partnership between the K20 Center and 17 high-poverty, low-academic readiness schools located in 3 urban Oklahoma districts. The partnership seeks to directly impact 7,123 students through a 7-year, dual cohort project beginning with 6th and 7th grades in FY2025.

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.

The K20 Center for Educational and Community Renewal is a statewide education research and development center that promotes innovative learning through school-university-community collaboration. Through the GEAR UP grants, K20 provides comprehensive support services to students in cohort schools, as well as to their teachers, counselors, and families.

The K20 GEAR UP the METRO (Maximizing Education Through Real-World Opportunities) project is a

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 which college can change your students' lives for the better:

1. Earning a bachelor's degree will allow 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 that will benefit them throughout their careers (Campbell et al., 2012; D'Agostino, 2022).

3. When you attend a college that is a 'match' with your high school GPA and test scores, you will likely 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 interactions in their jobs than non-college graduates (Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013; Sutton, 2017; Wolniak & Engberg, 2019).

5. Graduating from college increases students' prospects for employment. The unemployment rate for college graduates, as of 2022, 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 & McKitrick, 2013).

9. College graduates experience health benefits, including 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 experience family benefits, including lower likelihood of divorce and children who are more successful in school (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.

GEAR UP the METRO
(Maximizing Education Through Real-World Opportunities)

2025-2032

K20 GEAR UP the METRO seeks to directly impact 7,123 students from 17 Oklahoma schools. METRO 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.

METRO Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1:	Objective 1.1: Increase % of cohort who report being engaged with their school campus (affective) by 2-3%.
	Objective 1.2: Increase % of cohort who report being engaged in their classrooms (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional) by 2-3%.

GOAL 2:	**Objective 2.1:** Increase % of cohort who meet established performance levels in English, math, science, and social studies by 2-3%.
GOAL 3:	**Objective 3.1:** Increase % of cohort promoted on time to successive grade levels by 2-3%.
	Objective 3.2: Increase % of cohort with PSE aspirations/expectations by 2-3%.
GOAL 4:	**Objective 4.1:** 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.
	4.1.1: Increase % of cohort who complete the FAFSA by 4-6%.
	4.1.2: Increase % of cohort students who expect to graduate from high school by 13-15%.
	4.1.3: Increase % of cohort students and parents with knowledge of necessary academic preparation for PSE by 13-15%.
	4.1.4: Increase % of cohort parents who actively engage in activities by 13-15%.

Services

Micro-Credentials & Learning Paths

The METRO 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 engage in self-directed learning to 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 the METRO 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 METRO will engage leaders in a learning experience that starts with a nationally recognized Leadership Institute and persists through ongoing engagement within a professional learning community. 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 support 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.

College & Career Readiness - Professional Learning Community (CCR-PLC) Each METRO cohort school represents a unique community committed to supporting student success through collaborative partnerships that extend beyond educators to include parents, community leaders, service providers, and institutions. Anderson-Butcher et al. (2022) highlight the importance of leveraging external expertise to address non-academic barriers and improve school conditions.

METRO fosters this approach by forming CCR-PLCs—teams of school leaders, counselors, teachers, and stakeholders—that bring diverse perspectives to build a college-going culture. These PLCs engage in cycles of instructional improvement, data analysis, and collaborative reflection, as noted by Ni et al. (2023), cultivating shared understanding and boosting student achievement. To sustain this culture, METRO encourages safe, data-driven decision-making environments led by school leaders who promote trust. Using the IDEALS framework, CCR-PLCs will design evidence-based interventions targeting specific school needs, with METRO providing support through site-based action plans and proven strategies.

Site-Based Action Plans K20 GEAR UP METRO'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 promotes schools' innovations in creating research based academic supports that will prepare students academically and encourage students and their families to explore postsecondary education.

LEAD: High-quality professional learning (PL) Wallace (2021) underscores the importance of quality teaching in enhancing student learning outcomes, emphasizing that effective educators must understand and apply sound

pedagogical practices. Teachers' knowledge, actions, and values significantly shape the learning experience, and continuous reflection on teaching methods can deepen understanding. In alignment with this, METRO invests in professional learning to empower educators with content expertise, evidence-based strategies, and college readiness structures. Through initiatives like the CCR-PLC, Counselor Academy, and Parent Academy, METRO builds local capacity by gradually transitioning leadership to school-based professionals, ensuring sustained growth and a lasting college-going culture beyond the program's duration.

Counselor and Parent Academies School counselors are vital in fostering a college-going culture and supporting 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 engagement plays a crucial role in students' college readiness. The Parent Academy involves parents in data analysis, research, collaboration, and project development to enhance college awareness and support. This initiative fosters shared leadership and capacity-building in school parent partnerships.

Parent Just-in-Time Learning METRO offers a micro learning opportunity for parents, providing just-in-time knowledge about postsecondary education options. It's accessible on mobile devices and employs various media formats, fostering parent-child discussions and engagement in the college and career exploration process.

Academic Readiness

Under-resourced communities face challenges in post secondary education access. Underserved students such as first-generation college or low-income students, have lower college readiness, lower test scores, and lower early college success rates. METRO has identified a series of supports to bridge students' academic readiness through authentic learning, technology integration, 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 (Parsons et al., 2021). This process emphasizes learning strategies and instructional sequencing to provide deeper conceptual understanding (Tornwall, 2017) and increase real-world transfer (Roach et al., 2018). To achieve this, the METRO project consists of master teachers that will serve as instructional coaches that will partner with schools and stakeholders to increase

student engagement through meaningful, student centered learning. With the support of Learning Teams, they will identify and implement research-based professional development experiences that support cohort schools.

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 12 different resource types, including standards-based lessons, family resources, instructional strategies, 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 core content teacher leaders from each cohort school to act as both learners and action researchers. Educators participate in a yearlong professional learning experience focusing on a student centered, constructivist learning approach. This approach aims to engage all students in active learning through educators taking part in cycles of goal-setting, LEARN lesson implementation, and reflection, to refine their teaching skills. Upon completion of an in-person summer institute and each quarterly cycle with their instructional coach, educators will receive a stipend for their participation.

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 build real-world skills that are applicable for careers.

Micro-Credential Courses The grant also seeks to improve college and career readiness culture by providing short, supportive online self-paced learning courses for educators.Through these courses, educators complete modules at their own pace and use Swivl cameras to record their implementation of the knowledge and skills developed within the course. Upon completion of a course, participants will be issued a digital badge that can be verified and checked by employers. Cohort educators will also be given a stipend for each course successfully completed.

Dual Credit/Dual Enrollment (DC) A 2023 meta analysis by Schaller and her colleagues, reported that they "found that dual enrollment and early college programs have mostly positive effects on a wide range of outcomes related to postsecondary enrollment, persistence, performance, and degree completion" (Schaller et al., 2025). METRO will support cohort students' enrollment in a Dual Credit (DC) course with an opportunity to begin their college careers as juniors and seniors in high school. METRO will provide assistance to help cover out-of-pocket expenses. and offers mechanisms that support college credit accumulation and degree attainment.

Student Readiness

The final component of embedding a college-going culture within cohort schools involves developing social supports to boost students' postsecondary education (PSE) 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 reach through four threads – tutoring, college experiences, interactive learning, and mentoring. Student participation will be documented, and they will earn a College & Career Readiness 'badge' for each activity they complete, aligning the skills they have acquired with the path toward higher education.

Site College Team METRO provides a foundation of postsecondary education (PSE) awareness by facilitating campus visits for each cohort student. An annual campus visit allows every cohort student the opportunity to explore at least five PSE sites (including community, regional, and research institutes) throughout middle and high school. Before 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.

Comprehensive School-Based Mentoring and Tutoring (SBMT) METRO's school-based mentoring and tutoring (SBMT) initiative is designed to support under-resourced students by implementing evidence-based mentoring programs tailored to each school's unique needs and resources. METRO will collaborate with each school's College and Career Readiness Professional Learning Community (CCR_PLC) to select and implement the most suitable mentoring model, supported by project funding and professional development.

Dual Credit (DC) Mentoring METRO's mentoring and tutoring coordinator will collaborate with high schools and colleges to expand dual credit opportunities, emphasizing remote learning to broaden access and flexibility. This will allow students to choose the best-fit college without the burden of travel. The coordinator will also develop a peer-mentoring structure, and pair a student with METRO's site-based DC coordinators, who will guide students through an 18-week program to support them as they progress through coursework. This opportunity allows students to get a taste of college life while safely ensconced in the familiar context of their high school.

Adult Advocates METRO will implement the Check & Connect model to provide students with consistent adult advocates aimed at reducing dropout rates and improving school engagement. Each site will have a full-time coach who serves as a stable, supportive presence, helping students build stronger connections within their school community. The coach's work is guided by seven principles, including relationship building, data-driven problem solving, and a focus on indicators of disengagement such as attendance and academic performance. By monitoring student data and offering personalized support, the coach helps identify and address barriers to success, ultimately fostering persistence and progress in school.

Career Mentoring METRO's mentoring program includes three key initiatives to connect students with professionals and guide their career and college planning. Career Expo events allow students to learn about various professions through virtual classroom visits, where professionals share insights into their work and educational paths. These sessions are recorded and made available for future viewing. Career Cafés offer informal, small group discussions during lunch periods, in person or virtually, giving students a chance to explore new career fields and set personal goals. The program also includes College2Career Forums, which provide immersive experiences at partnering postsecondary institutions, such as hands-on activities, professional shadowing, and one-on-one mentoring. Together, these efforts aim to inspire students and guide them toward meaningful career pathways.

PSE Summer Bridge Metro's Summer Bridge program provides recent high school graduates with personalized mentoring to support their transition to college. These mentors help students navigate critical steps, such as enrolling, securing housing, signing up for orientation, managing financial aid, and addressing any barriers that may arise before the start of their postsecondary journey.

Map of

ASTEC Charter Middle School

Oklahoma City Public Schools
Capitol Hill Middle School
Jefferson Middle School
John Marshall Middle School
Mary Golda Ross Middle School
Moon Middle School
Rogers Middle School
Roosevelt Middle School
Southeast Middle School
Taft Middle School
Webster Middle School
Wheeler Middle School

Putnam City Schools
Capps Middle School
Cooper Middle School
Hefner Middle School
Mayfield Middle School
Western Oaks Middle School

To meet grant goals, GEAR UP the METRO provides the following opportunities:

Engagement Survey

Authentic Teaching & Learning Teacher Support

College Going Culture

Site-based Action Plans

KISSCE Student and Tutoring

ACT and Concurrent Enrollment Support

Family Events and FAFSA Nights

Professional and Leadership Development
(Administrators, Counselors & Teachers)

Microcredentialing Learning/Badges

Campus Visits and Career Forums

School-based Mentoring

The GEAR UP Cohort Model

| Middle School | | High School | | College |

| 2025/2026 · 6th 7th | 2026/2027 · 7th 8th | 2027/2028 · 8th 9th | 2028/2029 · 9th 10th | 2029/2030 · 10th 11th | 2030/2031 · 11th 12th | 2031/2032 · 12th College Transition |

PROMISE

In its fifth of seven years, K20's GEAR UP for the PROMISE has been providing college readiness services to...

4,337

diverse, poverty stricken areas of the Oklahoma City Metro.

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

cohort students from 9 high schools living in urban, ethnically

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

52% 41%

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

33.5% 40.8%

An increase in awareness of Financial Aid availability

75% 57%

An increase in awareness of college entrance requirements

78.2% 74.6%

Cohort Students that believe they can succeed in college

Instructional Strategy Note Sheet

Snap, Clap, Pop		
I Notice, I Wonder		
3-2-1		
Cognitive Comics		

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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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