



# GEAR UP VIRGINIA

*Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs*

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia  
**GEAR UP VIRGINIA**  
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## A Message from the GEAR UP Director

This has been an exciting year for our program, our partners, our schools, and our students! Working together, we have maintained our focus on systemic school reform and sustainability in middle schools. While our state grant is unique in this respect, the critical work that we are doing together serves to further integrate reforms across the entire spectrum of education, from preschool to graduate school.

This brochure provides a snapshot from across the spectrum of opportunities offered through our GEAR UP program. In early August, the GEAR UP staff held its initial team meeting which marked the beginning of the 2007-2008 academic year. Consistent with the GEAR UP comprehensive plan, the primary foci of the meeting were the renewal of our commitment to team solidarity with our partners, developing a consensus about the most essential components of our program, and developing a program plan to address student retention through the end of grade nine.

For more than a decade, education in Virginia has focused on the achievement gap and the academic preparation of all students. Events planned for this academic year present an ideal opportunity for our GEAR UP program to shape solutions that will address those important issues. With the support of our partners, including the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Community College System, and Virginia's institutions of higher education, we will continue to share broadly the GEAR UP collaborative model for developing an appreciation among all students for postsecondary education.



## Status Report for 2006-2007

The first six months of the 2006-2012 GEAR UP/ACCESS Virginia program were devoted to vigorous efforts by staff at the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and its school partners to plan and implement initiatives that will excite students about postsecondary education. Beginning in July 2006, and continuing through early December, GEAR UP partners planned program activities, developed a GEAR UP program manual, trained GEAR UP school coordinators and central office staff, and wrote implementation plans for each school. School staffs initiated their programs on January 15, 2007 with GEAR UP Kick-Off rallies. Each rally was attended by students, teachers, parents, principals, superintendents, school board members, and SCHEV staff, and many featured motivational speakers who inspired their audiences with dynamic accounts of successes that they had enjoyed as a result of furthering their education.

During the Kick-Off rallies every GEAR UP student received a booklet entitled *Opportunities*, printed as a result of collaboration between SCHEV and the Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC). That publication explains the steps necessary to apply for and receive financial assistance for college. In addition, GEAR UP staff at each cohort school worked with parents to help them understand the information presented in the publication and to answer questions about college financial aid. Issues related to course selection, academic achievement, and college preparation also were addressed during the rallies.

## By the Numbers

Between January 15 and April 15, 2007, the following numbers of students received services through GEAR UP:

**1,341** students received an average of seven hours of tutoring;

**327** students spent an average of 22 hours working with mentors;

**1,222** students spent an average of two hours in counseling sessions;

**217** students spent an average of two and a half hours on a college campus or shadowing a college student;

**326** students spent approximately three hours on educational field trips;

**74** students spent an average of two hours in workshops discussing academic and career planning;

**1,890** students and their parents attended GEAR UP Kick-Off rallies where they spent an average of one and a half hours learning about their responsibility to participate in activities throughout the six-year GEAR UP program.

SCHEV hosts the Virginia Mentor website on its homepage to further promote awareness of postsecondary opportunities. The Virginia Mentor site provides a wealth of information about access to Virginia's colleges and universities. To facilitate use of this resource, staffs from each GEAR UP school attended a day-long training program devoted to use of the website and were instructed to share the information they had learned during the session with colleagues at their respective schools.

Over the course of the grant, development of local academic support systems is expected to enhance students' readiness to succeed in middle school and to be prepared academically for rigorous high school courses. Local neighborhood academies will serve as a central location for GEAR UP activities, and will provide avenues for collaborations between schools and their community partners.

With programs underway, counselors and teachers at each middle school have identified cohort students who need tutoring and other GEAR UP services.

Each year, GEAR UP will sponsor summer enrichment programs for cohort students. During the first summer, nine transition programs will be held on high school campuses in school divisions where eighth-grade students will attend high school in 2007-2008. An additional four summer programs will be offered on college campuses for other rising eighth-grade students. Other programs that have resulted from partnerships between colleges and universities and GEAR UP school divisions will be encouraged and supported by SCHEV.

# Program Components

In addition to in-school activities, GEAR UP provides the following services:

- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Parental Involvement Initiatives
- Teacher and Counselor Professional Development
- Summer College Campus Programs
- Financial Aid Workshops
- Scholarships for Eligible Students



## Student Stories

*from the 2000 Grant*

There are many stories of young people whose lives have changed profoundly as a result of their experiences with GEAR UP. One young Hispanic girl with little more than dreams and a smile was placed into foster care during her time in the cohort. GEAR UP gave her hope and opportunity, a powerful combination for a young girl with potential. She attended GEAR UP summer camps on college campuses, took advantage of after-school tutoring and counseling, and other program events that sparked her interests. During her senior year in high school she qualified for a GEAR UP scholarship and is now a freshman at Liberty University.

Another student, a young African American male, lived in an automobile with his mother who suffered from drug addiction. Despite being homeless, he was determined as he put it "to be somebody." Again, GEAR UP provided hope and support. In August 2006, he enrolled at Virginia State University.

## QUICK FACT:

According to the American Council on Education, students who had a majority of friends who were planning to attend college were four times more likely to enroll than students whose friends did not intend to pursue a college degree.

## QUICK FACT:

Over 80% of the academically prepared students from higher-income families (household income of \$75,000 or more) will attend a four-year college, and 96% will attend either two- or four-year institutions.

Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, "Empty Promises: The Myth of College Access in America", Washington, 2002

## The GEAR UP Virginia Student Pledge

Members of the GEAR UP cohort signed a pledge noting that they will:

- graduate from a Virginia high school and apply for admission to at least two Virginia colleges or universities;
- attend school regularly, maintaining an attendance rate of 95% or better;
- provide information needed for evaluating the success of GEAR UP Virginia;
- encourage parents/guardians to actively participate in GEAR UP Virginia meetings, workshops, and events;
- attend at least one parent/teacher meeting per year, accompanied by at least one parent/guardian; and,
- establish a student account on the Virginia Mentor website at [www.virginiamentor.org](http://www.virginiamentor.org).



## GEAR UP Scholarships Make a Difference



Virginia has chosen the cohort model for GEAR UP Virginia. Therefore, the initial year in which scholarships will be awarded will be 2012. In order to have scholarship funds available for eligible cohort students upon high school graduation, the Commonwealth will transfer financial aid funds from the annual grant award into the Virginia Education Savings Trust (VEST). VEST is a qualified state tuition program administered by the Virginia Higher Education Tuition Trust Fund (VHETTF) – an independent state agency established under the tax regulations of section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code. VHETTF has agreed to work as a partner with GEAR UP Virginia to invest and manage the scholarship funds. Criteria consistent with federal guidelines will be established to determine student eligibility for a GEAR UP scholarship.

# GEAR UP VIRGINIA Partners

## 2007 - 2008

# GEAR UP VIRGINIA

COUNTY	SCHOOL	GRADES
Buchanan County Public Schools	Council High School	8 - 12
	Hurley High School	8 - 12
	Riverview Elementary/Middle School	PK-8
	Twin Valley High School	8 - 12
Charlotte County Public Schools	Central Middle School	6 - 8
Charlottesville City Public Schools	Buford Middle School	7 - 8
Chesterfield County Public Schools	Falling Creek Middle School	6 - 8
Cumberland County Public Schools	Cumberland Middle School	6 - 8
Danville City Public Schools	Edwin A. Gibson Middle School	6 - 8
	O. Trent Bonner Middle School	6 - 8
	Westwood Middle School	6 - 8
Grayson County Public Schools	Fries Middle School	6 - 8
	Independence Middle School	6 - 8
	Mt. Rogers Combined School	KG - 12
Greensville County Public Schools	Edward W. Wyatt Middle School	7 - 8
Hopewell City Public Schools	Carter G. Woodson Middle School	6 - 8
King and Queen County Public Schools	Central High School	8 - 12
Lynchburg City Public Schools	Paul L. Dunbar Middle School	6 - 8
	Sandusky Middle School	6 - 8
Martinsville City Public Schools	Martinsville Middle School	6 - 8
Norton City Public Schools	Norton High School	8 - 12
Nottoway County Public Schools	Nottoway Middle School	7 - 8
Patrick County Public Schools	Patrick County High School	8 - 12
Petersburg City Public Schools	Peabody Middle School	6 - 8
	Vernon Johns Middle School	6 - 8
Pittsylvania County Public Schools	Gretna Middle School	6 - 8
Prince Edward County Public Schools	Prince Edward Middle School	5 - 8
Prince William County Public Schools	Fred M. Lynn Middle School	6 - 8
Pulaski County Public Schools	Pulaski Middle School	6 - 8
Scott County Public Schools	Twin Springs High School	8 - 12
	Gate City Middle School	7 - 9
	Rye Cove High School	8 - 12
Smyth County Public Schools	Northwood Middle School	6 - 8
	Sugar Grove Combined School	KG - 8
Sussex County Public Schools	Sussex Central Middle School	6 - 8
Washington County Public Schools	Damascus Middle School	6 - 8
	Glade Spring Middle School	6 - 8
Westmoreland County Public Schools	Montross Middle School	6 - 8



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### About SCHEV

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) is the Commonwealth's coordinating body for higher education. SCHEV was established by the Governor and General Assembly in 1956. Then as now, our mission, which is outlined in the Code of Virginia, is "to promote the development of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education" in Virginia.