

# **Maine State GEAR UP Program**

Maine's GEAR UP Program is helping to create a sustainable culture in schools that supports students who are economically disadvantaged in preparing for, accessing, and succeeding in postsecondary education.

## **GEAR UP History in Maine:**

Maine has received GEAR UP federal funds since 1999, and is currently in the midst of its second 6-year grant. GEAR UP supports 3,000 students at 49 schools across the state. These schools are in 19 school districts that report over 50% of their student body eligible for free/reduced lunch. Within these schools, eligible 7<sup>th</sup> grade students from low-income families were enrolled and make up the GEAR UP cohort. The current grant ends in 2011, new students are not being enrolled. The last classes of GEAR UP students, who are now 9-12<sup>th</sup> graders, are being followed through to high school graduation.

GEAR UP scholarships are available to students who graduate high school, meet academic criteria, financial eligibility, and enroll in an eligible Maine postsecondary institution.

Program funds and scholarships are targeted to GEAR UP students, but the practices adopted by schools are intended to be sustainable and live beyond the end of the grant.

## **GEAR UP Administrative structure:**

The Maine Department of Education's State GEAR UP Program is administered by staff at the Maine Support Network and the Maine Parent Federation. Both organizations provide support to GEAR UP school administration and district GEAR UP liaisons through regional coordinator positions. In addition, the Maine Support Network has engaged an AmeriCorps\*VISTA volunteer to support the program.

GEAR UP partner organizations include Maine CITE, the University of Maine System, the Maine Community College System, the Mitchell Institute, school administrative units, and the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME).

### **We work together with schools to ensure that...**

- All 8<sup>th</sup> grade students develop proficient algebraic skills
- All high school students take college courses
- All students have personal learning plans that include a postsecondary component which are shared at student-led parent-teacher conferences
- All students and their families participate in student-led conferences
- All seniors complete at least one application to attend a postsecondary school and file a FAFSA
- All schools increase the number of rigorous courses, including AP and college courses
- All schools promote high aspirations for all students by facilitating student engagement and achievement in a supportive learning environment

## **Our Unique Strengths:**

Schools are implementing the GEAR UP goals and objectives in district-guided plans. Shifting a large portion of control to districts creates a more meaningful and targeted course, which includes: allocation of budget, strategies to achieve end goals, ability to focus on areas of self-assessed need.



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