

OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
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Oklahoma GEAR UP Partnership Helps Harrah Students Better Prepare for College

Oklahoma GEAR UP, in partnership with Harrah Public Schools, is celebrating ongoing success in helping students and families prepare for college during National GEAR UP Week Sept. 23-27. The week highlights the impactful work of Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), a college access program that provides students and families with college planning resources. Since 1999, GEAR UP has helped improve educational outcomes for millions of students across the U.S., including thousands of Oklahoma students.

As partners, GEAR UP and Harrah Public Schools work together to motivate and prepare students to enter and succeed in college through early interventions like tutoring, mentoring, financial literacy, college counseling, college campus visits and more.

"National GEAR UP Week gives us an opportunity to reflect on the tremendous strides we have made in preparing students for college since 1999," said Oklahoma Higher Education Chancellor Glen D. Johnson. "We celebrate the partnership between GEAR UP and Harrah Public Schools because it is helping to improve both college access and academic readiness of students to succeed in college and earn their degree."

During 2012-13, Oklahoma GEAR UP worked directly with Harrah Public Schools to provide early intervention services and strategies for approximately 949 students in grades seven through 12. Some of the impacts* include:

- Approximately 463 students toured a college campus to learn about college academic programs and life on campus.
- Approximately 74 educators attended GEAR UP professional training in areas such as school leadership, school data analysis and planning, advanced science and math teaching strategies, creating a college going culture, counseling for college readiness, working with students from special populations and more. Attendees may have attended more than one training.
- Approximately 142 students received financial information that provided guidance on how to search and apply for financial aid through FAFSA, community, state and local scholarship and other aid programs.

- High school seniors received more than \$76,000 in college scholarships in 2013.
- Approximately 100 parents attended local college planning, financial aid and college readiness workshops.
- 127 high school seniors participated in College App Week last November, resulting in 158 college applications started with the assistance of onsite college mentors.
- One student participated in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) institute at Connors State College in Warner.

Investing in students is a great way to improve and sustain the local community. Data provided by the National Council on Community and Education Partnerships shows that the federal investment in each GEAR UP student is about \$500 for a total of \$3,000 over six years. This investment is returned to the community (with interest) throughout the student's lifetime as she or he leaves the program more able to earn a livable wage, pay higher taxes and be an engaged citizen.

"We appreciate the countless education leaders, parents and community volunteers who have contributed to the success of GEAR UP's efforts to help more students realize their dream of earning a college degree," Johnson said.

The statewide grant is one of several GEAR UP programs in Oklahoma. Eastern Oklahoma State College, Seminole State College and the University of Oklahoma K-20 Center also have GEAR UP partnership grants that serve students in their specific geographic areas.

GEAR UP goes beyond the classroom, encouraging community and parental involvement that helps school districts create and sustain a college going culture. Through awareness activities and services, the grant helps promote Oklahoma's Promise, the state scholarship program, and encourages families to start planning for college early at OKcollegestart.org.

To learn more about Oklahoma GEAR UP, please visit www.okhighered.org/gearup, email studentinfo@osrhe.edu, call 800.858.1840 or follow us on Facebook or Twitter under Oklahoma GEAR UP.

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Special Note:

Oklahoma GEAR UP School Districts include: Ardmore Public Schools, Caney Valley Public Schools, Catoosa Public Schools, Checotah Public Schools, Davis Public Schools, Duncan Public Schools, Elk City Public Schools, Guymon Public Schools, Harrah Public Schools, Henryetta Public Schools, Hobart Public Schools, Kingston Public Schools, Little Axe Public Schools, Luther Public Schools, Madill Public Schools, Marietta Public Schools, McLoud Public Schools, Newkirk Public Schools, Okmulgee Public Schools, Roland Public Schools, Sapulpa Public Schools, Stilwell Public Schools, Tecumseh Public Schools, and Woodward Public Schools.

*Data based on most recent information reported by 24 Oklahoma GEAR UP School Districts as of Sept. 1, 2013.

The U.S. Department of Education awarded Oklahoma with state GEAR UP grants totaling \$20.5 million in August 1999, \$20.6 million in August 2005 and \$34.9 million in September 2011. The grants have been matched by more than \$48 million from state and partner resources. From 1999 to 2011, GEAR UP received more than \$45.6 million in federal funds. With the addition of the 2011 grant, Oklahoma's GEAR UP program will ultimately receive more than \$80.6 million in federal funds by 2018.