



# GEAR UP FOR LIFE

**The K20 Center is excited to welcome you as a new strategic partner. Through exploring this relationship, you'll see how K20 and GEAR UP work together to establish a college-going culture that leads to life-altering benefits for your students.**

In 2018, the K20 Center for Educational and Community Renewal competed for and was awarded three separate Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grants sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. There were 160 applications for GEAR UP funding, 60 grants were awarded, and K20 won 3 of them.

The K20 GEAR UP for LIFE (Learning and Investigating Future Education) project is a partnership between the K20 Center and 27 high-poverty, mostly rural schools located in 22 Oklahoma school districts. The partnership seeks to directly impact 8,258 students through a 7-year project beginning with 6th and 7th grades in October 2023.



## Partnership Overview Agenda

- Engage – Snap, Clap, Pop
- Explore – I Notice, I Wonder
- Explain – 3-2-1
- Extend – Cognitive Comics
- Evaluate – Rapid Feedback & LEARN

## Objectives

- Identify characteristics and generate questions about K20 and its research-based professional development approaches.
- Identify characteristics and generate questions about goals, benefits, and expectations of participation in the GEAR UP for LIFE grant.
- Apply your understanding of the benefits of going to college to create an image depicting the impact going to college could have on an individual student that you know.
- Choose and sign up for more information on the following K20 events: Counselor Academy, ADEPT, OETT, and Leadership.



Creativity & problem-solving skills

Public economic good



More in lifetime earnings



Higher civic engagement:  
(voting, running for office, volunteering)

Personal economic good



Higher job satisfaction

Public social capital



Healthier family life  
(as an adult, lower divorce rates and higher-achieving children)

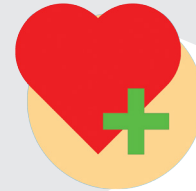
Sense of accomplishment & independence

Personal social capital



Professional mentors & lifetime network

Longer life expectancy



Better mental & physical health

Leadership support

College & career culture development

Teachers' learning

College & career readiness\*<sup>3</sup>

COLLEGE BENEFITS TO STUDENTS\*<sup>1</sup>

SERVICES

GEAR UP

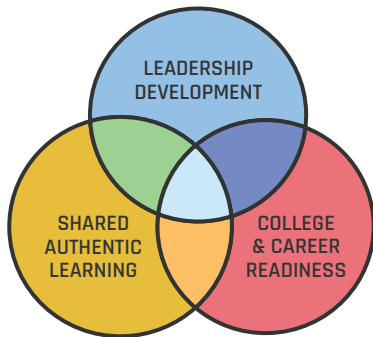
PROGRAM GOALS

1. Increase student engagement
2. Increase academic preparation
3. Increase graduation rates
4. Increase family college & career awareness

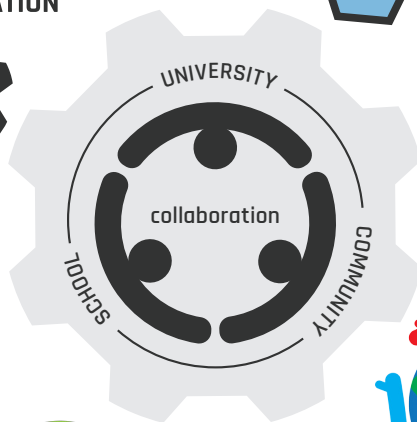
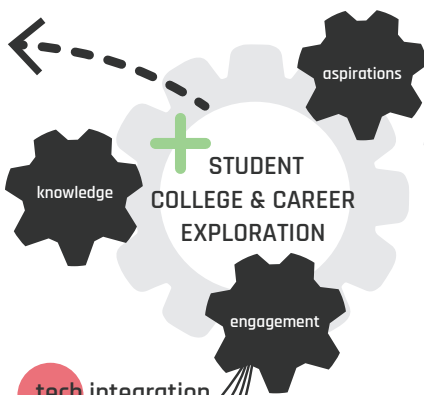
LEFT

The K20 Center's **mission** is to advance leadership and learning through authentic experiences, educational resources, technology integration, college and career readiness, and community connections that innovate and transform education.

# RIGHT



## INNOVATION & TRANSFORMATION



RESEARCH-BASED & DATA-DRIVEN



AUTHENTIC LESSONS\*2

**INCREASE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF**  
 enjoyment  
 interest  
 critical thinking  
 future relevance

**DECREASE STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF**  
 boredom  
 confusion  
 frustration  
 hopelessness



model resources  
[learn.k20center.ou.edu](http://learn.k20center.ou.edu)  
 strategies, lessons, activities

Evaluation expectations  
 (surveys, student achievement data, mini-research studies)

### References

- \*1 Sutton, H. (2017). Learn to articulate the value of college beyond dollar signs. *Recruiting & Retaining Adult Learners*, 19(7), 6-7.
- \*2 Parsons, A. E., Heddy, B. C., Wilson, S. N., Williams, L. A., Atkinson, L. K., & Garn, G. A. (2019). Making 'brain food': Converting photosynthesis into a positive learning experience through authentic instruction. *Journal of Biological Education*
- \*3 Wilson, S.N., Williams, L., Williams, L.A., Goodin, A., & Wheeler, A. (in press 2023). Reexamining the democratic IDEALS and best practices in education. In P. Woods, H. D. O'Hair, & M. J. O'Hair (Eds.), *Communication and Education: Promoting Peace and Democracy in Times of Crisis and Conflict*. (Vol. 3). Wiley-Blackwell, Inc.

# College Benefits Top 10\*

College can be a life-altering experience for students, and not only academically. Here are just a few of the ways in which college can change your students' lives for the better:

1. Earning a bachelor's degree allows students to earn, on average, \$1 million more than high school graduates over the course of their careers (Starrett et al., 2022; Abel & Deitz, 2014).
2. College offers students an opportunity to build relationships with mentors and peers benefit them throughout their careers (Campbell et al., 2012; D'Agostino, 2022).
3. Students who attend a college that "matches" their high school GPA and test scores are more likely to graduate from that college within six years and go on to find a great job (Cook, 2022; Howell & Pender, 2015).
4. College graduates tend to have more job satisfaction, jobs that offer a greater sense of accomplishment, more independence and opportunities for creativity, and more social interaction in their jobs than non college graduates (Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013; Sutton, 2017; Wolniak & Engberg, 2019).
5. As of 2022, the unemployment rate for college graduates has been approximately half that of high school graduates (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022).
6. College helps students develop skills that prepare them for careers in the tech-driven economy, including nonroutine, abstract skills that aid in problem solving, multitasking, and creativity (Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013; St. Louis et al., 2021; Hutson et al., 2023).
7. College can broaden students' understanding of the world and international perspectives (Sutton, 2017; D'Agostino, 2022).
8. Getting involved as a college student can lead to greater civic involvement over a lifetime.  
College graduates are more likely to vote, run for political office, and volunteer in their communities (Perrin & Gillis, 2019; Brand, 2010; Sutton, 2017; Ishitani & McKittrick, 2013).
9. College graduates experience health benefits like longer life expectancy, lower obesity, lower likelihood to smoke, and lower instances of mental illness (Harper et al. 2021; Baum et al. 2013; Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013).
10. College graduates tend to carry more benefits forward into their family lives, including a lower likelihood of divorce and higher-achieving children (Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013; Reynolds, 2021).

\*These benefits generally compare the average student with a bachelor's degree to the average student with a high school diploma.

## Student-Friendly Language

1. Earn \$1M more over your lifetime.
2. Be happier in your job.
3. Connect with peers and mentors.
4. Make a difference in your community (volunteer, vote, run for office).
5. Develop your creativity and problem-solving skills.
6. Feel a sense of accomplishment.
7. Grow your career independence.
8. Prepare for success in a technology-driven world.
9. Live longer and healthier.
10. Have a more satisfying family life.

# GEAR UP for LIFE

*(Learning and Investigating Future Education)*

## 2023-2030

GEAR UP for LIFE seeks to directly impact 8,258 students from 27 Oklahoma schools. LIFE has identified four goals to improve students' success in the future. These goals clearly define a methodology to guide the implementation of an evidence-based approach.

## LIFE Goals and Objectives

<p><b>GOAL 1:</b></p> <p><i>Increase cohort students' engagement in learning.</i></p>	<p><i>Objective 1.1:</i> Increase % of cohort who report being engaged with their school campus (affective) by 2-3%.</p> <p><i>Objective 1.2:</i> Increase % of cohort who report being engaged in their classrooms (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional) by 2-3%.</p>
<p><b>GOAL 2:</b></p> <p><i>Increase cohort students' academic preparation for PSE at graduation from participating schools.</i></p>	<p><i>Objective 2.1:</i> Increase % of cohort who meet established performance levels in English, math, science, and social studies by 2-3%.</p>
<p><b>GOAL 3:</b></p> <p><i>Increase cohort schools' high school graduation and PSE enrollment rates.</i></p>	<p><i>Objective 3.1:</i> Increase % of cohort promoted on time to successive grade levels by 2-3%.</p> <p><i>Objective 3.2:</i> Increase % of cohort with PSE aspirations/expectations by 2-3%.</p>
<p><b>GOAL 4:</b></p> <p><i>Increase cohort students' and their families' knowledge of PSE options, preparation, and financing.</i></p>	<p><i>Objective 4.1:</i> Increase % of cohort students and their families who know PSE options, develop plans for meeting entry requirements, complete applications, and make financial plans for going to college.</p> <p><i>4.1.1:</i> Increase % of cohort who complete the FAFSA by 4-6%.</p> <p><i>4.1.2:</i> Increase % of cohort students who expect to graduate from high school by 13-15%.</p> <p><i>4.1.3:</i> Increase % of cohort students and parents with knowledge of necessary academic preparation for PSE by 13-15%.</p> <p><i>4.1.4:</i> Increase % of cohort parents who actively engage in activities by 13-15%.</p>

## Services

### Micro-Credentials & Learning Paths

The LIFE project aims to foster a college and career readiness culture by involving stakeholder groups of school leaders, teachers, students, and parents through a micro-credentialing system. Participants earn digital badges by mastering specific competencies. These badges are verifiable and contain metadata. The project, facilitated by a learning management system partner and digital credentialing platform, seeks to enhance learning outcomes. Committees will define competencies for students, parents, and educators in college and career readiness as part of the initiative. Micro-credentialing will be integrated into project services to promote self-directed learning.

### College & Career Readiness Culture (CCR)

K20 GEAR UP for LIFE's project services will center around the process of developing a sustainable college and career readiness culture that supports rigorous curriculum, promotes student achievement through the attainment of college-ready academic behaviors and skills, and provides students with opportunities to explore an array of postsecondary education institutions to determine which environment best fits their academic, social, and career needs/requirements.

**Leaders Learning** LIFE will engage leaders in a learning experience that starts with a nationally recognized Leadership Institute and will persist through ongoing engagement within professional learning communities. Leaders will (1) be introduced to K20's theoretical framework, (2) explore school improvement theory, (3) investigate change theory and data-driven decision-making strategies to explore research-based practices that would provide students with academic supports or enrichment, and (4) learn professional development theory. Leaders will develop a better understanding of their school's learning climate and explore methods for building structures to create an environment of effective and reflective shared leadership.

**Learning Teams** LIFE schools aim to establish a college-going culture by forming Learning Teams, including leaders, counselors, teachers, students, parents, and community members. Collaboration is crucial for culturally relevant innovation and sustaining initiatives. Effective team selection and evidence-based interventions are key. LIFE will work with these teams to implement action plans and college readiness supports.

**Site-Based Action Plans** K20 GEAR UP for LIFE's project staff will work together with cohort schools to use K20's web-based action plan platform, PLANS (Project Logic-models: Adapting Novel Strategies for school), to create site-based action plans. The six-stage action plan-building process includes data analysis, defining research, setting goals, determining activities and resources, indicating outputs, and defining intermediate and long-term outcomes. This process will help schools create innovative research-based academic supports that will prepare students academically and encourage students and their families to explore postsecondary education.

### High-Quality Professional Development (PD)

Meaningful professional learning is essential for effective teaching, which greatly influences student learning. Framed around the focus of the school's Action Plan, the LIFE project will invest in educators' content knowledge and evidence-based pedagogical practices to create a college-going culture. Educators and Learning Teams will collaborate to support students and sustain this culture after the project ends.

**Counselor Academy** School counselors are vital in fostering a college-going culture and supporting traditionally underserved families. The Counselor Academy aims to equip counselors with skills to build partnerships, provide valuable information, and facilitate college readiness for students and families.

**Parent Academy** Parent engagement plays a crucial role in students' college readiness, especially for traditionally underserved families. The Parent Academy will involve parents in data analysis, research, collaboration, and project development to enhance college awareness and support. This initiative will foster shared leadership and capacity-building in school-parent partnerships.

**Parent Just-in-Time Learning** LIFE will offer a micro-learning opportunity for parents, providing just-in-time knowledge about postsecondary education options. This opportunity will be accessible on mobile devices and will employ various media formats, fostering parent-child discussions and engagement in the college and career exploration process.

### Academic Readiness

Under-resourced communities face challenges in postsecondary education access. Disadvantaged students, including those from low-income households and minority groups, have lower college readiness, lower test scores, and lower early college success rates. LIFE has identified a series of supports

to bridge students' academic readiness through authentic learning, technology-enriched learning, rigorous learning experiences, teachers learning, and access to exemplar lessons.

**Authentic Learning** The correlation of significant student gains through high levels of authentic pedagogy and content has been well documented (Jeter et al., 2019; Parsons et al., 2019). Authenticity emphasizes learning strategies and instructional sequencing, which provide deeper conceptual understanding (Tornwall, 2017) and increase the likelihood of transfer to real-world situations (White et al., 2017). An Instructional Support Team, consisting of master teachers with exemplary content knowledge, pedagogy, and technology backgrounds, will serve as instructional coaches for the LIFE project. They will work with Learning Teams to identify and implement research-based professional development experiences that support cohort schools' action plans.

#### **LEARN - Authentic, Rigorous Learning Experiences**

The K20 Center has created a repository of high-quality, authentic lessons that include recommended instructional approaches, strategies, and resources (e.g., handouts/presentations), which has averaged over 9,900 hits per month and has been accessed in all 50 states and 173 countries (K20 Center, 2021). LEARN, found at <http://learn.k20center.ou.edu>, currently contains 10 different resource types, including standards-based lessons, family resources, instructional strategies, online courses, and professional learning. The Instructional Support Team will coordinate with cohort teachers, instructional coaches, and subject matter experts to identify a standards-based learning objective to generate high-quality resources steeped in best practices that can be used with in-person instruction, hybrid learning, or remote learning.

**Learning ADEPT Live** The Learning Authenticity and Discourse for Engagement using Pedagogy and Technology Live (Learning ADEPT Live) process involves selecting two teacher leaders from each cohort school to act as both learners and action researchers. They will undergo a yearlong professional learning experience focusing on a student-centered, constructivist learning approach. This approach aims to engage all students in active learning through cycles of learning, implementation, and reflection, helping educators refine their teaching skills. This group of educators will commit to an in-person summer institute and quarterly interactions with their instructional coach and will receive an honorarium for their participation.

**Learning ADEPT Badge** The Learning Authenticity and Discourse for Engagement using Pedagogy and Technology Badge (ADEPT Badge), a self-directed learning approach will invite interested educators to explore the different learning modules, each one linked to a professional standard and a well-defined application of their learning to produce evidence of their mastery. While these sessions will be chunked and stackable, educators can engage as much as they choose. Each body of evidence they produce will be evaluated by a professional panel against a published set of criteria. When the educator meets the established ADEPT Badge benchmark, they are awarded a micro-credential and will receive an honorarium for their engagement in the learning process and transfer of their learning to the cohort students they serve. Most of the advanced ADEPT Badge micro-credentials will require the implementation of an exemplar lesson.

**Learning ADEPT Lessons** The overarching goal of Learning ADEPT (Live and Badge) is to equip educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively deliver rigorous and engaging learning experiences. These experiences aim to enhance students' academic readiness for postsecondary education (PSE). The lessons will align with ACT's CCR curriculum standards or introduce students to specific careers, challenging them to solve real-world problems associated with those careers.

#### **Student Readiness**

The final component in fostering a college-going culture in cohort schools involves establishing social supports to boost students' postsecondary education aspirations. Project, school, and partner personnel will organize activities to increase campus visits, provide information on entrance requirements, degrees, careers, costs, scholarships, and other financial aid options. These services encompass tutoring, college experiences, interactive learning, and mentoring. Student participation will be tracked, and they will earn a College & Career Readiness badge for each activity they engage in, aligning them with the path toward higher education.

**Site College Team** LIFE provides a foundation of postsecondary education (PSE) awareness by facilitating campus visits for each cohort student. An annual campus visit gives every cohort student the opportunity to explore a minimum of five PSE sites (including community, regional, and research institutes) throughout their middle and high school careers. Prior to each visit, the school's College Team (five staff, including one counselor) will use a

pre-visit curriculum kit from the LEARN repository to engage students in the exploration of the upcoming visit (student life, degree path, entrance requirements, and cost). Each visit delivers activities to highlight college match and fit in alignment with federal and state recommended timelines and milestones for PSE preparation and enrollment.

**Near-Peers Supporting Student Success** LIFE will partner with the Student Success Agency (SSA) who will offer on-demand support for academic growth needs from a trained near-peer tutor/mentor. The SSA (2021) provides digital Agents, typically college students who have completed a rigorous onboarding training process that prepares them to serve as near-peer mentors. Based on the needs of the student, this Agent will leverage their advanced virtual tutoring/mentoring platform to provide the student access to needed resources. LIFE and SSA will use on-demand tutoring supports to assist students deemed by their schools to be at risk of failing a core course (English, math, science, or social studies). Students who have three or more unexcused absences will be encouraged to connect with a SSA Agent and explore mentoring curriculum around student self-efficacy and future education aspirations. A tutoring coordinator at each school will manage a pool of accounts (starting with 25% of student cohort), with additional accounts available if needed.

**Concurrent Enrollment** LIFE will encourage concurrent enrollment by offering financial assistance to cover expenses. Virtual tutoring systems will be established in schools, along with research on creating a college-like learning environment. Peer mentoring will connect concurrent enrollment students with SSA Agents to explore college structures and provide guidance on higher education.

**Transition Mentoring** LIFE will implement a structured mentoring program to prepare students for three crucial transitions: 8th to 9th grade, 12th grade to graduation, and the first year of postsecondary education. Research shows that students, particularly those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, may face challenges transitioning to college. Mentors from the SSA will assist students throughout these transitions, ensuring they have the support needed to succeed in their educational journey.

**Career Mentoring** LIFE students will have three different opportunities to engage in career-based mentoring:

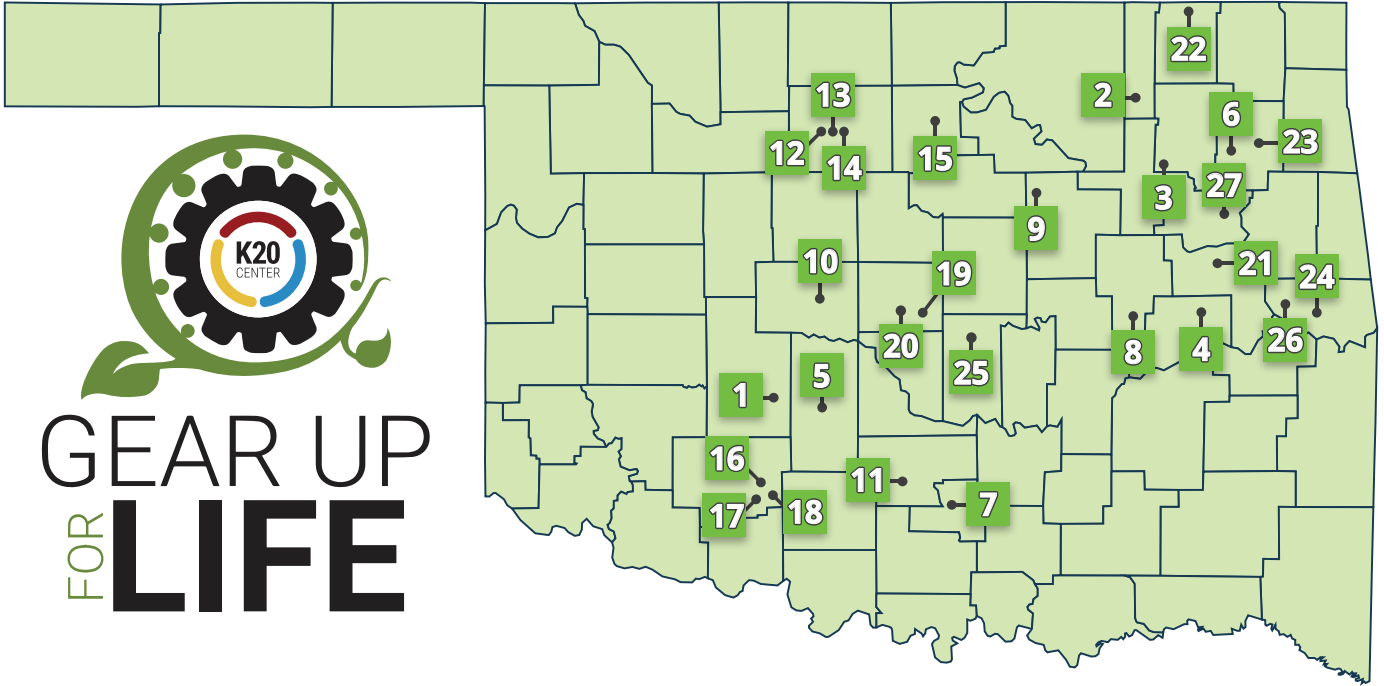
- Students will participate in monthly “Zoom into Your Career” events, where professionals will discuss various careers, educational requirements, salaries, and job prospects. Sessions will be recorded and shared on K20’s YouTube channel. A focus will be placed on high demand occupations.
- Schools will use student interest inventories to invite professionals for Career Cafés, small-group sessions where students learn about various careers and college options. This initiative aims to broaden students’ career horizons, boost aspirations, and provide guidance for achieving their goals. These sessions may be face-to-face or via Zoom.
- College2Career Forums will offer hands-on experiences related to top-requested careers at a local PSE. Equipped with these experiences, students have an opportunity to visit an actual business and shadow or engage in a short mentoring session with a practicing professional.

**Interactive Game-Based Learning** LIFE’s Game-Based Learning (GBL) team will create interactive educational games for career-based lessons to provide college and career readiness activities for students and families and professional learning for educators. The goal is to develop three to four titles annually to promote critical thinking in real-world scenarios.



# Map of Current Cohort Schools

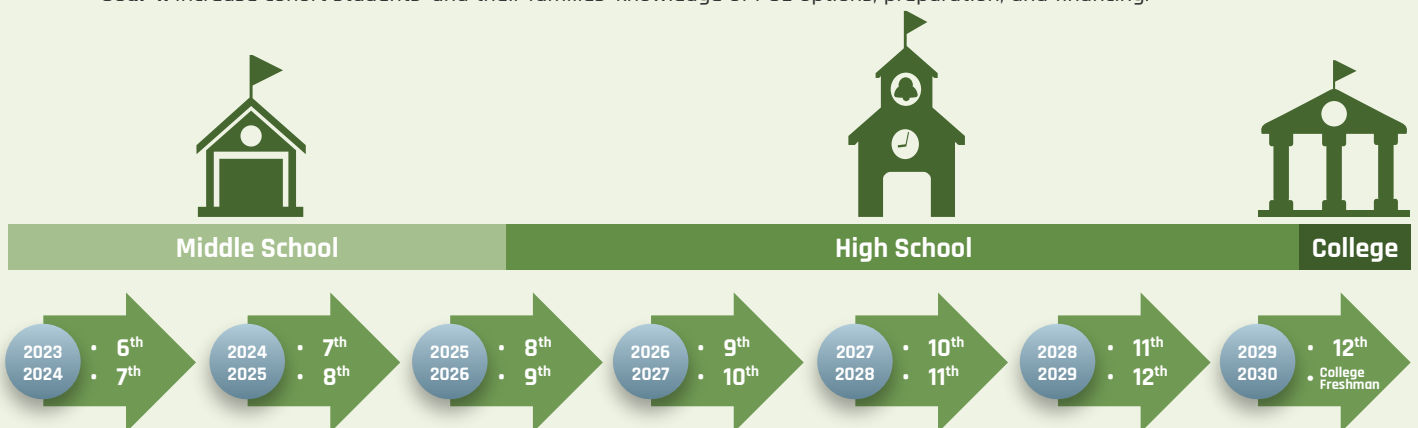
- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 1 Anadarko Middle School                 | 10 Etta Dale Junior High School, El Reno | 19 Midwest City Middle School                      |
| 2 Caney Valley Middle School             | 11 Elmore City Junior High School        | 20 Del City Middle School                          |
| 3 Wells Middle School, Catoosa           | 12 Dewitt Waller Middle School, Enid     | 21 Ben Franklin Academy, Muskogee                  |
| 4 Checotah Middle School                 | 13 Emerson Middle School, Enid           | 22 Oklahoma Union Middle School, South Coffeyville |
| 5 Chickasha Middle School                | 14 Longfellow Middle School, Enid        | 23 Salina Middle School                            |
| 6 Chouteau-Mazie Middle School           | 15 Frontier Elementary School            | 24 Sallisaw Middle School                          |
| 7 Davis Middle School                    | 16 Central Middle School, Lawton         | 25 Shawnee Middle School                           |
| 8 Dewar Middle School                    | 17 Eisenhower Middle School, Lawton      | 26 Vian Middle School                              |
| 9 Virgil Cooper Middle School, Drumright | 18 MacArthur Middle School, Lawton       | 27 Wagoner Middle School                           |



## The GEAR UP for LIFE Model

The K20 **GEAR UP for LIFE** (Learning and Investigating Future Education) project is a partnership between the K20 Center for Educational and Community Renewal (K20 Center) and 27 high-poverty, mostly rural schools located in 22 Oklahoma school districts. The partnership seeks to directly impact 8,258 students through a 7-year project beginning with 6th and 7th grades in October 2023.

- **Goal 1:** Increase cohort students' engagement in learning.
- **Goal 2:** Increase cohort students' academic preparation for PSE at graduation from participating schools.
- **Goal 3:** Increase cohort schools' high school graduation and PSE enrollment rates.
- **Goal 4:** Increase cohort students' and their families' knowledge of PSE options, preparation, and financing.





# What is GEAR UP?

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a federal grant provided by the U.S. Department of Education to help students prepare for and pursue a college education. The K20 Center has already worked with many schools, both urban and rural, across the state in past GEAR UP efforts. The power of a GEAR UP project is that it transforms a high-poverty school into a community with a college-going culture.

## 2007-2014 SUCCESS

Over the course of a 6-year grant, K20's GEAR UP for SUCCESS provided college readiness services to...

**3,549**

cohort students from 32 districts living in mostly rural, ethnically diverse, poverty stricken areas of Oklahoma.

Hours of teacher, student, and family participation in college preparation programs totaled 186,929.



## 2011-2018 PROMISE

In year five of seven, K20's GEAR UP for the PROMISE has provided college readiness services to...

**4,337**

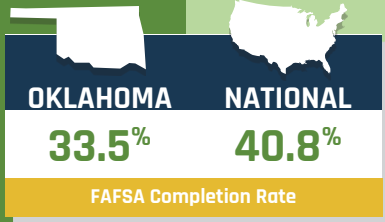
cohort students from nine high schools living in urban, ethnically diverse, poverty-stricken areas of the Oklahoma City metro.

Hours of teacher, student, and family participation in college preparation programs so far total 100,166.



COMPARISON  
COHORT

SUCCESS  
COHORT



SINCE GEAR UP FOR THE PROMISE BEGAN IN 2011, COHORT STUDENTS HAVE MADE:

An increase in awareness about the cost and benefits of going to college



**46.7%**

FAFSA  
Completion Rate

**51.9%**

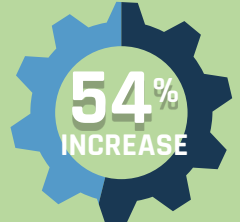
**45.6%**

ACT  
Participation

**89.5%**



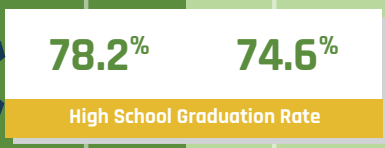
An increase in awareness of financial aid availability



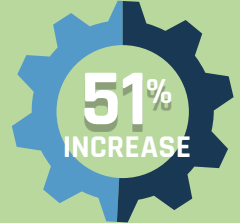
**79.7%**

High School  
Graduation Rate

**80.0%**



An increase in awareness of college entrance requirements



**46.8%**

College  
Enrollment

**62%**



Cohort students who believe they can succeed in college





GEAR UP FOR MY SUCCESS



GEAR UP FOR THE FUTURE

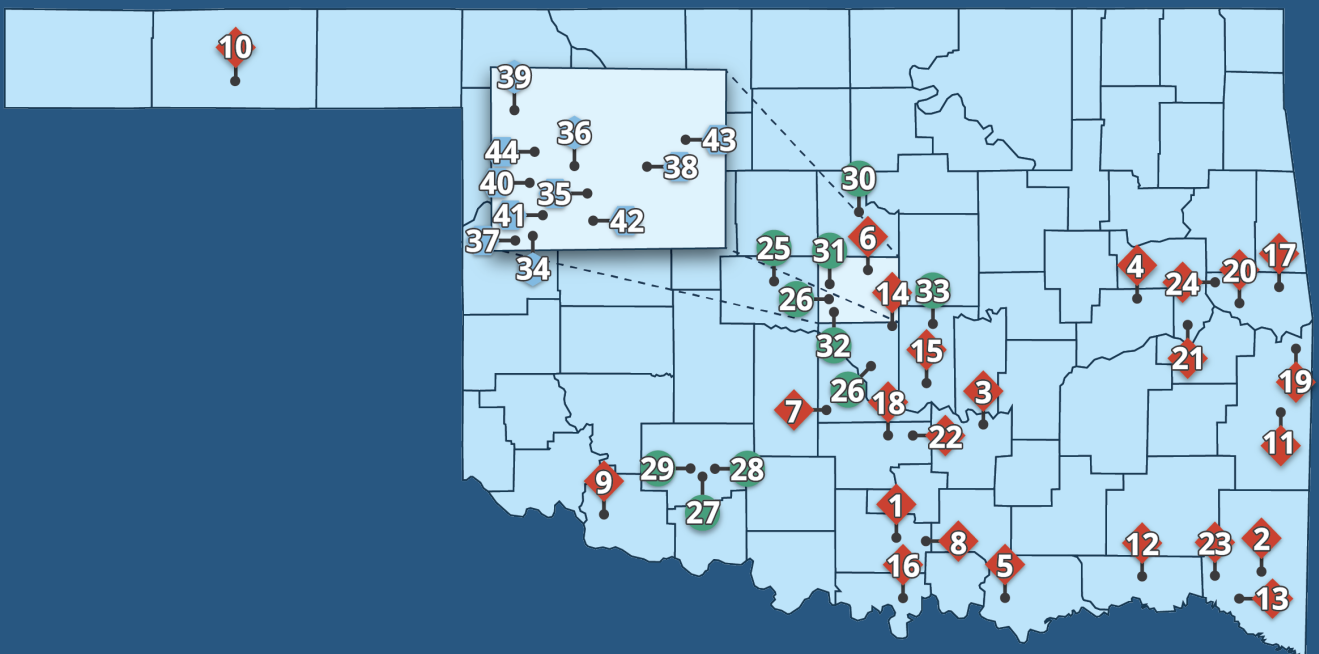


GEAR UP O+K=C

12,222 students

44 schools

In 2018, the K20 Center for Educational and Community Renewal competed and was awarded three separate Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP) grants sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education.



◆ GEAR UP for MY SUCCESS

● GEAR UP for the FUTURE

⬡ GEAR UP O+K=C

- |  |                            |   |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| 1 Marietta High School                   | 16 Ardmore High School     | 31 Putnam City High School                          |
| 2 Muldrow High School                    | 17 Broken Bow High School  | 32 Santa Fe South High School, <i>Oklahoma City</i> |
| 3 Pauls Valley High School               | 18 Byng High School        | 33 Shawnee High School                              |
| 4 Pocola High School                     | 19 Checotah High School    | 34 Emerson South Mid-High School                    |
| 5 Sallisaw High School                   | 20 Colbert High School     | 35 Capitol Hill High School                         |
| 6 Stigler High School                    | 21 Crooked Oak High School | 36 Classen High School of Advanced Studies          |
| 7 Stratford High School                  | 22 Dibble High School      | 37 Emerson North High School                        |
| 8 Valliant High School                   | 23 Dickson High School     | 38 Douglass High School                             |
| 9 Vian High School                       | 24 Frederick High School   | 39 John Marshall High School                        |
| 10 El Reno High School                   | 25 Guymon High School      | 40 Northwest Classen High School                    |
| 11 Noble High School                     | 26 Heavener High School    | 41 Putnam Heights Academy                           |
| 12 Eisenhower High School, <i>Lawton</i> | 27 Hugo High School        | 42 Southeast High School                            |
| 13 MacArthur High School, <i>Lawton</i>  | 28 Idabel High School      | 43 Star Spencer High School                         |
| 14 Lawton High School, <i>Lawton</i>     | 29 Little Axe High School  | 44 U.S. Grant High School                           |
| 15 Guthrie High School                   | 30 Macomb High School      |   |

# Instructional Strategy Note Sheet

Strategy	How was it used?	How will I use it?
Snap, Clap, Pop		
I Notice, I Wonder		
3-2-1		
Cognitive Comics		

The K20 Center for Educational and Community Renewal is a statewide education research and development center at the University of Oklahoma that promotes research-based innovative learning through school-university-community collaboration.

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