

Mentors, Mindsets & Role Models

PARENT-TO-PARENT MENTORING

Region One ESC GEAR UP Project

University of Texas-Pan American

GEAR UP Project

Edinburg, Texas



Texas GEAR UP Promising Practice

This program has been recognized as a Texas GEAR UP Promising Practice by the Texas Education Agency and Texas GEAR UP. The model is featured in the 2009 "Mentors, Mindsets & Role Models" toolkit designed to assist schools, districts, and community groups in their efforts to create or expand mentoring opportunities.

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www.texasgearup.com

REGION ONE ESC
GEARUP
BRIDGES TO THE FUTURE



Program Highlights 2008-2009

A Region One Education Service Center Partnership funded by the U.S. Department of Education

GEAR UP FAST FACTS...

The Region One Education Service Center, in partnership with twenty-two (22) high schools in 21 South Texas school districts, the College Board, Texas Instruments, Vernier Software and Technology, Surescore, Inc., Texas A&M University and local colleges and universities established the **GEAR UP: Bridges to the Future Partnership**. This partnership restructures school services to provide a knowledge pipeline to postsecondary success for 8,234 traditionally underrepresented youth.

Targeted School Demographics:

- ◆ 98% of the students are Hispanic
- ◆ 87% are economically disadvantaged
- ◆ 27% are English Language Learners
- ◆ 78% are considered potential first generation college bound students



The primary goal of the GEAR UP Bridges to the Future Partnership is to increase the number of students graduating from high school and entering and succeeding in post-secondary institutions.

GEAR UP Bridges to the Future is organized into three objectives. These objectives are then supported by delineated activities.

- ◆ **Objective 1:** Increase the academic performance and preparation for post-secondary education for GEAR UP students.
- ◆ **Objective 2:** Increase the rate of high school graduation and participation in post-secondary education for GEAR UP students
- ◆ **Objective 3:** Increase GEAR UP students' and their families' knowledge of post-secondary education options, preparation, and financing.

GEAR UP: Bridges to the Future At a Glance



The Bridges to the Future Partnership is in its fourth year of operation, with cohort students currently engaged in tenth grade activities. The primary goal of the partnership is to increase the number of targeted students who enter and succeed in post-secondary environments. This goal is supported by a plan that encompasses academic systemic reform. Services are substantiated by validated research, and are intended to result in a systemic examination, alignment, and implementation of policies, programs, and practices that enable students to succeed in college. Services are classified into four major components, Academic Support, Mentoring/Tutoring, Counseling/Outreach, and Support Services, and are designed to provide a sustainable, cohesive network of support to students, parents, and educators.

During its third year of funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the Bridges to the Future Partnership was implemented as written, with minor modifications. Local, state, and national level partnerships were sustained and enhanced with the Institute for School Excellence, The College Board, Texas A&M College Station, the National Council for Communities and Education Partnerships (NCCEP), the University of Texas-Pan American, the University of Texas at Brownsville, South Texas College, the Region One T-STEM Center, Texas Instruments, Agile Mind, the Princeton Review, Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies and ABC NEWSCHANNEL 5. These partnerships led to the development and refinement of innovative products customized to highly mobile, limited English proficient children of poverty. An extensive array of services was offered to partnering schools, students, and parents with the intent of increasing student enrollment and success in college.

Through the combined efforts of educators, community partners, parents, and students, the partnership can mark multiple successes during the 2007-2008 school year, including:

- ◆ **44.4% of ELL cohort** students met the minimum standard in Reading/ELA, representing **+24% points over baseline**. Additionally, 2.6% of ELL students reached the commended performance level in Reading/ELA.
- ◆ **90.3% of Non-ELL cohort** students met the minimum passing standard representing **+28% points over baseline** and **+15.3% points above the stated target**. Additionally, 37.4% of Non-ELL students reached the commended performance level in ELA
- ◆ **34.9% of ELL cohort** students met the minimum standard representing **+17.9% points over baseline**. Additionally, 1.6% of ELL students reached the commended performance level in mathematics.
- ◆ **72.1% of Non-ELL cohort** students met the minimum passing standard representing **+24.1% points over baseline** and **+23.1% points above the stated target**. Additionally, 14% of Non ELL students reached the commended performance level in mathematics.
- ◆ **48 cohort students** were enrolled in **Biology**.
- ◆ **931 cohort students were enrolled in Algebra I**, and the **average score** of cohort students (in all participating campus) who took **Algebra I** was **74.1%**.
- ◆ **46 cohort students** were enrolled in **Geometry**, and **5 cohort students** were enrolled in **Algebra II**.
- ◆ **368 cohort students** took the **PSAT** examination, and **3 cohort students** took the **SAT** examination.
- ◆ **135 cohort** students completed one Advanced Placement course.
- ◆ **7,596 (92%)** of the continuing 8th grade cohort students were promoted to 9th grade
- ◆ **4,562 (55.4%)** students have participated in 71,845 advisory sessions
- ◆ **968** students participated in academic enrichment activities

GEAR UP Program Components



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Media Partnerships (NEWSCHANNEL 5)

Quarterly Newsletter

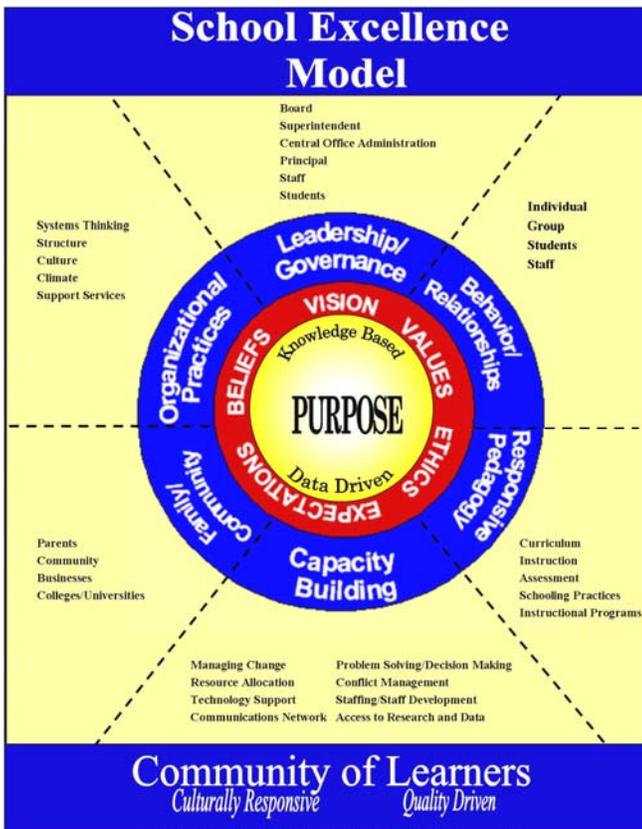
Teen Scene Magazine

Systemic Leadership Initiative

An underpinning of the Region One GEAR UP: Bridges to the Future Partnership plan is the implementation of an alignment initiative aimed at improving student achievement at the systemic level. This initiative recognizes that specific attention must be given to the importance of district support and systemic processes in the realization of long-term meaningful change toward improving academic performance.

Each district in the Partnership has committed to developing the leadership capacity of the district and campus by engaging in a **Systemic Alignment and Leadership Initiative**. This approach to improvement is led by Region One GEAR UP Specialists and the Institute for School Excellence, utilizing the researched-based School Excellence Model to develop and support the leadership team at each of the participating districts. The **District Leadership Team**, comprised of the superintendent, curriculum director, middle and high school principals, and the campus-based GEAR UP facilitator, meets five (5) times during the school year to develop high performing learning communities imperative in building the leadership and staff commitment needed for systemic change.

This process is designed to build capacity of school personnel to utilize a research-based, quality-driven model for insuring that programs and policies are aligned to the stated purpose, to the diverse needs of the cohort students, and to a solid research base, insuring the adoption of systemic practices which contribute to enabling students to succeed in college.



07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ A total of 21 campus and district level administrators have participated in the District Leadership Team Meetings, held during the 2007-08 school year
- ✓ A total of 218 content area teachers, counselors and campus and district level administrators have attended five District Leadership Team meetings during the 2007-08 school year



Mathematics Initiative

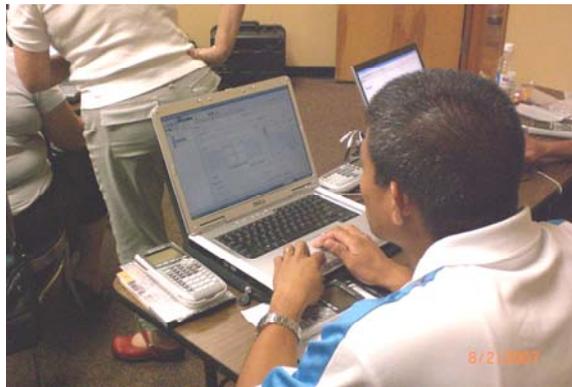
To ensure cohort students are ready to meet the challenges of the 21st Century, classroom teachers have to know how children develop an understanding of the core concepts of mathematics. The Region One GEAR UP Partnership realizes the importance of the professional role of classroom teachers and know that teachers need continued support and professional development to meet the growing challenges of teaching this core content to ensure children have a solid foundation and understanding of mathematics.

In partnership with El Centro del Futuro T-STEM Center, Texas Instruments and Agile Mind, the Region One GEAR UP Partnership provides math teachers with research based training on best teaching practices. Participating teachers learn to utilize TI-Navigator systems, graphing calculators, and other related software to support teaching and learning.

The Region One GEAR UP Partnership has been utilizing The Agile Mind curriculum to train math teachers. The Agile Mind curriculum identifies nine different “barrier concepts” that traditionally block students’ absorption of the material, and helps overcome them. The curriculum employs technology in innovative and enjoyable ways, to help students to master math with greater ease both at home and at school.

07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ 89 Ninth grade math teachers received nine (9) days of professional development through the Math Initiative Training and the Region One T-STEM Center
- ✓ 21 School districts received cutting-edge math technology in the form of TI Navigators
- ✓ 3,390 cohort students participated for an average of 12.32 hours of classroom activities using TI Navigators
- ✓ 99 math teachers received on-site technical assistance from Texas Instruments instructors
- ✓ 48 teachers received on-site visits by Agilemind Mentors





Science Initiative

The Region One GEAR UP Partnership believes that the skills and techniques of science teachers should be strengthened and expanded, and that science teaching resources, including curriculum, laboratory equipment, and information technologies, should be renewed and improved. The Science Initiative is based on the vision that science should be taught in a hands-on, inquiry-based way. Through this initiative, professional development sessions were held that fostered a kind of inquiry or experiential learning involving a shift from fact-intensive, textbook-based, lecture-driven science to idea-intensive, experiment-based science learning.

Science teachers in GEAR UP partnering schools are trained on integration of technology-based methods of instruction to improve cohort student performance and prepare them to enter and succeed in post-secondary courses of study. In addition, science technology resources such as temperature probes, calculators, and a variety of sensors are provided to teachers who attend to improve the understanding and implementation of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills through technology lab integration.

During the last year (2007-2008), Region One ESC T-STEM (Texas-Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Center of South Texas coordinated the GEAR UP science initiative using the Region One ESC C-Scope Curriculum (for Curriculum Collaborative members) or district scope and sequence documents to provide teachers with research-based instructional lessons.

The Region One GEAR UP Partnership: Bridges to the Future Partnership Schools also partner with the Region One T-STEM Center and Vernier Technology and Software, to provide a unique professional development training for tenth grade IPC and Biology teachers and District Science Coordinators at the participating campuses.



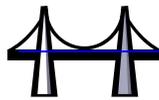
El Centro del Futuro
STEM Center of South Texas



07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ 89 Ninth grade IPC and Biology science teachers received nine (9) days of professional development through the Science Initiative Training and the Region One T-STEM Center
- ✓ 22 GEAR UP high schools received cutting-edge science technology in the form of science probes from Vernier Technology and Software
- ✓ 3,687 GEAR UP students participated for an average of 14 hours of classroom activities utilizing science technology





English/Language Arts Initiative: Springboard™



Springboard is a comprehensive and integrated program for students in grades 6-12 focused on reading and writing. It is designed to increase the number and broaden the diversity of students prepared to succeed in

college and Advanced Placement Program (AP) courses. A set of standards for college success, which are the focus of Springboard, were created by College Board with the idea of closing the gap between secondary school requirements and college-level expectations. The Springboard college prep training prepares teachers to use new pedagogical strategies for teaching English language arts. Teachers have year-round access to online mentors, online communities, and videoconferencing with peers to share best practices and questions.

This initiative was a result of a major SpringBoard pilot in South Texas which began with ELA teachers at GEAR UP campuses and developed exclusively to meet the needs of students of the Region One ESC. It is offered at a minimal cost to each district as a result of a partnership between Region One GEAR UP, the College Board, and the Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies, which funds the costs for professional development, district licensing fees, and student/teacher workbooks.

07-08 Highlights:

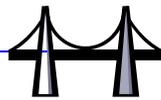
- ✓ 112 ELA teachers received an extensive five-day training and one-day follow-up training through the College Board SpringBoard Institute
- ✓ 49 ELA teachers participated in two days of mentoring via videoconferencing technology
- ✓ 16 campus principals and administrators received the College Board SpringBoard administrator training
- ✓ 3,391 GEAR UP students received instruction utilizing SpringBoard

English Language Learner (E.L.L.) Initiative

Region One GEAR UP: Bridges to the Future Partnership has organized an initiative to target the English Language Learners in the GEAR UP cohort. GEAR UP ESL Specialists provide direct technical assistance to core area teachers of English Language Learners. In addition, the GEAR UP ESL Specialists collaborate with the campus GEAR UP Facilitator to closely monitor English Language Learner needs by ensuring proper tutorial services, student activities, mentoring services, and teacher staff development.

Highlights:

- ✓ 135 teachers received training in second language learning by Kagan professionals.
- ✓ 98 teachers received professional development in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)



Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies (PAS) Initiative



Ford PAS is an academically rigorous, standards-based program with an interdisciplinary curriculum specifically designed for students who want to get more out of high school and who want to better prepare for post-secondary studies, professional careers, and roles as future leaders. This advanced studies program creates a dynamic link between what is learned in the classroom and what will be expected of students in college and beyond. Ford PAS students will work with peers to explore ideas, analyze problems, and find solutions to real-life challenges. Fifteen (15) college credit hours are available to earn at South Texas College for Ford PAS students completing articulated courses using Ford PAS modules



07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ 26 Career and Technology (CTE) teachers from 13 partnership schools participated in Ford PAS training and piloted the curriculum as part of the pilot year of implementation

Test Preparation

As GEAR UP cohort students prepare to enter the tenth grade, special emphasis will be made to prepare teams of high school educators to administer the PSAT/NMSQT exam in the fall of 2008. A grant stipulation establishes that every GEAR UP cohort student will take the PSAT exam during the sophomore and junior year.

Through partnerships with the College Board, the Princeton Review, and Surescore, Inc., the Region One GEAR UP partnership will provide test preparation for the SAT, ACT, and THEA exams for GEAR UP students beginning in the spring of their sophomore year. In anticipation of students taking dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment courses while still in high school, students will receive preparation for the THEA or other equivalency exams. SAT and ACT test preparation will be supported through campus based initiatives.

07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ 23 GEAR UP facilitators, content area teachers, high school counselors and principals participated in a PSAT overview session provided by the College Board
- ✓ 66 GEAR UP facilitators, content area teachers, test coordinators, counselors, and high school administrators participated in a PSAT overview session offered by the College Board via videoconferencing





Web-Plus Tutoring

07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ Tutoring in Algebra and Geometry offered from October 2007-June 2008
- ✓ 1,879 students from 19 partnership school districts logged on to Web-Plus tutoring for an average of 7 minutes since October 2007
- ✓ 6 regional math teachers served as Web-Plus tutors

Web-Plus Tutoring pairs top-notch regional math teachers with students from all twenty-two (22) high schools in the partnership. Web-Plus Tutoring covers high school math curriculum, yet exposes students to a broader range of topics than a public school or textbook can. Through a safe and secure online portal, students are offered a rewarding online learning experience through live chat sessions and



discussion boards. Lessons in a broad range of math topics help stimulate thinking and reinforce skills among students participating in this new and cutting edge initiative. Through web-based tutoring, each student were engaged in effective one-to-one learning in a safe learning environment from the comfort of the student's home, had access to a web-based tutor 24/7, and received tutoring from regional teachers who each have unique expertise in the area of mathematics. Each student had separate log-in user ID and password, and their usage was monitored daily by the Region One GEAR UP Partnership Staff.

Cybermentoring

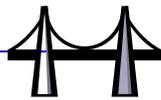
07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ Over 400 students across 21 school districts participated in Cybermentoring
- ✓ Eleven (11) Cybermentors from different career fields interacted with students via videoconferencing technology
- ✓ Cybermentoring sessions averaged 45 minutes to an hour

Through cybermentoring, small groups of 20 to 30 students at 6 GEAR UP schools had access to a mentor at a remote location via a T1 connection and state of the art videoconferencing equipment. This equipment is provided by the Region One GEAR UP Partnership. GEAR UP priority students are targeted for cybermentoring sessions, and campus facilitators use online career interest inventories to identify which students should attend each session.



Typically, mentors spend approximately fifteen to twenty minutes in sharing information about their personal and educational background with students. The rest of the mentoring time is reserved for questions and answers between the mentor and participating students. Each session is approximately forty-five minutes to one hour in duration. For later viewing by students, cybermentoring sessions are recorded and uploaded to the Region One GEAR UP Partnership website.



Academic Tutors

The GEAR UP campus tutor is responsible for providing high school students with the academic assistance needed to succeed in core academic classes. First priority and consideration for candidates for GEAR UP academic tutors must be given to students enrolled in a college course of study. This allows college students to act as both tutors and mentors in encouraging cohort students to pursue a post-secondary education. Potential tutors should be students in good academic standing at the college or university and should demonstrate high levels of proficiency in the area they are assigned to tutor.

07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ 1,433 GEAR UP students received individual tutoring from academic tutors
- ✓ A total of 648 hours of individual tutoring were offered by academic tutors across GEAR UP schools

F.A.S.T.B.R.E.A.K.

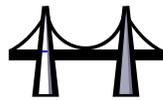
As part of the mentoring component, Region One GEAR UP has partnered with the local NBA D-League affiliate, the Rio Grande Valley Vipers. This initiative, entitled **Fostering Awareness Striving Toward Building Relationships Ensuring Academic Knowledge** (FASTBREAK), partners players, coaches, and staff from the RGV Vipers organization with GEAR UP cohort students through a variety of mentoring opportunities such as videoconferencing, a basketball/leadership camp, and an invitation to attend a Vipers game at the Dodge Arena. RGV Viper mentors share pertinent information about their personal and educational background with students and have the opportunity to engage in question and response sessions with participants.



07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ Over 400 students across 21 school districts attended a RGV Vipers basketball game at the Dodge Arena
- ✓ Four (4) Rio Grande Valley Viper players and coaches mentored with students via videoconferencing technology
- ✓ Cybermentoring sessions averaged 45 minutes to an hour





GEAR UP Facilitator

A central component of the Region One ESC GEAR UP: Bridges to the Future Partnership that has proven to be the most impactful is the campus-based GEAR UP facilitator. The facilitator provides an invaluable link between the different components within the GEAR UP project: project director to school administration, students to school culture, parents to school culture and administration, and cross-district networking. As part of the Partnership plan, each campus has a GEAR UP facilitator assigned to ensure that all components of the grant are in place and are carried out in an effective and sustainable



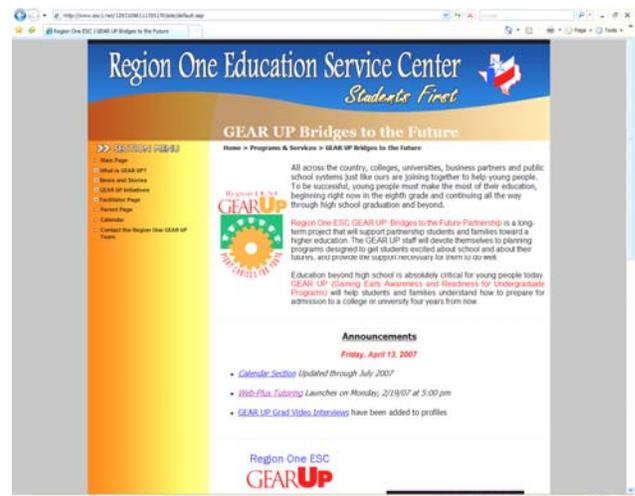
manner. GEAR UP facilitators provide students and parents services and information that support post-secondary preparation. Through ongoing individual conferences with students, GEAR UP facilitators provide advisement regarding course selection, career pathways and preparation for high school and post-secondary preparation. In addition, GEAR UP facilitators assist in providing parents with information regarding post-secondary preparation through sessions that include topics such as financial aid, college admissions, high school graduation plans, and course selection. The GEAR UP facilitator provides the campus with an essential focus and support toward post-secondary preparation.

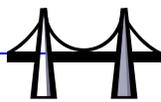
Videoconferencing & High Speed Internet Connections

Each GEAR UP: Bridges to the Future Partnership school has been equipped with technology and communication equipment to facilitate networking between partnership students, parents, educators, and community members. Each campus has received videoconferencing equipment with the necessary supporting technology, including T-1 lines and ESCONETT connections. It is intended that this equipment be utilized to provide stakeholders with opportunities that support GEAR UP objectives. These opportunities might not have been available without this cutting-edge technology.

GEAR UP Website: www.esc1.net/gearup

The Region One ESC Bridges to the Future Partnership has developed an interactive website for students, parents, and educators. Visitors can access exclusive video content, downloadable college and financial aid materials, and links to each of the GEAR UP exclusive initiatives, such as Web-Plus tutoring.





Abriendo Puertas



In partnership with Texas A & M University, the Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors) parental involvement component addresses parental involvement outreach services.

Abriendo Puertas is a parent-to-parent training model whereby parents share and present information to each other regarding specific lessons regarding communication with adolescents, academic services and post-secondary preparation.

This initiative is based on the assumptions that parents: 1) inherently want what is best for their children; 2) are contributors to their children's education and to the schools; 3) want to participate in meaningful school activities; 4) are willing to participate in school activities based on the personal relationships with teachers, principals, and school facilitators; and 5) must be an integral part of all school and GEAR UP activities.



07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ 65 parent volunteers representing 20 school districts attended lessons of the *Abriendo Puertas* Curriculum
- ✓ Parents trained in *Abriendo Puertas* conducted outreach to over 600 parents

Post-Secondary Counselor's Academy

In an effort to improve the knowledge and capacity of school counselors, a Postsecondary Counselor's Academy was developed and customized for the Region One GEAR UP Bridges to the Future Partnership. The academy focuses on improving counselor and GEAR UP facilitator knowledge and outreach competencies in the post-secondary area.

The academy focused the training on time management, student portfolios, college and career centers, college admission exams, the admission process, financial aid as well as legislative updates on post-secondary education.

07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ 57 high school counselors and GEAR UP facilitators representing 19 of 22 partnership campuses participated in the five day counselor's academy

Planners

Through a partnership with Premier Agendas, Region One GEAR UP will provide every cohort student with a student planner correlated to Covey's "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens." This planner serves as a time management tool, with the ultimate goal of assisting students to self-regulate their behavior and to better manage their lives.





Youth Advisory Committee

Region One GEAR UP and the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) collaborated to create a GEAR UP Youth Advisory Committee. This committee, which consists of 90 students, seeks to serve two purposes: to provide a unique leadership opportunity to a variety of students, including those who are not traditionally considered for leadership programs; and to create the foundation for a student-led initiative that seeks to positively impact the achievement, awareness, and aspirations of their peers over a four year period.

Through the course of the next three years, the Youth Advisory Committee at each high school will work towards three specific goals:

- ◆ Creating a team of students who know about college admissions and access issues and are prepared to share that information with their peers;
- ◆ Enabling students to gather information from their peers and communities and share it with staff, parents, and administrators to help the work of GEAR UP; and
- ◆ Planning a minimum of one to two college access and /or academic enrichment events each semester.



07-08 Highlights:

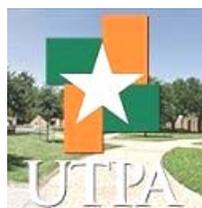
- ✓ 90 students representing 22 GEAR UP high schools participated in the Youth Advisory Conference, mid-year conference, and three (3) videoconferences held through the year
- ✓ YAC students participated in a special plenary with U.S. Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, during HESTEC
- ✓ YAC students participated in a special Christmas toy drive with NEWSCHANNEL 5

Pre-College Academies

Region One GEAR UP has partnered with the University of Texas-Pan American, the University of Texas at Brownsville, South Texas College, Texas A&M International University, and Laredo Community College to create Pre-College Academies focusing on academic enhancement. The STC Teens' College is a hands-on college camp that provides career exploration options and helps students develop skills that lead to a post-secondary enrollment. The University of Texas-Pan American has developed academic enrichment programs such as Ford PAS, Physics, Communication/Leadership, Clinical Lab Science, Computer Science, and English as well as other areas such as Drama and Robotics. The University of Texas at Brownsville has created academic enrichment camps in the areas of math/science and writing/history. It is anticipated that over 2,000 GEAR UP cohort students will participate in Pre-College Academies for the 2008-2009 school year.

07-08 Highlights:

- ✓ 280 GEAR UP students participated in overnight summer camps at UTPA
- ✓ 314 GEAR UP students participated in a ten-day academic camp at South Texas College
- ✓ 67 GEAR UP students participated in the UTB Summer camp in 2007
- ✓ 310 GEAR UP students participated in fall and spring camps held during the 2007-08 school year



Region One ESC GEAR UP - Staff Assignments and Initiatives



Melissa Lopez

Senior Education Specialist

Initiatives: Youth Advisory Committee (YAC), Pre-College Academies (UT-Pan American, UT-Brownsville, South Texas College, Texas A&M International University, Laredo Community College)



Jessie Doria

Lead Program Assistant



Jose M. Castillo

Senior Education Specialist

Initiatives: Pre-College Academies (UT-Pan American, UT-Brownsville, South Texas College, Texas A&M International University, Laredo Community College), College Entrance Exams/Test Preparation



Elizabeth Garcia

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Senior Education Specialist

Initiatives: Abriendo Puertas, Parental Involvement, Youthservices, Counselors' Academy, FASTBREAK, Advisory, College Access Program (CAP)



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Ellie Torres

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Initiatives: Counselors' Academy, Student Portfolios, FASTBREAK, Advisory, Abriendo Puertas, Parental Involvement, College Access Program (CAP)



Rosie Lozano

Senior Education Specialist

Initiatives: Math Initiative, Science Initiative, KAGAN, English Language Learners (ELLs)



Sonia Arce

Senior Education Specialist

Initiatives: Math Initiative, Science Initiative, KAGAN, English Language Learners (ELLs)



Rita Cedillo

Senior Education Specialist

Initiatives: Planners, Abriendo Puertas, Parental Involvement, Advisory, College Access Program (CAP)



Tina Atkins

GEAR UP Director



David W. Hernandez

Senior Education Specialist

Initiatives: SpringBoard ELA, Cybermentoring, Web-Plus Tutoring, FASTBREAK, Marketing & Outreach (website, newsletters, publications), TEEN SCENE



Abel Diaz

GEAR UP Accountant





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Marco Antonio Lara, Jr.
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