, or hanging signs on their door.

Satisfaction. We next asked respondents about the extent to which they agreed with two statements about the services provided through GEAR UP: (1) "I think GEAR UP is making a positive impact on students in my school," and (2) GEAR UP activities are likely to be sustained after the grant ends." Respondents had five response options for these items (i.e., 0 = *Not Applicable*, 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Agree*, 4 = *Strongly Agree*).

We found that respondents in all four years were positive about GEAR UP services. Figure 12 shows that very few disagreed or strongly disagreed that GEAR UP was making a positive impact in Year 1 (4%) and even fewer reported this perception in Years 2, 3, and 4 (2%, 1%, and 2% respectively). In fact, the vast majority of respondents (95%) in Year 4 agreed or strongly agreed that GEAR UP was making a positive impact on students at their school. We found the distribution of ratings was significantly different between Years 1 and Year 4, however, because the percentage of respondents who agreed was so high in Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4, there were no significant differences in those years.[40] The effect size for the decrease in the proportion who selected this option was small when comparing Year 4 to Year 1 (*phi* =.19).

Figure 12. Perceptions Among School Personnel that GEAR UP is Making a Positive Impact on Students in their School by Year

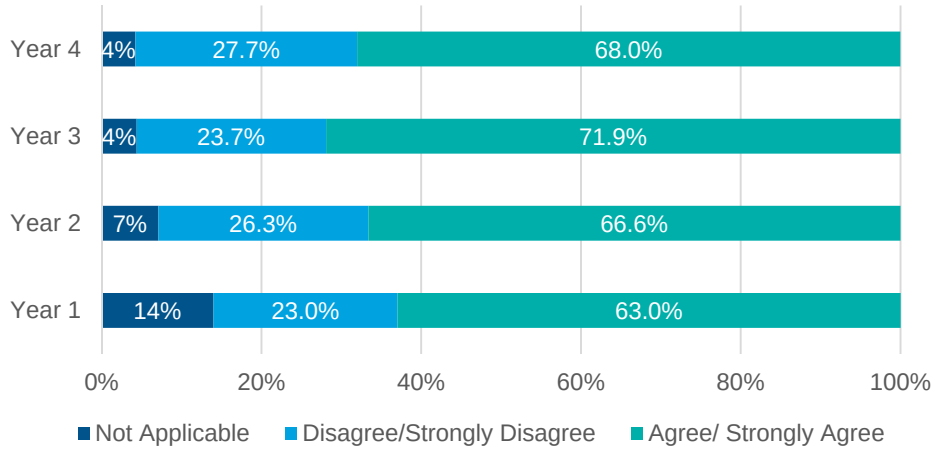


When responding to the item, "GEAR UP activities are likely to be sustained after the grant ends," we found respondents were again less likely in Year 4 than in previous years to choose the "not applicable" response option (i.e., 4% in Years 4 and 3 versus 7% in Year 2 and 14% in

[40] $X^2(1) = 59.03$, $p<.001$,

Year 1).[41] There was no difference found in the proportion of respondents selecting "not applicable" when comparing Year 4 to Year 3.

Figure 13. Perceptions Among School Personnel that GEAR UP Services Will Be Sustained After the Grant Ends by Year



Additionally, while the proportion of Year 4 respondents selecting *Agree* or *Strongly agree* that GEAR UP activities would be sustained after the grant ends slightly decreased from Year 3 to Year 4, Year 4 respondents were more likely to strongly agree than those in previous years (i.e., 27% in Year 4 vs. 25% in Year 3, 24% in Year 2, and 17% in Year 1). The effect size for this difference was small when comparing Year 4 to Year 1 (d = .2) and there was no significant difference found when comparing Year 4 to Year 3 (d = .09). See Figure 13 for further details.

Perceptions of Program Effectiveness. In Years 3 and 4, we asked school personnel to (a) indicate whether or not they participated in 11 GEAR UP-sponsored activities, and (b) to rate the effectiveness of these activities in helping students to succeed in school and prepare for college. Six response options were provided for each activity (i.e., 1 = *It was not offered/does not apply*, 2 = *I did not attend*, 3 = *Not at all effective*, 4 = *Slightly effective*, 5 = *Moderately effective*, 6 = *Extremely effective*). Table 11 shows the percentage of personnel in Years 3 and 4 who reported either that an activity was not offered or that they did not attend.

In Year 3, nearly one out of three respondents indicated that these activities were not offered/did not apply or that they did not attend. In Year 4, this ratio decreased to one in six personnel likely to respond in this manner. Notably, we found large, between 16 percentage point and 22 percentage point, decreases from Year 3 to Year 4 in the percentage of personnel who either did not participate in all activities or responded "did not apply."

[41] $X^2(8) = 59.03$, $p<.001$

Table 11. Percentage of School Personnel Responding "Not Offered" or "Did Not Attend" by Activity and Year

Activity	Year 3 N	Year 3 Not Offered or Did Not Attend	Year 4 N	Year 4 Not Offered or Did Not Attend	Difference (Y3-Y4)
a. Tutoring*	546	33%	585	16%	17 points
b. Opportunities to participate in college visits*	545	32%	585	11%	21 points
c. Summer activities*	544	49%	594	29%	20 points
d. College Application and Exploration Week*	544	29%	594	12%	17 points
e. Provide information about college entrance requirements*	539	28%	594	12%	16 points
f. Career exploration activities*	545	25%	593	11%	14 points
g. Test preparation*	542	29%	592	12%	17 points
h. Assistance with the college entrance process*	540	32%	593	12%	20 points
i. Assistance with FAFSA*	541	33%	593	11%	22 points
j. Teacher professional development*	543	41%	593	21%	20 points
k. Mentoring opportunities*	540	36%	593	16%	20 points

Source: Year 3 and Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys
*Statistically significant (p<.001); effect sizes are small ranging between *phi* =.16 and *phi*=.33

In Table 12 we show the average effectiveness ratings by year for each activity. We include only those respondents who chose an answer other than *it was not offered/does not apply* or *did not attend*. We found that Year 4 respondents reported greater perceptions of effectiveness than Year 3 respondents for all but two activities. The largest differences were statistically significant, but effect sizes were small for "assistance with college entrance process" (*d* =.16) and "assistance with FAFSA" (*d* = .21).[42] We also found that Year 4 respondents reported a greater perception of effectiveness than Year 3 respondents for "opportunities to participate in college visits" *(d =.16).*

[42] Assistance with the college entrance process $t(888) = -2.27$, $p<.05$; Assistance with the FAFSA $t(884)$, $= -2.78$, $p<.05$; Opportunities to participate in college visits $t(862) = 4.11$, $p<.001$

Table 12. School Personnel Ratings of the Effectiveness of GEAR UP Resources, Information, and Tools by Year

Resource, Information, or Tool	Year 2			Year 3			Year 4		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
a. Tutoring	460	5.12	.84	365	5.15	.79	495	5.23	.76
b. Opportunities to participate in college visits*	491	5.23	.77	373	5.44	.69	523	5.55	.67
c. Summer activities	414	5.08	.85	276	5.05	.77	410	5.10	.83
d. College Application and Exploration Week	525	5.36	.78	387	5.34	.73	521	5.39	.73
e. Provide information about college entrance requirements	522	5.41	.73	388	5.35	.69	519	5.42	.71
f. Career exploration activities	523	5.35	.75	410	5.27	.73	520	5.36	.73
g. Test preparation*	559	5.22	.84	383	5.29	.74	519	5.39	.70
h. Assistance with the college entrance process**	520	5.46	.69	370	5.35	.70	516	5.47	.67
i. Assistance with FAFSA**	524	5.58	.66	362	5.43	.74	522	5.56	.66
j. Teacher professional development	464	5.11	.84	318	5.12	.74	460	5.12	.84
k. Mentoring opportunities	498	5.21	.80	347	5.25	.73	491	5.23	.77

Source: Year 3 and Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys
*Statistically significant (p<.05); **statistically significant (p<.01)

2.2.1 College-Going Culture in my School

We asked all respondents—teachers, administrators, and counselors—to rate their schools on 19 items measuring two components of CGC: (1) expectations/rigor and (2) visual cues/material resources. Each item used a four-point Likert-type response format (i.e., 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Agree*, 4 = *Strongly Agree*).

Expectations/Rigor. Table 13 shows each of the 10 items assigned to the rigor/expectations component of CGC, and the descriptive statistics for the entire sample of school personnel each year. We conducted an ANOVA to determine whether ratings for the nine items included in all three years varied by year. When ANOVAs returned statistically significant results, we conducted post-hoc tests to determine which year-to-year comparisons were significant (i.e., Year 1 to Year 4 or Year 3 to Year 4). Effect size estimates were calculated for significant differences.

We found there were no significant gains in the average respondent ratings for 9 of the 10 expectations/rigor items from Year 3 to Year 4. For the item, "Teachers are able to engage students in a rigorous curriculum," there were significant increases found from Year 3 to Year 4 (*p*<.001*)*. Additionally, for 7 of the 10 items, there were significant increases from Year 1 to Year 4 ratings (*p*<.001 for all comparisons).

Personnel reported the greatest Year 1 to Year 4 gains in their perceptions that "students care about learning and getting a good education" and that "creativity and original thinking are highly valued" in their school. The effect sizes for both items were small, but substantively important (*d*

= .38 and *d* = .29). We also saw a substantively important difference regarding the extent to which teachers "regularly talk with students about the importance of college" (*d* = .32), and "All students have the potential to succeed in college or other postsecondary training" (*d* = .29).

Table 13. Average School-Level CGC Ratings by Item and Year: Expectations/Rigor Component

	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4		
Item	N	M	SD	N	N	N	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
a. Creativity and original thinking are highly valued.***	797	3.17	.61	804	3.40	.61	561	3.39	.60	598	3.36	.63
b. All students have the ability to succeed academically.***	791	3.22	.67	802	3.37	.65	562	3.38	.62	596	3.38	.62
c. Students are encouraged to do their best.	798	3.42	.56	802	3.57	.58	562	3.51	.59	598	3.49	.61
d. Teachers regularly talk to students about the importance of college.	795	3.22	.57	801	3.41	.59	559	3.40	.61	596	3.40	.59
e. Students care about learning and getting a good education.***	794	2.74	.68	805	3.00	.68	561	2.99	.70	595	3.01	.72
f. Students are encouraged to set future college and career goals.***	790	3.25	.54	800	3.42	.57	559	3.43	.58	597	3.40	.59
g. Students are learning effective problem solving skills.***	797	3.00	.54	805	3.17	.62	561	3.17	.66	595	3.15	.69
h. Teachers are able to engage students in a rigorous curriculum.***	795	3.12	.61	799	3.18	.64	561	3.16	.67	594	3.37	.69
i. The curriculum appropriately challenges most students.	799	3.17	.58	797	3.20	.63	557	3.25	.60	591	3.20	.69
j. Advanced (i.e. honors, pre-AP, etc.) courses are appropriately rigorous.[43]	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	559	3.39	.63	596	3.35	.65

Source: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys
*Statistically significant (p<.05); ***statistically significant (p<.001)

[43] Item added to the scale in Year 3.

Taken together, these findings provide evidence of a substantively important increase in many aspects of the expectations/rigor component of CGC over baseline. Furthermore, although the findings illustrate that WV GEAR UP has not found gains from Year 3 to Year 4, it has sustained the gains initially achieved in prior years. In addition, it is possible that the lack of change from Year 3 to Year 4 may be attributed to the scale only going up to 4 and having a ceiling effect.

Visual Cues/Material Resources. Table 14 shows average school personnel perceptions of the visual cues/material resources component of CGC in their schools. We again used ANOVAs to check for items with statistically significant changes over time. We found statistically significant differences in average scale ratings for all items.

Post-hoc analyses revealed that in all cases, Year 4 and Year 3 average ratings did not differ significantly from one another. However, Year 4 average ratings differed significantly from Year 1 ratings. We found particularly noteworthy gains with respect to seven items: (1) “Teachers are provided information about the school’s college-going rate and FAFSA completion rates” (d = .70), (2) “College pennants, banners, and posters are visible” (d = .69), (3) “Teachers include visual cues to encourage discussions about their college experience” (d = .61), (4) “Parents are included in the college preparation process” (d = .57), (5) “College messaging is integrated into events, including sports events or arts performances” (d = .54), (6) “Students have access to the information and resources they need to support their college attendance decisions” (d = .52), and (7) “School staff are provided with professional development on the topics of college readiness and success” (d = .50). All of these effect sizes were medium. For the remaining items, “Teachers are equipped with the knowledge to assist students in the transition from high school to college” (d = .21) and “Teachers engage in ongoing professional development about ways to promote college readiness” (d = .12), effect sizes were small.

Table 14. Average School-Level CGC Ratings by Item and Year: Visual Cues/Material Resources Component

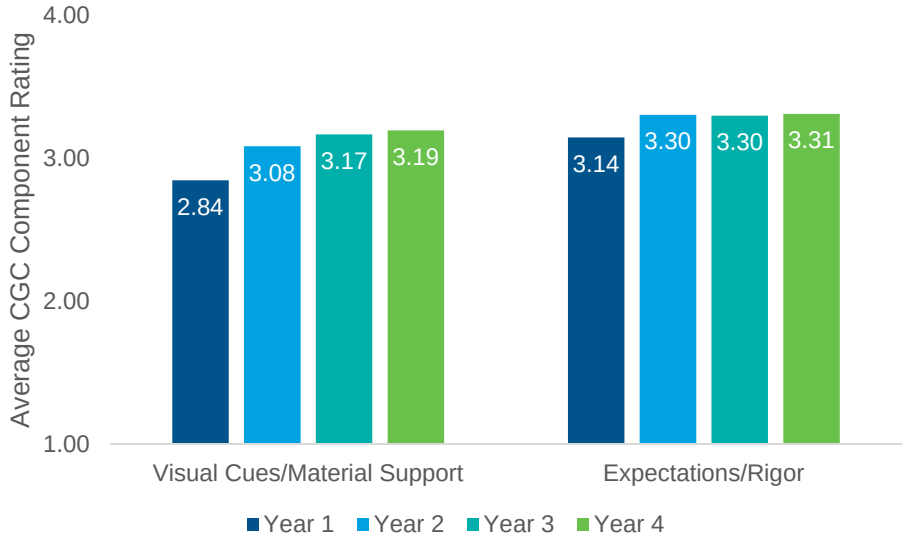
	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4		
Item	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
a. College pennants, banners, and posters are visible.***	797	2.84	.83	804	3.31	.72	561	3.39	.61	596	3.35	.65
b. Parents are included in the college preparation process.***	789	2.97	.67	800	3.27	.64	560	3.36	.58	594	3.37	.63
c. School staff are provided with professional development on the topics of college readiness and success.***	794	2.67	.72	796	2.92	.76	560	2.98	.73	594	3.04	.76
d. Students have access to the information and resources they need to support their college attendance decisions.***	790	3.06	.61	797	3.27	.65	558	3.39	.55	594	3.37	.61
e. Teachers include visual cues to encourage discussions about their college experience.***	791	2.82	.70	803	3.17	.69	561	3.19	.63	596	3.23	.65
f. Teachers are provided information about the school's college-going rate and FAFSA completion rates.***	787	2.68	.80	797	3.01	.80	560	3.17	.69	597	3.22	.72
g. College messaging is integrated into events, including sports events or arts performances.***	790	2.66	.70	798	2.89	.76	555	2.99	.72	593	3.04	.73
h. Teachers engage in ongoing professional development about ways to promote college readiness.*	789	2.87	.71	795	2.89	.78	558	2.91	.76	593	2.96	.77
i. Teachers are equipped with the knowledge to assist students in the transition from high school to college.***	792	3.05	.67	795	3.02	.73	556	3.13	.65	587	3.19	.65

Source: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys
*Statistically significant (p<.05); **statistically significant (p<.01); ***statistically significant (p<.001)

Using ANOVAs and post-hoc tests, we also compared the average overall scores on the CGC scales for both the Expectations/Rigor and Visual Cues/Material Resources components across time (see Figure 14). We found average Year 4 scores on the Expectations/Rigor component did not differ from Year 3 scores, but the difference from Year 1 to Year 4 was statistically significant, with a small, but substantively important effect size (d = .35).

The average Visual Cues/Material Resources score for Year 4 was higher than in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3, but only the difference from Year 1 was significant. In fact, this difference was statistically significant in the Year 1 compared to Year 4 case. The effect size for the difference between Year 1 and Year 4 ratings was medium (d = .64).

Figure 14. School-Level Expectations/Rigor and Visual Cues/Material Support CGC Component Ratings by Year



Most important aspect of building a CGC. Respondents were next asked to provide a description of the most important aspect of building a CGC in their school. In Year 4, 336 of 600 respondents commented on the most important aspect of building a CGC. Table 15 shows the categorization of their responses by theme, sample comment, and count. Communicating the importance and benefits of post-secondary education (N = 139) was most commonly reported as the most important aspect, followed by providing resources on college and career options (N=77). Making college seem attainable (N = 39) was the next most frequently identified theme, followed by exposing students to college and career options (N = 31), parental involvement (N = 29), improving study skills (N = 16), and helping students apply for college (N = 5).

The majority of respondents made comments that we coded under the theme, communicating the importance and benefits of college. In most cases, respondents indicated a need to promote student success by communicating to students the many college or career opportunities available in and outside of their community. Similar to previous years, respondents also mentioned the importance of finding the right “college fit” for students, pecifically, providing them information about the benefits of two-year or vocational school options, or the need to fill jobs within the community that would not necessarily require a traditional four-year college degree. One respondent commented:

> *Introductions to and the researching of colleges and universities. We need to educate students and parents on the types of post-secondary options. Students can be successful and financially comfortable by completing only a two-year degree instead of a four-year.*

Table 15. Thematic Analysis of School Personnel Perceptions about the Most Important Aspect of Building a CGC

Theme	Sample Comment	Count of Responses
a. Communicating the importance and benefits of college	*Discussing the value of education. By explaining to students how important it is to complete their HS diploma and try to attend a College to make them more valuable to employers.*	139
b. Providing resources on college and career options	*Students need to know and be aware of their options, what is available, and what they need to accomplish in order to succeed in a college or trade. Knowledge is power and broadcasting as much information as possible is one key to success.*	77
c. Making college seem attainable	*I think that letting them see that a college education is attainable is something that is so important. Many of our students don't think that they can go to college and be successful, but having continued discussion and providing abundant information helps them see that they can actually pursue a degree.*	39
d. Exposing students to college and job visits	*I think providing an opportunity for students to visit colleges makes the possibility seem a reality more than an abstract idea, especially to students who don't have college educated parents. Also, making colleges visible in our building and available for information is extremely beneficial. As professionals, we all proudly promote our own colleges and universities, but placing them in direct contact with the schools has a deeper impact.*	31
e. Parental Involvement	*Engaging Parents with information regarding Post Secondary Education. Our students would have a better understanding and more support if Parents truly understood what was available to them.*	29
f. Improving Study Skills	*Create a reasonable but rigorous curriculum to provide a solid next-step for students so they are better equipped to succeed in college and keep the idea of college in front of them as one of the reasons to work hard and do well in class.*	16
g. Helping students apply to colleges	*Helping students to apply for scholarships and to complete the FAFSA.*	5

Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Survey

Additionally, the Year 4 survey included an open-ended item asking respondents to describe what they perceived their role to be in building a CGC at school. More than half of all survey respondents (331 of 600) answered the question. Responses were coded into one or more of six themes: (a) encourage and support student success (N = 143), (b) be a resource (N = 93) (c) application and/or planning support (N = 38) (d) academic support (N = 37), (e) set high expectations (N = 7), and (f) talk to students/share experiences (N = 13). Examples of comments within these themes are presented in Table 16.

Table 16. Sample Personnel Responses Regarding Their Role(s) in Building a CGC in Their School

Theme	Sample Comment
a. Encourage and support student success	*My role is to encourage students to push themselves in all subjects and to care about their education and future*
b. Be a resource	*I see my role as a facilitator, one that continually questions, guides and supports students and their decisions for higher education. Providing resources, assistance, and guidance whenever students need it.*
c. Application and/or planning support	*I actively promote discussions of college requirements, how to apply for scholarships, and the importance of meeting deadlines. Further, I write recommendation letters and encourage students to apply for scholarships and financial aid.*
d. Academic support	*Teach all students as much as I can about not only about science but English, math, and basic life skills that they will need in the future.*
e. Set high expectations	*Maintaining high expectations and giving ample support for my students.*
f. Talk to students/share experiences	*I believe that sharing my own college experience is an important part of my role and using that as a way of showing students the vast opportunities available to them if they pursue and complete a college degree.*

Source: Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Survey

2.2.2 College-Going Culture in my Classroom

Respondents who indicated that their primary role was “teacher” were also asked to rate the CGC of their individual classroom. This section provides an overview of the findings for this subset of survey respondents.

Expectations/Rigor. Table 17 shows each of the items assigned to the expectations/rigor subscale, and the descriptive statistics for the entire sample of school personnel by year. ANOVA tests revealed average ratings for Year 4 were significantly higher than ratings for Year 1 for every scale item except for one item, “Advanced (i.e. honors, pre-AP, etc.) courses are appropriately rigorous,” which was not measured in Year 1. Effect sizes for the difference in their perceptions of classroom CGC Year 4 and Year 1 ratings ranged from small (e.g., “I am able to engage students in a rigorous curriculum” d = .20) to strong (e.g., “All students have the ability to succeed academically” d = .75).

Table 17. Average Classroom-Level CGC Ratings by Item and Year: Expectations/Rigor Component

	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4		
Resource	N	M	SD	N	N	N	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
a. Creativity and original thinking are highly valued.***	697	3.41	.58	693	3.60	.53	492	3.59	.54	527	3.62	.52
b. All students have the ability to succeed academically.***	700	3.19	.65	694	3.41	.65	493	3.63	.52	525	3.63	.51
c. Students are encouraged to do their best.***	706	3.46	.56	688	3.68	.51	490	3.69	.48	527	3.70	.48
d. I regularly talk to students about the importance of college.***	706	3.28	.61	692	3.42	.61	491	3.49	.58	525	3.47	.59
e. Students care about learning and getting a good education.***	703	2.83	.67	691	3.10	.68	490	3.13	.70	525	3.14	.74
f. Students are encouraged to set future college and career goals.***	698	3.29	.55	688	3.45	.56	491	3.51	.55	522	3.51	.55
g. Students are learning effective problem-solving skills.***	706	3.21	.54	690	3.35	.57	489	3.39	.59	525	3.36	.65
h. I am able to engage students in a rigorous curriculum.**	703	3.26	.58	687	3.37	.60	488	3.33	.69	515	3.38	.67
i. The curriculum appropriately challenges most students.***	707	3.24	.56	689	3.40	.59	489	3.43	.60	523	3.39	.62
j. Advanced (i.e. honors, pre-AP, etc.) courses are appropriately rigorous.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	559	3.39	.63	515	3.38	.67

Source: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys
*Statistically significant (p<.05); **statistically significant (p<.01); ***statistically significant (p<.001)

Visual Cues/Material Resources. Table 18 shows teacher perceptions of classroom-level CGC related to visual cues/material resources by year. ANOVAs illustrated that there were statistically significant increases for all items from Year 1 to Year 4, with two exceptions; there were significant decreases from Year 3 to Year 4 for "I engage in ongoing professional development about ways to promote college readiness" (*d* = -.51) and "Students have access to the information and resources they need to support their college attendance decisions" (*d* = -

.18). We found there were no other significant differences from Year 3 to Year 4 on the remaining items.

Table 18. Average Classroom-Level CGC Ratings by Item and Year: Visual Cues/Material Resources Component

	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4		
Resource	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
a. College pennants, banners, and posters are visible.***	705	2.70	.81	689	3.09	.78	490	3.13	.77	526	3.19	.75
b. Parents are included in the college preparation process.***	691	2.81	.67	683	3.05	.71	490	3.13	.69	523	3.12	.72
c. I am provided with professional development on the topics of college readiness and success.***	701	2.67	.74	528	2.54	.59	488	2.97	.78	369	2.62	.57
d. Students have access to the information and resources they need to support their college attendance decisions.***	699	3.01	.62	618	3.08	.67	488	3.32	.60	464	3.20	.62
e. I include visual cues to encourage discussions about my college experience. ***	705	2.80	.75	687	3.07	.75	489	3.17	.69	525	3.22	.70
f. I am provided information about the school's college-going and FAFSA completion rates.***	705	2.64	.80	685	2.94	.82	489	3.08	.75	523	3.16	.75
g. College messaging is integrated into events, including sports events or arts performances.***	699	2.67	.72	683	2.88	.80	489	3.00	.75	521	3.03	.74
h. I engage in ongoing professional development about ways to promote college readiness.	701	2.87	.71	685	2.90	.80	491	2.98	.77	523	3.04	.76
i. I am equipped with the knowledge to	702	3.11	.70	681	3.12	.74	489	3.24	.63	521	3.29	.67

assist students in the transition from high school to college.**				

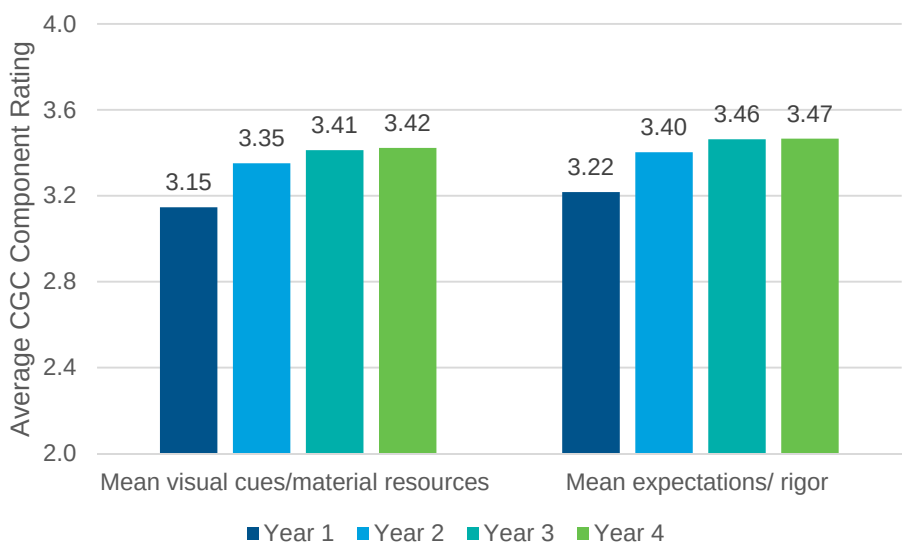
Source: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys
*Statistically significant (p<.05); **statistically significant (p<.01); ***statistically significant (p<.001)

Using ANOVAs and post-hoc tests, we also compared average overall scores on the CGC scales for both the Expectations/Rigor and Visual Cues/Material Resources components across time. (See Figure 15.)

The overall difference in average expectations/rigor ratings was statistically significant (*p*<.001). Post-hoc analyses showed that, despite a small positive increase in mean ratings, the Year 4 and Year 3 average expectation/rigor ratings did not differ significantly from one another. However, Year 4 ratings did significantly differ from baseline Year 1 ratings. Notably, the effect size for the differences approached the threshold for a medium effect (*d* = .55).

When examining the visual cues/material resources component of CGC, we again found the overall difference in CGC ratings across years was statistically significant (p<.001). Post-hoc analyses showed that the Year 4 ratings were significantly different from Year 1 with a medium effect size (*d* = .61). However, the average rating in Year 4 was not significantly higher than in Year 3.

Figure 15. Classroom-Level Expectations/Rigor and Visual Cues/Material Support CGC Component Ratings by Year



2.2.3 Knowledge of PSE Topics and Involvement in College-Related Activities

Two items on the school personnel survey asked respondents to rate their level of comfort with their knowledge to assist students with five college-related topics and to rate their own involvement in several college-related activities at their school.[44] Respondents had four

[44] Six topics were included on the Year 1 survey. The evaluation team revised and moved the item "I participate in GEAR UP activities" to a different section of the Year 2 survey.

response options for comfort/knowledge items (1 = *Not at all comfortable*, 2 = *Slightly comfortable*, 3 = *Moderately comfortable*, 4 = *Extremely comfortable*). Five response options were included for involvement items as well (1 = *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Always*). A sixth option, (*Rather not say* or *not applicable*) was included on each scale, but these options were not used to calculate average ratings.

Comfort/Knowledge. A series of ANOVAs showed that the average comfort/knowledge level reported by survey respondents differed significantly across years and for all 10 topics included on the survey (*p* <.001). Subsequent post-hoc analyses revealed that Year 4 respondents were significantly more comfortable with their knowledge to assist students with all 10 topics than Year 2 and Year 1 respondents. (See Table 19.)

Table 19. School Personnel Respondents' Comfort with their Knowledge to Assist Students with 10 PSE Topics by Year

	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4		
PSE Topic	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
a. FAFSA***	790	2.65	.99	796	2.85	.95	556	3.00	.91	593	2.98	.93
b. College savings plan/529***	785	1.97	.94	787	2.24	.98	553	2.39	1.01	586	2.35	1.04
c. ACT/SAT***	778	2.87	.92	787	3.02	.88	551	3.24	.85	586	3.27	.83
d. WV HEGP***	782	2.21	1.01	785	2.45	1.02	555	2.62	1.03	589	2.68	1.03
e. Federal grants, loans, and work-study***	781	2.48	.98	789	2.70	.97	554	2.87	.95	587	2.90	.97
f. College selection (match and fit)***	786	2.50	1.06	787	2.71	1.01	551	2.97	.98	593	3.03	.95
g. Scholarships (e.g., PROMISE or Institutional)***	787	2.58	.97	785	2.79	.95	548	2.99	.92	584	3.02	.92
h. Requirements for college acceptance***	782	2.86	.93	783	3.02	.90	549	3.21	.83	584	3.25	.84
i. Importance/benefit of college education***	767	3.55	.72	780	3.60	.66	520	3.71	.58	570	3.69	.58
j. High school graduation requirements***	777	3.15	.87	784	3.27	.82	529	3.48	.69	574	3.50	.70

Source: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys
*Statistically significant (p<.05); **statistically significant (p<.01); ***statistically significant (p<.001)
[a] Year 3 and Year 4 changes statistically significant (p<.05)

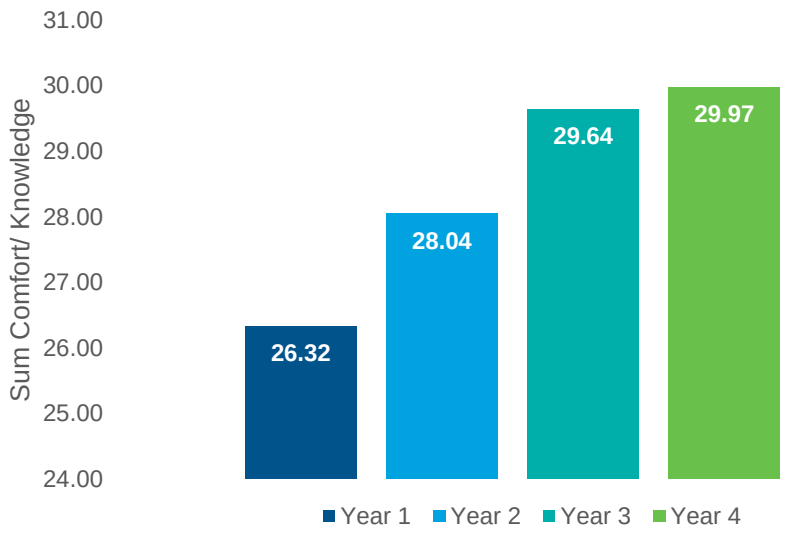
When examining comparisons between Year 1 and Year 4, we found that Year 4 school personnel reported higher comfort/knowledge to assist students than Year 1 personnel for all 10 topics. The average effect size change for the 10 topics from Year 1 to Year 4 approached the threshold for a medium effect (*d* = .50). We found the largest Year 1 to Year 4 differences with respect to the following topics: (1) *College selection (match and fit)* (*d* = .53), (2) *WV HEGP* (*d* = *.46*), (3), *ACT/SAT* (d = .46), (4) *scholarships* (*d* = *.46*) (5) *federal grants, loans, and work-study,*

(*d* = .44), (6) *college savings plan/529* (*d* = .38), and (7) *requirements for college acceptance* (*d* = .44). There were no significant differences found between Year 4 and Year 3 on comfort/knowledge ratings for any of the 10 topics.

As we did in previous years, we calculated an overall comfort/knowledge score for each participant. This score was operationalized as the sum of participant self-ratings for each of the 10 items on the scale. The range for this variable was 0–40 points, and a score of 30 points would indicate "moderate" comfort with the 10 college-related topics. We calculated a one-way ANOVA on respondents' knowledge score, using year as the predictor. The overall results showed that comfort/knowledge levels differed significantly by year.

Personnel found their comfort/knowledge slightly higher in Year 4 than in Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3. The effect size for the difference between Year 4 and Year 1 ratings was medium (*d* = .47), while there was no effect for the difference in Year 4 and Year 3 ratings. See Figure 16.

Figure 16. School Personnel Respondents' Sum Score Comfort with their Knowledge to Assist Students with PSE Topics by Year



Involvement. We next examined the extent to which respondents reported that they were involved in six college-related activities offered by their schools. ANOVAs revealed that there were significant differences in involvement across years for all activities. (See Table 20.)

Specifically, involvement ratings increased when comparing Year 1 to Year 4, and all differences were statistically significant. However, the average effect size was small (*d* = .33). The largest difference was related to the extent to which personnel reported offering students "supplemental instructional support to prepare them for postsecondary success" (*d* = .40). There were no differences found in Year 3 and Year 4.

Table 20. School Personnel Involvement in Six College-Related Activities by Year

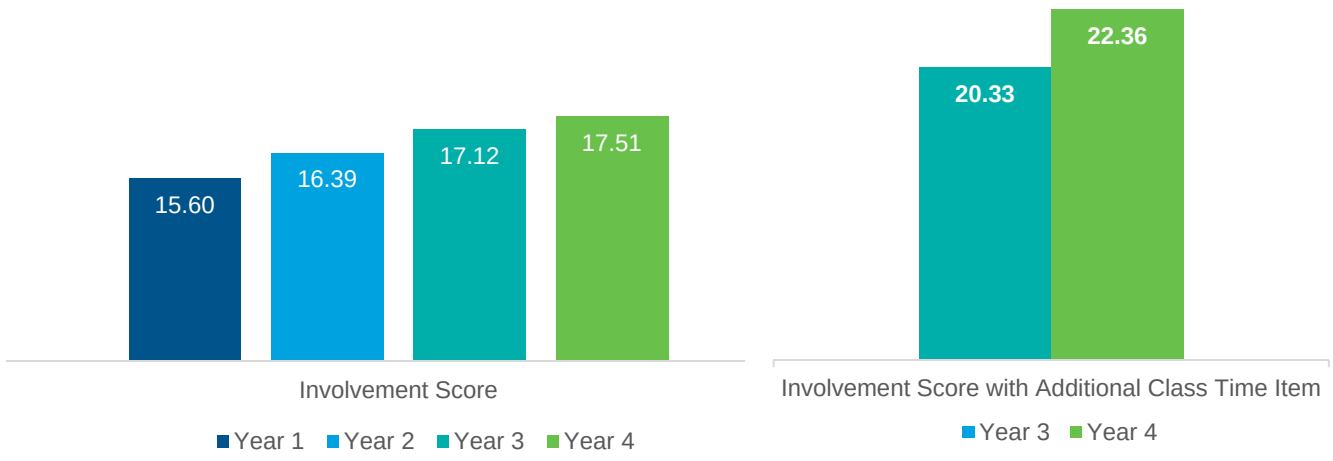
	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4		
Item	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
a. I participate in the college preparation activities of my school, e.g., chaperoning college visits.**	665	2.77	1.20	713	2.90	1.25	558	2.71	1.42	597	2.76	1.37
b. I have individual discussions with students about what they want to do with their futures.**	781	3.88	.86	789	3.93	.81	560	4.01	0.80	596	4.05	.82
c. I talk with students about their plans for college or work after high school.***	785	3.89	.85	789	3.97	.77	555	4.06	0.79	594	4.11	.78
d. I offer students supplemental instructional support to prepare them for postsecondary options.***	737	3.31	1.08	759	3.40	1.03	554	3.51	1.15	593	3.58	1.12
e. I talk with parents about their ability to help prepare their students for postsecondary education.***	734	2.84	1.13	750	3.00	1.10	551	2.96	1.30	593	3.08	1.23
f. I offer or incorporate class time to support college preparation efforts at my school.†	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	553	3.25	1.31	590	3.27	1.36

Source: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys
*Statistically significant (p<.05); **statistically significant (p<.01); ***statistically significant (p<.001)
†Not included in average or sum comparison across years. Included only in Year 3 and Year 4

As we did in previous years, we calculated an overall involvement score for each participant. This score was operationalized as the sum of participant self-ratings for the first five items on the scale. The range for this variable was 0–20 points, and a score of 15 points indicated being involved "sometimes." Once again, we conducted ANOVA on school personnel respondents' involvement scores using the year of response as the predictor variable. We found personnel reported significantly different involvement levels across years (p <.001).

Year 4 respondents had a slightly higher involvement than respondents in previous years. The differences were statistically significant for Year 1 to Year 4 comparisons. Effect sizes were small (d = .26 for the difference between Year 1 and Year 4 ratings). Figure 17 shows the difference.

Figure 17. School Personnel Overall Sum Involvement (Across Items) Score by Year



Year 3 and Year 4 respondents were also asked about the involvement of an additional item: "I offer or incorporate class time to support college preparation efforts at my school." We calculated a new overall involvement score for each participant that included this additional item. The range for this variable was 0–25 points, and a score of 18 points indicated being involved "sometimes." We found Year 4 personnel reported a higher involvement than Year 3 respondents. The difference with this item was statistically significant. Effect sizes approached medium (*d* = .39) for the difference between Year 1 and Year 4 ratings. Figure 17 shows the difference.

2.2.4 Perceptions Reported by School Personnel of Student College-Going Efficacy

In Years 2–4, we asked school personnel to respond to 10 items designed to measure their perceptions of student efficacy related to college-going efficacy (e.g., "the majority of students will be eligible to apply to a postsecondary institution"). (See Table 21.) Items were adapted from Gibbons (2005) and utilized a four-point Likert-type response scale (i.e., 1 = *Not at all sure*, 2 = *Somewhat sure*, 3 = *Sure*, 4 = *Very sure*). The option of *not applicable* was also offered, but not included in averaging item scores.

We used independent samples t-tests to test for statistically significant differences between Year 3 and Year 4 average ratings on each item. We only found differences for one item: "The majority of students can get good grades in high school math classes." Nevertheless, the effect size for this difference was small (*d* = .13).

Table 21. School Personnel Perceptions of their Students' College-Going Efficacy

	Year 2			Year 3			Year 4		
The majority of students…	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
a. Will not attend (college) but will seek a job or enter the military.	766	2.00	.81	538	2.06	.87	576	2.10	.90
b. Will be eligible to apply to a postsecondary institution.	772	2.55	.81	548	2.67	.83	587	2.70	.83
c. Can make an educational plan that will prepare them for college.	769	2.49	.82	540	2.50	.82	583	2.58	.83
d. Can get good grades in their high school science classes.	779	2.51	.76	547	2.48	.75	586	2.55	.82
e. Can get good grades in their high school math classes.*	781	2.43	.79	545	2.33	.79	587	2.45	.854
f. Can choose the high school classes needed to get into college.	781	2.64	.83	544	2.66	.84	586	2.69	.89
g. Know enough about computers/ technology to get into college.	783	2.88	.84	546	2.86	.86	587	2.82	.84
h. Can go to college after high school.	784	2.58	.84	548	2.65	.84	587	2.67	.86
i. Could get A's and B's in college.	780	2.29	.82	542	2.29	.81	586	2.31	.87
j. Could finish college and receive a college degree.	774	2.43	.82	540	2.46	.83	587	2.48	.87

Source: Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys
*Statistically significant (p<.05); **statistically significant (p<.01); ***statistically significant (p<.001)

2.2.5 Sustainability of GEAR UP Activities

In Years 3 and 4, we asked all school personnel to indicate the extent to which they believed their schools were likely to continue promoting 10 specific activities after the GEAR UP grant ends. Respondents used a four-point Likert-type scale (i.e., 1 = *Not at all*, 2 = *Slightly*, 3 = *Moderately*, 4 = *Extremely*). A fifth option, *not applicable,* was also offered, but not included in calculating mean ratings. (We included the same question on the Year 2 survey; however, only respondents in middle schools that would not be continuing on with the GEAR UP program were asked to answer.)

Table 22 shows the average ratings for all three years. Respondents in Year 4 reported their schools were most likely to sustain *academic support*, *financial literacy,* and *College Application and Exploration Week*. We also found significant differences in the negative direction with respect to the extent to which respondents thought the following activities would be sustained from Year 3 to Year 4: (1) *family involvement* (2) *academic support* and (3) *college visits*. However, the effect sizes for these differences were small (d = .12, d = .12, and d = .17, respectively).

Table 22. Average Sustainability Ratings Reported By School Personnel by Year

Resource	Year 2†			Year 3			Year 4		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
a. Family involvement*	296	4.11	.78	546	4.13	.79	587	4.02	.89
b. Mentoring	291	4.06	.81	548	4.10	.85	586	4.04	.89
c. Academic support*	295	4.37	.72	546	4.34	.77	585	4.24	.84
d. Financial aid literacy	241	3.52	.91	547	4.24	.79	584	4.14	.91
e. Partnership with institutions of higher education	264	3.75	.89	547	4.16	.84	585	4.10	.92
f. Community support	291	3.99	.83	547	4.02	.86	580	4.00	.93
g. College visits**	286	3.74	.91	548	4.09	.93	584	3.92	1.01
h. Access to college professionals	274	3.64	.93	548	4.00	.91	585	3.91	.95
i. Life Skills Development	291	4.02	.83	546	4.09	.83	584	4.04	.91
j. College Application and Exploration Week	233	3.66	.99	537	4.20	.85	579	4.15	.89

Source: Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys
*Statistically significant (p<.05); **statistically significant (p<.01); ***statistically significant (p<.001)
†Includes only middle school respondents

Sustainability Comments. The sustainability item also asked respondents to elaborate on their ratings (described above). Approximately 26% of the total respondents added a comment regarding their school's ability to sustain activities (N = 157). As in the previous years, we found nearly one-third of the comments (N = 50) concerned how and why funding from GEAR UP was essential to sustaining the activities listed in Table 22. Most commented that the loss of GEAR UP funding would mean that only limited activities would be available. Many staff commented on the ability of schools and their faculty to make every effort to sustain promising practices (N = 39). A few staff also commented on the counseling staff role in continuing these activities; some shared their counseling office would be successful while others were less optimistic.

Illustrative comments are below:

> *"I think we have great counselors at HS so I see them putting forth their best efforts in the future to continue many of the most effective Gear Up initiatives."*
>
> *"Counseling staff is very weak at the school. Without the Gear Up coordinator, the items above will be neglected."*

Fortunately, many respondents also indicated that they would try to sustain college readiness efforts, with some noting specific examples like college visits/field trips (N = 16), financial aid workshops and awareness activities (N = 3), academic support or tutoring (N = 1), and a day or week focused on college application and exploration (N = 4). Table 23 provides sample comments.

Table 23. Comments Provided by School Personnel Regarding the Potential Sustainability of GEAR UP Services

Theme	Sample Comment
a. Community Involvement	*I am certain that our community and our West Virginia colleges will continue to support and be involved in activities that help our learners become successful professionals and citizens.*
b. College visits/field trips	*The greatest benefit to many of our students has been the field trips to visit colleges and technical schools. Those will probably be eliminated due to lack of funding.*
c. School will continue promote college-readiness	*My school is very involved in encouraging students to go to college and provide an array of ways to support students and parents in their search for a college.* *I believe that our staff feels that all of the above are important and will try to include them as much as possible* *I feel we can support the 10 things above as we would in a normal year. We would plan visits and bring different colleges in as planned, have a College Fair, have our own activities and not need to see the state put out $1,000 a month for a coordinator.*
d. Counselor role	*The counselor will have all of these responsibilities if Gear Up is gone.*
e. Importance of GEAR UP funding	*The GEAR UP grant helps with the financial side of all of the above mentioned activities, without the financial assistance I do not know if my school will be able to continue some of the activities.* *If it costs anything the school will not do it.*
f. Influence of GEAR UP on school culture	*Gear up has a positive effect on school climate and helps many students that would not have these opportunities. Without it, I'm afraid interest will decrease.*

Source: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4 WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys

2.2.6 Additional Comments

The final item on the school personnel survey asked respondents to provide any additional comments. In Year 4, 55 of 600 respondents commented. Of these, 11 responses could not be categorized. We divided the remaining 44 responses into two overarching themes: (1) concerns and (2) impact. Table 24 shows a selection of sample responses by theme and, where applicable, sub-theme.

Table 24. Additional Comments

Theme	Sub-Theme(s)	Sample Response(s)
a. Concerns (N=27)	GEAR UP Structure	*I think the Gear Up concept and information is wonderful. But, I think the way it is set-up isn't the best as far as timing (kids being away from classes due to surveys, teachers or counselors being away from their classes and/or school for entire days).*
	Student Ability	*Most of the students are of low ability level and will have trouble being a success in college. They will not improve because they can pass high school classes without much effort.*
	Student Interest	*Despite the efforts of Gear Up, many students have no goal of going to college when they enter high school.*
	Affordability	*There are so many socioeconomic factors that cripple many of our students' abilities to attend college long term. Many of them are faced with little or no financial support at home, so even if they are eligible for loans and grants, they are still impoverished to the point where they can't afford gas money to go to school daily or food while they are there.*
	Family Background	*Many of our students have the ability, but many do not have families that have gone to college or know how to help them. I also feel like the economic position of many of our families encourages students to get a job and make money rather than spend money on more education.*
b. Impact (N=17)	Exposure	*Because we live in a rural area, and many of our students have never even traveled out of the county, the GEARUP funding has provided opportunities that their parents cannot afford to do on their own. Our school does not receive enough regular funding to provide them with the opportunities that GEARUP provides. I believe that more students from our school attend college because they are exposed to more opportunities.*

Source: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4, WV GEAR UP School Personnel Surveys

3. Mentor Interviews

This section contains an overview of results from telephone interviews with GEAR UP mentors in spring 2018. ICF audio-recorded interviews with the consent of mentors and transcribed these discussions. The evaluation team analyzed and coded transcripts to identify major themes.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Of the 15 mentors interviewed, 12 are current teachers while two are counselors and one is an assistant principal. Teachers involved as SSS mentors come from a variety of backgrounds, currently teaching subjects in science, math, English and in the music/theater arts. Most mentors noted that they were involved in school activities outside of their normal responsibilities, which included chaperoning field trips, sponsoring academic societies, and participating in event

committees. Although a few cited some type of experience in serving as a mentor or other supportive role in their school, most reported being asked to participate by their peers due to their rapport with the students. According to one mentor:

> *She [site coordinator] asked me and my colleague if we would both be willing to be a mentor. Because we do other things like the AP program and we do a lot of field trips and we're always involved with the kids….She considered us to be good candidates for the mentoring program.*

Generally, mentors clearly understood their roles and responsibilities as they pertained to helping students, with one mentor stating, "My idea of my duties is to help them realize their potential and recognize the best ways to not only see the potential but to capitalize on it." Only two mentors said that they were somewhat unsure of their roles, citing uncertainty on how often they should meet with students or the types of topics that they would discuss. Mentors reported usually having a group of 6 to 10 students, but the frequency and capacity in which they would meet individually with each student varied. The most common methods of interaction with students were during lunch periods or teacher planning periods. Some mentors noted that they made a point to meet with every student formally once a quarter, not including "mini" check-ins. According to one mentor:

> *We do weekly meetings during high school lunch, and that's 45 minutes. During that time, we go through our handbook, and then we also address any other responsibilities. In addition to that, I make sure I meet with each student once a month to just do a check-in with them.*

3.2 Training and Ongoing Support

All mentors found the annual training from the Commission helpful, particularly the guest speaker who provided resources and strategies for implementing student support and data collection. Through the training, mentors learned about strategies for selecting students to participate as a mentee, as well as training on how to document mentor relationships.

Due to the nature of mentors' previous experience or other responsibilities within the school, some found it reassuring that they had resources and supports through WV GEAR UP that could help them in future challenges. According to one mentor:

> *It was really well done and organized, and despite the fact that it was a whole day's worth of training, it moved really quickly….The training lets you know that if something else comes up or if you want to address something, or your kid needs something, and you're not exactly on session two on week two, that's okay.*

While mentors believed they had considerable autonomy in conducting activities, all emphasized that they received the support and guidance of their GEAR UP site coordinators when needed. The communication between mentors and site coordinators was usually conducted by email at least once a week, but sometimes in-person meetings would take place if schedules allowed. The trust between mentor and site coordinator was a common theme for mentors when asked to describe the working relationship between the two positions. According to one mentor:

> *Any time I would ever need anything, I knew they would be there. Any time I ever had any questions or concerns, or comments, I had their utmost support. Even further than that, if I needed to check with [site coordinator], who's not even the coordinator for my area, I talked to her a couple times back and forth. So I knew I had the support of everybody.*

3.3 Student Recruitment and Selection

Most mentors reporting having a caseload of 10 to 12 individuals, though a few reported serving as few as 5–6 students. Most said they had lost at least a few of the students originally recruited for the program, and mentors typically sought out new students or allowed existing SSS participants to bring friends into the program.

Asked about student recruitment, most mentors said they recruited students who have potential but may face barriers to success. One looked for students "who need an extra push or motivation," and another saw the goal as to "get them to be successful students and successful people."

At most sites, even the ones that participated in the earlier RCT study, mentors said they would fill open slots by talking to teachers or guidance counselors so they could obtain recommendations. One sent an email to all teachers asking for names of students who might benefit from the program.

Regardless of school, most mentors described similar characteristics among SSS students, including difficult family lives with parents affected by drug addiction, unemployment, poverty, or incarceration. As a result, these students lack confidence and motivation and often have poor attendance and low grades. One mentor described how she made a special effort to work with one student who frequently missed school.

> *He has a difficult home life, and I've been trying to catch him here and there to say, 'Let me help you with make-up work. Why don't you come in at lunch or stay after school?' And he has stayed to make up assignments.*

At one school, a mentor reported heavy interest in the program even though there were limited spots available for new members. This mentor tried to add any interested student who wanted to attend, since there seemed to be no budgetary reasons not to do this.

> *We were told there was a limit, but we have kids that want to join all the time. We let them attend, we just let them sign in as members. We let them come in because the program started to catch on and they like it.*

3.4 Implementation

In their interviews, all mentors said they tried to hold weekly meetings of at least 20 to 30 minutes in length with their group of SSS participants. While they cited support for the program within the school, mentors said some factors occasionally prevented the implementation of weekly classes, including:

- Weather-related school disruptions, such as cancellations or delays that affected early morning classes;

- A statewide teachers strike from February 23 to March 7, 2018; and
- Occasional building-level events or conflicts that prevented meetings from taking place.

Having a regularly scheduled SSS time during the week was viewed as essential for success. One mentor noted that the meeting time was essentially built into the school schedule for them, and that the central office would help her find students if they forgot about SSS or were not in class on time.

At another school, SSS became a regular offering under the school's Learning, Individualized Needs, Knowledge, and Skills (LINKS) advising program designed to promote student success. As a result, mentors at this school reported that they increased the frequency of student contact, conducting two 20-minute sessions during most weeks. This also led to greater use of deep dives or extended activities at the second meeting to build on lessons covered in the earlier meeting that week.

Two mentors believed that a success factor in implementation was selecting SSS participants who are also in the teachers' regular subject-matter classes every day. If they were also teaching a mentee in an academic subject, mentors found it easier to monitor students' school attendance and academic progress and to take action if students were absent or missing assignments. In addition, having a mentee in a class made it easy for mentors to remain connected if weather delays forced cancellation of SSS meetings or events.

For some mentors, one implementation challenge was the issue of student expectations. Several noted that the SSS program was marketed to students as an extracurricular activity; however, delivering formal lessons could make it seem like a regular class, and some students were less interested as a result. Many mentors said they adapted lessons to allow for more discussion so that it felt less like a typical school-day class.

Even with a regularly scheduled time for the program, several mentors believed that there was not enough time to meet as a group because students had other obligations, were not motivated to come, or forgot about the meeting. A few in SSS also wanted to participate in the GEAR UP Higher Education Readiness Officers (HEROs) program, and at least one school scheduled both activities at the same time. Another mentor believed that the most motivated students typically came to SSS while the ones who did not show up regularly seemed to have the greatest needs. According to one mentor:

> *The students who steadily participated already had good grades and some idea about college.*

Despite such challenges, however, all mentors said they were able to conduct regular one-to-one check-ins with students on at least a monthly basis. Some would hold these check-ins during lunch periods or informally in the hallways; other mentors would schedule meetings during teacher planning periods. If a mentor also had a student in another class, the mentor might ask students to stay briefly after class to review progress. By spring 2018, one mentor said most SSS students in his group know they can go to him if they have any academic or school-related problem.

For some mentors, the SSS program—despite some implementation challenges—opened the eyes of many school officials. According to one mentor:

> *I just think it shined a light on something—that our kids need more structure and guidance …. I think it helps illuminate the fact that we just feel a need to do more of these types of things.*

3.5 Curriculum

Mentors said they enjoyed the curriculum although some let the students dictate the pace in which they covered individual lessons. For example, one noted that some students might get focused on a particular topic and wanted to continue to discuss it. In these instances, the mentor would encourage free-flowing discussion even if it meant not covering parts of the intended session.

> *I would say let the students lead where it goes. When you're doing your session, if they are enjoying a session, carry it over as much as possible …. Just pay attention to what they are interested in and listen to them. They'll tell you what they want to learn.*

Most agreed it was important to gauge the group's interest in a topic and to spend more or less time on it accordingly. This was particularly important for SSS sessions that might meet only 20 to 30 minutes a week.

> *Sometimes students get stuck on a topic, either out of interest or a lack of understanding. So we would just stay on that for a longer time.*

Several mentors cited the lesson on emotional intelligence as particularly helpful to students, who learned more about themselves that can help navigate challenging school or family issues. Career planning also drew many students' interest, and personal and emotional growth sessions led many students to talk about their problems and establish goals. Other mentors cited grit as a popular topic because students understood the connection between effort and results. Regardless of the topic, however, most mentors said they often altered the basic SSS material to better promote student engagement. One mentor sometimes allowed students to lead the lesson, while some adopted a game or role-play approach when covering a topic such as social engagement.

Most mentors said they used at least some of the SSS curriculum's deep dive supplemental activities to reinforce concepts covered in a previous session. Again, many opted for the deep dive if they knew their students had an interest in the topic. According to one mentor:

> *The deep dives were something new…. Instead of 10 separate sessions on 10 separate topics, it was like doing the two sessions on the same topic and getting a little bit more into it the second time you meet with them about it.*

At a school with twice-a-week SSS meetings, the mentor used the second meeting to cover the deep dives that supported the earlier lesson.

> *I always did a deep dive after I did the initial session because the deep dives specifically were built off of what you spoke about the previous time …. And they were good because again, it was just another chance for them to dig a little deeper and say, "Hey, this is where I'm at, this is what I'm struggling with.*

About half of the mentors said students sometimes did not respond well to a lesson presented in a traditional classroom style, where the teacher did most of the talking. This was particularly true among mentors at former RCT sites, where some had difficulty convening regular meetings during the year. If students felt SSS was just like any other class, they would not engage in the material.

> *When we would try to deliver the curriculum in a straightforward manner, they looked at it as another class and it was disinteresting to them. But when you made it applicable to them or had a hands-on activity or guest speaker, it meant more to them.*

Mentors agreed that their sessions provided a safe space for students to talk about their challenges in and out of school. Having such a safe space also encouraged some mentors to alter the curriculum to provide more hands-on activities or games that support the topic. In the view of these mentors, going away from a class structure was important because it would promote some important group bonding. According to one mentor:

> *Over the year you kind of develop a family-like atmosphere with the group and I think some kids want that.*

Among resources, mentors were most likely to note that they used the CFWV website and found it helpful in building the college-is-possible message. This finding is not surprising as CFWV shares many of the same goals as the GEAR UP program. One mentor reported that he adapted a goal-setting activity and the graduation pledge directly from the CFWV site.

3.6 Impact

Virtually all mentors recognized the importance of the SSS mentor program in proactively improving, at various levels, students' grades, school attendance, and their social and emotional well-being. One mentor had recognized the importance of communicating with students his role in overseeing their academic progress, stating:

> *They know that somebody's keeping up with them, because like I said, I do look at their grades. I get their report cards and I go through all the data, and I share that with them so they know that I'm paying attention.*

In some instances, mentors recognized the importance of the group dynamic in which students interacted based on similar backgrounds or interest. For example, one female mentor recalls her group of all girls, saying:

> *I feel like the girls that I've got in my group are not afraid to share, and so I've learned a lot about them through the years….Girls are a little bit more apt to share their feelings.*

Mentors also believed that students' college readiness improved while in the program, as did their understanding of the skills needed to succeed in college. In addition to direct improvements in academic achievement and school attendance among students, mentors noted a paradigm shift of students in how they thought of college, particularly as it relates to how they will achieve their goals. According to one mentor:

> *It's more of the talk is happening more. It's not the 'Oh, well maybe when I leave here I'll go have a couple kids and maybe I'll work at Go-Mart' or anything like that. It's 'Well maybe I'll go and get a beautician degree. Maybe I could create a business where I run my own business.' It's little things like that, where you hear the talk kind of changing in those social times.*

In addition to mentors describing the positive impact that the SSS mentor program had on students through traditional school-based strategies, they also cited examples of how community outreach activities helped establish a deeper relationship between mentor and student. This was particularly true among mentors at sites that had participated in the RCT. These community-based activities served as projects that took place out of the traditional structure of school and the classroom. According to one mentor:

> *We had different projects that we did initially, we had a project through the animal shelter over here and that went really well….We have another project coming up; it's a lake cleanup project and I feel like that's going to be a really positive thing.*

4. Site Coordinator Interviews

The following section provides an overview of results from focus groups conducted with GEAR UP site coordinators in spring 2018. ICF conducted focus groups as part of a regularly scheduled site coordinator meeting in Charleston, WV. The evaluation team recorded all focus groups and individual interviews with the consent of participants and then transcribed the audio recordings to prepare them for analysis. The evaluation team analyzed the interviews to identify major themes, sub-themes, and interrelationships. We then coded transcripts by themes to present examples we thought would be useful to WV GEAR UP in interpreting the findings. Below we present a summary of results organized into three major sections: Implementation, Impact and Outcomes, and Sustainability. Under Implementation, key sub-themes include communication, partnerships with colleges and universities, development of a college-going culture, school buy-in, tutoring, and experience in helping students complete financial aid forms.

4.1 Implementation

4.1.1 Communication

Site coordinators said they understood their roles and knew that they could look to WV GEAR UP staff to answer questions. They expressed strongly positive views about WV GEAR UP regional directors, saying that they fielded programming and financial questions both quickly and accurately. As one noted:

> *They're so detailed and organized. You ask a question and it's answered almost immediately. I don't know how they are so on top of everything.*

The only suggestion for improvement came from two coordinators who recommended that WV GEAR UP hold fewer in-person coordinator meetings and perhaps rely more on webinars for more routine training. WV GEAR UP could still bring coordinators together at key points in GEAR UP programming, such as when cohort students are transitioning to high school.

> *Today I needed to be at my school. A lot of this stuff we already know. We do it every year. Can we cut some of these meetings down?*

Yet all coordinators appeared satisfied with regular and ongoing support received by WV GEAR UP. One coordinator summarized this positive view:

> *They do a very good job telling us what we have to do and what we're missing. Today they showed us a list of stuff that we completed and haven't completed. That's almost a weekly update from them.*

4.1.2 School Buy-In

With cohort students in 10th grade, most coordinators believed the program has attained a sense of stability at their schools in part because of at least some progress in gaining school and teacher buy-in. Examples included site coordinators who saw greater teacher interest and involvement in GEAR UP-sponsored tutoring and college application campaigns. At one school, math teachers served as tutors either before or after school, and another site reported increases in teacher-tutor communication. Another coordinator received help on financial aid forms from a fellow teacher whose two children are recent high school graduates.

This view was not universal, however. One coordinator explained that buy-in remained challenging in part because other teachers/staff believe the person getting paid to work on GEAR UP should be able to handle all the responsibilities.

> *The staff was like, 'It's your job. Aren't you getting paid from GEAR UP? Why do we need to help?'*

But another coordinator cited strong coordination and support for the program within the building. This was particularly useful when the coordinator asked for help in administering GEAR UP, citing the weight of other responsibilities in the school. Ultimately, the school and regional director worked together to designate a co-coordinator to provide help.

> *There was no way I could do everything that I normally do plus all the GEAR UP stuff. I had to have help.*

One coordinator created a Facebook page that is popular with families and "has been vital to the success of what I've done this year." Several coordinators believed it is important to have a social media presence in spreading the GEAR UP message regularly to students and their families.

4.1.3 Tutoring and Academic Support

As in past years, site coordinators in spring 2018 continued to differ in their perceptions about the effectiveness of GEAR UP-sponsored tutoring. However, several coordinators reported that changing the time of tutoring has improved participation. According to one coordinator:

> *Last year, I had it after school, and I had one student show up consistently. This year, we were able to get a retired math teacher to come in and do our tutoring on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and it's much, much better. Tutoring seems to be much more successful during the school day [8:30-1] as opposed to after school.*

Another school also moved from after school to schoolday tutoring in math by hiring a half-time teacher. This teacher taught one class and then stayed to do pull-out tutoring of GEAR UP students who were struggling or had F's in their math classes.

> *She works one-on-one with these kids. She's still there, working with those kids and she's helped get their grades up.*

For many coordinators, however, after-school tutoring remains a challenge. Several said that they tried after-school as well as before-school tutoring this year with minimal response. One site even provided after-school buses two days a week, "but no one would use them."

4.1.4 College-Going Culture

Most site coordinators believed that GEAR UP has helped to generate a college-going culture at their schools, as evidenced by increased student knowledge of college options, the ACT/SAT, and the FAFSA. According to one coordinator:

> *It's helped to build a college culture that didn't exist before.*

One coordinator noted that getting teachers on board "is a big part of changing the cultural aspect of the school." One example was having all teachers decorate their doors during College Application and Exploration Week. Another agreed, noting that all staff, including custodians, wore FAFSA t-shirts to raise awareness of the need to complete this form. As a result of such activities, GEAR UP had greater visibility at the school. According to one coordinator:

> *Before, if you would say GEAR UP, some kids would know what it is, some kids wouldn't. We're at a point where it's become more of a culture within the school.*

College visits are another critical element of supporting a college-going culture. One coordinator sought to carefully match visits to student interests by having them complete an interest inventory before each trip. That way, a visit could include more detailed information beyond simply a general campus tour. For low-income students who rarely travel outside their county, college visits also provide new experiences and exposure to different places and people.

> *Students who've never been out of the county have exposure to a new place, see the actual layout of a college and how it differs from high school.*

Another coordinator noted that all seniors in their civics classes are required to complete one college application whether or not they have plans to attend. The coordinator said:

> *Even if they really don't want to go, they still do the application and just go through the process to see what it's all about.*

4.1.5 College Acceptance Programming

While coordinators continued to view college visits as a popular activity, many cited the growing popularity of College Decision Days and related programming to celebrate college acceptances. Schools appeared to take somewhat different approaches to these events; one convened a panel of alumni to answer questions from students, while others had guest speakers. Several schools organized ceremonies to honor students individually for their decisions to attend college. One coordinator noted that at his school, seniors can also honor individual teachers for the guidance they have provided during their school careers. Parents, family, and school board members typically attend these ceremonies. As two coordinators said:

> *The community loves it, the parents love it, and everyone appreciates it.*
>
> *I think it's one of the best things that has ever come out of GEAR UP. It's become a big deal the past two years.*

Another reported that they schedule this recognition event as a "fancy dress" evening, somewhat like a graduation where students walk across the stage and shake hands with principal, superintendent, board members, and the regional director.

One coordinator combined a College Decision Day celebration in the morning with a college fair in the afternoon for younger students. The two events give college representatives more incentive to visit the school that day, since they know they can work on recruiting in the afternoon. Other coordinators say they honor teachers during these events, either through certificates or a PowerPoint presentation about honored educators that plays throughout the day's events. Another school had a college president speak at the ceremony.

> *We say things to the kids over and over, but sometimes if they hear it from someone else, it has a little more oomph to it.*

Several coordinators noted the importance of having younger students attend the College Decision Day ceremony. Said one:

> *They're there to see what next year might look like for them. It gets them thinking.*

4.1.6 Enhanced Partnerships with Colleges and Universities

As WV GEAR UP has matured at these schools, many site coordinators described enhanced partnerships with colleges and universities. One coordinator noted that a new branch campus of West Virginia University recently opened nearby and that GEAR UP scheduled many visits to this campus. In turn, university officials attend some college workshops and presentations on dual credit options.

One coordinator noted that school/college partnerships have expanded to include targeted, subject-specific visits from representatives from different colleges. A college student majoring in music came to talk with high school choir and band students, a psychology graduate student visited an honors psychology class, and health science college staff came to speak with interested students. The coordinator said that these interactions allow students to learn "what happens at the next level" and connect high school with college and careers.

Another noted that private colleges are "stepping up their game," offering to help with transportation to college visits as they realize many students cannot afford private college tuition. "They're paying a little more attention" to GEAR UP students than they did previously, one coordinator said.

Coordinators offered many examples of colleges/schools helping them with FAFSA workshops or college visits. Said one:

> *I don't think I've called anywhere where they've turned us down. Any place you call is very open to have you.*

4.1.7 FAFSA Completion Initiatives

FAFSA was a popular topic among coordinators, who had mixed views of the success of completion initiatives for priority students. Nearly half viewed FAFSA as their most significant challenge, in part due to lack of parent involvement, while the remainder were neutral or positive about their outreach efforts.

One coordinator said he had worked on this issue for three years but this year, the fourth, was the worst. Others attributed the challenges to increasing poverty, drug abuse, and family dysfunction. Although some cited student apathy as an issue, another found more parents who would not supply Social Security numbers or financial data because of divorce or step-parenting situations. As one stated:

> *You've got great kids and they get their ID's and they login and they do their part, and then it stops right there.*

Some high school seniors also lived with grandparents who were unfamiliar with the financial aid process. When many parents or guardians had questions, one coordinator responded by scheduling additional FAFSA workshops. Another sought help from a fellow teacher who had a strong understanding of the form because of having children in college. One other coordinator tried to increase student interest by providing an incentive—a magnet or sticker for students who completed the form.

While challenges remained, one coordinator said the school started from such a low baseline on FAFSA that WV GEAR UP's efforts were a success.

> *We didn't even get to our 63% goal [for seniors], but we still had over 100 kids complete the FAFSA. We've never had that many. We wouldn't have been able to do that without GEAR UP.*

Other coordinators distributed magnets, banners, and stickers to those who completed FAFSA, and many students placed it on their lockers.

> *Students would ask, 'where's my sticker.' It's a good thing. I know it was positive in our school. Students like to be recognized.*

4.2 Impact and Outcomes

Site coordinators generally agreed that WV GEAR UP is having a positive effect on their schools by providing a "college-is-possible" message often lacking in students' lives. While they did not provide specific data indicating impact, they believed there were tangible examples of success.

> *GEAR UP provides experiences for students that otherwise would not happen.*

> *They know the ACT, the FAFSA. Those are things that they need to take care of. Before, it was seen as this mythical stuff that's more like voodoo.*

Asked how they viewed success in their own role as coordinators, many defined success as the connection made with students to help them plan for the future. While most believed that fulfilling their GEAR UP work plan was important, many said that making individual connections with students was paramount. One saw success for a coordinator as "providing opportunities for the kids." Another noted:

> *If I can just get them to think about what their future is…because they are so wrapped up in the day to day, I would consider that successful beyond achieving the workplan.*

Coordinators generally agreed that GEAR UP is making a positive impact so far by enhancing a college-going culture at schools and getting more students talking about college.

> *They get hands-on experiences that they wouldn't get if we didn't have GEAR UP.*

Even if schools did not meet their FAFSA goals, most believed that their school saw an increase in the number of students completing financial aid forms. One noted that while the school didn't meet its GEAR UP goal for FAFSA, it had the most completers in school history. "We wouldn't have been able to do that without GEAR UP."

Several coordinators cited the SSS mentoring program as an initiative having a positive impact. At one site, teachers played a major role in identifying students. According to one site coordinator:

> *Kids are seeing what is possible, and that college is within the realm of their possibilities.*

4.3 Sustainability

Site coordinators expressed different views about sustaining GEAR UP, from optimistic to negative. Some said they want to continue FAFSA workshops and college visits, although lack of funds may make it difficult to continue the latter activities. Several mentioned College Decision Day as a low-cost activity with a significant payoff for students and families, a powerful rationale for the initiative to continue after the end of the grant.

> *The decision day ceremony is something that we can continue, because it's so popular. We've had a lot of parent involvement with that, and it has been a struggle otherwise to get parents involved.*

There was strong sentiment that GEAR UP activities are important and should continue but may not due to lack of funds. As coordinators stated:

> *I think a lot of it is sustainable, but the money is really nice to have.*

> *The concern is that when it goes away, the [college-going] culture is going to slowly erode.*

After the grant's conclusion, one coordinator will miss the extra nudging received from the Commission's regional program directors. This constant contact helps keep the program on target even when coordinators have other school responsibilities.

> *I'm not sure what will happen when the grant goes away and there's nobody to ask, 'did you do your workshops or your bus tours?' I need somebody to make sure I do things, and that's what I like about this program.*

Two coordinators believed that career days could continue, given the way that initiative has helped build partnerships in the community. Another thought the school could continue to

support college visits, at least for high school seniors. HEROs and SSS were other popular initiatives that some coordinators believed should continue after the grant. However, as one noted, “If activities are going to cost money, I’m not sure they’re going to continue.”

At one school, the GEAR UP coordinator met with SSS mentors to develop their own workplan for the next year that builds on—and goes beyond—the annual GEAR UP workplan. This coordinator believed that by taking ownership of GEAR UP, these individuals have set a foundation for sustainability.

> *I’ve reflected on this year and met with my mentors, and we’re developing our own workplan that will weave into the workplan for GEAR UP.*

V. Discussion

ICF’s evaluation of WV GEAR UP is situated with the broader context of challenges and successes presented in the introduction section of this report. Notably, the opioid epidemic has become significantly worse since the Year 3 Annual Evaluation Report was submitted. Although those with a stake in the GEAR UP program likely desire to see an annual increase in positive outcomes, given the far-reaching impact that the opioid epidemic has had on communities—and children and families, in particular—it should be considered noteworthy when outcomes have been sustained from Year 3 to Year 4, rather than declined.

1. Educational Goals, Aspirations, and Academic Confidence

Most cohort students (90%) reported plans to continue education after high school in Year 4, a relatively high percentage. Similar percentages of students reported they aspire (92%) and expect (90%) to attain postsecondary education.

Cohort students were generally “confident” about various academic skills (though not “very confident”) in Year 4. They were more confident about their ability to do well in college courses and ability to pass end-of-year tests and less confident in their study skills—but these differences were small.

Overall, there were not too many notable differences between students from the Year 4 cohort, the Year 3 cohort, and the R-Comp group regarding educational goals, aspirations, and academic confidence, with a few exceptions:

- There was a decline between Year 3 and Year 4 regarding students’ academic confidence ratings in their ability to do well in college courses; however, the difference, while statistically significant, was very small.
- In addition, Year 4 cohort students exhibited higher academic confidence ratings than R-Comp students in math and their ability to pass end of year tests. These differences were also very small.

Cohort parents/guardians had generally high aspirations and expectations for their children to attain postsecondary education in Year 4—98% and 95% respectively. When comparing Year 4 cohort parents/guardians to those in Year 3 and the R-Comp group, there were no notable differences.

Overall, high percentages regarding postsecondary goals and aspirations were sustained from Year 3 to Year 4 and there are not many noteworthy longitudinal or cross-section differences on these topics.

2. College Entrance Requirements, Cost, and Financial Aid

Approximately three-quarters of cohort students reported speaking with someone about college entrance requirements and more than two-thirds reported speaking with someone about the availability of financial aid in Year 4. This was relatively unchanged from Year 3. A significantly greater percentage of cohort students reported speaking with GEAR UP staff or someone at their school about these topics, with a medium effect size, when compared to the R-Comp group. This is not too surprising, considering that site coordinators serve the cohort students, but not the R-Comp group. It does confirm the fact that key conversations regarding college and financial aid are happening between GEAR UP and/or other school staff and cohort students, which is an important aspect of measuring program implementation.

Just under half of cohort parents/guardians reported speaking to someone about college entrance requirements and the availability of financial aid in Year 4. Regarding availability of financial aid, this represented a statistically significant decrease (with a small effect size) from Year 3. The percentage of parents/guardians who reported speaking to someone about college entrance requirements was relatively unchanged from Year 3, however. As with cohort students, there was a significantly greater percentage of cohort parents/guardians who reported speaking to someone about both topics when compared to the R-Comp group. Again, this helps to confirm that the grant is enabling more conversations to take place between GEAR UP and/or other school staff and parents/guardians regarding important college access topics.

In Year 4, nearly all cohort parent/guardian respondents (94%) indicated that they had talked to their child about attending college and agreed or strongly agreed that attending college is important to their child's future. In addition, the vast majority of cohort parents/guardians (86%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was too early to think about their child attending college. These high percentages regarding favorable perceptions of PSE are relatively unchanged from Year 3 and the same as the R-Comp group. There are a range of potential interpretations for these findings. For example, it is possible that most parents/guardians generally value PSE, not just those benefiting from GEAR UP. It also is possible that parents/guardians who tend to respond to surveys sent home from school may be more likely to value PSE.

In Year 4, approximately 70% of cohort students responded affirmatively that they were knowledgeable about financial aid and the costs and benefits of going to college. This was relatively unchanged from Year 3, however significantly greater than the R-Comp group, by 16 percentage points. It is possible that the conversations about college entrance requirements and the availability of financial aid that cohort student reported having in Year 4 gave them the confidence to report higher levels of knowledge about these topics when compared to the R-Comp group. Their actual knowledge about the costs of college and available financial aid is a different story, however. Just 12–22% of cohort students could accurately estimate costs of PSE and financial aid (and there were only minor differences when comparing between Year 3 and the R-Comp group). One reason why students may struggle to correctly estimate the cost of postsecondary education could be related to the constant changes in the cost of tuition.

Regardless of the incorrect estimates on costs, most Year 4 cohort students reported that they believed they could probably or definitely afford a public career/technical center (70%), followed by a public community/technical college (69%) and a four-year college (64%). There were some minor increases over Year 3 and some minor gains when compared to the R-Comp group—for some options. What remains to be seen is whether cohort students would be more or less likely to perceive PSE as affordable if they had greater knowledge regarding the true costs of PSE and available financial aid.

The percentage of cohort parents/guardians who responded affirmatively that they were knowledgeable about financial aid and the costs and benefits of going to college was 71% in Year 4, about the same as cohort students, and less than how parents/guardians responded in Year 3. As with cohort students, parents/guardians were generally unable to correctly estimate the costs of college and available financial aid. Just 15–24% of cohort parents/guardians could accurately estimate costs of PSE and financial aid (and there were only small differences when comparing between Year 3 and the R-Comp group). Aside from this finding, however, most Year 4 cohort parents/guardians students reported that they believed they could probably or definitely afford a public career/technical center (79%), followed by a public community/technical college (76%) and a four-year college (66%). These perceptions were relatively unchanged from those reported in Year 3 or by the R-Comp group. As with the cohort students, it is unknown whether PSE would be perceived as more or less affordable if parent/guardian respondents had more accurate information about the actual costs of PSE and available financial aid.

Year 4 cohort students reported higher levels of overall awareness of a range of postsecondary topics than Year 3 cohort and R-Comp students, however the differences were small. As with the interpretation regarding cohort students' higher levels of self-reported knowledge about financial aid and the costs and benefits of going to college, when compared to the R-Comp group, the difference may be linked to the significant differences in the percentage of students in each group who reported that they spoke with someone regarding college entrance requirements and the availability of financial aid. Students who received GEAR UP services were more likely to have spoken with someone regarding these topics, thus likely increasing their self-reported awareness.

Generally, Year 4 cohort students reported higher importance ratings for sources of information on PSE than they did in Year 3 and in comparison to the R-Comp group. Text messages were cited as the source of information that had the highest gains in importance from Year 3 to Year 4; this may have been due to increased use of platforms like Signal Vine that GEAR UP staff use to communicate with students.

Considering the student knowledge about college and financial aid is likely linked to their conversations with GEAR UP or other staff at school, it is important to consider how personnel are reporting their own knowledge of college topics. Specifically, personnel reported no changes in their comfort or knowledge about college-related topics between Year 3 and Year 4. In addition, there were no differences in the involvement of personnel in five different types of college-related activities offered by their schools between Year 3 and Year 4. Perhaps one potential explanation why there have not been as many gains in student and parent knowledge about college is due to the fact that personnel are also not gaining in their comfort and knowledge about college topics or their participation in college-related activities.

3. College-Going Self-Efficacy and Outcomes-Expectations

When comparing the average ratings for the two scales in Year 4, the evaluation team found students generally reported more certainty about their outcomes expectations than self-efficacy (there were no significant differences between Year 3 and the R-Comp group for the average scores of either scale). However, when examining individual items for each subscale, the evaluation team found cohort students rated themselves more certain than did their R-Comp counterparts on the majority of items from both scales. Overall, this finding suggests that GEAR UP may have a significantly important impact on self-efficacy and outcomes expectations as they pertain to college.

School personnel also reported their perceptions regarding students' college-going efficacy. There was only one significant difference between Year 3 and Year 4—school personnel's beliefs that their students could get good grades in their high school math classes.

4. College-Going Culture

From Year 3 to Year 4, although personnel reported no significant differences in the overall rigor and expectations component score or visual cues and material resources component score for CGC in schools or in classrooms, there were some notable differences on individual CGC items:

- "Teachers are able to engage students in a rigorous curriculum" shifted in the positive direction for personnel, which represents how well schools provide or receive support to work with a rigorous curriculum.
- "I engage in ongoing professional development about ways to promote college readiness" showed a significant decrease from Year 3 to Year 4.
- "Students have access to the information and resources they need to support their college attendance decisions" also shifted in the negative direction from Year 3 to Year 4.

With this analysis, there are now two years of comparable data about CGC perceptions for educators of grade 9–12 students while the Year 2 and Year 1 samples included educators of grades 6–12. That said, while there were only a few significant differences between Years 3 and 4 regarding CGC, there were many significant differences over the baseline in Year 1. Ultimately, this suggests that WV GEAR UP has sustained the gains initially achieved in prior years.

In open-ended comments, personnel expressed views about the importance of communicating to students about the benefits of higher education and providing resources to students on college and career options. Personnel also described what they perceive their role to be in building a CGC at school. Personnel most frequently saw their role as encouraging and supporting student success and serving a resource to students. Overall, these views demonstrate the value and importance placed on PSE and the responsibility that personnel feel in supporting students in accessing PSE.

Site coordinator focus groups also shed light on CGC. In the focus groups, coordinators expressed that they felt GEAR UP had helped to generate a college-going culture at their schools—which, in some cases, did not exist prior to the grant. One coordinator noted that getting teachers on board "is a big part of changing the cultural aspect of the school." The fact

that many personnel reported in the open-ended comments of the survey that they have the responsibility for having college conversations with students suggests that a cultural shift has already taken place.

5. Participation in, Satisfaction with, and Effectiveness of GEAR UP Activities

In the site coordinator focus groups, site coordinators expressed the feeling that the program had attained a sense of stability at their schools in part because of at least some progress in gaining school and teacher buy-in. Specifically, site coordinators reported greater teacher interest and involvement in GEAR UP-sponsored activities, a finding which was echoed in the school personnel survey results. Overall, a higher portion of personnel appear to be participating in GEAR UP activities. The evaluation team asked school personnel how often they had participated in GEAR UP activities. Fewer than 10% of respondents indicated that they had never participated in GEAR UP events in Year 4, compared with 29% in Year 1. Specifically, from Year 3 to Year 4, respondents reported a significant increase in participation in all GEAR UP activities; mentoring, participation in college visits, and assistance with FAFSA, were among the activities with the highest participation, with a 20–22 percentage-point difference from Year 3. In addition, in the open-ended comments, most personnel wrote that they participated in student activities, whenever asked or whenever possible; this was followed by the number of participants who mentioned participation in college visits or field trips. Although fewer personnel reported “never or seldom” participating in GEAR UP activities, several respondents shared concerns in the open-ended fields that they had not yet participated in an event because they were either not included or informed about GEAR UP activities at their school.

When personnel were asked to review the effectiveness of GEAR UP activities, Year 4 respondents reported greater perceptions of effectiveness than Year 3 respondents for all but two activities. The activities that received the greatest gains in perceived effectiveness between Years 3 and 4 included assistance with college entrance process, assistance with FAFSA, and opportunities to participate in college visits. Site coordinators also emphasized the importance and popularity of college visits in the site coordinator focus groups. It is possible that the increased effectiveness ratings among personnel are due to the fact that more personnel participated in activities in Year 4. Another potential interpretation is that since cohort students also reported higher levels of knowledge about college entrance and financial aid options (compared to the R-Comp group), it is possible that these GEAR UP activities may indeed be effective at boosting students’ knowledge on key college-related topics.

One other type of GEAR UP activity worthy of mention was the college acceptance programming discussed by site coordinators in the focus groups. Site coordinators described the growing popularity of College Decision Days and related programming to celebrate college acceptances. In some cases these events are ceremonies; in other cases they involve panel discussions with alumni. Overall, though, several site coordinators noted the positive impact of these activities on the school community and in building a CGC.

6. Providing Services to Meet Extraordinary Needs

In the focus groups with site coordinators and phone interviews with mentors, these personnel described services that they provided to students to meet extraordinary needs related to an unstable home life or adverse effects of the opioid epidemic. For example, in Year 4, mentors described intentionally recruiting students with difficult circumstances and noted that SSS mentees had difficult home lives and parents affected by drug addiction, unemployment, poverty, or incarceration. Mentors noted that these characteristics led to students lacking confidence and motivation and often resulted in students having poor attendance and low grades. One mentor specifically described efforts to work with a student with a difficult home life and who frequently missed school by offering to have impromptu one-on-one mentoring sessions whenever possible.

Site coordinators also described providing added services related to the FAFSA to meet the needs of students and families in the context of increasing family dysfunction, poverty, and drug abuse. Nearly half of the coordinators interviewed noted that FAFSA was their most significant challenge, in part due to lack of parent involvement. Coordinators also noted that students sometimes lived with grandparents who were unfamiliar with the financial aid process. To address these issues, coordinators scheduled additional FAFSA workshops and provided student incentives to increase FAFSA completion rates.

7. Sustainability

School personnel respondents in Year 4 were less confident they would continue some of the GEAR UP services and activities after the grant ends. As in the previous year, many personnel indicated they wanted to continue college visits, but may have a difficult time finding the funding. In the focus groups, site coordinators expressed similar sentiments regarding the desire to continue college visits but the fact that a lack of funding may make it difficult to do so.

Overall, personnel perceptions of activities that will be sustained slightly decreased from Year 3 to Year 4 with significant changes in one topic, academic support. However, personnel still rated financial literacy, academic support, and college application week as the most likely services to be sustained. Site coordinators reported in focus groups that they would like to continue FAFSA workshops. Several coordinators also noted that College Decision Day is a low-cost activity with significant payoffs—and so may be able to be sustained.

When asked to describe their ratings, many respondents believed that their school counseling office would be responsible for sustaining implementation and reported mixed feelings about how the office would handle sustaining these services. In many cases, personnel reported that the counselor(s) would do as much as possible and it would be a seamless transition once funding ended. In other cases, personnel reported little confidence in the capacity of their counseling team.

Overall, there was strong sentiment among site coordinators that GEAR UP activities are important and should continue but may not due to lack of funds.

VI. Recommendations

The evaluation team provides the following recommendations for the WV GEAR UP staff to consider based on the findings summarized in this report.

- **Site coordinators and other school staff should continue having conversations with students and families about PSE options and work to maximize the benefit of these conversations**. Since the cohort reported significantly more conversations with GEAR UP and other school staff than the R-Comp group, with a moderate effect size, this provides evidence that the grant is facilitating more college and financial aid conversations. In addition, since the cohort exhibited greater self-reported knowledge about key college and financial aid topics than the R-Comp group, it is also possible that these conversations are contributing to greater confidence and comfort with college-related topics. As noted in the report, however, students and parents lacked accurate knowledge regarding the costs of PSE options and financial aid. Because cost is likely a great inhibitor to college access for students and families living in poverty, it is important that students and parents/guardians have accurate information about costs to inform PSE plans. One way to maximize the benefit of conversations with students and families is for GEAR UP and other school staff to use these conversations to communicate accurate information about PSE costs. WV GEAR UP has initiated a survey challenge and will award a technology grant to the school that reports the highest knowledge scores on the financial aid questions for the upcoming Year 5 student and parent surveys; this incentive will hopefully inspire conversations to be built around accurate information about costs and other related topics.
- **Given the fluctuations in tuition and available financial aid, WV GEAR UP may wish to work with site coordinators to make a concerted effort to educate families, specifically, about the costs and benefits of PSE and the availability financial aid.** When students were asked to rate various resources that provide information to them about college, family members were among the highest rated resources. The fact that most parents/guardians did not correctly estimate the costs of PSE and financial aid options suggests, however, that parents/guardians and other family members may not always have the most accurate information to provide to students. Providing correct information to families, therefore, is important for helping to ensure that students also get that information.
- **WV GEAR UP should consider offering PD to site coordinators and other school personnel regarding financial aid topics in Years 5 and 6—to improve comfort and knowledge on these topics and increase FAFSA completion rates.** Personnel reported no changes in their comfort and knowledge on college-related topics between Years 3 and 4. In addition, nearly half of the site coordinators who participated in focus groups expressed that FAFSA completion was one of their most significant challenges—particularly for students whose parents were not involved and for those who lived with grandparents. In addition, as noted in the introduction to this report, the FAFSA is far more complicated to complete for students who live in nontraditional families—with relatives who are not their parents, with foster parents, and other situations. As such, WV GEAR UP may consider providing PD on strategies for improving FAFSA completion—to include strategies for completing the application in a variety of complicated scenarios as well as opportunities for schools with higher FAFSA completion rates to share their own successful strategies.

- **Site coordinators should continue to involve more school personnel in GEAR UP activities.** As noted in the report, it appears that more personnel participated in GEAR UP activities in Year 4 than in Year 3, which has no doubt helped contribute to building and sustaining a CGC and improving buy-in for the grant. Some staff noted, however, that they had not yet participated in a GEAR UP activity or event because they were either not included in or informed about GEAR UP activities at their school. As such, site coordinators may wish to consider reaching out specifically to those personnel who have not yet participated in GEAR UP activities.
- **Provide guidance to mentors on adapting the curriculum and sessions of the SSS mentoring program to meet student needs.** The Year 4 Interim Evaluation Report provided the recommendation, based on interviews with mentors at RCT sites, to explore revising the SSS mentoring curriculum to be more engaging to students. Based on the interviews with mentors at non-RCT sites, however, it may not be necessary to revise the curriculum. Mentors at the non-RCT sites described modifying the curriculum as needed to meet student needs and exercising flexibility with meeting times. If all SSS mentors approach the mentoring program in this way, and use professional discretion about how to tailor the curriculum and sessions to the needs of their mentees, a revision to the curriculum is not needed.
- **With sustainability a concern for both site coordinators and personnel, regional program directors and other WV GEAR UP staff may find value in launching discussions with site coordinators around the topic of planning for the post-grant period.** With significant student interest in GEAR UP and increased school buy-in at many sites, it may be an appropriate time in the grant for WV GEAR UP staff to lead such discussions at site coordinator meetings. In addition, many site coordinators appeared to have developed creative and effective programming such as College Decision Days and enhanced partnerships with postsecondary institutions. As the cohort moves closer to high school graduation, it may be an appropriate time for coordinators to share lessons learned and effective strategies with their colleagues. While supporting the replication of promising strategies, this sharing of ideas also may help schools as they consider questions and challenges related to sustainability.

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Appendix A: Instruments and Consent Forms

West Virginia GEAR UP Student Survey 2017-18
Parent/Guardian Permission Form

Date: September 5, 2017

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We are writing to ask you to complete a short survey and to give your permission for your child to complete a short survey during school this year. The surveys are about education and training after high school. ***If you DO NOT give your permission for your child to take the survey, please sign and return the form attached to this letter.***

Who is doing the surveys and why? The reason for these surveys is that your child's school is part of the West Virginia (WV) GEAR UP program. GEAR UP stands for *Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs*. It is a program that helps students get ready for education and training after high school. To learn more about WV GEAR UP, please visit www.wvgearup.org. A company called ICF is doing a study of WV GEAR UP for the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WV HEPC) to learn if GEAR UP is achieving its goals.

Who is part of GEAR UP? GEAR UP works with 23 schools in 10 counties in WV. This includes your child's school. Only some grades are getting GEAR UP support, because the money for GEAR UP is limited. This year, all Grade 10 students and most Grade 12 students in GEAR UP schools are getting GEAR UP support.

What is the Student Survey? GEAR UP is asking all students in your child's grade to do a 15- to 20-minute survey every year. This year we are doing the student survey from November 2017 to January 2018. The student survey will be given at school by your child's teachers or other school staff. It asks questions about what your child knows and thinks about college. It asks what they think about other options after high school. It asks about your child's goals for high school and beyond. Knowing about your child's plans for college helps us know if GEAR UP is working.

Who is doing the Student Survey? We are asking all students in your child's grade to complete the student survey.

Is there a Parent/Guardian Survey? Yes. In November 2017, your child will bring home a paper copy of the parent/guardian survey and/or a link to an online version of the survey. We would like all parents/guardians to take the survey once, either on paper or online, by January 5, 2018.

What is the Parent/Guardian Survey about? How long will it take? The parent/guardian survey asks questions just like the ones on the student survey and takes 15 to 20 minutes. Having your feedback lets us know if there are ways we can do more to support families.

Will you keep the information we provide private? Yes! We have to keep your information private. We will only write reports about groups of students and parents/guardians. We never write about individuals. The survey does not ask for your name or your child's name. We only ask for your child's student identification number (lunch/WVEIS number). We will NEVER link this number to your name or to your child's name. The reason we ask for it is to make sure we can check that we get surveys back from the same students and parents/guardians each year. We also use it to connect student and parent/guardian surveys to each other. We may also use the number to connect surveys to other information from your child's school.

Right now, we are only asking for your permission to give your child a survey. Any other information we might ask for in the future would be collected from the West Virginia Department of Education or your county school district. We will follow all the privacy laws that protect you if we request this information. We will ask for your permission if it is needed.

Are there any risks or benefits to participating in the surveys? There are no risks. We will not identify parents/guardians or children who take the surveys. The only risk is that the surveys may take some time from your day

and your child's normal school day. We made the surveys short to reduce this problem. If you decide to give your permission for your child to take the survey, it will help us figure out how to support students better. If you take the parent/guardian survey, it will help us support families. WV GEAR UP schools might also use the surveys to change their programs.

Are the surveys required? No. You can decide if you or your child want to take them or not. There are no penalties to you or your child if you decide not to take the parent/guardian survey or if you don't give your permission for your child to take the student survey. There are also no penalties if you give your permission, but your child decides not to take the student survey. You and your child will not give up any support or programs you would normally get.

Even if you give your permission for your child take the survey, he or she can decide if they want to do it. He or she can skip questions or stop at any time without penalties. The same is true for parents/guardians who take the parent/guardian survey.

What do I need to do?

*If you give your permission for your child to participate in the survey, you **DO NOT** need to respond to this letter.*

If you ***DO NOT*** give your permission for your child to complete the survey, just complete and sign the form on the next page and return it to your child's school by *September 29, 2017.* If you sign this form, our team will work with the school to ensure that your child does not complete the survey.

What if I have questions? If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact Nate Hixson. He is a researcher working on the study. You can call him at (434) 205-0478 or email him at nate.hixson@icf.com. If you have questions about the WV GEAR UP program, please contact Dr. Adam Green. He is in charge of GEAR UP. You can call him at (304) 558-0655 or email him at adam.green@wvhepc.edu. Thanks for helping make GEAR UP a success!

Sincerely,
Dr. Adam S. Green, Vice Chancellor
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

West Virginia GEAR UP Student Survey 2017-18
Parent/Guardian Permission Form

* * * * * * * * * * *

If you give your permission for your child to take the November 2017/January 2018 GEAR UP survey, you do not need to do anything with this form. Just keep it for your records. If you ***DO NOT*** give your permission for your child to complete the survey, please complete, sign, and return this form to your child's school no later than *September 29, 2017.*

I DO NOT WANT my child, _____, (please print full student name) to participate in the West Virginia GEAR UP survey in November 2017/January 2018.

Name of your child's school: _____

Parent/Guardian name (please print): _____

Parent/Guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

This section for school and GEAR UP staff use ONLY:

Student's 9-digit WVEIS ID: _____

Student's Grade Level (circle one): 10

Site Coordinator/School Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

ICF Signature: _____ Date: _____

West Virginia GEAR UP Student Survey 2017-18
Student Assent Form

Welcome!

Your school is part of a program called West Virginia GEAR UP that helps middle and high school students get ready for college or other education options after high school. The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WV HEPC) has asked a company called ICF International to do a study of GEAR UP.

Because GEAR UP has a limited amount of money, only a few grades in your school are getting GEAR UP support this year. If you are a grade 10 student, your grade is part of GEAR UP this year. That means you can get free services to help you get ready for college or other training after school.

What are you asking me to do? We are asking you to take a 15-20 minute online survey during the school day. The survey asks questions about what you know about college. It asks what you think about other options after high school too. It asks about your goals for high school and beyond. It also asks if you go to tutoring or after school events.

Why are you doing the survey? Knowing about your plans for college helps us know if GEAR UP is working.

Who else is doing the student survey? We are asking all students in your grade to do the survey.

Please read the rest of this message carefully. When you are done, you can decide if you want to take the survey.

Will you keep the information I provide private? Yes! We have to keep your information private. We will only write reports about groups of students. We will never write a report about your personal survey answers. The survey does not ask for your name. We only ask for your lunch/WVEIS number. We will NEVER link this number to your name. We ask for your lunch/WVEIS number so we can make sure the same student takes the survey over time. We also use it to connect your survey results to parent/guardian survey results. We might also use it to connect your results to other information like class grades.

Right now, we are only asking you to take a survey. If we ask more information about you in the future, we will make sure everything is private. We will ask for your parents' permission if needed.

Are there any risks or benefits to taking the survey? There are no risks. We will not identify students who take the survey. So, the only risk is that the survey may take some time from your school day. We made the survey short to avoid this problem. If you take the survey, it will help us figure out how to help more students. Your school might also use surveys to change their programs.

Do I have to take the survey? No. You can decide if you want to take it or not. There are no penalties to you if you decide not to take it. Your school will not take away any support or programs if you decide not to. If your grade is part of GEAR UP this year, you will still be able to get free help to get ready for college or other after high school training even if you don't take the survey. You can also skip any questions you do not want to answer. You can stop taking the survey at any time. There are really no penalties.

Does my parent or guardian know about this? Yes. We sent your parent or guardian a letter telling them that we would ask you to do a survey at school. We told them to send our letter back if they did not want you to take the survey. If you are reading this message, it means your parent or guardian did not return our letter. That means you can take the survey.

What if I have questions? If there is a teacher or program coordinator helping you take the survey, you can always raise your hand and ask questions if you have technical problems. If you have any questions about the study, you can call

West Virginia GEAR UP Student Survey 2017-18
Student Assent Form

Nate Hixson. He is a researcher who is in charge of the survey. You can call him at (434) 205-0478. You can also email him at nate.hixson@icf.com. If you have questions about GEAR UP, you can call Dr. Adam Green. He is the person in charge of GEAR UP. His phone number is (304) 558-0655. You can also email him at adam.green@hepc.edu.

Thanks for helping make GEAR UP a success!

If you agree to participate in this survey, please click the "I agree to take this survey" button below.

- ○ I agree to take this survey.
- ○ I do not agree to take this survey.

West Virginia GEAR UP Evaluation

Adult Interview and Focus Group Consent Form

West Virginia postsecondary leaders and public schools in 10 counties are participating in a federal grant to implement and assess the effectiveness of the GEAR UP program to promote college awareness and enrollment among low-income students across the state. The grant's fiscal agent, the West Virginia Higher Education Postsecondary Commission (HEPC), has contracted with ICF to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of this grant program to better understand strategies used to meet program goals. As part of this important research, you are being asked to participate in an interview or focus group that should take approximately 45-60 minutes. The discussion will include questions about your opinions and experiences with GEAR UP. Please consider the details below prior to deciding to participate in this interview:

• **Confidentiality**: The session will be recorded either by audio files or written notes. The recordings of what you share will only be used by researchers. Data will be stored in a secure area accessible only to the researchers. Your answers to these questions will be kept confidential. Summary reports may indicate particular individuals by the roles they describe but challenges and successes will be reported confidentially.

• **Risks**: The study presents minimal risk to you. You will not be required to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and reports will not identify you by name. If at any time you feel uncomfortable while answering questions or want to talk with someone after the discussion, please let the interviewer know.

• **Benefits**: Study participation helps build knowledge in the state and nationally about how to support students in building momentum for postsecondary education success. Where appropriate, HEPC and participating postsecondary institutions can use the information learned to adjust GEAR UP programming.

• **Voluntary Participation**: Your participation is voluntary meaning that you do not have to participate in this interview or focus group if you do not want to; you can stop participating at any time. We hope you will participate in the conversation, but you do not have to share information that makes you feel uncomfortable. Your decision to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, will not affect your employment status or performance review. By answering questions and signing below, you are consenting to participate.

If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a study participant, you can call Samantha Spinney, ICF, at (703) 272-6681.

To indicate your consent to participate in this interview, please sign your name below in black/blue ink pen.

_____ _____

Sign your name here **Date**

_____

Clearly print your name here

West Virginia GEAR UP Student Survey - 2017-18 School Year

Grade 10

Directions: Please respond to all questions by completely filling in the circle for each answer:

Like this: ● Not like this: ✓ ✗ /

1. Please write your 9-digit lunch/WVEIS number in the spaces below. Fill in the bubbles to match each number. The example on the left shows how to fill in your lunch/WVEIS number. If there are zeroes at the beginning of your number, please include them.

This is an Example: *lunch/WVEIS number: 009132567*

_0_	_0_	_9_	_1_	_3_	_2_	_5_	_6_	_7_
●	●	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	●	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	●	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	●	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	●	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	●	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	●
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	●	9	9	9	9	9	9

Your lunch/WVEIS number:

___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

2. Are you a grade 10 student? Y N

3. What is your gender?

A *Male* B *Female* C *Other*

4. What is your race?

A *White*
B *Black or African American*
C *Asian*
D *American Indian or Alaska Native*
E *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander*
F *Two or more races*
G *Other* [ ]

5. What is your ethnicity?

A *Hispanic or Latino* B *Not Hispanic or Latino* C *Other* [ ]

6. What is the main language you speak at home?

Ⓐ *English* Ⓑ *Spanish* Ⓒ *Other* [ ]

7. How much money do you think your family made (before taxes) during the past 12 months? As you think about it, please include any money you earned from working and all the money you think the people living in your house made.

$30,000 or Less	*$30,001-$60,000*	*$60,001-$100,000*	*$100,001 or more*	*Don't know or I'd rather not say*
Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ

8. What is the highest level of education of your ***father or male guardian*** (*bubble only one answer*)?

Ⓐ *Some high school*

Ⓑ *High school diploma/GED*

Ⓒ *Some college (less than a 2- or 4-year degree, e.g., certificate or career/tech. cert.)*

Ⓓ *2-year college degree (Associate's)*

Ⓔ *4-year college degree (Bachelor's)*

Ⓕ *Master's degree*

Ⓖ *Ph.D. or higher*

Ⓗ *Don't know*

9. What is the highest level of education of your ***mother or female guardian*** (*bubble only one answer*)?

Ⓐ *Some high school*

Ⓑ *High school diploma/GED*

Ⓒ *Some college (less than a 2- or 4-year degree, e.g., certificate or career/tech. cert.)*

Ⓓ *2-year college degree (Associate's)*

Ⓔ *4-year college degree (Bachelor's)*

Ⓕ *Master's degree*

Ⓖ *Ph.D. or higher*

Ⓗ *Don't know*

10. If you have brothers or sisters, how many have attended college in the past or are in college now?

0	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5 or more*	*I don't have brothers or sisters.*
Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ	Ⓕ	Ⓖ

11. As you think about your current skills, how confident are you of your ability in the following areas?

	Not Confident	*Confident*	*Very Confident*	*Don't Know*
Math	A	B	C	D
English/Language Arts	A	B	C	D
Science	A	B	C	D
Study skills	A	B	C	D
Ability to pass the end-of-year tests	A	B	C	D
Ability to do well in college level courses in the future	A	B	C	D
Ability to pass college entrance exams in the future (e.g., ACT)	A	B	C	D

12. Do you plan to continue your education after high school? Y N

13. If you answered "no" to question 12, what are the main reasons you do not plan to continue your education (bubble all that apply)?

- ◯ *My grades aren't good enough.*
- ◯ *It costs too much/I can't afford it.*
- ◯ *I need to work.*
- ◯ *I want to work.*
- ◯ *Family issues*
- ◯ *I plan to enlist in the military.*
- ◯ *Other (please write in reason):* _____

14. What is the highest level of education that you ***would like*** to get (*bubble only one answer*)?

A *High school or less*

B *Some college (less than a 2- or 4-year degree, e.g., certificate or career/tech. cert.)*

C *2-year college degree (Associate's)*

D *4-year college degree (Bachelor's)*

E *More than a 4-year college degree*

15. What is the highest level of education that you ***expect*** to get (*bubble only one answer*)?

A *High school or less*

B *Some college (less than a 2- or 4-year degree, e.g., certificate or career/tech. cert.)*

C *2-year college degree (Associate's)*

D *4-year college degree (Bachelor's)*

E *More than a 4-year college degree*

16. How sure are you about being able to do the following?

	Don't Know	*Not at all Sure*	*Somewhat Sure*	*Sure*	*Very Sure*
I can find a way to pay for college.	A	B	C	D	E
I can get accepted to a college.	A	B	C	D	E
I can have family support for going to college.	A	B	C	D	E
I can choose a good college.	A	B	C	D	E
I can get a scholarship or grant for college.	A	B	C	D	E
I can make an educational plan that will prepare me for college.	A	B	C	D	E
I can make my family proud with my choices after high school.	A	B	C	D	E
I can choose college courses that best fit my interests.	A	B	C	D	E
I can pay for college even if my family cannot help me.	A	B	C	D	E
I can get good grades in my high school math classes.	A	B	C	D	E
I can get good grades in my high school science classes.	A	B	C	D	E
I can choose the high school classes needed to get into a good college.	A	B	C	D	E
I know enough about computers/technology to get into college.	A	B	C	D	E
I can go to college after high school.	A	B	C	D	E

17. ***If you do go to college***, how sure are you about being able to do the following?

	Don't Know	*Not at all Sure*	*Somewhat Sure*	*Sure*	*Very Sure*
I could pay for each year of college.	A	B	C	D	E
I could get A's and B's in college.	A	B	C	D	E
I could get my family to support my wish of finishing college.	A	B	C	D	E
I could take care of myself in college.	A	B	C	D	E
I could fit in at college.	A	B	C	D	E
I could get good enough grades to get or keep a scholarship.	A	B	C	D	E
I could finish college and receive a college degree.	A	B	C	D	E
I could care for my family responsibilities while in college.	A	B	C	D	E
I could set my own schedule while in college.	A	B	C	D	E
I could make friends at college.	A	B	C	D	E
I could get the education I need for my choice of career.	A	B	C	D	E
I could get a job after I graduate from college.	A	B	C	D	E
I would like being in college.	A	B	C	D	E
I could be smart enough to finish college.	A	B	C	D	E
I could pick the right things to study at college.	A	B	C	D	E
I could do the classwork & homework assignments in college classes.	A	B	C	D	E

18. Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about…

College entrance requirements?	Y	N
The availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?	Y	N

19. Are you knowledgeable about financial aid and the cost and benefits to you of going to college? Y N

20. Do you think that you could afford to attend one of the following types of colleges using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?

	Definitely Not	*Probably Not*	*Not Sure*	*Probably*	*Definitely*
A public 4-year college	A	B	C	D	E
A public community/technical college	A	B	C	D	E
A public career/technical center	A	B	C	D	E

21. On average, how much do you think it costs for one year of in-state tuition to attend the following college options in West Virginia: (*bubble only one answer per row; your estimate should **not** include the cost of food, housing, or books*)?

	Up to $4,000	*$4,001-$8,000*	*$8,001-$11,000*	*$11,001-$16,000*	*$16,001-$21,000*	*$21,001-$26,000*	*More than $26,000*
A 4-year public college in West Virginia	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
A public community/technical college in West Virginia	A	B	C	D	E	F	G

22. How aware are you about the following topics?

	Not at All	*Slightly*	*Moderately*	*Extremely*
FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)	A	B	C	D
College savings plan/529	A	B	C	D
ACT/SAT	A	B	C	D
WV Higher Education Grant	A	B	C	D
Federal Pell Grants	A	B	C	D
Federal student loans	A	B	C	D
Federal work-study	A	B	C	D
Scholarships (e.g., PROMISE or Institutional)	A	B	C	D
Requirements for college acceptance	A	B	C	D
The importance/benefit of a college education	A	B	C	D
High school graduation requirements	A	B	C	D

23. What do you think is the maximum amount of money ***per academic year*** that is available to help pay for college through each of the following programs *(bubble only one answer for each row)?*

	Up to $1,000	*$1,001-$2,000*	*$2,001-$3,000*	*$3,001-$4,000*	*$4,001-$5,000*	*$5,001-$6,000*	*$6,001-$7,000*	*More than $7,000*
Federal Pell Grant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
West Virginia Higher Education Grant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H

24. How important have the following resources, individuals, or tools been in gathering information about your options for college?

	Not at All	*Slightly*	*Moderately*	*Extremely*
College or university websites	A	B	C	D
College Foundation of WV website (CFWV.com)	A	B	C	D
Other college planning websites	A	B	C	D
College fairs	A	B	C	D
Television	A	B	C	D
Radio	A	B	C	D
Direct mail	A	B	C	D
E-mail	A	B	C	D
Brochures and pamphlets	A	B	C	D
Magazines/newspapers	A	B	C	D
Signs, posters, or billboards	A	B	C	D
Text messages	A	B	C	D
School counselor	A	B	C	D
Family members	A	B	C	D
GEAR UP staff	A	B	C	D
College admissions representatives	A	B	C	D
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	A	B	C	D

25. Please rate how much you think each of the following statements describes you.

	Not Like Me at All	*Not Much Like Me*	*Somewhat Like Me*	*Mostly Like Me*	*Very Much Like Me*
New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.	A	B	C	D	E
Setbacks don't discourage me.	A	B	C	D	E
I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time, but later lost interest.	A	B	C	D	E
I am a hard worker.	A	B	C	D	E
I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.	A	B	C	D	E
I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.	A	B	C	D	E
I finish whatever I begin.	A	B	C	D	E
I am diligent.	A	B	C	D	E

Thank you for your time!

Please return this survey to your teacher or school.

West Virginia GEAR UP Parent/Guardian Survey – 2017-18 School Year

Directions: Please respond to all items by completely filling in the circle for each answer:

Like this: ● Not like this: ✓ ✗ /

Note: Many of the questions on this survey ask about "your child." If you have more than one child, please complete this survey in reference to the child who brought the survey home.

ICF Use Only

1. Please write your child's 9-digit lunch/WVEIS number in the spaces below. Fill in the bubbles to match each number. The example on the left shows how to fill in the lunch/WVEIS number. If there are zeroes at the beginning of your child's number, please include them.

This is an Example: *lunch/WVEIS number: 009132567*

_0_	_0_	_9_	_1_	_3_	_2_	_5_	_6_	_7_
●	●	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	●	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	●	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	●	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	●	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	●	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	●
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	●	9	9	9	9	9	9

Your child's lunch/WVEIS number:

___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

2. Is the child that brought this survey home a grade 10 student?

Y N

3. What is your gender?

A *Male* B *Female* C *Other*

4. What is your relationship to the child who brought this survey home?

A *Parent or guardian* C *Grandparent*

B *Step or foster parent* D *Other*

5. What is your race?

Ⓐ *White*
Ⓑ *Black or African American*
Ⓒ *Asian*
Ⓓ *American Indian or Alaska Native*
Ⓔ *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander*
Ⓕ *Two or more races*
Ⓖ *Other* [ ]

6. What is your ethnicity?

Ⓐ *Hispanic or Latino*
Ⓑ *Not Hispanic or Latino*
Ⓒ *Other* [ ]

7. What is the main language you speak at home?

Ⓐ *English*
Ⓑ *Spanish*
Ⓒ *Other* [ ]

8. Which of the following options best describes your family's total income (before taxes) during the past 12 months? Please include income for yourself and all your family members living with you during this time.

$30,000 or Less	*$30,001-$60,000*	*$60,001-$100,000*	*$100,001 or More*	*Don't know or I'd rather not say*
Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ

9. What is the highest level of education of your child's ***father or male guardian*** (<u>bubble only one answer</u>)?

Ⓐ *Some high school*
Ⓑ *High school diploma/GED*
Ⓒ *Some college (less than a 2- or 4-year degree, e.g., certificate or career/tech. cert.)*
Ⓓ *2-year college degree (Associate's)*
Ⓔ *4-year college degree (Bachelor's)*
Ⓕ *Master's degree*
Ⓖ *Ph.D. or higher*
Ⓗ *Don't know*

10. What is the highest level of education of your child's ***mother or female guardian*** (<u>bubble only one answer</u>)?

Ⓐ *Some high school*
Ⓑ *High school diploma/GED*
Ⓒ *Some college (less than a 2- or 4-year degree, e.g., certificate or career/tech. cert.)*
Ⓓ *2-year college degree (Associate's)*
Ⓔ *4-year college degree (Bachelor's)*
Ⓕ *Master's degree*
Ⓖ *Ph.D. or higher*
Ⓗ *Don't know*

11. If you have other children, how many have attended or are currently attending college?

0	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5 or more*	*I don't have other children.*
A	B	C	D	E	F	G

12. Have you talked with your child about attending college?

Y N

13. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
Attending college is important to my child's career goal and future.	A	B	C	D
It's too early to think about my child going to college.	A	B	C	D

14. What is the highest level of education that you ***would like*** your child to get (*bubble only one answer*)?

A *High school or less*

B *Some college (less than a 2- or 4-year degree, e.g., certificate or career/tech. cert.)*

C *2-year college degree (Associate's)*

D *4-year college degree (Bachelor's)*

E *More than a 4-year college degree*

15. What is the highest level of education that you ***expect*** your child to get (*bubble only one answer*)?

A *High school or less*

B *Some college (less than a 2- or 4-year degree, e.g., certificate or career/tech. cert.)*

C *2-year college degree (Associate's)*

D *4-year college degree (Bachelor's)*

E *More than a 4-year college degree*

16. Has anyone from your child's school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about…

College entrance requirements?	Y	N
The availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?	Y	N

17. Do you know about financial aid and the cost and benefits to your child of pursuing a postsecondary education (e.g., going to college)?

Y N

18. Do you think that your child could afford to attend one of the following types of colleges using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?

	Definitely Not	*Probably Not*	*Not Sure*	*Probably*	*Definitely*
A public 4-year college	A	B	C	D	E
A public community/technical college	A	B	C	D	E
A public career/technical center	A	B	C	D	E

19. On average, how much do you think it costs for one year of in-state tuition to attend the following college options in West Virginia: (*bubble only one answer per row; your estimate should **not** include the cost of food, housing, or books*)?

	Up to $4,000	*$4,001-$8,000*	*$8,001-$11,000*	*$11,001-$16,000*	*$16,001-$21,000*	*$21,001-$26,000*	*More than $26,000*
A 4-year public college in West Virginia	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
A public community/technical college in West Virginia	A	B	C	D	E	F	G

20. How aware are you about the following topics?

	Not at All	*Slightly*	*Moderately*	*Extremely*
FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)	A	B	C	D
College savings plan/529	A	B	C	D
ACT/SAT	A	B	C	D
WV Higher Education Grant	A	B	C	D
Federal Pell Grants	A	B	C	D
Federal student loans	A	B	C	D
Federal work-study	A	B	C	D
Scholarships (e.g., PROMISE or institutional)	A	B	C	D
Requirements for college acceptance	A	B	C	D
The importance/benefit of a college education	A	B	C	D
High school graduation requirements	A	B	C	D

21. What do you think is the maximum amount of money ***per academic year*** that is available to help pay for college through each of the following programs *(bubble only one answer for each row)?*

	Up to $1,000	*$1,001-$2,000*	*$2,001-$3,000*	*$3,001-$4,000*	*$4,001-$5,000*	*$5,001-$6,000*	*$6,001-$7,000*	*More than $7,000*
Federal Pell Grant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
West Virginia Higher Education Grant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H

22. How important have the following resources, individuals, or tools been in gathering information about your child's options for college?

	Not at All	*Slightly*	*Moderately*	*Extremely*
College or university websites	A	B	C	D
College Foundation of WV website (CFWV.com)	A	B	C	D
Other college planning websites	A	B	C	D
College fairs	A	B	C	D
Television	A	B	C	D
Radio	A	B	C	D
Direct mail	A	B	C	D
E-mail	A	B	C	D
Brochures and pamphlets	A	B	C	D
Magazines/newspapers	A	B	C	D
Signs, posters, or billboards	A	B	C	D
Text messages	A	B	C	D
School counselor	A	B	C	D
Family members	A	B	C	D
GEAR UP staff	A	B	C	D
College admissions representatives	A	B	C	D
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)	A	B	C	D

Thank you for your time!

Please ask your child to return this survey to her/his school.

WV GEAR UP
Year 4 School Personnel Survey

We are looking for your feedback about the college-going culture— that is, promoting a school culture that encourages all students to consider any "college" options including certificate programs, two-year degree programs, four-year degree programs, or military training after high school graduation and prepares them to make informed decisions about these and other available postsecondary educational opportunities— at your school.

1. What is your current primary position at your school? Administrator Counselor Teacher

2. What current grade level(s) do you serve (check all that apply)? 9 10 11 12

3. In which school(s) are you currently working? [DROPDOWN MENU]

4. Are you a GEAR UP site coordinator? Yes No

5. For items a - s please rate your level of agreement twice for each of the statements: once for your level of agreement that the statement accurately reflects your SCHOOL and once for your level of agreement that the statement accurately reflects your own CLASSROOM.

	In My School					In My Classroom			
The following set of items ask about areas related to Rigor and Expectations.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Creativity and original thinking are highly valued.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
b. Teachers expect all students' to succeed academically.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
c. Students are encouraged to do their best.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
d. Teachers regularly talk to students about the importance of college.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
e. Students care about learning and getting a good education.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
f. Students are encouraged to set future college and career goals.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
g. Students are learning effective problem solving skills.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
h. Teachers are able to engage students in a rigorous curriculum	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
i. Advanced (i.e. honors, pre-AP, etc.) courses are appropriately rigorous.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
j. The curriculum appropriately challenges most students.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1

WV GEAR UP
Year 4 School Personnel Survey

The next set of items ask about areas related to Visual Cues and Material Resources.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
k. College pennants, banners, and posters are visible.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
l. Parents are included in the college preparation process.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
m. School staff are provided with professional development on the topics of college readiness and success.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
n. Students have access to the information and resources they need to support their college attendance decisions.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
o. Teachers include visual cues to encourage discussions about their college experience	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
p. Teachers are provided information about the school's college-going rate and FAFSA completion rates.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
q. College messaging is integrated into events, including sports events or arts performances.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
r. Teachers engage in ongoing professional development about ways to promote college readiness.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1
s. Teachers are equipped with the knowledge to assist students in the transition from high school to college.	4	3	2	1		4	3	2	1

6 How comfortable do you feel about your level of knowledge *to assist students with the following college topics*?

	Not at all Comfortable	*Slightly Comfortable*	*Moderately Comfortable*	*Extremely Comfortable*	*Rather not say*
FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)	1	2	3	4	99
College savings plan/529	1	2	3	4	99
ACT/SAT	1	2	3	4	99
WV Higher Education Grant	1	2	3	4	99
Federal grants, loans, and work-study	1	2	3	4	99
College Selection (Match and Fit)	1	2	3	4	99

Scholarships (e.g., PROMISE or Institutional)	1	2	3	4	99
Requirements for college acceptance	1	2	3	4	99
The importance/benefit of a college education	1	2	3	4	99
High school graduation requirements	1	2	3	4	99

7. Please rate the level of your involvement in the college-related activities presented below.

	Not Applicable	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
a. I participate in the college preparation activities of my school (e.g., chaperoning college visits).	99	1	2	3	4	5
b. I have individual discussions with students about what they want to do with their futures.	99	1	2	3	4	5
c. I talk with students about their plans for college or work after high school.	99	1	2	3	4	5
d. I offer students supplemental instructional support to prepare them for postsecondary options.	99	1	2	3	4	5
e. I offer or incorporate class time to support college preparation efforts at my school.						
f. I talk with parents about their ability to help prepare their student(s) for postsecondary education.	99	1	2	3	4	5

8. In your opinion, what is the most important aspect to building a college going culture at your school?

9. Also, please explain what you see as your role in building a college going culture at your school?

<u>The next few questions ask specifically about your GEAR UP experiences.</u>

10. Please indicate how effective participation in GEAR UP sponsored activities available at your school has been in helping your students to succeed in school/prepare for college:

	It was not offered/does not apply	*I did not attend*	*Not at all effective*	*Slightly effective*	*Moderately effective*	*Extremely effective*
a. *Tutoring and homework assistance*	99	999	1	2	3	4
b. *Opportunities to participate in college visits*	99	999	1	2	3	4
c. *Summer activities*	99	999	1	2	3	4
d. College Application and Exploration Week	99	999	1	2	3	4
e. Provide information about college entrance requirements	99	999	1	2	3	4
f. *Career exploration activities*	99	999	1	2	3	4
g. *Test preparation (e.g., ACT/SAT)*	99	999	1	2	3	4

WV GEAR UP
Year 4 School Personnel Survey

	It was not offered/does not apply	*I did not attend*	*Not at all effective*	*Slightly effective*	*Moderately effective*	*Extremely effective*
h. *Assistance with the college entrance process*	99	999	1	2	3	4
i. *Assistance with completing financial aid forms (e.g., FAFSA)*	99	999	1	2	3	4
j. Teacher professional Development about College awareness and success strategies	99	999	1	2	3	4
k. Student Success Societies/Mentoring opportunities	99	999	1	2	3	4

11. In general, how often do you participate in GEAR UP activities?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

Please elaborate:

12. The next set of items ask about your level of agreement related to the overall experience provided to you through GEAR UP.

	Not Applicable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I think GEAR UP is making a positive impact on students in my school.	99	1	2	3	4
b. I think GEAR UP is making a positive impact on my colleagues in my school	99	1	2	3	4
c. GEAR UP activities are likely to be sustained after the grant ends.	99	1	2	3	4

13. Thinking about the future when GEAR UP services and activities are no longer at your school, to what extent will your school promote the following elements related to a college-going culture?

	Does Not Apply	*Not at all*	*Slightly*	*Moderately*	*Extremely*
Family Involvement	99	1	2	3	4
Mentoring	99	1	2	3	4
Academic Support	99	1	2	3	4
Financial Aid Literacy	99	1	2	3	4
Partnership with Institutions of Higher Education	99	1	2	3	4
Community Support	99	1	2	3	4
College Visits	99	1	2	3	4

Access to College Professionals	99	1	2	3	4
Life Skills Development	99	1	2	3	4
College Application and Exploration Week	99	1	2	3	4

Please elaborate:

14. This last question asks about your belief in students' ability to prepare for and succeed in college. How sure are you that the majority of students…

	Not Applicable	Not at All Sure	Somewhat Sure	Sure	Very Sure
a. will not attend college but will seek a job or enter the military.	99	1	2	3	4
b. will be eligible to apply to a postsecondary institution.	99	1	2	3	4
c. can make an educational plan that will prepare them for college	99	1	2	3	4
d. can get good grades in their high school science classes	99	1	2	3	4
e. can get good grades in their high school math classes	99	1	2	3	4
f. can choose the high school classes needed to get into college	99	1	2	3	4
g. know enough about computers/technology to get into college	99	1	2	3	4
h. can go to college after high school	99	1	2	3	4
i. could get A's and B's in College	99	1	2	3	4
j. could finish college and receive a college degree	99	1	2	3	4

15. Please use this space for additional comments, questions, or concerns:

West Virginia GEAR UP Evaluation

Spring 2018 Focus Group Guide for Site Coordinators at High Schools

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Facilitator Guidelines:

- Introduce yourself and colleagues as representatives of ICF and describe your roles (i.e., facilitator, note taker).
- Briefly discuss the focus group's purpose: Explain that the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (the Commission) has contracted with ICF to conduct an independent evaluation of the West Virginia GEAR UP program. The purpose of this focus group is to learn more about the program's operation and activities. Explain that this is not an evaluation of site coordinators, their schools, or other GEAR UP personnel. They can agree or disagree with comments, but only one person speaks at a time. The session will take approximately 45-50 minutes.
- Convey to each participant our confidentiality policy: Remind them (1) The focus group is voluntary; (2) they can decline to answer any questions or stop participating at any time without any consequences; (3) the information will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law by the evaluation team, who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; (4) ICF maintains focus group data in secure areas; and (5) please respect each other's confidentiality by not sharing any information outside of this focus group.
- Ask if they have any questions before you begin. Hand out consent forms, review, and ask them to sign before the focus group begins.
- Ask permission to record the focus group: State that: "*In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording. If at least one person chooses not to have the focus group recorded, we will not record the session but will take notes. We will not include your name(s) in these notes. Any information that can be used to identify an individual will be removed from transcripts prior to being shared.*" **START RECORDER NOW!**

Time	Questions	Facilitator's Activity
3 min	**INTRODUCTION** Please introduce yourself, your school, how long you've been with GEAR UP, and your role at the school in addition to GEAR UP (teacher, counselor, etc.).	Probe: Are you the only GEAR UP site coordinator at your school or part of a team of site coordinators? If part of a team, what is your specific responsibility in the school?
7-10 min	**IMPLEMENTATION AND BUY-IN** How is GEAR UP going in your school this year? What activities were provided to students, parents, and teachers? How have you built awareness and buy-in at your school for GEAR UP? For those who have been involved for more than one year, how has buy-in changed since your first year working on the grant?	Probe for college application week, financial aid/awareness workshops, student leadership academy, college decision days, tutoring, Student Success Societies. Probe for trends across sites, any barriers/challenges, and lessons learned. Probe for their meaning of school buy-in.
5 min	**INTERACTION** In what ways and how often do you interact with Commission personnel about the work you are doing through GEAR UP (e.g., regional program directors, project director)? In what ways and how often do you interact with your county coordinator about GEAR UP? For those of you	Identify common threads across the schools. Probe whether contact is ongoing and consistent. Probe for differences in participant views and possible reasons for this.

	who have been involved for more than this past year, how has this changed over time? How satisfied are you with the information and resources you receive related to GEAR UP? How could they be improved?	
3-5 min	**PARTNERS** How have local ***college and community*** partners been involved in GEAR UP at your school over the past year, and what resources have they provided?	Probe for satisfaction with level and extent of involvement. Probe for strategies perceived as successful in achieving partner support. Probe for comments on college partners in their geographic area and WVGU's college-specific partners (SWVCTC, Concord and WVSU).
5 min	**PARENT INVOLVEMENT** How involved are parents in GEAR UP at your school? How, if at all, has this improved since your school became involved in GEAR UP?	Probe for strategies perceived as effective or ineffective and new strategies designed for parents of high school students.
3-5 min	**PRIORITY STUDENTS** For coordinators currently working with high school seniors, how have services for priority students evolved this year? What strategies have worked/not worked?	Probe for promising practices and lessons learned.
5 min	**COLLEGE VISITS AND PREPARATION** What role has GEAR UP played in helping students learn about colleges, college entrance requirements, and financial aid? What strategies have worked/not worked?	Probe for GEAR UP role in scheduling college visits, learning about college entrance requirements, and FAFSA/financial aid issues. Probe for lessons learned and best practices.
5 min	**YOUR ROLE AS COORDINATOR** How do you define being a successful coordinator? For example, is it showing improvement each year or is it being able to check off items on the work plan?	Probe for how coordinators balance short-term goals such as FAFSA completion with long-term improvement such as changing school culture.
7 min	**IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY** Overall, how would you describe GEAR UP's impact at your school? What, if any, services have been sustained for younger students? What challenges do you face in sustaining these activities?	Probe for views on culture, homework completion, test scores, course completion, grades, high school graduation, financial aid knowledge, etc. Probe for which services may be most difficult to sustain.
	CLOSING Is there anything else we should know to understand the GEAR UP program at your school?	

Thank you very much for your time.

West Virginia GEAR UP Evaluation

2018 Mentor Interview Protocol

Facilitator Guidelines:

- Introduce yourself and colleagues as representatives of ICF and describe your roles (i.e., facilitator, note taker).
- Briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: Explain that the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (The Commission) has contracted with ICF to conduct an independent evaluation of the West Virginia GEAR UP program. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about the operation and activities of the Student Success Societies (SSS) intensive student mentoring program. Explain that this is not an evaluation of the mentors or other GEAR UP personnel.
- Convey to each participant our confidentiality policy: Remind them (1) The interview is voluntary; (2) they can decline to answer any questions or stop participating at any time without any consequences; (3) the information will be held in confidence, to the extent permitted by law, by the evaluation team, who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; (4) ICF maintains interview data in secure areas.
- Ask if they have any questions before you begin. If conducted in person, hand out consent forms, review, and ask them to sign before the interview begins. If conducted by phone, ask for verbal consent before the interview begins.
- Ask permission to record the interview: State that: "*In order to capture the findings, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording. If you choose not to have the interview recorded, we will not record the session but will take notes. We will not include your name(s) in these notes. Any information that can be used to identify an individual will be removed from transcripts prior to being shared."* **START RECORDER NOW!**

1. **Please tell us your name, school, job responsibilities (outside of GEAR UP), and how you became part of the Student Success Societies program.**

2. **What training did you receive prior to starting your work as a mentor? Was this training sufficient for you to carry out your work?**

   What did you like/dislike about the training? Do you have recommendations to improve the training? What information or documentation were you asked to collect and maintain for this program?

3. **What on-going support have you received from West Virginia GEAR UP in carrying out this project?**

   Who would you contact with questions (regional program director, GEAR UP site coordinator, others)? If you did contact anyone with questions, what kind of responses did you receive? Did your site coordinator attend any SSS meetings?

4. **How many students are in your Student Success Society? What challenges do they face?**

5. **What successes or challenges did you have in delivering the Student Success Societies mentoring curriculum?**

   Probe for access to students, student attendance, scheduling conflicts.

How often and for how long did your group meet? How many hours did you typically spend as a mentor per month, and was that in line with your original expectations?

6. **Were you able to deliver all of the workshops outlined in the curriculum? If not, why not? What were your impressions of these workshops?**

   Are there workshops that were more effective than others?
   Remind mentors and/or probe about specific workshops: High School Success, GRIT, Learning Styles, Self-Efficacy, Personal Growth/ Development, Emotional Intelligence, Social Competencies, Academic Success, Career Planning and Exploration, Review and Reflection

7. **Did you use any of the resources or websites in the program guidebook?**

   If yes, what resources/sites did you use and how helpful were they? If no, why not?
   Probe for use of specific resources: self-efficacy scale, GRIT scale, effort rubric, pocket praise, College Foundation of West Virginia.

8. **Were you able to conduct brief one-on-one check-ins with students every month? Why or why not?**

   What factors contributed to or hindered this effort?
   How often did you review academic progress data for these students?

9. **How useful were other suggested activities such as deep dive sessions, booster sessions, group projects and growth projects?**

   What did you do during these projects/sessions? How engaged were students in these activities?

10. **Did your students participate in other GEAR UP activities outside of the mentoring program? What was your own involvement in other GEAR UP activities?**

    Probe for attendance/involvement in leadership academies or college application/exploration week.

11. **The mentoring initiative is also a research project, and eligible students were randomly assigned to participate. In your opinion, how well did that work?**

    In what ways did that enhance or hinder the project during the past year?

12. **At the end of the day, what impact do you think this mentoring initiative has had on your students?**

    Probe for improvements in attendance/grades and declines in disciplinary referrals.
    Are there lessons learned that you or your school might apply from these activities?
    How interested do you believe the students are in enrolling in postsecondary education?

Thank you very much for your time.