

Texas GEAR UP: Beyond Grad

Annual Project Outcomes Report

Evaluation of Year 4

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AP	Advanced Placement
APR	Annual Performance Report
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
GEAR UP	Gaining Early Access and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs
IB	International Baccalaureate
PD	Professional Development
PO	Project Objective
PSAT	Preliminary SAT
TEA	Texas Education Agency

Overview

The Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): Beyond Grad State Grant (referred to as “GEAR UP” in this report) provides supports and strategies for many low-income students to overcome the college achievement gap. GEAR UP serves approximately 6,500–9,000 students from six Texas school districts (five high schools and one Kindergarten through Grade 12 comprehensive campus) in rural communities in West Texas, East Texas, and the Coastal Bend. GEAR UP provides services for the following two groups of students:

- *Targeted services* to a grade-specific primary cohort of students who were in Grade 7 during the 2018–19 school year (i.e., the **class of 2024**) through their first year of postsecondary education.
- *Basic services* to **priority cohort** students consisting of all other students in Grade 9–12 attending participating high schools during each year of the 7-year grant (i.e., from school years 2018–19 to 2024–25).

To track the implementation and outcomes associated with this grant, the GEAR UP program team established nine goals and 31 corresponding project objectives (PO). This report provides an overview of program performance focusing on the relevant goals and POs during the 2021–22 academic year (Year 4). For POs that were also applicable in 2018–19 (Year 1), 2019–20 (Year 2), and 2020–21 (Year 3) academic years, longitudinal trends are presented. It is important to note that program PO performance during Years 2 and 3 was substantially complicated by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Lingering ramifications from the pandemic were still affecting students, schools, and communities in 2021–22 (Year 4). A variety of programs and services were canceled in some or all schools in 2020 and 2021.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) reported on program performance for each PO in the federal Annual Performance Reports (APRs) required by the U.S. Department of Education. The findings regarding program performance shared in this report come directly from the APRs for Years 1–4. Relevant qualitative summary and quotes from GEAR UP program stakeholders, including district-level GEAR UP coordinators and school principals, are included to provide contextual information about project performance, and are pulled from the relevant school year tied to each specific PO.¹ Findings include overall results and district-level results if they were reported in the federal APRs.

The following symbols are used throughout this report to indicate if the project objective was fully met, partially met, or not met²:



¹ Stakeholder quotes originated from qualitative data collected for the [Year 4 Annual Implementation Report](#) or the [Year 3 Annual Implementation Report](#).

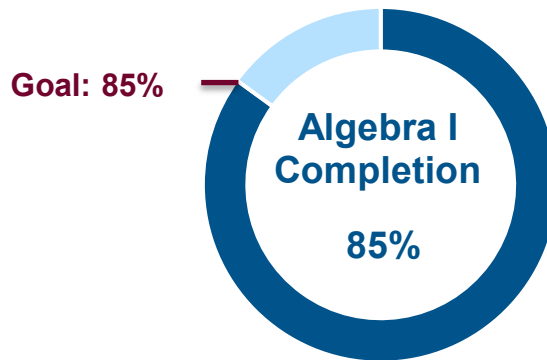
² Criteria for determining projective objectives as fully met, partially met, or not met were based on a combination of the following factors and informed by programmatic knowledge of the field: 1) The individual district performance (i.e., how many districts met the objective); 2) the percent of the total number of students that met the objective, regardless of district results (this was used when an objective was significantly missed); and 3) the impact of COVID-19 on a district's plans to meet an objective (i.e., a campus or district may have otherwise been on track to meet the objective but plans were cancelled or delayed due to COVID-19). The determination for meeting these criteria was computed while preparing the APR and is included in each respective APR.

Project Goal 1: Increase Access to Rigorous Courses in Order to Reduce the Need for Remediation



In Year 3, of the class of 2024 students who took Algebra I in Grade 9 and completed the student survey, 65% generally Agreed that they felt prepared to take Algebra I and received enough support to succeed in Algebra I.

Objective 1.1: By the end of the class of 2024's third year (Grade 9), 85% of class of 2024 students will complete Algebra I.

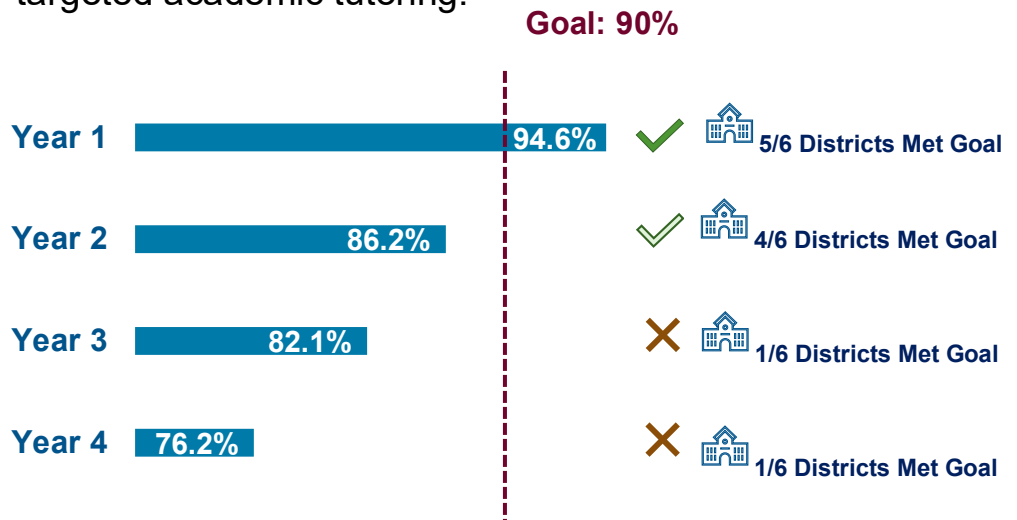


✓  3/6 Districts Met Goal



In Year 4, 50% of class of 2024 student survey respondents reported receiving tutoring services.

Objective 1.3: Each year, 90% of class of 2024 students who receive a failing grade on a progress report will receive targeted academic tutoring.

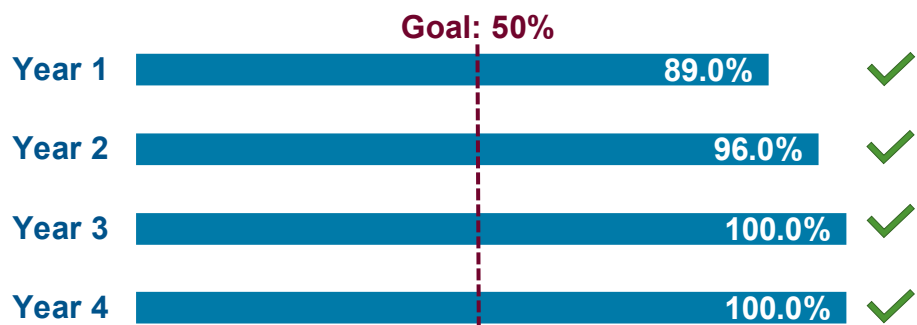


Project Goal 3: Provide Educator Training and Professional Development for Rigorous Academic Programs



In Year 4, personnel survey respondents had a significantly higher level of agreement that they were able to successfully implement the strategies they learned in a virtual setting in Year 4 than they did in Year 3.

Objective 3.1: Each year, 50% of high school core content teachers will participate in professional development (PD) that supports a rigorous curriculum (e.g., project-based learning, advanced instructional strategies, teacher externships, student engagement, etc.).



In Year 4, administrators who participated in vertical teaming and responded to the personnel survey felt that vertical teaming helped align curriculum and reduce the need for future remediation at the district level.

Objective 3.2: Each year, teams of educators and administrators (middle school, high school, and institutions of higher education) will complete at least five days of vertical teaming in order to align curriculum and reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level.



Project Goal 3 (cont.): Provide Educator Training and Professional Development for Rigorous Academic Programs



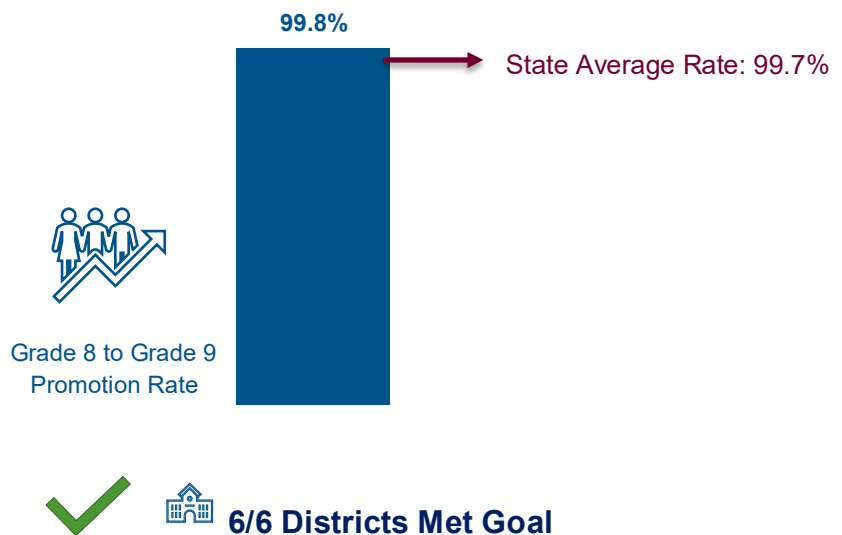
Objective 3.3: Each year, 20% of high school core content teachers will participate in at least three individualized educator coaching and/or mentoring sessions.

In Year 4, a GEAR UP coordinator found the role-playing instructional strategies during coaching sessions were very helpful in identifying opportunities for growth to help facilitate student learning.

Year 1		6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 2		5/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 3		6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 4		6/6 Districts Met Goal

Project Goal 4: Increase High School Graduation

Objective 4.2: At the end of the class of 2024’s second year (Grade 8), the on-time promotion rate will exceed the baseline state average promotion rate.



Project Goal 5: Support Participation in Postsecondary Education and Career Preparation

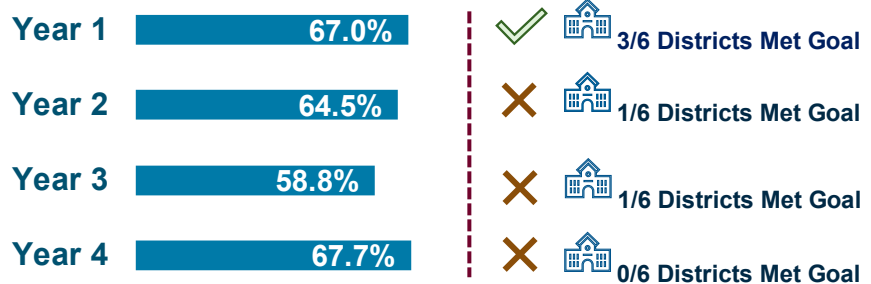


In Year 4, nearly three-quarters of student survey respondents noted that test preparation helped prepare them for college entrance examinations.

Objective 5.1: Each year, 85% of tenth graders will take the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) or ACT Aspire exam. Each year, 85% of eleventh graders will take the SAT or ACT exam.

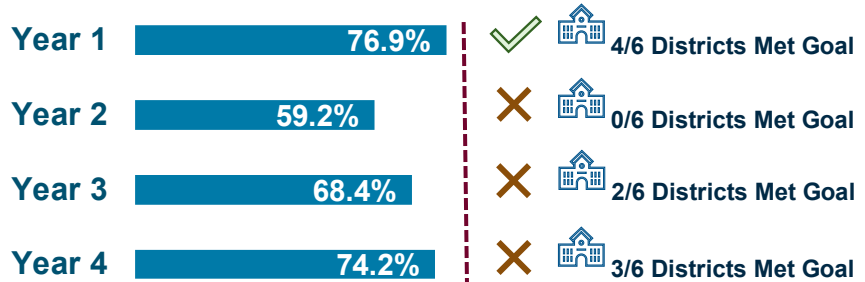
Tenth Graders Took PSAT or ACT Aspire

Goal: 85%



Eleventh Graders Took SAT or ACT

Goal: 85%



Project Goal 6: Provide Postsecondary and Career Preparation Information to Students and Families



In Year 4 site visits and/or surveys, students, parents, and school personnel described positive relationships with non-profit advisors. One participant shared that their nonprofit advisor “always [goes] beyond [their] normal responsibilities to assist students and teachers with college and career advising.”

Objective 6.1: Each year in ninth grade, students will receive information about the school’s high-quality pathways and programs of study that align to postsecondary programs and high-demand careers available to them.

Year 1		6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 2		6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 3		6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 4		6/6 Districts Met Goal



In Year 4, a GEAR UP coordinator described using “multiple ways” to encourage families to participate in postsecondary and career events. For example, they said if a parent doesn’t answer the phone, they would reach out via a “Facebook post, or ... Twitter, or the student may come home and say, ‘Hey, mom, we need to go here tomorrow.’ So just having it various ways will get our message across.”

Objective 6.2: Each year, students and parents will receive information about postsecondary and career options, preparation, and financing.

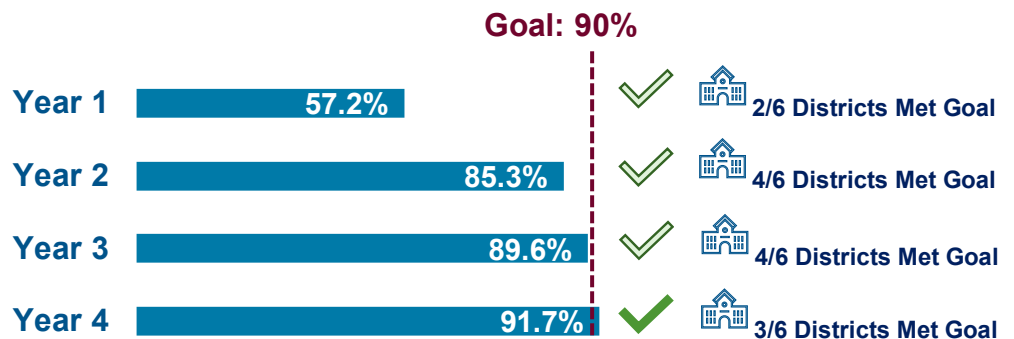
Year 1		6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 2		6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 3		6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 4		6/6 Districts Met Goal

Project Goal 6 (cont.): Provide Postsecondary and Career Preparation Information to Students and Families



Objective 6.3: Each year, 90% of class of 2024 students will receive at least one comprehensive, individualized college and career counseling session.

In Year 4, student survey respondents who reported participating in a one-on-one counseling session reported being Satisfied with their session.



Personnel survey respondents in Year 3 provided suggestions on increasing parent involvement in advising services. An example: "Perhaps more information regarding career and postsecondary options for students can be relayed directly to the parent."

Objective 6.4: By the end of the third year, 50% of class of 2024 parents will receive at least one individualized college and career counseling session.





In Year 4, the GEAR UP coordinator from District 6 noted that they had the largest turn out at a Texas GEAR UP event they had ever seen.

Objective 6.5: Each year, class of 2024 parent attendance at Texas GEAR UP events and services will increase.

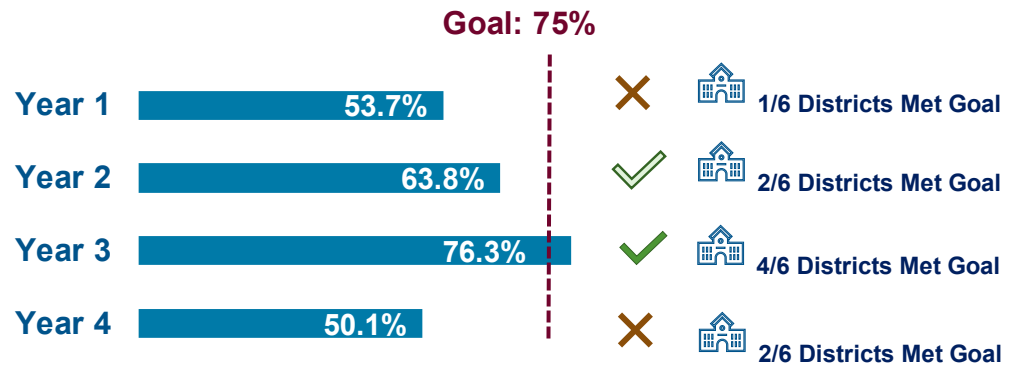
Year 1 Attendance	154 parents	✓
Year 2 Attendance	383 parents	✓
Year 3 Attendance	243 parents	✗
Year 4 Attendance	1,027 parents	✓

Project Goal 7: Increase Educational Expectations for and Awareness About Postsecondary and Career Options



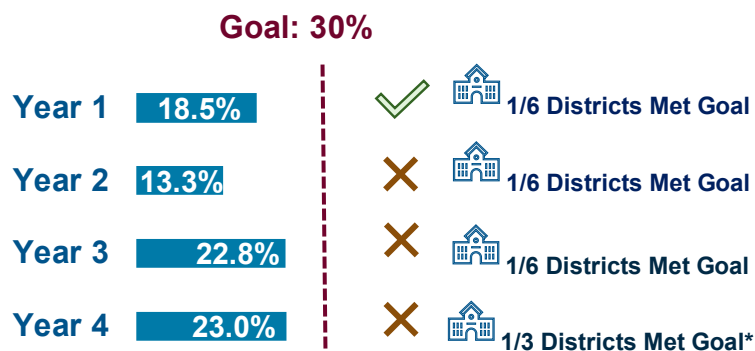
In Year 4, student survey respondents indicated that the most common reason why they did not attend at least one college visit was because they were unaware of the opportunity.

Objective 7.1: Each year, 75% of class of 2024 students will attend at least one college visit.



In Year 4, districts continued to experience challenges with summer programming due to COVID-19. A GEAR UP coordinator noted that their school had challenges adjusting their summer programming because of COVID-19-related occupancy restrictions.

Objective 7.4: Each year, 30% of class of 2024 students will attend a summer program (academic acceleration, enrichment, college exploration, etc.).



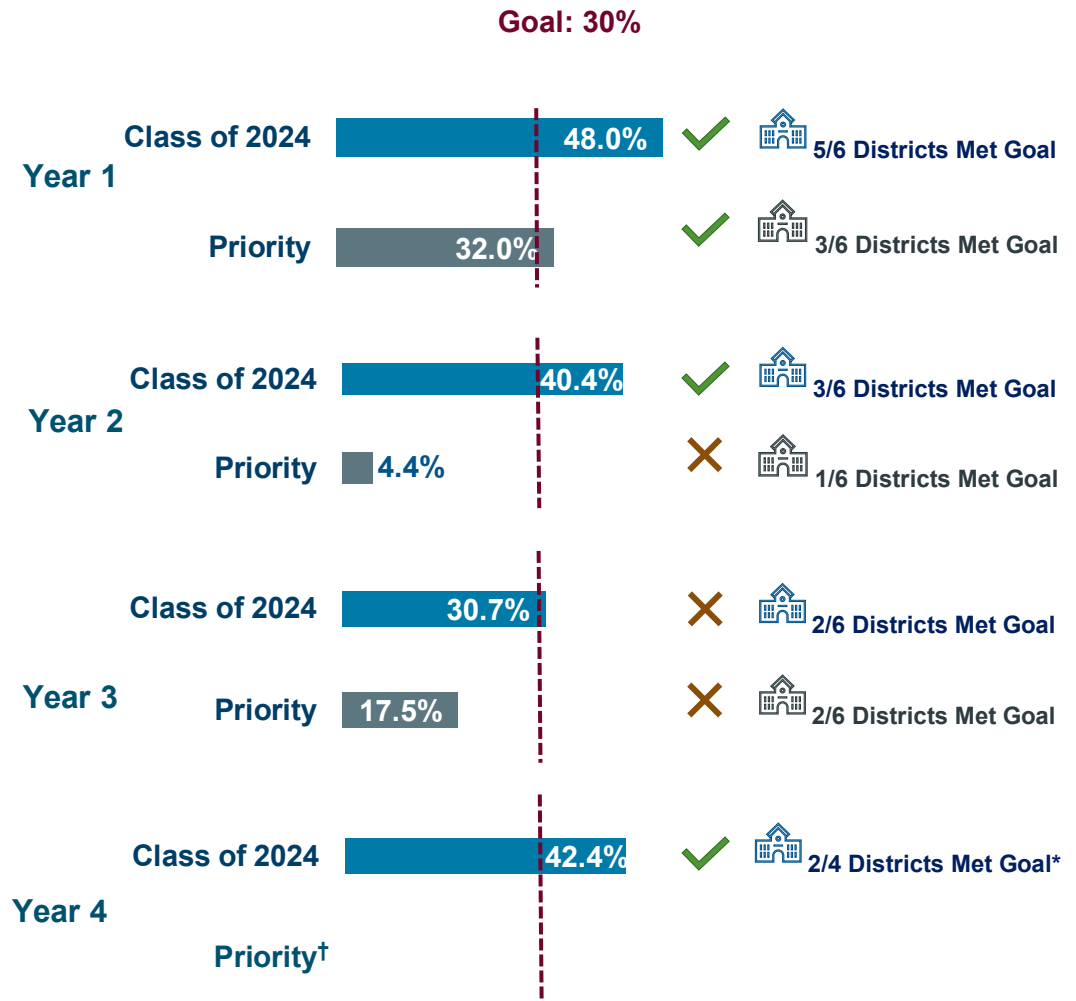
* Only 3 of the 6 GEAR UP schools reported data by the Year 4 APR data collection deadline (Texas Education Agency, personal communication, May 10, 2023).

Project Goal 7 (cont.): Increase Educational Expectations for and Awareness About Postsecondary and Career Options



In Year 4, work-based learning opportunities resumed and were offered both in person and virtually. Of those student survey respondents who attended a work-based learning activity, they reported being satisfied with the experience.

Objective 7.5: Each year, 30% of class of 2024 and priority cohort students will participate in a work-based learning opportunity.



* Only 4 of the 6 GEAR UP schools reported data by the Year 4 APR data collection deadline (Texas Education Agency, personal communication, May 10, 2023).

† Data were not provided for priority cohort students by the Year 4 APR data collection deadline.

Project Goal 8: Build and Expand Community Partnerships

Objective 8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.


Year 1		 6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 2		 6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 3		 6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 4		 6/6 Districts Met Goal

Objective 8.2: All participating districts will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding high school pathways, scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.

Year 1		 6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 2		 6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 3		 6/6 Districts Met Goal
Year 4		 6/6 Districts Met Goal

Project Goal 9: Enhance Statewide College and Career Readiness

Objective 9.1: Each year, tri-agency partners (TEA, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission) will convene quarterly to ensure alignment of statewide initiatives around college and career readiness.

Year 1  Year 2  Year 3  Year 4 

Objective 9.3: Annually increase the number of educators, counselors, and community members that complete specialized college and career readiness training.

Year 1 NA Year 2  Year 3  Year 4 

Appendix A: GEAR UP: Beyond Grad Project Goals and Objectives

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) established the following goals and objectives for GEAR UP:

Project Goal 1: Increase access to rigorous courses in order to reduce the need for remediation

- ▶ Objective 1.1: By the end of the class of 2024's second year (Grade 8), 30% of class of 2024 students will complete Algebra I. By the end of the class of 2024's third year (Grade 9), 85% of class of 2024 students will complete Algebra I.³
- ▶ Objective 1.2: By the end of the class of 2024's fifth year (Grade 11), 60% of class of 2024 students will complete a Pre-Advanced Placement (AP), Pre-International Baccalaureate (IB), AP, or IB course.
- ▶ Objective 1.3: Each year, 90% of class of 2024 students who receive a failing grade on a progress report will receive targeted academic tutoring.

Project Goal 2: Graduating prepared for college and career

- ▶ Objective 2.1: By the end of the project's sixth year, 60% of class of 2024 students will be eligible to earn college credit through achievement of a passing score on the AP exam, IB exam, or completion of a rigorous dual credit course.
- ▶ Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of class of 2024 students graduating on the Foundation High School Program with an endorsement and/or receiving the Distinguished Level of Achievement will meet or exceed the baseline state average.

Project Goal 3: Provide educator training and professional development for rigorous academic programs

- ▶ Objective 3.1: Each year, 50% of high school core content teachers will participate in professional development that supports a rigorous curriculum (e.g., project-based learning, advanced instructional strategies, teacher externships, student engagement, etc.).
- ▶ Objective 3.2: Each year, teams of educators and administrators (middle school, high school, and institutions of higher education) will complete at least five days of vertical teaming in order to align curriculum and reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level.
- ▶ Objective 3.3: Each year, 20% of high school class of 2024 core content teachers will participate in at least three individualized educator coaching and/or mentoring sessions.

³ The goals and objectives originally referred to the class of 2024 as the "primary cohort." These have been edited here to use "class of 2024" for consistency with the rest of the report and to clearly distinguish this cohort from the priority cohort.

- ▶ Objective 3.4: By the end of the project's second year, all high school counselors will complete training in college and career advising.

Project Goal 4: Increase high school graduation

- ▶ Objective 4.1: The class of 2024 completion rate will meet or exceed the baseline state average completion rate.
- ▶ Objective 4.2: At the end of the class of 2024's second year (Grade 8), the on-time promotion rate will exceed the baseline state average promotion rate.⁴

Project Goal 5: Support participation in postsecondary education and career preparation

- ▶ Objective 5.1: Each year, 85% of tenth graders will take the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) or ACT Aspire exam. Each year, 85% of eleventh graders will take the SAT or ACT exam.
- ▶ Objective 5.2: By the end of the class of 2024's sixth year (Grade 12), 50% of class of 2024 students will meet the college readiness criterion on the SAT, ACT, or the Texas Success Initiative Assessment.
- ▶ Objective 5.3: At least 60% of class of 2024 students will enroll in postsecondary education in the fall after high school graduation.
- ▶ Objective 5.4: At least 60% of class of 2024 students who enroll in postsecondary education will place into college-level courses without the need for remediation.
- ▶ Objective 5.5: The number of class of 2024 students who complete the first year of college will meet or exceed the baseline district average.

Project Goal 6: Provide postsecondary and career preparation information to students and families

- ▶ Objective 6.1: Each year in ninth grade, students will receive information about the school's high-quality pathways and programs of study that align to postsecondary programs and high-demand careers available to them.
- ▶ Objective 6.2: Each year, students and parents will receive information about postsecondary and career options, preparation, and financing.
- ▶ Objective 6.3: Each year, 90% of class of 2024 students will receive at least one comprehensive, individualized college and career counseling session.
- ▶ Objective 6.4: By the end of the third year, 50% of class of 2024 parents will receive at least one individualized college and career counseling session.
- ▶ Objective 6.5: Each year, class of 2024 parent attendance at Texas GEAR UP events and services will increase.

Project Goal 7: Increase educational expectations for and awareness about postsecondary and career options

⁴ Project objective 4.2 was not reported in the Year 2 Annual Performance Report (APR); however, it was reported in the Year 3 APR. Findings were presented in the Year 3 Annual Project Outcomes Report.

- ▶ Objective 7.1: Each year, 75% of class of 2024 students will attend at least one college visit.
- ▶ Objective 7.2: By the end of the class of 2024's sixth year (Grade 12), 85% of class of 2024 students will complete the Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- ▶ Objective 7.3: By the end of the class of 2024's sixth year (Grade 12), 85% of class of 2024 students will complete at least two college applications.
- ▶ Objective 7.4: Each year, 30% of class of 2024 students will attend a summer program (academic acceleration, enrichment, college exploration, etc.).
- ▶ Objective 7.5: Each year, 30% of class of 2024 and priority cohort students will participate in a work-based learning opportunity.

Project Goal 8: Build and expand community partnerships

- ▶ Objective 8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.
- ▶ Objective 8.2: All participating districts will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding high school pathways, scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.

Project Goal 9: Enhance statewide college and career readiness

- ▶ Objective 9.1: Each year, tri-agency partners (TEA, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission) will convene quarterly to ensure alignment of statewide initiatives around college and career readiness.
- ▶ Objective 9.2: By the end of the project's fourth year, class of 2024 and priority cohort students will have access to a student-focused online resource to assist them in making informed decisions about their education and career pathway options.
- ▶ Objective 9.3: Annually increase the number of educators, counselors, and community members that complete specialized college and career readiness training.

Appendix B: Data and Analysis Methods

Data for the report were collected by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) from six participating school districts, including five high schools and one K-12 school with the class of 2024 cohort of Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): Beyond Grad students (Grade 10 in 2020–21) and the priority cohort of GEAR UP students (Grades 9, 11 and 12 in 2020–21). For the class of 2024, data were collected at the individual level and the data elements included student demographics, advanced courses participation, student services received, student/family events provided and attended, and professional development events for teachers. The priority cohort data were collected through a school survey in which each participating school reported aggregated information on student demographics, services received, and event attendance.

TEA analyzed data for the purposes of submitting the GEAR UP Annual Performance Report to the U.S. Department of Education. ICF used these metrics and added additional contextual data based on some of the qualitative data collected for the Year 3 and 4 Annual Implementation Reports.⁵

⁵ Stakeholder quotes originated from qualitative data collected for the [Year 4 Annual Implementation Report](#) or the [Year 3 Annual Implementation Report](#).