



GEAR UP MACON

Summative Evaluation
Grant Year 1

2024–2025

PREPARED BY

Towering Your Success

PREPARED FOR

Bibb County School District

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GEAR UP 2024-2025 SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

YEAR 1

Bibb County School District – Macon, Georgia

Executive Summary

The Bibb County School District's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) Partnership Grant is dedicated to enhancing academic achievement, post-secondary readiness, and long-term educational success for students across the district. The project is guided by the district's commitment to empowering students to learn, lead, innovate, and serve. It has established a comprehensive system of academic support, social-emotional development, college readiness, family engagement, and career exploration to improve educational outcomes and increase post-secondary opportunities for participating students. During its first year, the project successfully laid the groundwork by establishing foundational systems, partnerships, staffing structures, and program components necessary for the long-term implementation of the seven-year grant. Through strategic coordination among district leadership, school staff, community organizations, post-secondary institutions, families, and business partners, the project created a comprehensive framework that aligns with GEAR UP's mission to boost academic performance, prepare students for post-secondary success, and elevate educational expectations for students and their families.

The project implemented a multi-tiered framework of services aligned with the three primary GEAR UP objectives: increasing academic performance and preparation for post-secondary education, improving high school graduation and post-secondary participation

rates, and increasing educational expectations and knowledge of post-secondary opportunities among students and families. A significant accomplishment during Year 1 was the successful development and implementation of a school-based Graduation Advisor model designed to provide individualized and systematic support to GEAR UP cohort students. Graduation Advisors serve as mentors, advocates, resource coordinators, college and career navigators, and liaisons between schools, families, and community partners.

To ensure high-quality implementation, the project made significant investments in building staff capacity through a comprehensive professional learning framework for Graduation Advisors and program personnel. The professional development activities were centered around project objectives, performance measures, data collection protocols, advising strategies, intervention systems, college and career readiness planning, family engagement practices, and student support services.

Throughout the year, students engaged in a wide variety of evidence-based academic enrichment and college readiness activities aimed at improving educational outcomes and enhancing post-secondary preparedness. Key program components included after-school academic support, tutoring services, STEM learning experiences, Saturday workshops, career exploration activities, financial literacy programming, college readiness lessons, summer learning opportunities, and initiatives to raise awareness about post-secondary education.

One of the most significant accomplishments during Year 1 was the implementation of the Prep Smart Saturday Academy model. These sessions provided students with structured academic enrichment opportunities aimed at strengthening their academic skills,

increasing readiness for state assessments, and promoting awareness of college and career pathways. Career exploration and workforce readiness programming were also key components of Year 1. Students engaged in career awareness lessons, completed career interest inventories, participated in career exploration activities, and took part in structured discussions about future educational paths. The project emphasized the importance of developing a college-going culture through intentional college awareness and post-secondary planning activities. Students attended college readiness lessons that focused on educational planning, finding the right college fit, exploring post-secondary opportunities, enhancing financial literacy, and setting future goals.

Experiential learning opportunities further increased student engagement and awareness of post-secondary options through educational field trips and visits to post-secondary institutions and STEM-focused learning environments. Additionally, family engagement was a central element of the project throughout the year. Families participated in parent meetings, family engagement workshops, informational sessions, community outreach events, school open houses, and district-sponsored activities.

The project also strengthened community engagement through strategic partnerships with local organizations, post-secondary institutions, workforce development agencies, financial institutions, and community stakeholders. Data-driven decision making remained central to project implementation. Staff utilized structured progress monitoring systems, advising frameworks, and data review processes to assess student outcomes, identify barriers to success, and inform intervention strategies. The project also recognized the importance of supporting students' social-emotional development as part of a

comprehensive readiness framework. Year 1 implementation established a strong operational and programmatic foundation for future success. The project successfully launched core services, developed effective staffing and support structures, established community partnerships, engaged students and families, implemented professional learning systems, and created processes for ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement.

As the project enters Year 2, priorities include expanding student participation across all service areas, strengthening family engagement efforts, increasing college and career exposure opportunities, enhancing academic support systems, scaling data collection and evaluation processes, and deepening partnerships with higher education institutions and community organizations. Overall, Year 1 showed significant progress in establishing a comprehensive college and career readiness system that supports academic achievement, educational aspirations, and post-secondary success.

Project Overview

The Bibb County School District (BCSD) has been awarded a seven-year Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) Partnership Grant called GEAR UP: Built4Bibb (GU B4B). This project aims to enhance academic achievement, educational attainment, college readiness, post-secondary enrollment, and long-term career success for students who encounter significant economic and educational challenges.

Using a cohort-based service model, the project will support participating students from middle school through high school graduation and, for one specific cohort, into their first year of post-secondary education. The grant represents a long-term investment in improving educational outcomes and creating sustainable pathways to college and career success for students across Bibb County. The GEAR UP Built4Bibb partnership includes a diverse network of educational, community, and business organizations dedicated to supporting student success. Key partners in this initiative include Central Georgia Technical College, United Way of Central Georgia, MidSouth Community Federal Credit Union, Hutchings College and Career Academy, and Towering Your Success, LLC, which serves as the project's external evaluator. Together, these partners provide expertise, resources, mentoring, workforce development opportunities, financial literacy education, college readiness experiences, and evaluation support aimed at strengthening student outcomes and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project.

Project Vision

GEAR UP Built4Bibb seeks to build a sustainable college-going culture by equipping students with academic preparation, social-emotional support, career readiness skills, and post-secondary knowledge needed to enter, persist in, and complete post-secondary education. The project provides a coordinated system of support that begins in middle school and continues through key transitions into high school and post-secondary education. Its core purpose is to expand educational opportunities and remove barriers that have historically limited access to college and career pathways for economically disadvantaged students. Strategic partnerships, evidence-based interventions,

individualized supports, family engagement, and college- and career-readiness programming, GEAR UP Built4Bibb aims to increase educational attainment, workforce readiness, and economic mobility while preparing students to contribute successfully to their communities and the broader workforce.

Logic Model

The GEAR UP Built4Bibb project is grounded in a comprehensive logic model that addresses the fundamental challenge that many students are not adequately prepared to enroll in and successfully complete post-secondary education. The logic model reflects a coordinated seven-year continuum of academic, social-emotional, college readiness, career development, and family engagement supports that begin during middle school and continue through post-secondary transition and persistence. The model leverages a robust network of inputs that include dedicated project personnel, school-based Graduation Advisors, district leadership, teachers, counselors, external evaluators, families, community organizations, post-secondary institutions, and workforce partners. These stakeholders work collaboratively to provide a comprehensive system of support designed to increase academic achievement, educational aspirations, post-secondary enrollment, and long-term success.

Through these inputs, the project implements a wide range of integrated activities aligned with the grant's three primary objectives. Academic and college-readiness activities include tutoring, mentoring, Saturday academies, summer enrichment programs, STEM learning experiences, mathematics interventions, college-readiness lessons, financial

literacy education, career exploration assessments, SAT and ACT preparation, and individualized academic advising. Students also participate in college tours, career fairs, work-based learning opportunities, bridge programs, leadership development experiences, and structured post-secondary planning activities. Families receive ongoing support through workshops focused on college admissions, financial aid, FAFSA completion, scholarship opportunities, budgeting, and educational planning.

Educators and project staff are engaged in professional learning that focuses on key areas such as college readiness, culturally responsive practices, student engagement, social-emotional learning, mental health awareness, and evidence-based intervention strategies. The immediate results of these activities include increased participation in tutoring and mentoring programs, expanded access to college and career readiness experiences, greater family involvement in educational planning, more educator participation in professional development, and enhanced collaboration among schools, families, community organizations, and post-secondary partners.

The project aims to increase student participation in advanced coursework, STEM programs, financial literacy education, career exploration activities, and opportunities for post-secondary planning. These initiatives are designed to achieve measurable short- and intermediate-term outcomes that align with federal GEAR UP performance indicators. Expected outcomes include higher completion rates for Pre-Algebra and Algebra I, improved academic performance in core subjects, increased attendance, and higher promotion and graduation rates. Additionally, the project anticipates greater participation in advanced coursework and dual enrollment opportunities, more students completing

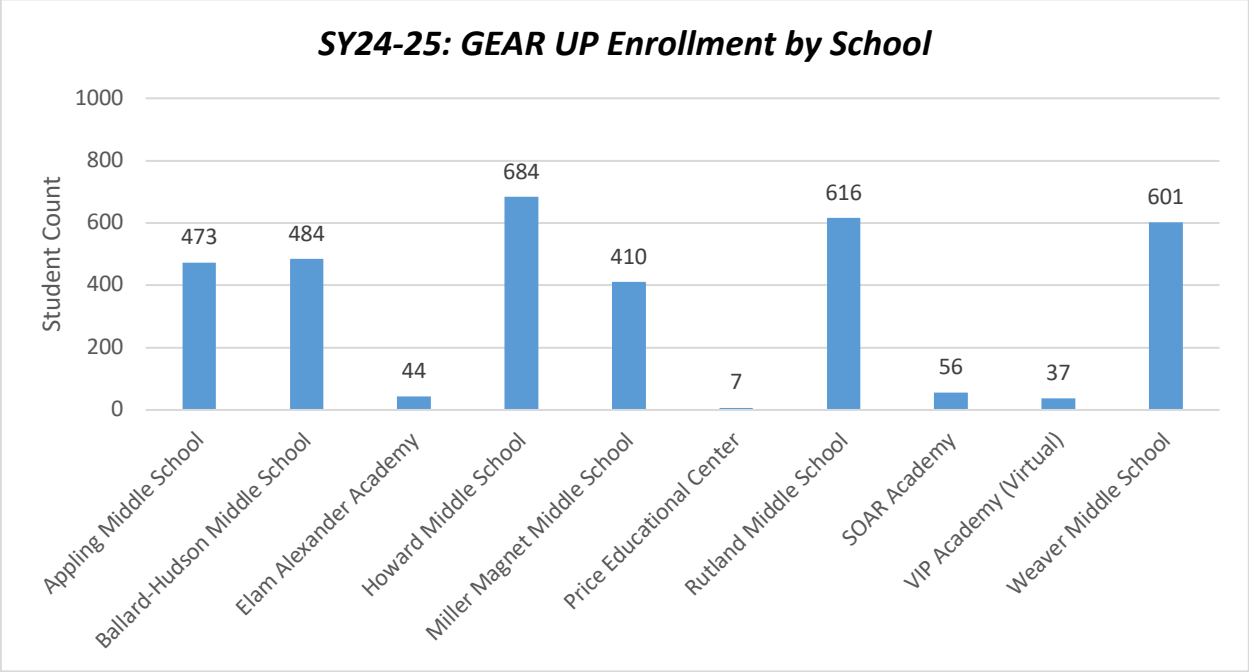
college entrance exams, enhanced college and career readiness skills, improved financial literacy, and more awareness of post-secondary education options among students and families. In the long term, the project expects to see increased FAFSA completion, higher rates of post-secondary enrollment, credential attainment, college persistence, and successful transitions into higher education. Ultimately, the Built4Bibb logic model aims to create a sustainable college-going culture that boosts educational attainment and economic mobility for students and their families.

Target Schools and Cohort Description

The GEAR UP Built4Bibb project serves approximately 3,412 students across fourteen target schools within Bibb County School District during the grant period. The project began with sixth and seventh-grade student cohorts and follows participating students throughout their secondary education. The seventh-grade cohort will be followed through the first year of post-secondary education, while the sixth-grade cohort will be followed through high school graduation. Participating middle schools include Weaver Middle School, Ballard-Hudson Middle School, Rutland Middle School, Howard Middle School, Miller Middle School, Appling Middle School, and VIP Academy Middle School. Participating high schools include Westside High School, Southwest High School, Rutland High School, Howard High School, Central High School, Northeast High School, and VIP Academy High School. Participating special schools and programs include Price Academy, SOAR Academy, and Elam Alexander Academy. Figure 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the GEAR UP Built4Bibb cohort, providing a comprehensive overview of the student

population served and establishing the baseline demographic profile that will guide equitable program implementation, service delivery, and outcome evaluation throughout the grant period.

Figure 1.



Demographic Characteristics

The GEAR UP Built4Bibb project serves a cohort of 3,412 students, all of whom qualify as economically disadvantaged under the district's Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). The Year 1 cohort reflects the district's diversity and includes student populations that are most affected by educational and economic barriers. Among the cohort, 2,625 students, or 76.93 percent, are African American. White students account for 295 students (8.65 percent), while Hispanic/Latino students represent 292 students (8.56 percent). Additionally, 139 students (4.07 percent) identify as Multi-Racial, 55 students (1.61 percent) identify as Asian or Pacific Islander, and 6 students (0.18 percent) identify as American Indian or Alaska Native. Furthermore, a total of 506 students (14.8 percent) receive services through the Program for Exceptional Children (PEC), and 216 students (6.3 percent) are identified as English Learners. The GEAR UP Built4Bibb cohort consists of 1,831 male students (53.7%) and 1,581 female students (46.3%), making for a relatively balanced gender distribution. A summary of the racial, ethnic, and gender composition of the GEAR UP Built4Bibb cohort is provided in Figures 2-4, establishing the demographic baseline for students participating in the project.

Figure 2.

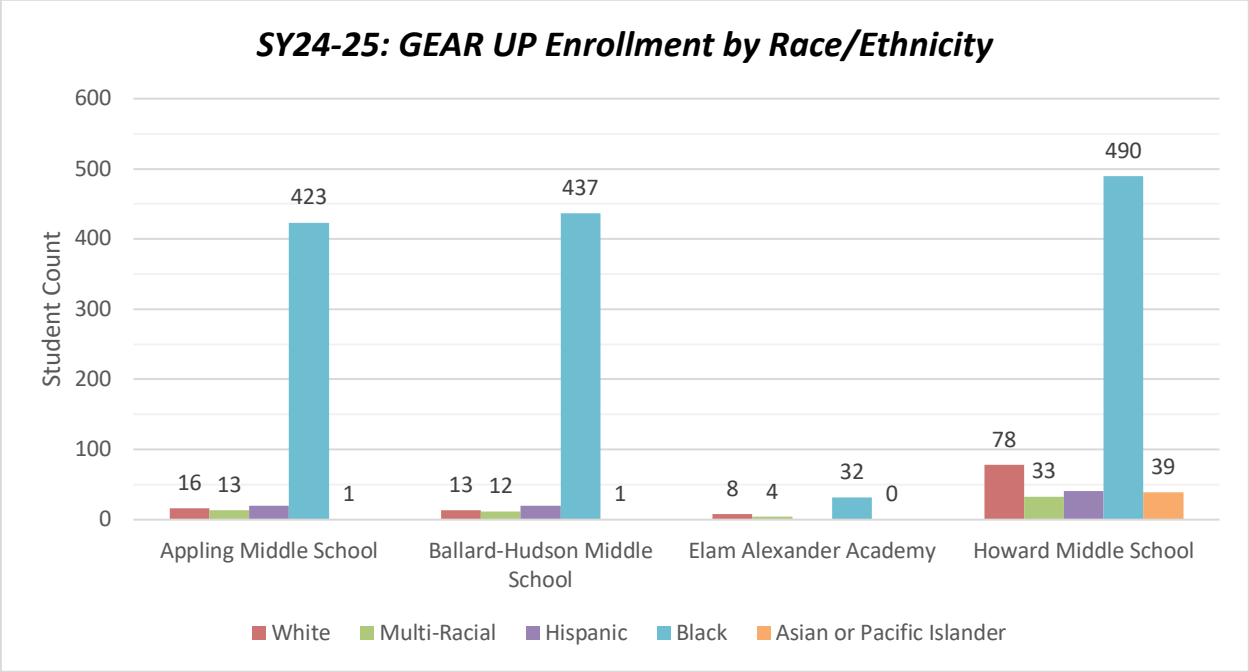


Figure 3.

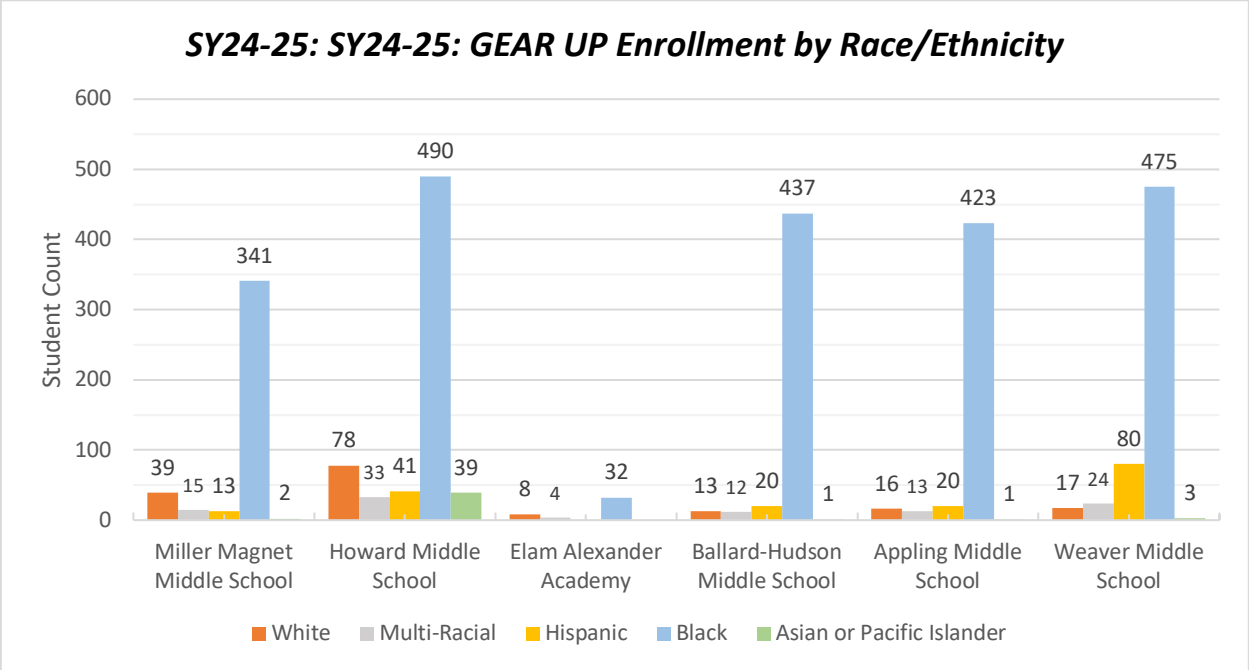


Figure 4.

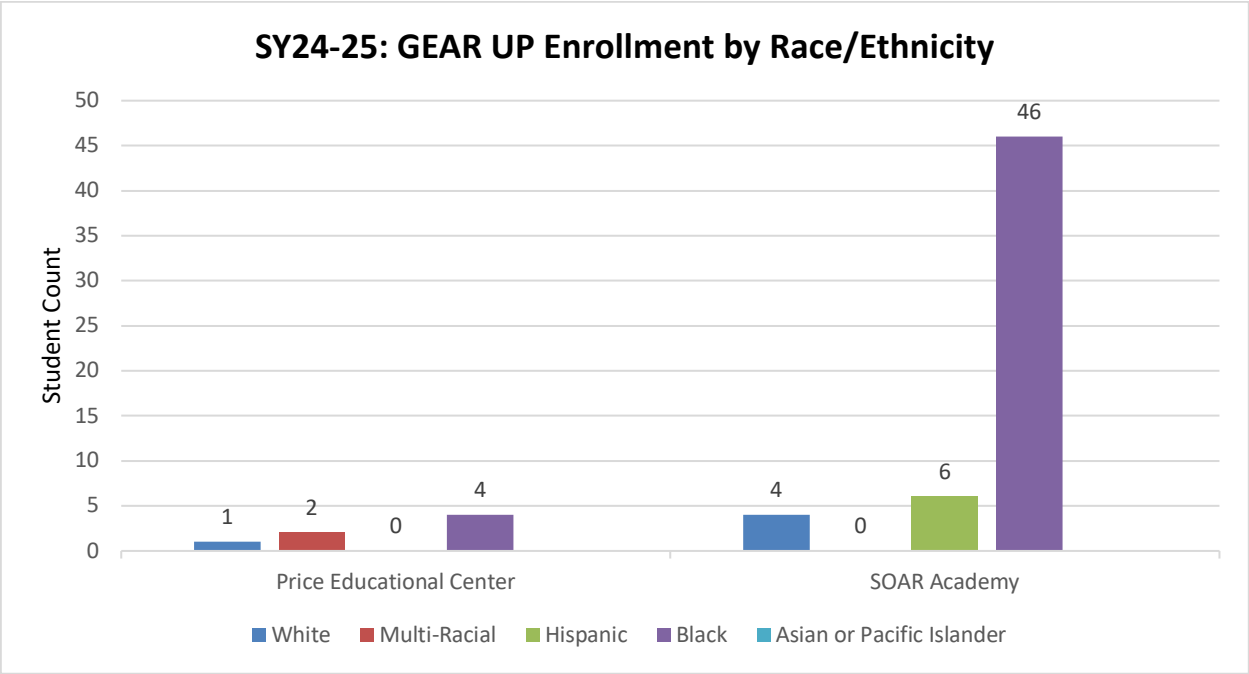
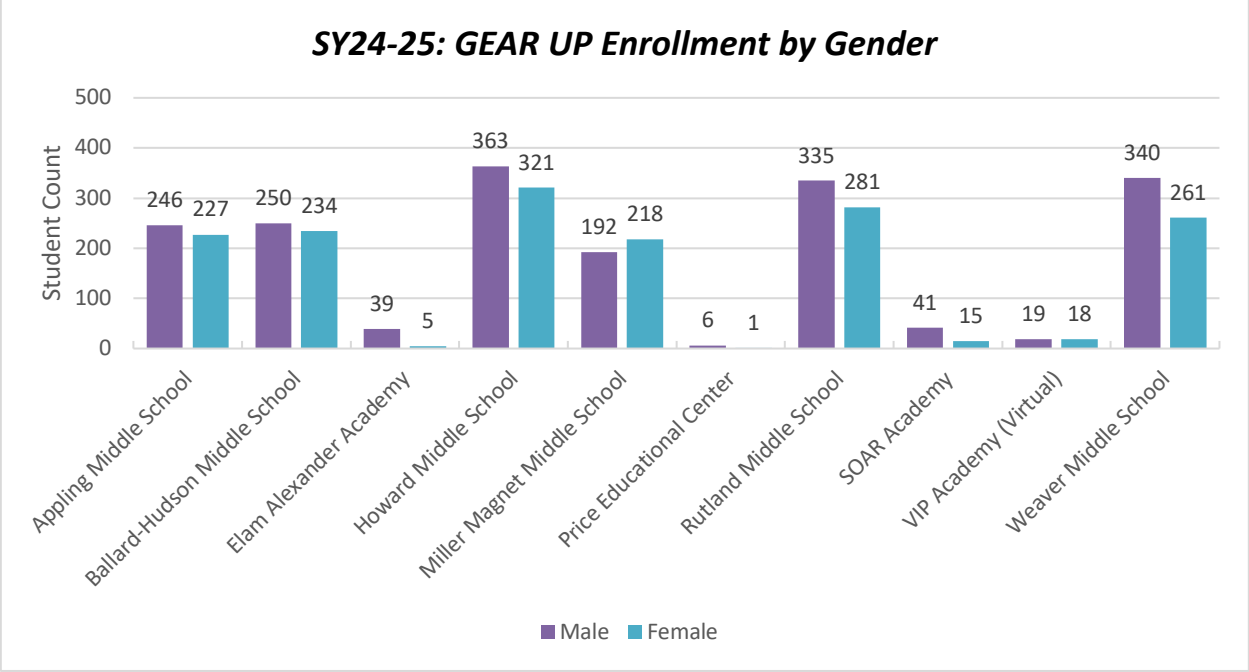


Figure 5.



Students with Disabilities and Section 504 Accommodations

The GEAR UP Built4Bibb cohort includes a significant population of students who receive specialized educational supports through either an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan, underscoring the importance of providing accessible, inclusive, and individualized services across all project activities. During Year 1, 506 students (14.8 percent) were identified as students with disabilities receiving special education services through an IEP, while an additional 257 students (7.5 percent) were identified as having active Section 504 plans. Collectively, these populations represent nearly one-quarter of the GEAR UP cohort and highlight the need for intentional supports that promote academic achievement, grade-level promotion, high school graduation, and post-secondary success.

Students with disabilities receiving special education services were enrolled across all participating schools, with the largest concentrations at Howard Middle School (87 students), Rutland Middle School (79 students), Ballard-Hudson Middle School (78 students), and Weaver Middle School (77 students). Additional students receiving IEP services were enrolled at Appling Middle School (62 students), Miller Magnet Middle School (62 students), Elam Alexander Academy (44 students), SOAR Academy (9 students), Price Educational Center (4 students), and VIP Academy (Virtual) (4 students).

Similarly, students receiving accommodations through Section 504 plans were represented across multiple schools, with the largest concentrations at Howard Middle School (54 students), Weaver Middle School (45 students), Miller Magnet Middle School (42 students), Appling Middle School (32 students), Ballard-Hudson Middle School (30

students), and Rutland Middle School (30 students). Additional students with Section 504 plans were enrolled at SOAR Academy (12 students), VIP Academy (Virtual) (7 students), Elam Alexander Academy (4 students), and Price Educational Center (1 student).

The presence of a substantial number of students with disabilities and accommodation plans highlights the importance of ensuring that all GEAR UP services are designed and implemented in ways that promote equitable access and participation. Students receiving special education and Section 504 services may require accommodations, differentiated instructional strategies, transition planning, assistive supports, and targeted interventions to successfully engage in rigorous coursework, college readiness activities, and career exploration experiences. These students often benefit from enhanced academic monitoring, individualized support planning, and coordinated services that address both academic and non-academic barriers to success.

Through collaboration with special education teachers, Section 504 coordinators, school counselors, administrators, families, and Graduation Advisors, GEAR UP Built4Bibb works to ensure that students with disabilities receive comprehensive supports aligned with their individual educational needs. Project services include tutoring, mentoring, academic coaching, college and career exploration, leadership development opportunities, social-emotional learning supports, and individualized academic planning designed to increase academic achievement and educational attainment.

In addition, GEAR UP places a strong emphasis on post-secondary preparation and self-advocacy development for students with disabilities. Through college awareness activities, career readiness programming, and transition-focused advising, students learn

how to access accommodations, advocate for their needs, and successfully navigate post-secondary education and workforce environments. By intentionally supporting students with disabilities and accommodation plans, GEAR UP Built4Bibb seeks to eliminate barriers to achievement, strengthen promotion and graduation outcomes, and ensure that all students are prepared to pursue their educational and career aspirations.

Gifted and Advanced Learners

The GEAR UP Built4Bibb cohort includes a population of students identified for gifted education services, representing students who have demonstrated advanced academic aptitude, achievement, creativity, or exceptional potential. During Year 1, a total of 216 cohort students were identified as gifted and talented, accounting for approximately 6.3 percent of the total cohort population. Gifted students were distributed across participating schools, with the largest concentrations found at Miller Magnet Middle School (67 students), Rutland Middle School (53 students), and Howard Middle School (49 students). Additional gifted students were enrolled at Weaver Middle School (20 students), Appling Middle School (15 students), Ballard-Hudson Middle School (6 students), VIP Academy (4 students), and SOAR Academy (2 students).

The distribution of gifted students across the GEAR UP cohort highlights the importance of ensuring that college and career readiness services address the needs of advanced learners while maintaining a focus on educational equity and access. Research suggests that gifted students, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, may benefit from intentional talent development opportunities, advanced

coursework, enrichment experiences, mentorship, leadership development, and exposure to post-secondary pathways that align with their academic potential. Given that all students in the GEAR UP cohort are identified as economically disadvantaged, it is especially important to provide supports that help gifted learners access rigorous academic opportunities and fully realize their educational potential.

Through GEAR UP Built4Bibb, gifted students have access to a variety of enrichment opportunities designed to support advanced academic growth and post-secondary readiness. These opportunities include college and university visits, STEM learning experiences, career exploration activities, leadership development programs, dual enrollment awareness, advanced course planning, academic competitions, and individualized college and career advising. In addition, the project collaborates with school counselors, gifted education personnel, teachers, and Graduation Advisors to ensure that gifted students are appropriately challenged and supported throughout their educational journey.

By identifying and intentionally supporting gifted learners, GEAR UP Built4Bibb seeks to increase participation in advanced coursework, strengthen college and career aspirations, expand access to post-secondary opportunities, and ensure that high-potential students from historically underserved backgrounds are positioned for long-term academic success. This commitment aligns with the project's broader mission of promoting educational excellence, expanding opportunity, and preparing all students to succeed in post-secondary education and future careers.

Students Experiencing Homelessness, Unaccompanied Youth, and Foster Care

The GEAR UP Built4Bibb cohort includes several special populations that face unique educational challenges and require targeted academic, social-emotional, and wraparound supports. These populations include students experiencing homelessness, unaccompanied youth, and students in foster care. Understanding the needs of these students is critical to ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities and supporting the project's goals related to academic achievement, grade-level promotion, high school graduation, and post-secondary success. During Year 1, a total of 88 cohort students were identified as experiencing homelessness under the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. These students represent one of the most educationally vulnerable populations served through the project and often face barriers that can negatively impact attendance, academic achievement, behavioral outcomes, school engagement, grade-level promotion, and long-term educational attainment.

Students experiencing homelessness were concentrated across several participating middle schools. Ballard-Hudson Middle School reported the largest number of students experiencing homelessness with 29 students, followed by Howard Middle School with 17 students, Weaver Middle School with 12 students, and Appling Middle School with 11 students. Additional students experiencing homelessness were enrolled at Rutland Middle School (9 students), Miller Magnet Middle School (6 students), and SOAR Academy (4 students). In addition to students experiencing homelessness, the GEAR UP cohort includes four students identified as unaccompanied youth, a particularly vulnerable subgroup of the

homeless population. These students lack the care and physical custody of a parent or legal guardian and often face significant educational, social, emotional, and economic challenges. One unaccompanied youth was identified at Ballard-Hudson Middle School, Miller Magnet Middle School, Rutland Middle School, and Weaver Middle School, respectively. Although small in number, unaccompanied youth frequently require intensive individualized support because they often navigate school, transportation, healthcare, and educational planning without consistent adult guidance or family support.

The cohort also includes 19 students identified as being in foster care, another population that frequently experiences educational disruption and increased risk factors affecting academic success. Foster youth were enrolled across multiple participating schools, including Miller Magnet Middle School (4 students), Appling Middle School (3 students), Howard Middle School (3 students), Price Educational Center (3 students), Rutland Middle School (3 students), SOAR Academy (2 students), and Elam Alexander Academy (1 student). While foster youth represent a relatively small percentage of the overall cohort, they often face challenges associated with placement changes, school mobility, trauma, inconsistent educational experiences, and limited access to stable support systems. These factors can contribute to lower academic achievement, chronic absenteeism, behavioral concerns, and reduced post-secondary participation if not addressed through intentional intervention.

The presence of students experiencing homelessness, unaccompanied youth, and foster care involvement across the GEAR UP cohort reinforces the importance of addressing non-academic barriers that can affect educational outcomes. Research consistently

demonstrates that these populations are at greater risk for chronic absenteeism, lower academic achievement, behavioral challenges, grade retention, and reduced post-secondary enrollment. Housing instability, foster care placement changes, and the absence of consistent adult support can disrupt educational continuity and create significant social-emotional stressors that affect student performance and school engagement. Recognizing these challenges, GEAR UP Built4Bibb incorporates targeted supports designed to increase educational stability and academic success for students experiencing homelessness, unaccompanied youth, and foster care involvement.

Through the Graduation Advisor model, students receive individualized monitoring, mentoring, case management, attendance support, academic intervention, and referrals to community resources. Project staff collaborate closely with school counselors, social workers, McKinney-Vento liaisons, foster care points of contact, families, caregivers, and community organizations to ensure students have access to transportation assistance, school supplies, academic supports, social-emotional services, and other resources necessary to remain engaged in school and progress toward promotion and graduation.

For unaccompanied youth and foster youth specifically, GEAR UP staff provide additional support related to educational planning, college and career readiness, financial aid awareness, post-secondary transition planning, and advocacy. These students often require enhanced guidance to successfully navigate educational systems, access support services, and develop clear pathways toward post-secondary education and career opportunities.

By identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness, unaccompanied youth, and foster care involvement early, GEAR UP Built4Bibb seeks to reduce educational

barriers, improve attendance and academic performance, strengthen social-emotional well-being, and ensure that circumstances beyond a student's control do not prevent them from achieving their college and career aspirations. This targeted approach aligns with the project's broader commitment to educational equity, student success, and expanding post-secondary opportunities for all cohort participants.

English Learners (EL)

The GEAR UP Built4Bibb cohort includes a population of students identified as English Learners (ELs) who receive language development services designed to support English proficiency and academic success. During Year 1, 216 students were identified as English Learners, representing approximately 6.3 percent of the total cohort population. The remaining 3,196 students (93.7 percent) were not identified as English Learners.

Although English Learners represent a relatively small percentage of the overall cohort, they constitute an important student population that may face unique academic, linguistic, and social-emotional challenges as they develop English language proficiency while simultaneously mastering grade-level content. English Learners often require additional instructional supports, language accommodations, and culturally responsive educational experiences to ensure equitable access to rigorous coursework and college and career readiness opportunities.

Recognizing these needs, GEAR UP Built4Bibb works collaboratively with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers, school counselors, administrators, classroom teachers, families, and Graduation Advisors to ensure that English Learners have access to comprehensive academic and college readiness supports. Project services include

tutoring, mentoring, academic coaching, college and career exploration activities, family engagement opportunities, and individualized student support plans that are responsive to students' linguistic and educational needs. In addition, GEAR UP programming helps English Learners build the academic vocabulary, self-advocacy skills, and college knowledge necessary for long-term educational success. Through exposure to post-secondary institutions, career pathways, financial literacy education, and leadership development opportunities, English Learners are provided with experiences that strengthen educational aspirations and support successful transitions to high school, post-secondary education, and future careers.

The inclusion of English Learners within the GEAR UP cohort reflects the project's commitment to educational equity and access for all students. By providing targeted supports and ensuring meaningful participation in academic and enrichment opportunities, GEAR UP Built4Bibb seeks to improve academic achievement, increase grade-level promotion and graduation outcomes, and expand post-secondary opportunities for students who are developing English language proficiency while pursuing their educational goals.

Service Area Characteristics

Bibb County School District is one of the largest public school districts in central Georgia, serving approximately 21,000 students across a diverse network of schools and special programs. Overall district performance data further illustrate the need for sustained college- and career-readiness interventions. According to the Georgia School Grades Report,

Bibb County's 2024–2025 College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) Single Score was 66.3. Only 29.3 percent of third-grade students, 38.5 percent of fifth-grade students, and 41.1 percent of eighth-grade students are reading proficiently compared to higher statewide averages. Bibb County's chronic absenteeism rate is 29.8 percent, substantially exceeding the statewide rate of 20.4 percent. The district also reports a student mobility rate of 23 percent. Although the district has achieved a four-year graduation rate of 88.97 percent, only 43.17 percent of graduating seniors met Georgia's College and Career Ready indicator, while the college enrollment rate for the Class of 2024 was 45.21 percent. These data demonstrate why GEAR UP serves as a critical strategy for closing opportunity gaps and increasing educational attainment.

Brief Year 1 Findings and Implications

Year 1 implementation established a strong operational foundation for the GEAR UP Built4Bibb project. The district successfully launched core services, implemented systems for data collection and performance monitoring, established continuous improvement structures, implemented the Graduation Advisor model, expanded family engagement efforts, and strengthened collaboration with community and post-secondary partners. Early implementation findings indicate that the integration of academic support services, mentoring, college exposure opportunities, family engagement initiatives, social-emotional supports, and career exploration activities provides a strong framework for increasing student engagement, educational aspirations, college-going behaviors, and long-term post-secondary success.

Brief Action Steps and Recommendations

As implementation progresses, the project will continue to strengthen systems and services that support student success. Key priorities include expanding participation in college- and career-readiness activities, strengthening family engagement, increasing access to STEM and exposure to work-based learning experiences, enhancing data-driven decision-making, and deepening partnerships with post-secondary institutions and community organizations. Emphasis will be placed on improving academic proficiency, reducing chronic absenteeism, increasing college- and career-readiness indicators, strengthening preparation for post-secondary enrollment outcomes, and ensuring that all students have access to the GEAR UP resources and supports necessary to achieve their educational goals.

Progress Toward Goals and Objectives

During Year 1 of implementation, GEAR UP: Built4Bibb (GU B4B) focused on establishing the infrastructure, systems, partnerships, and student support services necessary to achieve the project's long-term goals of increasing academic achievement, educational attainment, college readiness, post-secondary enrollment, and college persistence. The project served 3,412 active cohort students across fourteen participating schools and implemented a comprehensive continuum of academic, college readiness, career awareness, family engagement, financial literacy, and professional development activities. Project implementation was aligned with approved objectives in the grant

application and focused on creating the foundation necessary to support cohort students throughout the seven-year grant period.

Analysis of Year 1 implementation data demonstrates strong participation in GEAR UP services, successful establishment of district-wide college and career readiness structures, and measurable progress toward multiple project objectives. At the same time, baseline academic performance, attendance, literacy, and mathematics achievement data reveal significant areas requiring continued intervention and targeted support. These findings will guide Year 2 implementation and continuous improvement efforts.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Increase GEAR UP Students' Academic Performance and Preparation for Post-Secondary Education

- Objective 1.1: Increase by at least 10% over baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students who pass Pre-Algebra by the end of 8th grade (GPRA 1).
- Objective 1.2: Increase by at least 10% over baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students who pass Algebra I by the end of 9th grade (GPRA 2).
- Objective 1.3: Increase by at least 10% over baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students who pass two years of mathematics beyond Algebra I by 12th grade (GPRA 3).
- Objective 1.4: Ensure that 90% of GEAR UP students are on track for graduation at the end of each grade level by passing core academic courses in mathematics, English language arts, science, and history/social studies annually (GPRA 4).

- Objective 1.5: Ensure that 90% of GEAR UP students complete the PSAT during their 10th-grade year (Project-Specific Measure).
- Objective 1.6: Ensure that 90% of GEAR UP students complete a college entrance examination (ACT or SAT) by the end of 11th grade (GPRA 5).
- Objective 1.7: Ensure that 80% of GEAR UP staff participate in project-specific professional development annually (Project-Specific Measure).

Goal 2: Increase the Rate of High School Graduation and Participation in Post-Secondary Education of Participating Students

- Objective 2.1: Increase by at least 20% over baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students who graduate from high school (GPRA 6).
- Objective 2.2: Ensure that the average daily attendance rate for GEAR UP students exceeds the statewide average for students in the same grade level annually (Program Measure 1).
- Objective 2.3: Ensure that 90% of GEAR UP students are promoted on time to the successive grade level as measured by credits earned annually (Program Measure 2).
- Objective 2.4: Increase by 5% from baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students who earn STEM-related credits in advanced coursework, including Honors, Career Pathway, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Dual Enrollment courses annually (Project-Specific Measure).

- Objective 2.5: Increase by 10% over baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students and former GEAR UP students who enroll in college (GPRA 8).
- Objective 2.6: Increase by 25% over baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students who place into college-level mathematics and English courses without remediation (GPRA 9).
- Objective 2.7: Increase by 20% over baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students and former GEAR UP students enrolled in college who remain on track to graduate from college (GPRA 10).
- Objective 2.8: Increase by 20% over baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students and former GEAR UP students who persist to the second year of post-secondary education at their initial institution or a subsequent institution (GPRA 10).
- Objective 2.9: Increase by 5% over baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students who earn a nationally recognized post-secondary credential by the end of 12th grade (Project-Specific Measure).

Goal 3: Increase Educational Expectations for Participating Students and Increase Student and Family Knowledge of Post-Secondary Options, Preparation, and Financing

- Objective 3.1: Ensure that 80% of GEAR UP students submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by the end of 12th grade (GPRA 7).
- Objective 3.2: Ensure that 95% of GEAR UP students indicate annually that they plan to graduate from high school (Program Measure 3).

- Objective 3.3: Ensure that each GEAR UP school offers at least two college readiness planning workshops annually addressing topics such as college fit, college and career planning, scholarship opportunities, financial planning, financial literacy, budgeting, tax preparation, FAFSA completion, student loans and repayment, apprenticeships, internships, and work-based learning opportunities (Project-Specific Measure).
- Objective 3.4: Ensure that 95% of GEAR UP students participate annually in at least four college readiness lessons addressing topics such as college readiness, college fit, career planning, financial planning, financial literacy, FAFSA completion, and scholarship opportunities (Project-Specific Measure).
- Objective 3.5: Administer an instrument designed to measure GEAR UP-related non-academic indicators, including college readiness, student engagement, financial literacy, budgeting and saving behaviors, career interests, and workforce readiness (Project-Specific Measure).

The first project goal focuses on improving student academic performance and preparing students for success in advanced coursework, high school graduation requirements, and college entrance examinations.

Goal 1: Increase Academic Achievement and College Readiness

Objective 1.1: Increase by at least 10 percent over baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students who pass Pre-Algebra by the end of eighth grade.

During Year 1, GEAR UP implemented supplemental instructional supports designed to strengthen foundational mathematics skills among sixth- and seventh-grade students. Academic enrichment activities focused on numeracy development, critical thinking, literacy integration, and problem-solving strategies. Students participated in afterschool tutoring, enrichment activities, and instructional sessions that incorporated cross-curricular approaches such as the RACES writing strategy to improve mathematical reasoning and communication skills. Baseline STAR Math assessment results demonstrated substantial academic need among cohort students. Winter STAR Math data indicated that 42.5 percent (1,395 students) were identified as Beginning Learners, 27.09 percent (889 students) were Developing Learners, 12.43 percent (408 students) were Proficient Learners, and only 5.36 percent (176 students) were Distinguished Learners. These results establish the baseline for Year 1 and confirm the need for intensive mathematics intervention and acceleration supports.

Project staff concluded that significant achievement gaps exist in mathematics readiness and that differentiated interventions must be expanded. As a result, Year 2 corrective actions include implementing tiered mathematics supports, strengthening collaboration with classroom teachers, increasing instructional alignment between school-day and out-of-school-time programming, and providing additional professional development focused on mathematics instruction.

Objective 1.2: Increase by at least 10 percent over baseline the percentage of GEAR UP students who pass Algebra I by the end of ninth grade.

Year 1 activities focused on building Algebra readiness through mathematics enrichment, goal-setting activities, growth mindset development, and academic skill-building. Students participated in instructional activities designed to develop mathematical schemas and improve readiness for future Algebra coursework.

Baseline i-Ready mathematics assessment results showed that sixth-grade students averaged a scale score of 460.99, corresponding to approximately a fourth-grade placement level, while seventh-grade students averaged 468.01, corresponding to approximately a fifth-grade placement level. Although these results showed modest improvement from fall assessments, they also revealed substantial achievement gaps relative to grade-level expectations. These findings indicate that academic acceleration must remain a central focus of project implementation. Year 2 efforts will include enhanced collaboration with mathematics teachers and instructional leaders, increased intervention opportunities during and beyond the instructional day, and expanded academic monitoring systems.

Objectives 1.3–1.6: Advanced Mathematics, Graduation Readiness, and College Entrance Examination Preparation

Progress toward Objectives 1.3 through 1.6 demonstrates early evidence that academic support systems are producing positive outcomes. Mathematics course performance improved during the school year, with 607 students earning grades of 90 or higher in mathematics by the end of the year, an increase from 551 students earlier in the academic year. Additionally, 91 percent of cohort students (2,827 of 3,099 students) earned passing grades of C or higher in English Language Arts, indicating that the project is making progress toward ensuring students remain on track for graduation.

To support future SAT, ACT, and Pre-SAT participation, students engaged in writing and literacy interventions through Write Score and STAR Reading assessments. Baseline literacy data revealed that only 18.57 percent of students performed at proficiency or above on STAR Reading assessments, while 36.29 percent required significant intervention. These findings indicate that literacy development remains a critical priority for improving future college entrance examination performance. Corrective actions for Year 2 include expanding writing interventions, integrating literacy supports across content areas, increasing student access to digital learning resources such as Edmentum and Khan Academy, and providing additional professional learning opportunities for educators focused on literacy instruction.

Objective 1.7: Professional Development Participation

The project successfully exceeded its Year 1 professional development target. All GEAR UP staff participated in project-specific professional development activities, surpassing the objective of 80 percent participation annually. Professional development focused on leadership collaboration, PBIS implementation, McKinney-Vento requirements, literacy instruction, mathematics education, afterschool programming, and district effectiveness initiatives. A total of 87 educators participated in GEAR UP-sponsored professional learning activities during the reporting period. The success of this objective demonstrates strong staff commitment and provides a foundation for continued improvement in instructional practice and program implementation.

Goal 2: Increase Educational Expectations, Graduation Rates, and Post-Secondary Enrollment

The second project goal focuses on increasing educational aspirations, academic persistence, graduation rates, and post-secondary participation.

Objectives 2.1–2.3: Educational Aspirations, Attendance, and Promotion

Year 1 implementation included multiple activities designed to strengthen students' educational expectations and future planning. Through the "I Have a Plan" initiative, students identified future career aspirations and developed initial post-secondary goals. Approximately 64 percent of participating students completed the activity, providing evidence of early engagement in college and career planning. Attendance data emerged as a significant need during Year 1. Unexcused absences increased among both sixth- and seventh-grade students between academic terms, indicating a need for more intensive attendance interventions. As a result, project staff identified attendance improvement as a major priority area for Year 2 and will implement additional incentives, case management support, family engagement efforts, and partnerships with community organizations to address attendance barriers. Promotion and academic persistence indicators were more encouraging. Approximately 91.22 percent of students earned passing grades in English Language Arts, suggesting that most cohort students remain on track for grade-level promotion. Continued literacy-focused interventions will be used to maintain and improve these outcomes.

Objectives 2.4–2.9: STEM Readiness, College Enrollment, Career Awareness, and Post-Secondary Success

The project expanded STEM programming through afterschool enrichment opportunities designed to increase awareness of advanced coursework and STEM career

pathways. Academic performance data indicated that approximately 88 percent of students were passing mathematics and 91 percent were passing science courses with grades of C or higher. These outcomes provide a positive foundation for future participation in advanced STEM coursework. Career awareness and college readiness activities were widely implemented during Year 1. A total of 188 students participated in career fairs, while 264 students participated in college visits. Students also engaged in College Gear Day activities, College Conversations, and other college awareness initiatives designed to foster educational aspirations and expose students to post-secondary opportunities. Behavioral data revealed an area requiring additional support, with 1,913 discipline incidents recorded during Year 1. Project leadership identified social-emotional learning, mentoring, restorative practices, and family engagement as critical intervention strategies for improving student behavior and educational persistence.

Goal 3: Increase Post-Secondary Knowledge and Financial Readiness

Objectives 3.1–3.5: Financial Literacy, College Readiness, and Post-Secondary Planning

The third project goal focuses on increasing knowledge related to college preparation, financial aid, financial literacy, and post-secondary planning. The project successfully implemented multiple financial literacy and college readiness initiatives through its partnership with MidSouth Community Federal Credit Union. A total of 178 students participated in financial literacy sessions, while 174 students completed a financial literacy pre-assessment designed to establish baseline measures related to budgeting, saving, and financial decision-making. College readiness programming was

also successfully implemented across project sites. Students participated in workshops such as "Diplomas to Degrees" and "My Beliefs About Post-Secondary Education," which addressed common misconceptions about college, financial aid, and educational barriers. In total, 129 students participated in college readiness workshops, while 76 percent of students participated in at least four college readiness lessons during the reporting period.

Student surveys and participation data demonstrated strong educational aspirations, with 87 percent of students indicating a desire to continue their education and graduate from high school. While this outcome falls short of the project's 95 percent target, it establishes a strong baseline from which future growth can occur. Project staff plan to incorporate annual graduation commitments, additional college planning activities, and expanded family engagement opportunities to strengthen educational aspirations among cohort students.

Findings and Implications

Year 1 implementation successfully established the operational infrastructure necessary to support long-term project success. The project exceeded participation expectations, serving 3,412 students and engaging 87 educators and 317 parents, guardians, and family members in GEAR UP programming. Academic support services, college readiness initiatives, financial literacy programming, STEM enrichment, and professional development activities were implemented across all participating schools.

Analysis of baseline data reveals several critical findings. First, mathematics and literacy achievement gaps remain substantial and require continued intervention. Second, attendance and behavior data indicate a need for stronger social-emotional and family

engagement supports. Third, students demonstrate strong interest in college and career planning when provided with opportunities for engagement. Finally, professional development and partnership structures are functioning effectively and provide a strong foundation for future implementation.

Year 2 Action Steps and Recommendations

Based on Year 1 findings, the project will prioritize the following actions during Year 2:

1) Expand tiered mathematics and literacy interventions to address achievement gaps identified through STAR, i-Ready, Write Score, and Georgia Milestones data.
2) Strengthen collaboration between GEAR UP staff, classroom teachers, instructional leaders, and student support teams to improve academic outcomes.
3) Implement targeted attendance improvement initiatives, including incentives, mentoring, family outreach, and individualized case management.
4) Expand social-emotional learning, restorative practices, and mentoring services to address behavior concerns and improve student engagement.
5) Increase participation in college readiness, career awareness, STEM, and financial literacy activities.
6) Continue providing high-quality professional development aligned with project goals and student needs.
7) Utilize performance data more systematically to monitor progress toward objectives and inform continuous improvement efforts.

8) Deepen family engagement initiatives to strengthen educational expectations and support post-secondary planning.

Collectively, these strategies position GEAR UP Built4Bibb to build upon Year 1 successes while addressing identified areas of need, ultimately increasing academic achievement, educational attainment, post-secondary enrollment, and long-term success for participating students.

Student Outcome Data: Georgia Milestones Assessment

Baseline performance data were obtained utilizing the Georgia Milestones assessment results from district academic reporting systems. These data serve as the official baseline measure for Objective 1 indicators related to academic achievement, grade-level proficiency, and college readiness. Additional supporting evidence includes district benchmark assessments, STAR Reading and STAR Math assessments, i-Ready diagnostic data, course grades, attendance records, and participation data collected through GEAR UP programming. Together, these measures provide a comprehensive picture of student academic performance and establish multiple data points for monitoring progress throughout the grant period.

Georgia Milestones Baseline Performance

Establishing baseline academic performance is a critical component of the GEAR UP Built4Bibb (GU B4B) evaluation framework. Baseline student achievement data provides insight into the academic strengths and challenges of the Year 1 cohort and establishes the foundation for measuring growth throughout the seven-year grant period. As part of the

project's commitment to increasing academic achievement and college readiness, Georgia Milestones assessment data were analyzed to evaluate cohort performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. The baseline data reveal that participating students enter the GEAR UP program with significant academic needs, particularly in mathematics achievement. These findings underscore the importance of the comprehensive academic interventions, tutoring, enrichment opportunities, college readiness programming, and individualized support services provided through the GEAR UP initiative.

Baseline Georgia Milestones Performance

Analysis of Georgia Milestones baseline assessment data indicates that sixth grade and seventh-grade cohort students performed similarly across English Language Arts and Mathematics. Sixth-grade students achieved an average ELA scale score of 480.73 and an average Mathematics scale score of 483.88. Seventh-grade students achieved an average ELA scale score of 481.37 and an average Mathematics scale score of 485.04.

Figure 6.

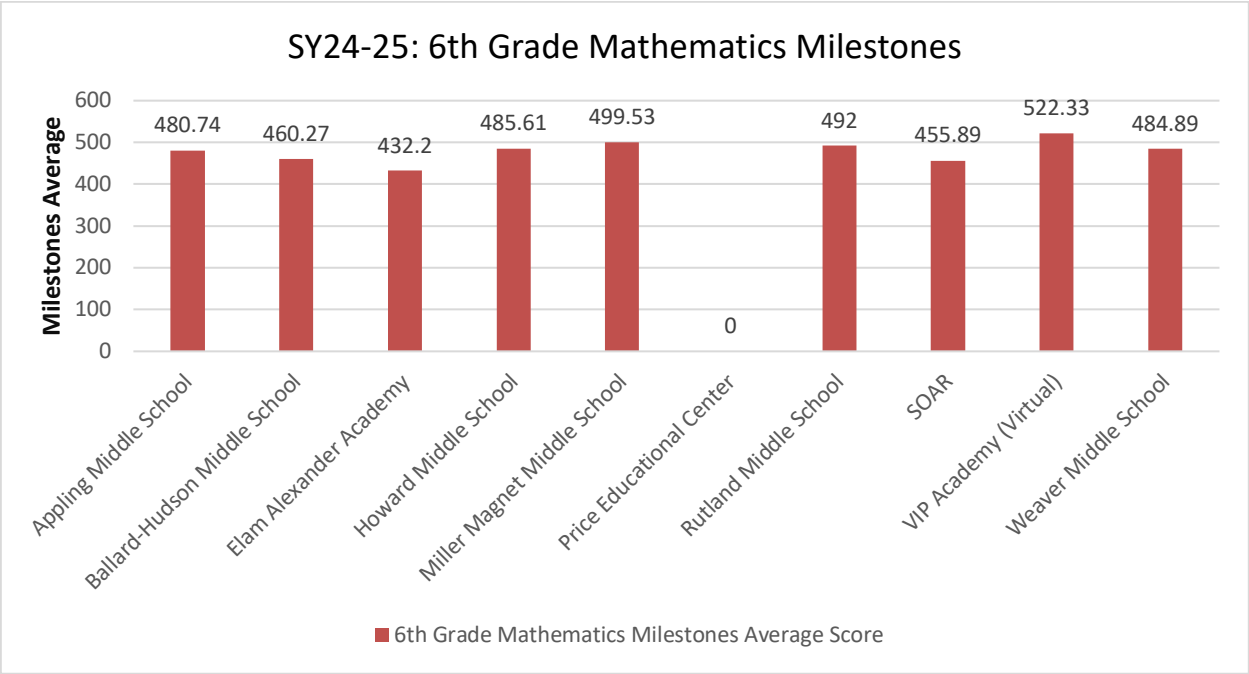


Figure 7.

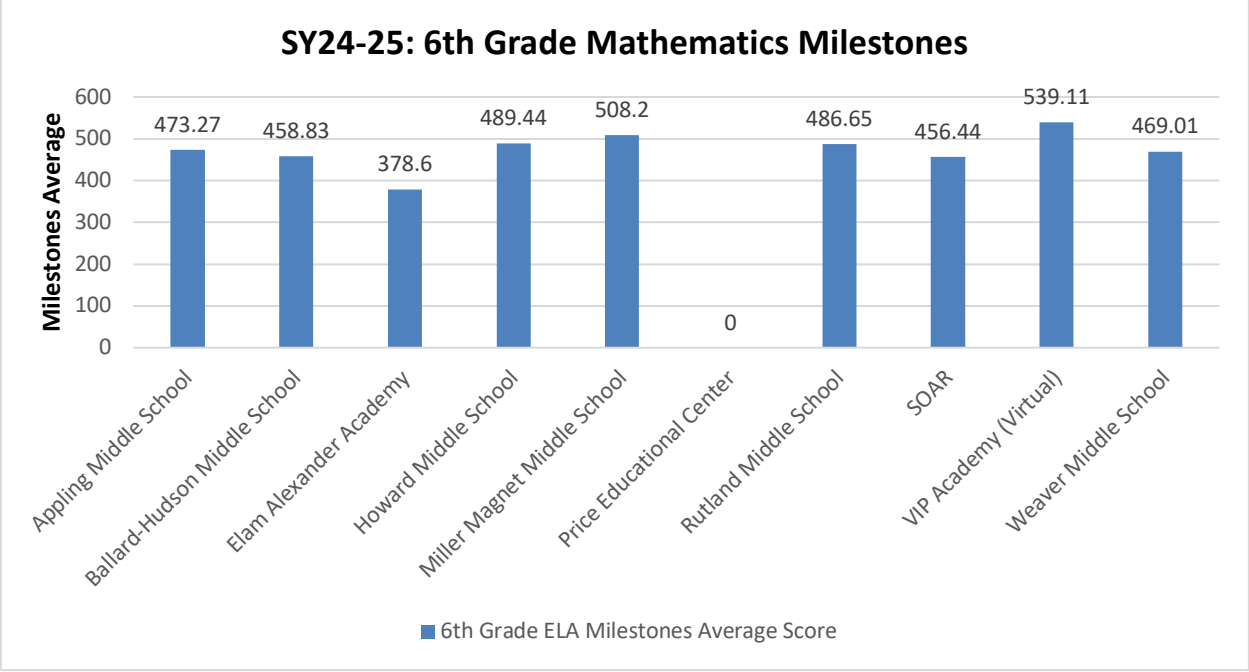


Figure 8.

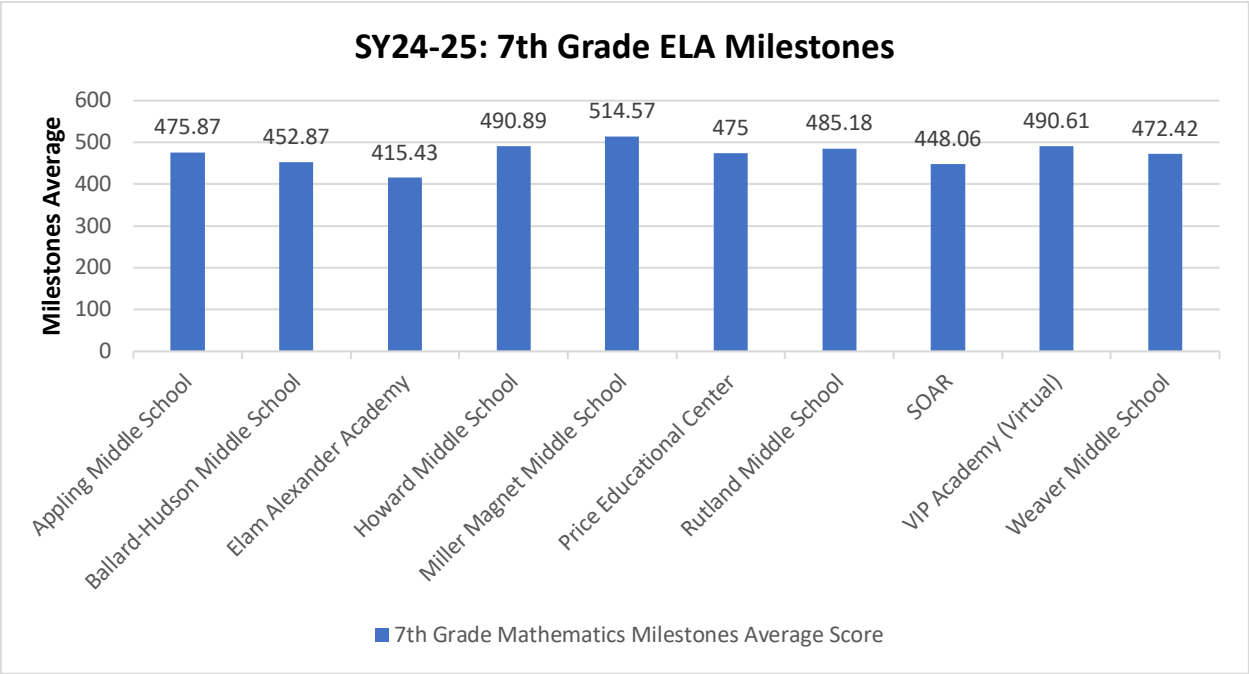
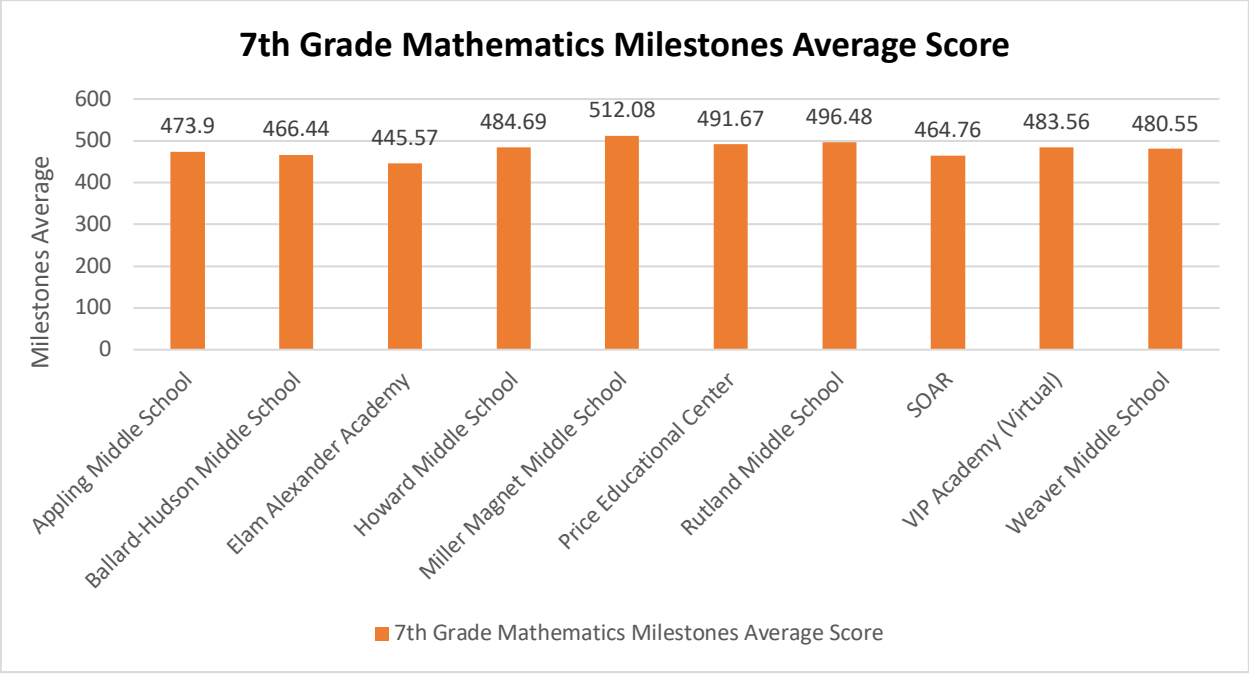


Figure 9.



Although average scale scores suggest relatively comparable performance across grade levels, achievement-level data indicate that many students are performing below proficiency. Sixth-grade students earned an average ELA achievement level of 1.78 and an average Mathematics achievement level of 1.72. Seventh-grade students earned an average ELA achievement level of 1.78 and an average Mathematics achievement level of 1.70. The Georgia Achievement Level Descriptors include Beginning Learner (Level 1), Developing Learner (Level 2), Proficient Learner (Level 3), and Distinguished Learner (Level 4). Average achievement levels below 2.0 indicate that a substantial proportion of students are performing in the Beginning Learner category and have not yet demonstrated grade-level mastery of state academic standards. These baseline findings highlight the need for targeted academic interventions designed to accelerate learning and improve academic outcomes over time.

Disaggregated Analysis

Comparison of grade-level performance reveals minimal differences between sixth grade and seventh-grade students. Seventh-grade students performed slightly higher in Mathematics scale scores, averaging 485.04 compared to 483.88 for sixth-grade students. Similarly, seventh-grade students achieved a marginally higher ELA scale score than sixth-grade students. However, average achievement levels remained virtually identical across grades, indicating that students in both cohorts face comparable academic challenges. A closer examination of achievement-level performance reveals that Mathematics represents the area of greatest need. Both grade levels earned lower average achievement levels in

Mathematics than in English Language Arts, suggesting that students may require additional support in numeracy development, mathematical reasoning, problem-solving, and foundational algebraic concepts. Since mathematics proficiency serves as a key predictor of future success in Algebra I, advanced coursework, graduation readiness, and post-secondary enrollment, addressing these deficits remains a central priority of the GEAR UP project. The consistency of performance across both grade levels suggests that the academic challenges identified are systemic rather than isolated to a specific grade. Consequently, the project's academic intervention model has been designed to provide comprehensive support throughout the middle school years and beyond.

Findings and Implications

The baseline Georgia Milestones results demonstrate that the GEAR UP Built4Bibb cohort enters the project with substantial opportunities for academic growth. While average scale scores suggest students possess foundational academic skills, achievement-level performance indicates that many students have not yet mastered grade-level standards necessary for long-term academic success. The findings reinforce the importance of providing intensive academic support during the middle school years. Without targeted intervention, students performing at Beginning Learner levels may face increased difficulty accessing advanced coursework, succeeding in Algebra I, meeting graduation requirements, and achieving college and career readiness benchmarks. Conversely, early intervention during middle school provides a significant opportunity to accelerate achievement, strengthen academic confidence, and improve long-term educational outcomes.

The data also suggest that mathematics achievement should remain a particular area of focus throughout project implementation. Because mathematics achievement is closely connected to future college readiness indicators, improving mathematics outcomes will likely have a positive impact on multiple GEAR UP objectives, including advanced coursework participation, high school graduation, and post-secondary enrollment.

GEAR UP Strategies to Improve Georgia Milestones Outcomes

The GEAR UP Built4Bibb project has implemented a comprehensive system of academic interventions specifically designed to improve student performance on the Georgia Milestones assessment and other academic indicators. These services are designed to address identified academic gaps while building the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary for students to demonstrate proficiency on future Georgia Milestones assessments. These strategies include:

1) High-dosage tutoring in English Language Arts and Mathematics;
2) Small-group academic interventions aligned to Georgia Standards of Excellence;
3) After-school and extended learning opportunities;
4) STEM enrichment programs focused on problem-solving and critical thinking;
5) Academic mentoring and individualized student success planning;
6) Progress monitoring through STAR Reading, STAR Math, and i-Ready assessments;
7) Literacy interventions utilizing evidence-based writing strategies, including RACES and Write Score;
8) Mathematics acceleration and foundational skills development;

9) Summer enrichment programming designed to reduce learning loss;
10) Family engagement initiatives that support academic achievement and attendance.

Year 2 Action Steps and Recommendations

Based on the baseline findings, the project will prioritize several key actions during Year 2 to improve student outcomes on Georgia Milestones assessments:

1) Expand targeted Mathematics interventions for students performing below proficiency levels.
2) Increase literacy supports across content areas to strengthen reading comprehension and writing performance.
3) Utilize interim assessment data more frequently to identify students requiring additional support.
4) Strengthen alignment between GEAR UP tutoring services and classroom instruction.
5) Implement individualized academic success plans for students performing at the Beginning Learner and Developing Learner levels, as well as at the Proficient Learner and Distinguished Learner levels.
6) Increase family engagement activities that support academic achievement at home.
7) Continue to monitor student data aggressively and adjust interventions and supports based on performance.
8) Expand professional development opportunities for educators focused on evidence-based instructional strategies in Mathematics and English Language Arts.

Through these coordinated efforts, GEAR UP Built4Bibb expects to increase student proficiency rates, improve achievement-level performance, and create sustained academic growth that supports high school success, college readiness, and post-secondary attainment.

Student Outcome: STAR Reading

Reading proficiency is a foundational component of academic achievement and serves as one of the strongest predictors of grade-level promotion, success on state assessments, high school graduation, and postsecondary readiness. Students who read proficiently are better prepared to engage in rigorous coursework across all content areas, successfully complete advanced academic programs, and develop the critical thinking and analytical skills necessary for college and career success. Consequently, improving literacy outcomes remains a central focus of the GEAR UP Built4Bibb (GU B4B) project and directly supports Goal 1: Increase Academic Performance and Preparation for Postsecondary Education.

STAR Reading benchmark data were obtained through the Renaissance STAR Reading assessment administered during the Spring benchmark window. Student performance data were extracted from district assessment records and analyzed according to Renaissance performance benchmarks. The STAR Reading assessment categorizes students into five performance levels: No Score, Beginning Learner, Developing Learner, Proficient Learner, and Distinguished Learner. These results provide the initial benchmark against which annual growth will be measured throughout the seven-year grant. These

data establish the official Year 1 literacy baseline for the GEAR UP cohort and will be supplemented annually with Georgia Milestones English Language Arts assessments, classroom performance, English Language Arts course grades, district benchmark assessments, and progress monitoring reports. Collectively, these measures will provide multiple indicators of student literacy growth and support continuous evaluation of project effectiveness.

Analysis of the Spring benchmark demonstrates that literacy achievement remains a significant area of need across the GEAR UP cohort. Of the 3,411 students represented in the assessment administration, 1,098 students (32.2%) performed at the Beginning Learner level and 662 students (19.4%) performed at the Developing Learner level. Collectively, 1,760 students (51.6%) demonstrated reading performance below proficiency, indicating that more than one-half of participating students require additional literacy intervention and academic support.

Conversely, only 442 students (13.0%) achieved the Proficient Learner level, while 68 students (2.0%) reached the Distinguished Learner level. Together, only 510 students (15.0%) demonstrated proficiency or advanced literacy performance. The most significant baseline finding is that 1,141 students (33.4%) did not receive a Spring STAR Reading benchmark score. Although these students may have transferred, enrolled after the assessment window, or were absent during testing, the large number of missing assessments limits the project's ability to fully determine literacy performance across the entire cohort. Improving benchmark participation will therefore become an important implementation priority during Year 2 with all cohort schools and programs.

Collectively, these findings establish the Year 1 literacy baseline and reinforce the need for expanded academic interventions, differentiated reading instruction, and comprehensive literacy supports designed to improve reading proficiency across all participating schools. These results indicate that approximately one out of every two assessed students is performing below proficiency, while only 15 percent have reached proficiency or above. These baseline data confirm literacy as one of the project's highest academic priorities moving into Year 2.

Disaggregated Analysis

School-level analyses reveal considerable differences in literacy performance across participating schools and identify opportunities for targeted intervention.

Students Performing at the Beginning Learner Level

The largest concentrations of students requiring intensive literacy intervention were found at:

- Ballard-Hudson Middle School: 281 Beginning Learners
- Rutland Middle School: 257 Beginning Learners
- Howard Middle School: 231 Beginning Learners
- Weaver Middle School: 182 Beginning Learners
- Miller Magnet Middle School: 101 Beginning Learners

These five schools account for nearly all students with the most significant reading deficiencies and therefore represent the highest-priority schools for expanded literacy interventions during Year 2.

Students Performing at the Developing Learner Level

Students classified as Developing Learners are approaching proficiency but continue to require targeted instructional supports. Howard Middle School reported the largest number of Developing Learners (190 students), followed by Rutland Middle School (140), Miller Magnet Middle School (118), Weaver Middle School (109), and Ballard-Hudson Middle School (71). Since these students are generally closer to proficiency than Beginning Learners, targeted interventions and progress monitoring may produce measurable achievement gains within a shorter period.

Students Demonstrating Proficient and Distinguished Performance

Although relatively few students achieved proficiency, several schools demonstrated stronger literacy performance. Howard Middle School reported the largest number of Proficient Readers (127 students), followed closely by Miller Magnet Middle School (114) and Rutland Middle School (105). Weaver Middle School reported 50 Proficient Readers, Ballard-Hudson Middle School reported 27, and Appling Middle School reported 10. At the Distinguished level, Miller Magnet Middle School led the cohort with 22 Distinguished Learners, followed by Rutland Middle School (15), Howard Middle School (12), Price Educational Center (7), Weaver Middle School (7), VIP Academy (2), and Ballard-Hudson Middle School (2). These schools provide opportunities for examining instructional practices associated with higher literacy achievement that may be replicated across other project sites. Figures 10-11 show achievement level performance for each GEAR UP school below.

Figure 10.

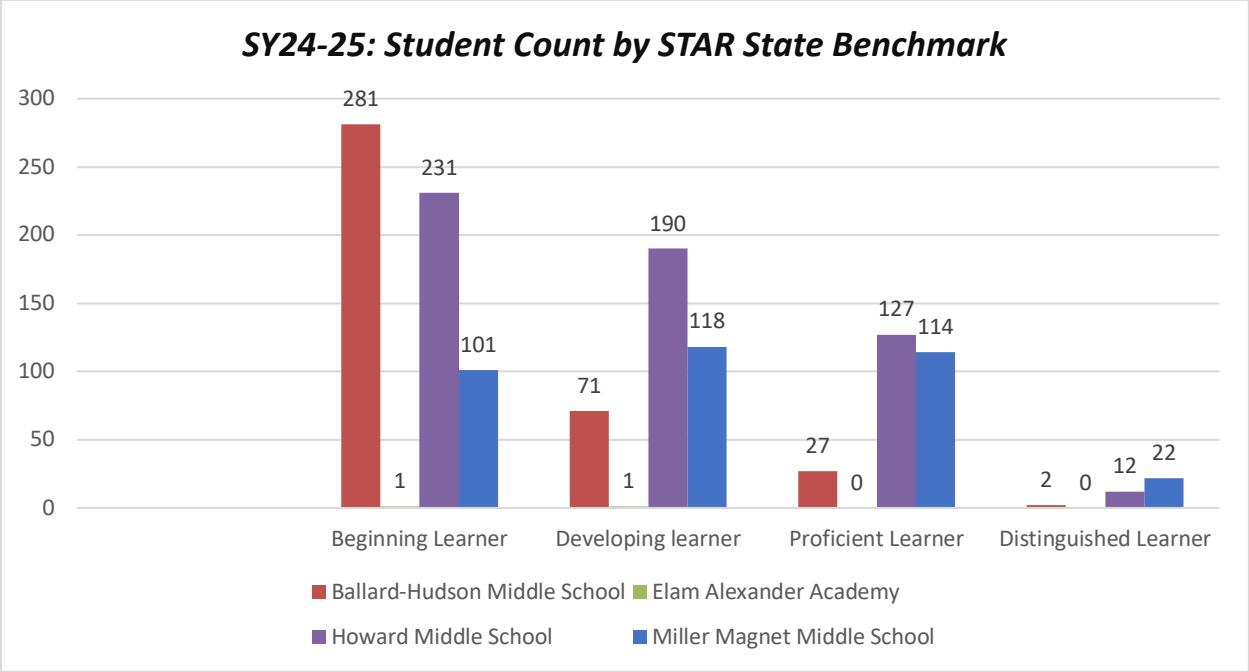
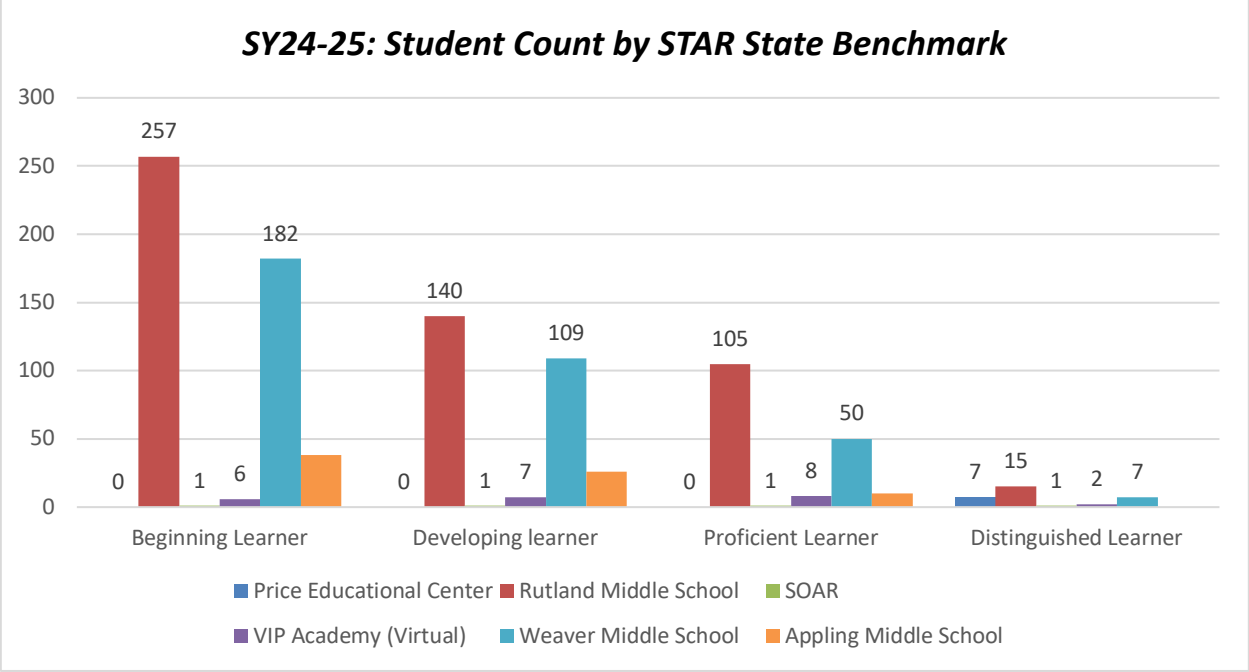


Figure 11.



Students Without STAR Reading Scores

The most notable implementation factor involved the number of students who did not receive a Spring STAR Reading benchmark. The largest numbers of students without assessment scores occurred at:

- Appling Middle School: 399 students
- Weaver Middle School: 253 students
- Howard Middle School: 124 students
- Ballard-Hudson Middle School: 103 students
- Rutland Middle School: 99 students
- Miller Magnet Middle School: 55 students
- SOAR: 52 students
- Elam Alexander Academy: 42 students

The high concentration of missing assessment data at several schools suggests differences in assessment participation rather than differences in academic performance alone. During Year 2, District GEAR UP staff and Graduation Advisors will collaborate with school leadership to increase participation in benchmark assessments, enabling more accurate measurement of student growth over time. Overall, the disaggregated analyses indicate that while literacy challenges exist districtwide, the intensity of required intervention varies across schools. Ballard-Hudson, Howard, Rutland, Weaver, and Miller Magnet Middle Schools will require the greatest concentration of literacy supports because

they collectively enroll most of the Beginning and Developing Learners. Conversely, Howard Middle School and Miller Magnet Middle School also demonstrate relatively large numbers of Proficient and Distinguished students, suggesting that differentiated instructional practices already exist in these schools and could be leveraged to improve outcomes for struggling readers.

Findings and Implications

Several important findings emerged from the baseline STAR Reading analysis. First, literacy achievement represents one of the project's greatest academic challenges. More than one-half of assessed students remain below proficiency, suggesting that substantial numbers of students enter middle school without the reading skills necessary for success in increasingly rigorous coursework. Second, only fifteen percent of students demonstrated proficiency or distinguished performance, highlighting the need to strengthen literacy instruction across participating schools. In addition, one-third of participating students did not receive a STAR Reading benchmark score. Improving assessment participation will strengthen the project's evaluation system, provide more comprehensive baseline information, and improve the ability to monitor literacy growth over time. Fourth, school-level differences indicate that literacy interventions should be differentiated according to student need. Schools with larger Beginning Learner populations will require intensive foundational reading interventions, while schools with larger Developing Learner populations may benefit from enrichment strategies designed to move students toward proficiency. Finally, literacy improvement will directly influence

multiple GEAR UP performance measures, including Georgia Milestones performance, English Language Arts course grades, grade-level promotion, participation in advanced coursework, ACT/SAT readiness, and postsecondary enrollment.

Planned Improvements

Beginning in Year 2, the addition of Graduation Advisors provides the project with significantly greater capacity to monitor literacy performance and coordinate interventions at each participating school. Academic supports will include:

- School-based literacy intervention plans developed using STAR Reading data.
- Individual literacy goal-setting with Graduation Advisors.
- Expanded after-school tutoring focused on reading comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and informational text.
- Small-group intervention for Beginning and Developing Learners.
- Integration of Write Score strategies to strengthen reading and writing performance.
- Collaboration with English Language Arts teachers to align interventions with classroom instruction.
- Progress monitoring using STAR Reading benchmark assessments throughout the year.
- Summer literacy enrichment programming.
- Family literacy engagement activities designed to strengthen reading habits outside of school.

- Expanded access to digital literacy resources and individualized instructional supports.

Graduation Advisors will review STAR Reading results with students and families, monitor literacy growth throughout the year, coordinate interventions with school instructional teams, and ensure students demonstrating the greatest literacy needs receive appropriate academic support.

Performance Priorities

Year 2 literacy priorities include:

- Increase the percentage of students performing at the Proficient and Distinguished levels.
    - Reduce the number of students classified as Beginning Learners.
    - Accelerate Developing Learners toward proficiency.
    - Increase STAR Reading assessment participation and reduce the number of students without benchmark scores.
    - Improve Georgia Milestones English Language Arts performance.
    - Increase passing rates for students enrolled in English Language Arts courses.
    - Improve grade-level promotion through stronger literacy achievement.
    - Increase readiness for rigorous coursework, ACT/SAT participation, and postsecondary success.

Action Steps and Recommendations

Based on Year 1 findings, GEAR UP Built4Bibb will implement the following actions during Year 2:

- Prioritize literacy interventions at Ballard-Hudson, Howard, Rutland, Weaver, and Miller Magnet Middle Schools.
- Utilize Graduation Advisors to coordinate individualized literacy intervention plans.
- Conduct quarterly STAR Reading data reviews with school leadership teams.
- Expand tutoring and evidence-based literacy interventions targeting Beginning and Developing Learners.
- Increase benchmark assessment participation across all participating schools.
- Strengthen collaboration among Graduation Advisors, English Language Arts teachers, instructional coaches, and school administrators.
- Expand family literacy engagement initiatives and home reading supports.
- Utilize disaggregated data to monitor literacy outcomes among English Learners, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, students experiencing homelessness, foster youth, gifted and advanced students, and other special populations.
- Monitor literacy growth using multiple assessment measures and adjust interventions through the project's continuous improvement process.

Conclusions

The Spring STAR Reading assessment established a comprehensive baseline of literacy achievement for the GEAR UP Built4Bibb cohort and identified reading proficiency as one of the project's highest academic priorities. More than half of assessed students demonstrated literacy performance below proficiency, while only fifteen percent met or exceeded proficiency expectations. School-level analyses revealed significant differences in performance, emphasizing the need for differentiated interventions and targeted supports. Through expanded school-based literacy interventions, individualized Graduation Advisor support, family engagement, ongoing progress monitoring, and evidence-based instructional strategies, GEAR UP Built4Bibb will work to improve: reading achievement, grade-level promotion, college readiness, and the project's long-term goals of increasing high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment, and postsecondary success.

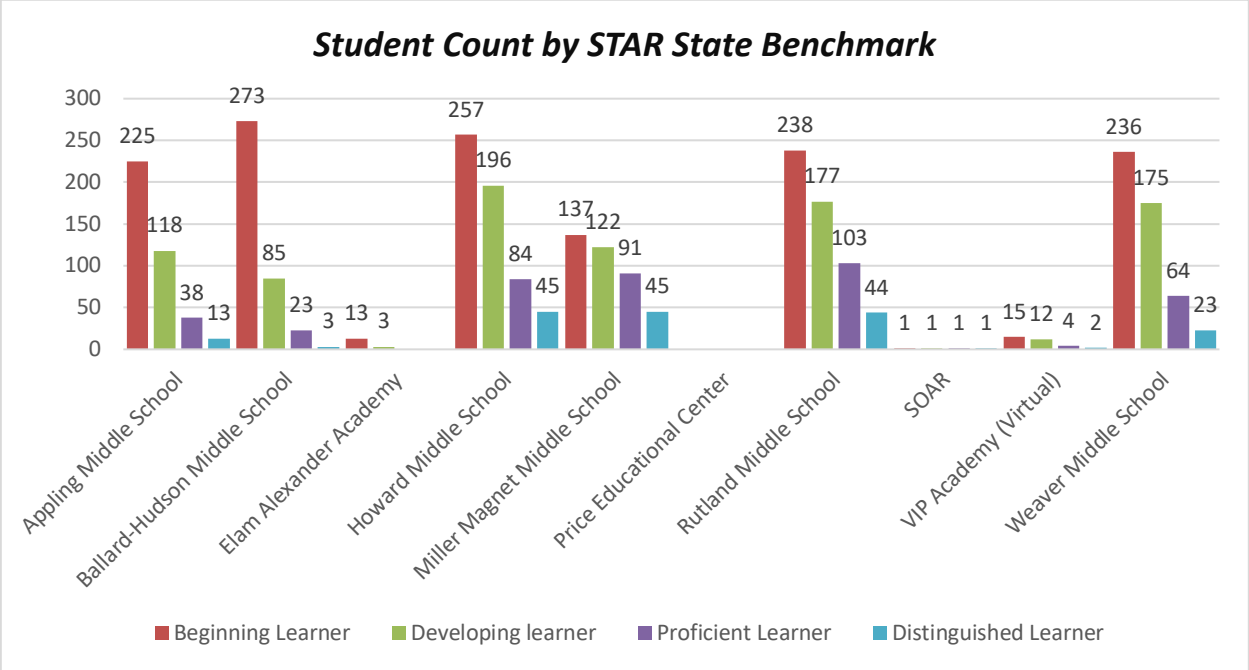
Student Outcome: STAR Math

Mathematics proficiency is a critical indicator of college and career readiness and serves as a cornerstone of the GEAR UP Built4Bibb (GU B4B) project's academic achievement goals. Success in middle school mathematics provides the foundation for Algebra I, advanced mathematics coursework, STEM pathways, high school graduation, and postsecondary success. Research consistently demonstrates that students who successfully complete Algebra I by the end of ninth grade and continue progressing through higher-level mathematics courses are substantially more likely to enroll in and

complete postsecondary education. Therefore, improving mathematics achievement is central to Goal 1 of the GEAR UP project, which focuses on increasing academic performance and preparing students for postsecondary education.

STAR Mathematics benchmark data were obtained through Renaissance STAR Mathematics assessments administered during the Winter benchmark window. Student performance data were extracted from district assessment reports and analyzed according to Renaissance benchmark performance levels. The Winter STAR Mathematics assessment establishes the official Year 1 mathematics baseline for the GEAR UP cohort. To establish the Year 1 mathematics baseline, GEAR UP analyzed Winter STAR Mathematics State Benchmark assessment data across participating schools. Student performance was classified into five benchmark categories: No Score, Beginning Learner, Developing Learner, Proficient Learner, and Distinguished Learner. These benchmark data provide the baseline from which future student growth and project effectiveness will be measured throughout the seven-year grant period. The baseline STAR Mathematics results are summarized in Figure 12 and provide an assessment of students' current levels of mathematical proficiency, establishing the foundation for measuring academic growth and monitoring progress toward the GEAR UP project's mathematics achievement objectives.

Figure 12.



Overall, the Winter STAR Mathematics results indicate substantial mathematics learning needs across the GEAR UP cohort. Of the 3,282 students included in the benchmark assessment, 1,395 students (42.5%) were identified as Beginning Learners, while 889 students (27.1%) were classified as Developing Learners. Collectively, 2,284 students (69.6%) performed below proficiency, indicating that nearly seven out of every ten assessed students require additional mathematics intervention and instructional support. In addition, 408 students (12.4%) demonstrated Proficient Learner performance, while 176 students (5.4%) achieved the Distinguished Learner designation. Together, 584 students (17.8%) met or exceeded grade-level mathematics expectations.

In contrast to several other student outcome measures, STAR Mathematics benchmark participation was strong, with only 414 students (12.6%) not receiving a benchmark score. This relatively low percentage of missing assessments provides the

district with a reliable baseline from which future mathematics growth can be evaluated. These findings establish mathematics achievement as one of the most significant academic priorities for the GEAR UP cohort and reinforce the need for comprehensive interventions designed to improve foundational mathematics skills, accelerate learning, and increase readiness for Algebra I and advanced coursework.

Disaggregated Analysis

School-level analyses reveal substantial variation in mathematics achievement across participating schools and highlight the importance of implementing differentiated interventions based on the academic needs of each school community. While mathematics challenges are evident throughout the GEAR UP cohort, the concentration of students performing below proficiency varies considerably by school, suggesting that instructional supports and intervention intensity should be strategically aligned with student performance data. Ballard-Hudson Middle School reported the highest number of Beginning Learners (273 students), followed by Howard Middle School (257), Rutland Middle School (238), Weaver Middle School (236), Appling Middle School (225), and Miller Magnet Middle School (137). Consequently, the concentration of Beginning Learners reflects both school enrollment and significant instructional need. The analysis shows that several schools had large numbers of students performing at the Developing, Proficient, and Distinguished levels. For example, Howard Middle School reported 196 Developing Learners, 84 Proficient Learners, and 45 Distinguished Learners, while Rutland Middle School reported 177 Developing Learners, 103 Proficient Learners, and 44

Distinguished Learners. Similarly, Miller Magnet Middle School enrolled 122 Developing Learners, 91 Proficient Learners, and 45 Distinguished Learners. These findings reinforce the importance of providing differentiated mathematics supports and a tiered intervention framework rather than implementing a one-size-fits-all districtwide intervention model.

Furthermore, these results suggest that effective instructional practices already exist in these schools and can be leveraged to support students performing below proficiency. Students identified as Beginning Learners will require intensive foundational mathematics instruction focused on number sense, mathematical reasoning, computational fluency, and conceptual understanding. Students classified as Developing Learners will benefit from targeted enrichment strategies designed to close remaining skill gaps and help them transition to proficiency. Conversely, students performing at the Proficient and Distinguished levels should be provided with opportunities for acceleration through advanced coursework, STEM experiences, problem-based learning, talent development in mathematics, and accelerated pathways to Algebra I and higher-level mathematics courses.

These findings will directly inform Year 2 implementation. Graduation Advisors will collaborate with mathematics teachers, instructional coaches, and school administrators to use STAR Mathematics benchmark data as an early warning indicator for identifying students requiring additional academic support. Schools with the largest concentrations of Beginning Learners (particularly the traditional middle schools: Ballard-Hudson, Howard, Rutland, Weaver, Appling, and Miller Magnet Middle Schools) will receive tiered mathematics tutoring, small-group intervention, individualized academic

success planning, and enhanced progress monitoring. At the same time, instructional leaders will examine practices occurring within schools demonstrating stronger mathematics outcomes to identify evidence-based strategies that can be replicated across the district. This differentiated, data-driven approach will strengthen mathematics achievement, improve readiness for Algebra I, increase grade-level promotion, and support the GEAR UP project's long-term goals of increasing academic achievement, high school graduation, and postsecondary success.

Students Performing at the Developing Learner Level

Students classified as Developing Learners have demonstrated emerging mathematical understanding but continue to require targeted instruction before reaching proficiency. Howard Middle School reported the largest number of Developing Learners (196 students), followed by Rutland Middle School (177), Weaver Middle School (175), Miller Magnet Middle School (122), Appling Middle School (118), and Ballard-Hudson Middle School (85). These students represent an important opportunity for enrichment and student growth, as targeted interventions may move many students into proficiency during the coming academic year.

Students Demonstrating Proficient and Distinguished Performance

Several schools demonstrated stronger mathematics outcomes. Howard Middle School reported the largest number of Proficient Learners (84 students), followed by Rutland Middle School (103), Miller Magnet Middle School (91), Weaver Middle School (64), Appling Middle School (38), and Ballard-Hudson Middle School (23).

Although these schools also reported relatively large Beginning Learner populations, as with STAR Reading, the presence of substantial numbers of Proficient students suggests opportunities to examine instructional practices that may be replicated to improve outcomes among struggling learners. Students achieving the Distinguished Learner designation demonstrated mathematics performance well above grade-level expectations. Howard Middle School and Miller Magnet Middle School each reported 45 Distinguished Learners, followed closely by Rutland Middle School (44), Weaver Middle School (23), Appling Middle School (13), Ballard-Hudson Middle School (3), VIP Academy (2), and SOAR (1). The concentration of Distinguished Learners at Howard, Miller Magnet, and Rutland Middle Schools demonstrates that high levels of mathematics achievement are attainable within the district and provides opportunities to identify effective instructional practices that can inform districtwide improvement efforts.

Students Without STAR Mathematics Scores

A total of 414 students did not receive a Winter STAR Mathematics benchmark score. The largest numbers of students without benchmark scores occurred at:

- SOAR: 77 students
- Howard Middle School: 74 students
- Weaver Middle School: 69 students
- Rutland Middle School: 55 students
- Ballard-Hudson Middle School: 41 students
- Miller Magnet Middle School: 35 students

- Appling Middle School: 28 students

Compared with other project assessment measures, benchmark participation was relatively strong. Nevertheless, increasing assessment participation during Year 2 will further strengthen the project's ability to monitor mathematics growth and evaluate intervention effectiveness. Overall, school-level analyses indicate that while mathematics challenges exist across all participating schools, intervention intensity should vary according to student need.

Findings and Implications

Several important findings emerged from the baseline STAR Mathematics analysis. First, mathematics achievement represents one of the greatest academic challenges facing the GEAR UP cohort. Nearly 70% of assessed students performed below proficiency, indicating widespread needs for foundational mathematics instruction and intervention. Second, fewer than 18% of students demonstrated proficiency or distinguished performance in mathematics, suggesting that relatively few students are currently on track for success in advanced mathematics coursework without additional academic support. Third, although several schools reported high numbers of Beginning Learners, those same schools also demonstrated substantial numbers of Proficient and Distinguished students. This suggests that effective mathematics instructional practices already exist within the district and may be leveraged to improve outcomes for struggling students. Finally, mathematics achievement directly influences nearly every academic outcome measured within the GEAR UP grant. Improvements in mathematics proficiency are expected to

increase Algebra I success, Georgia Milestones performance, grade-level promotion, enrollment in advanced coursework, STEM participation, college readiness, and ultimately postsecondary success.

Planned Improvements

Year 2 implementation will significantly expand mathematics interventions through the addition of Graduation Advisors and stronger collaboration with district mathematics instructional teams. Key mathematics improvement strategies include:

- Individual mathematics success plans developed using STAR Mathematics and i-Ready data
- Expanded after-school tutoring focused on numeracy, mathematical reasoning, problem-solving, and Algebra readiness
- Small-group mathematics interventions for Beginning and Developing Learners
- Integration of mathematics vocabulary and literacy strategies across content areas
- Quarterly progress monitoring using STAR Mathematics benchmark assessments
- Increased collaboration between Graduation Advisors, mathematics teachers, instructional coaches, and school administrators
- Summer mathematics enrichment opportunities
- Family mathematics engagement workshops focused on supporting mathematics learning at home
- Expanded utilization of Khan Academy, Edmentum, and other digital mathematics instructional platforms

- Targeted Algebra readiness programming for students transitioning to 7th and 8th grade

Graduation Advisors will monitor student mathematics progress, coordinate academic interventions, engage families in mathematics goal setting, and ensure students demonstrating the greatest mathematics needs receive timely support.

Performance Targets

During Year 2, GEAR UP Built4Bibb will prioritize the following mathematics outcomes:

- Reduce the percentage of students classified as Beginning Learners
- Increase the percentage of students performing at the Developing, Proficient, and Distinguished levels
- Improve readiness for Pre-Algebra and Algebra I
- Increase success in mathematics coursework and grade-level promotion
- Improve Georgia Milestones Mathematics performance
- Increase enrollment in advanced mathematics and STEM coursework
- Strengthen mathematics readiness for college entrance examinations and postsecondary education
- Increase participation in benchmark assessments across all participating schools.

Action Steps and Recommendations

Based on Year 1 baseline findings, GEAR UP Built4Bibb will implement the following actions during Year 2:

- Prioritize mathematics interventions at Ballard-Hudson, Howard, Rutland, Weaver, Appling, and Miller Magnet Middle Schools
- Utilize Graduation Advisors to develop individualized mathematics intervention plans for students across achievement levels
- Expand evidence-based mathematics tutoring and enrichment opportunities during and after school
- Conduct quarterly STAR Mathematics and i-Ready data reviews to monitor student progress
- Increase collaboration among mathematics teachers, instructional coaches, Graduation Advisors, and district instructional leadership
- Expand family engagement activities focused on mathematics achievement and Algebra readiness
- Utilize disaggregated mathematics data to identify achievement gaps among English Learners, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, students experiencing homelessness, foster youth, and other special populations.
- Monitor intervention effectiveness through the project's continuous improvement process and adjust instructional strategies based on student performance data

Student Outcome Data: Course Performance

Student course performance serves as one of the most important indicators of academic success, grade-level promotion, and long-term college and career readiness. As part of the Year 1 evaluation of GEAR UP Built4Bibb (GU B4B), student course grades were analyzed across core academic subjects and elective courses to establish baseline performance levels for the cohort and assess progress toward project objectives related to academic achievement, promotion, graduation readiness, and post-secondary preparation.

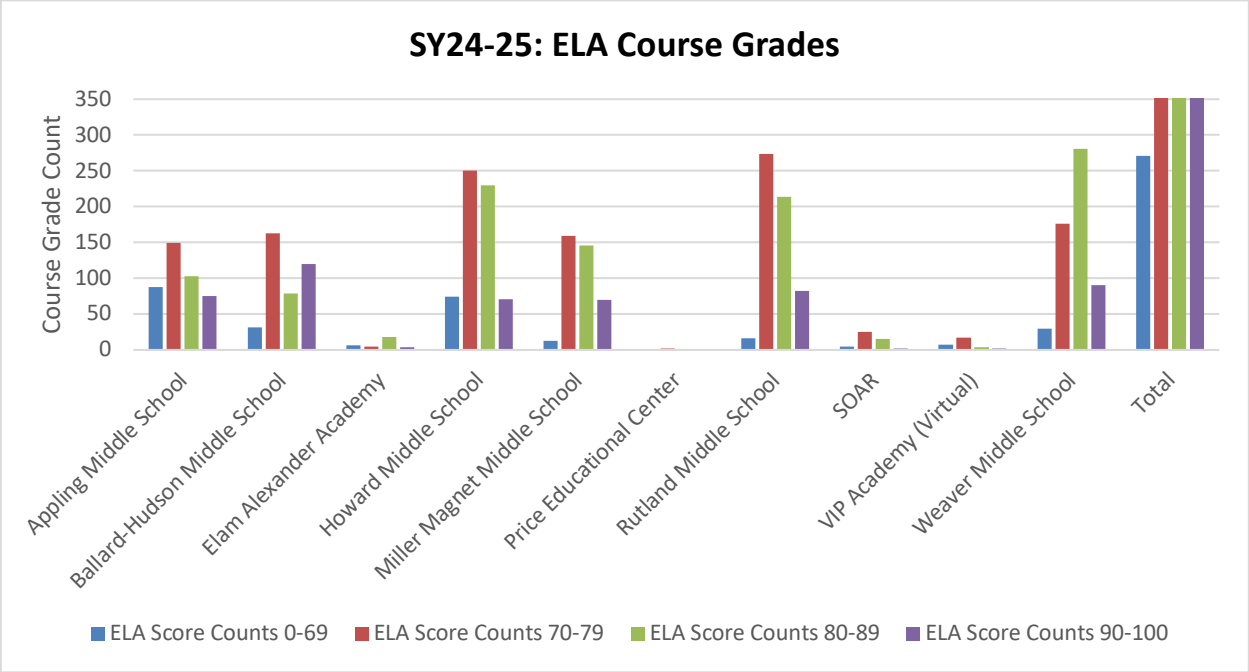
Student outcome data were collected from district student information systems and official end-of-year course grade reports. Analyzing course grades offers valuable insights into students' academic strengths and areas where they need additional support. Successful completion of coursework is directly linked to promotion to the next grade, graduation eligibility, and access to advanced academic opportunities. Therefore, monitoring course performance is a crucial element of the project's continuous improvement process. The findings presented below establish a baseline for future comparisons and inform the intervention strategies for Year 2, aimed at enhancing academic outcomes for participating students.

Year 1 course performance data indicate that most of the GEAR UP Built4Bibb students are successfully meeting academic expectations and remain on track for grade-level promotion. Across all core academic subjects, between 88 and 92 percent of students earned passing grades of 70 or higher, demonstrating that most cohort students possess the

foundational academic skills necessary for continued academic progression and future graduation readiness.

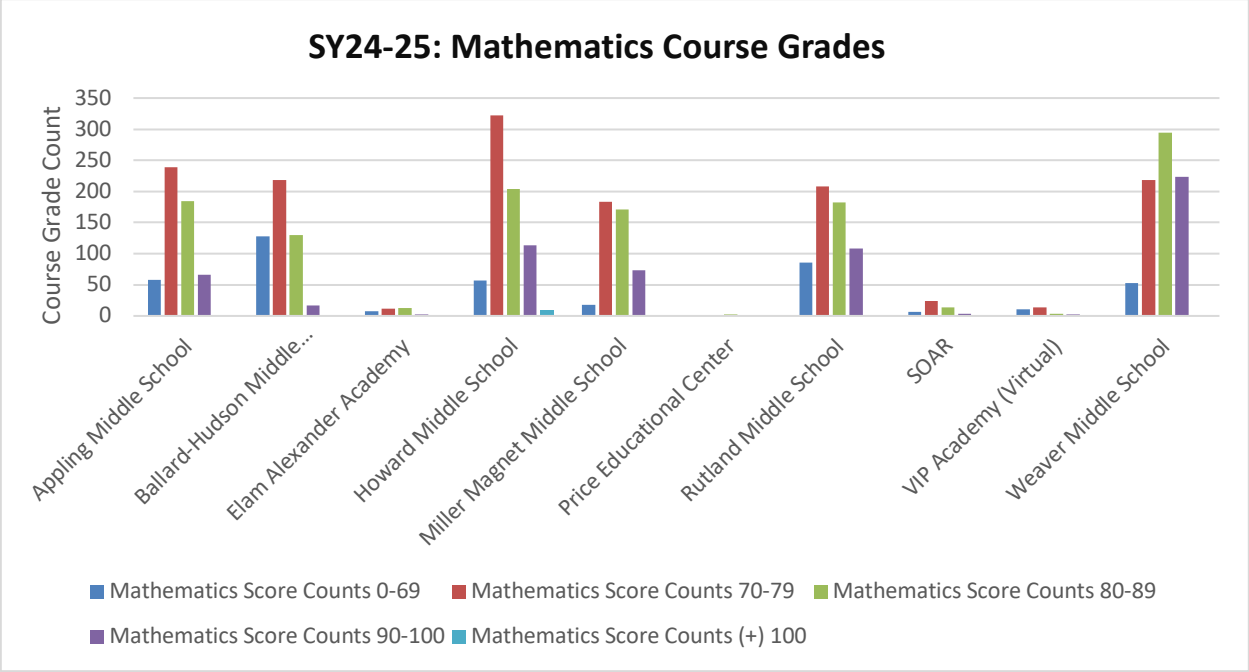
English Language Arts performance was particularly encouraging. Of the 3,099 students with available grades, 2,827 students earned passing grades of 70 or higher, resulting in an overall passing rate of approximately 91.2 percent. The largest percentage of students earned grades between 70 and 79 (39.4 percent), followed by grades between 80 and 89 (35.2 percent). Additionally, 516 students earned grades of 90 or higher, indicating that a substantial number of students are performing at advanced levels. However, 271 students earned grades below 70, highlighting the need for continued literacy interventions and academic support.

Figure 13.



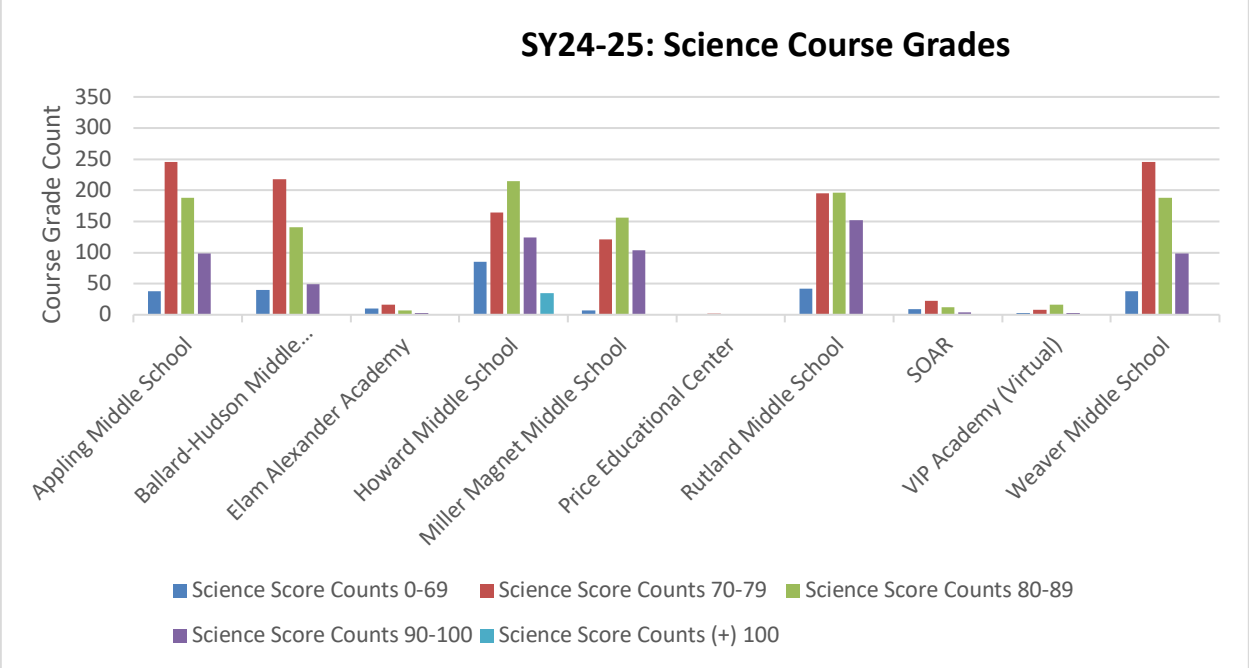
Mathematics performance has emerged as the area of greatest need among the core academic subjects. Out of 3,677 students with available mathematics grades, approximately 88.2 percent received passing marks. Among these students, 607 achieved grades of 90 or higher, while 1,197 earned grades between 80 and 89. The largest group consisted of 1,439 students who earned grades between 70 and 79. Additionally, 425 students received grades below 70, which represents the highest number of failing grades across all subjects. These findings are consistent with results from the Georgia Milestones, STAR Math, and i-Ready assessments, all of which indicate that mathematics is a critical area in need of additional intervention and support.

Figure 14.



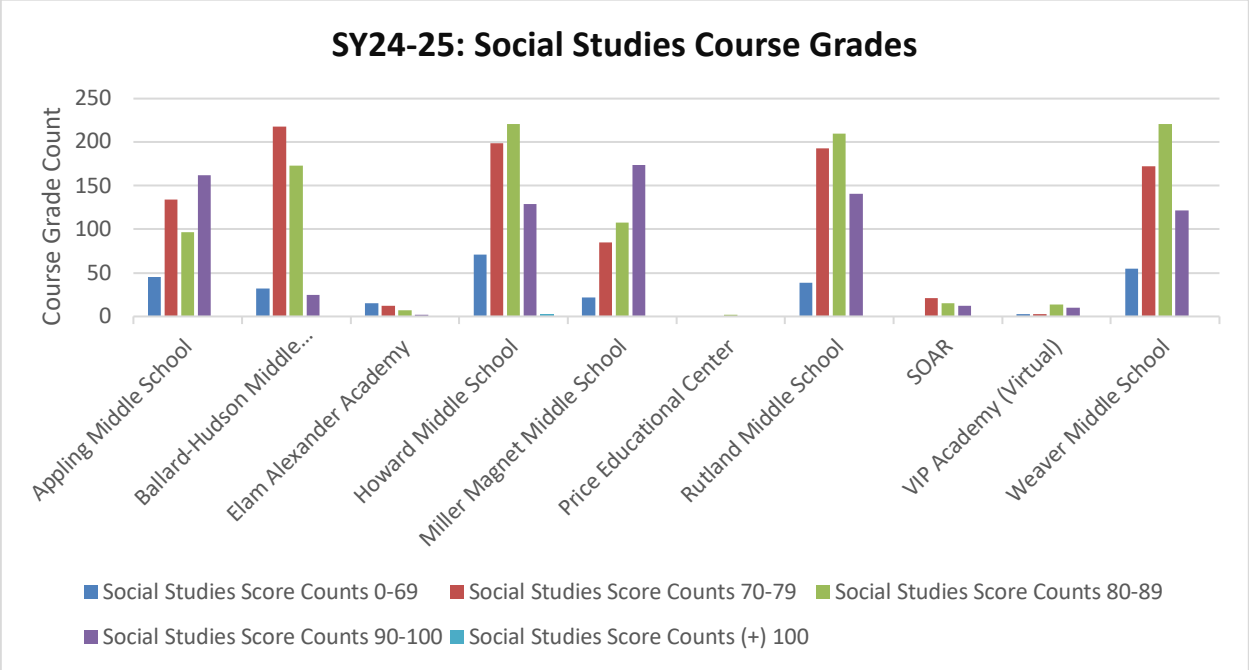
Science performance reflected generally positive academic outcomes. Out of 3,166 students with available science grades, 2,924 earned passing grades, resulting in an overall passing rate of approximately 92.4 percent. Nearly 20 percent of students achieved grades of 90 or higher, while an additional 35.6 percent received grades between 80 and 89. Only 242 students earned grades below 70, indicating that most students are demonstrating a strong understanding of science content and are well-positioned to benefit from expanded STEM learning opportunities.

Figure 15.



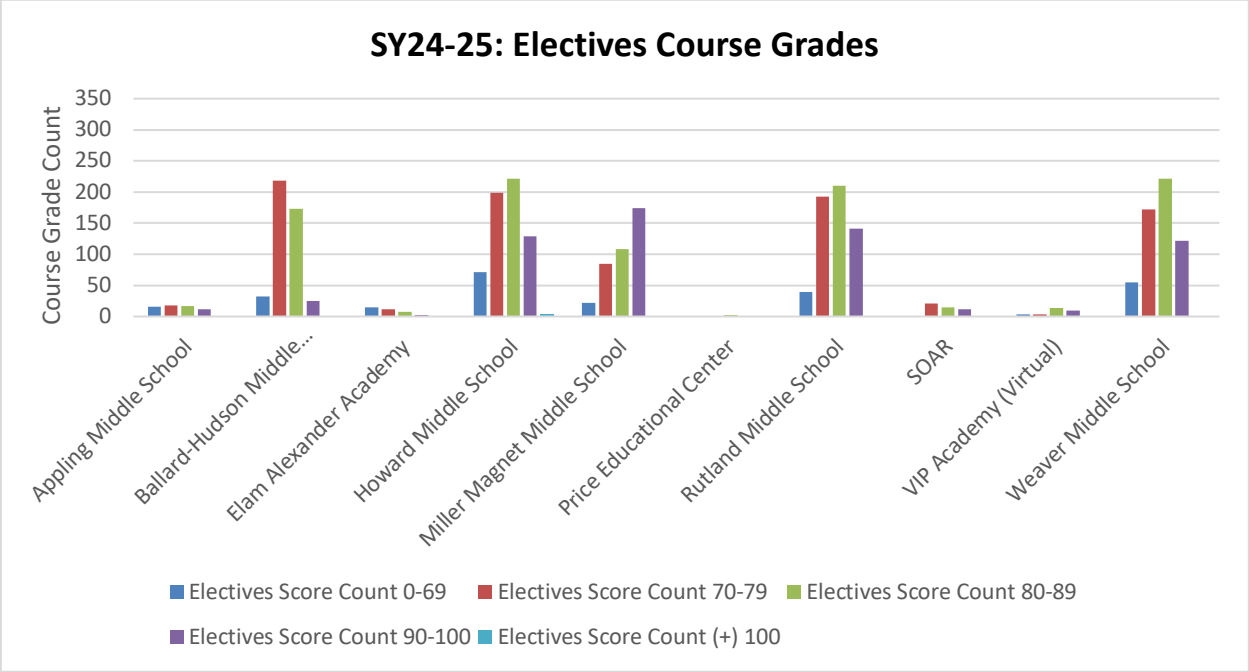
Similarly, Social Studies performance was strong across the cohort. Out of 3,167 students with available grades, 2,885 earned passing grades, leading to a passing rate of about 91.1 percent. More than half of the students received grades of 80 or higher, including 777 students who scored between 90 and 100. These results indicate that students are effectively developing the reading, analytical, and critical-thinking skills essential for academic success.

Figure 16.



The strongest performance was observed in elective courses. Of the 6,847 elective course grades reported, approximately 95.1 percent reflected successful course completion. More than half of all elective grades were in the 90–100 range, while nearly one-quarter were in the 80–89 range. Only 336 elective grades fell below 70. These outcomes suggest that students perform particularly well in learning environments that emphasize student interest, engagement, career exploration, creativity, and applied learning experiences.

Figure 17.



Collectively, the course performance data indicate that most GEAR UP students are progressing academically and meeting promotion requirements. However, the concentration of students earning grades in the 70–79 range, particularly in Mathematics and English Language Arts, suggests that many students remain academically vulnerable and would benefit from continued tutoring, mentoring, academic monitoring, and targeted intervention services. These findings reinforce the importance of GEAR UP's comprehensive academic support model and highlight opportunities to strengthen academic outcomes, increase promotion rates, and improve long-term college and career readiness.

The Year 1 findings further demonstrate that GEAR UP services are strategically aligned to address identified academic needs. Through high-dosage tutoring, small-group interventions, Graduation Advisor support, progress monitoring, afterschool programming, STEM enrichment, mentoring, family engagement, and individualized

student success planning, the project is building the academic foundation necessary for students to improve course grades, maintain promotion eligibility, succeed in rigorous coursework, and ultimately meet the project's long-term goals related to high school graduation, college readiness, and post-secondary enrollment.

Disaggregated Analysis

Several important patterns emerge from the Year 1 course performance data. First, passing rates exceeded 88 percent across all academic subjects, indicating that most GEAR UP students remain on track for grade-level promotion. This finding aligns with the project's objective of increasing academic success and ensuring students remain eligible for advancement toward high school graduation. Second, Mathematics remains the most significant area of need. Mathematics recorded both the lowest passing rate and the highest number of failing grades among all content areas. These findings are consistent with baseline Georgia Milestones, STAR Math, and i-Ready assessment results, which identified mathematics achievement gaps among cohort students. Third, a substantial percentage of students are concentrated within the 70–79 grade range across all core subjects. While these students are technically passing, they remain academically vulnerable and may be at increased risk of future academic difficulties if additional supports are not provided. Finally, students demonstrate substantially stronger performance in elective courses than in core academic subjects. This finding suggests that instructional strategies that increase student engagement, relevance, project-based learning, and career connections may help improve outcomes across academic content areas.

Findings and Implications

The Year 1 course performance data indicates that the majority of GEAR UP students are successfully progressing toward grade-level promotion and future graduation. Strong passing rates across all academic subjects demonstrate that many students possess the foundational academic skills necessary for long-term success. However, the findings also highlight the need for continued intervention. Mathematics achievement remains a significant need, and a large proportion of students are performing at levels that place them at risk of future academic challenges. These students represent an important target population for tutoring, mentoring, academic monitoring, and intervention services.

The results further suggest that increasing student engagement through experiential learning, STEM enrichment, career exploration, and project-based instructional approaches may contribute positively to academic outcomes and should remain a key component of project implementation. Furthermore, the large proportion of students earning grades within the 70–79 range presents a significant opportunity for academic growth. With targeted supports, many of these students can move from minimal proficiency to higher levels of achievement. Improving performance among this group will not only strengthen promotion rates but also increase readiness for advanced coursework, high school graduation requirements, and post-secondary opportunities.

GEAR UP Services Support Student Promotion and Academic Success

The GEAR UP Built4Bibb project was intentionally designed to improve course performance and increase student promotion rates through a comprehensive system of academic and non-academic supports. Key services include:

1) High-dosage tutoring in English Language Arts and Mathematics;
2) Small-group academic interventions;
3) Individualized student success planning;
4) Academic mentoring and Graduation Advisor support;
5) Progress monitoring using district and diagnostic assessment data;
6) STEM enrichment and experiential learning opportunities;
7) After-school and summer academic programming;
8) College readiness and career exploration activities;
9) Family engagement and academic support workshops; and
10) Social-emotional learning and attendance interventions.

These supports are designed to strengthen classroom performance, build foundational academic skills, increase student engagement, and keep students on track for promotion, graduation, and post-secondary success. The Graduation Advisor model is a key part of this intervention framework, providing individualized monitoring of grades, attendance, behavior, and engagement. Advisors work with students, families, teachers, and school administrators to identify barriers to academic success and coordinate timely supports. Students identified as academically at risk receive targeted tutoring, mentoring, and case management to improve course performance and prevent course failure.

GEAR UP's focus on college and career readiness helps students connect their current academic performance to future educational opportunities. Through college visits, career exploration, financial literacy education, STEM programming, and goal-setting activities, students strengthen their educational aspirations and motivation to succeed. Research shows that students who understand how academic achievement supports their future goals are more likely to persist in school and perform at higher levels.

Year 2 Action Steps and Recommendations

Based on Year 1 findings, the project will prioritize the following actions during Year 2:

1) Expand mathematics intervention services for students earning grades below 80.
2) Implement targeted supports for students in the 70–79 grade range to prevent academic decline.
3) Increase collaboration between Graduation Advisors, teachers, and families to monitor student progress.
4) Utilize early warning indicators to identify students at risk of course failure.
5) Expand tutoring and academic support opportunities during and beyond the school day.
6) Strengthen STEM enrichment and project-based learning opportunities to improve student engagement.
7) Increase attendance monitoring and intervention efforts for students demonstrating chronic absenteeism.

8) Utilize quarterly grade reviews to evaluate progress and adjust intervention strategies.
9) Implement data-driven intervention plans for students demonstrating multiple academic risk factors.
10) Expand family engagement efforts focused on supporting academic achievement and promotion requirements.

Through these coordinated strategies, GEAR UP Built4Bibb is expected to improve course performance, increase promotion rates, strengthen graduation readiness, and advance progress toward the project's long-term goals for post-secondary enrollment and success. By providing sustained academic, social-emotional, and college readiness supports, the project helps students improve academically while building a stronger pathway to high school completion and post-secondary achievement.

Student Outcome Data: Attendance

Student attendance is one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement, grade-level promotion, high school graduation, and postsecondary success. Consistent school attendance provides students with greater access to rigorous instruction, academic interventions, college and career readiness experiences, mentoring, and social-emotional supports that collectively contribute to long-term educational attainment. As part of the Year 1 evaluation process, GEAR UP Built4Bibb (GU B4B) established baseline attendance measures for the cohort by examining excused absences, unexcused absences, and tardiness across both the Fall (Term 1) and Spring (Term 2) semesters. These baseline data

provide an important benchmark for monitoring future progress toward Goal 2, which seeks to ensure that GEAR UP students maintain attendance rates that exceed the statewide average while increasing academic achievement, grade-level promotion, high school graduation, and postsecondary enrollment.

Attendance findings were derived from official Bibb County School District student attendance records maintained through the district's student information system. Data were collected for each participating GEAR UP school and categorized according to the number of excused absences, unexcused absences, and tardy incidents accumulated during both Fall (Term 1) and Spring (Term 2). These attendance records establish the Year 1 baseline against which future annual attendance outcomes will be measured. Analysis of Year 1 attendance data indicates that although most students maintained relatively low numbers of absences, a substantial number of students in the cohort experienced chronic absenteeism, placing them at increased risk of lower academic performance, reduced classroom engagement, disciplinary concerns, and delayed educational progress. The data further suggest that attendance challenges intensified during the Spring semester, reinforcing the importance of implementing proactive attendance interventions throughout the academic year. Year 1 attendance data were collected for 3,412 GEAR UP cohort students (across seven participating schools and 3 special schools/programs) and included three primary attendance indicators: excused absences, unexcused absences, and tardiness. Attendance data were analyzed for both Fall (Term 1) and Spring (Term 2) semesters to identify seasonal trends and establish baseline measures for future comparison.

Excused Absences

Excused absences remained relatively stable between the two academic terms. During Fall (Term 1), participating schools recorded approximately 1,607 excused absences, while Spring (Term 2) reflected a comparable total of approximately 1,501 excused absences. Most students accumulated between one and three excused absences each semester, suggesting that most excused absences were due to routine illnesses, medical appointments, or other approved circumstances.

Schools reporting the largest numbers of excused absences included:

- Rutland Middle School
- Howard Middle School

Although excused absences are generally unavoidable, students with repeated excused absences remain at risk of missing important instructional opportunities. Consequently, continued monitoring and academic support remain essential to ensure that missed instructional time does not negatively affect student achievement.

Figure 18.

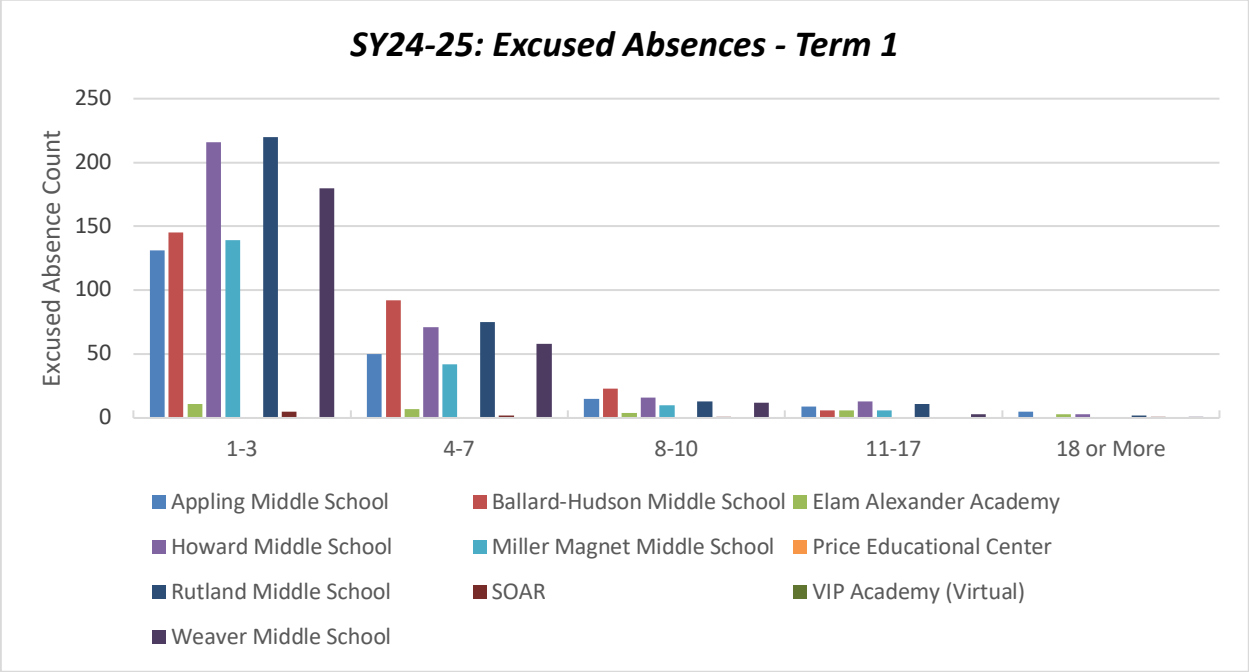
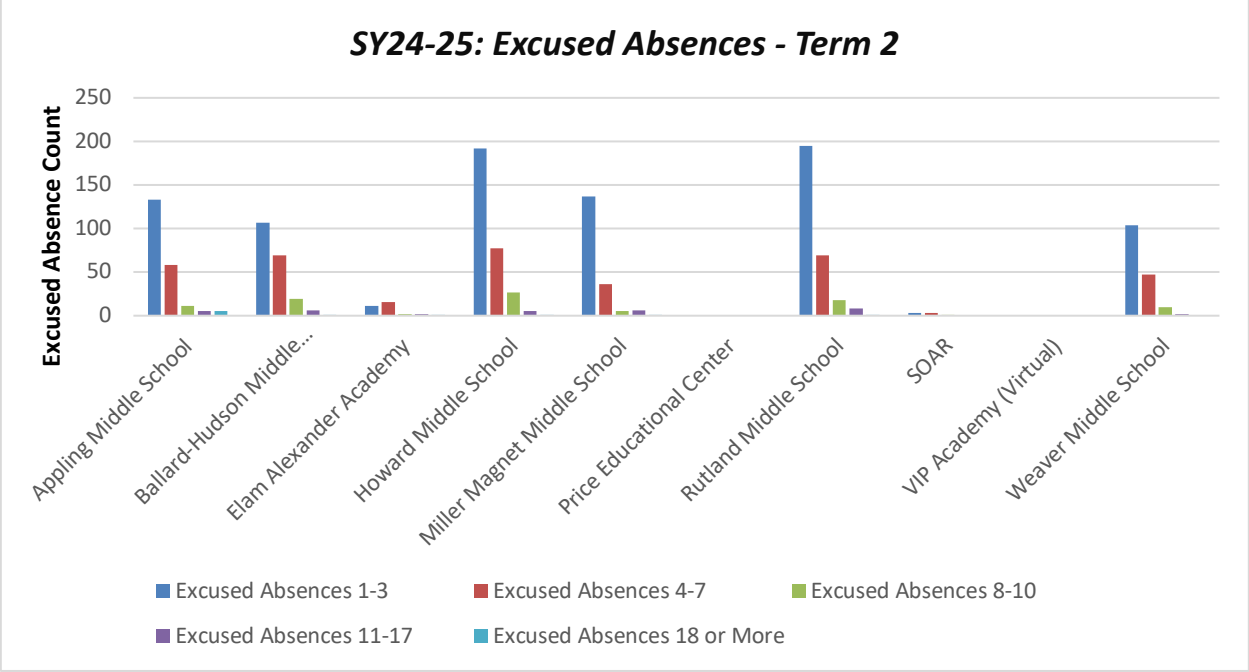


Figure 19.



Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences emerged as a more significant area of need for the District to address through the GEAR UP project. During Fall (Term 1), participating schools reported approximately 3,016 unexcused absences. By Spring (Term 2), this number increased to approximately 3,281 unexcused absences, representing nearly a 9 percent increase over the course of the academic year. Several schools experienced particularly higher levels of unexcused absences than other target schools, including:

- Howard Middle School
- Weaver Middle School
- Rutland Middle School

It is equally important to note the increase in students experiencing 11–17 absences and 18 or more absences, categories commonly associated with chronic absenteeism. Nearly every participating middle school experienced increases in these higher absentee categories during the Spring semester. These patterns suggest that attendance challenges accumulated throughout the school year and became increasingly difficult to reverse without targeted intervention. Since chronic absenteeism is strongly associated with lower academic achievement, increased behavioral referrals, reduced engagement, grade retention, and decreased likelihood of postsecondary enrollment, these findings represent one of the project's highest priorities for Year 2 implementation.

Figure 20.

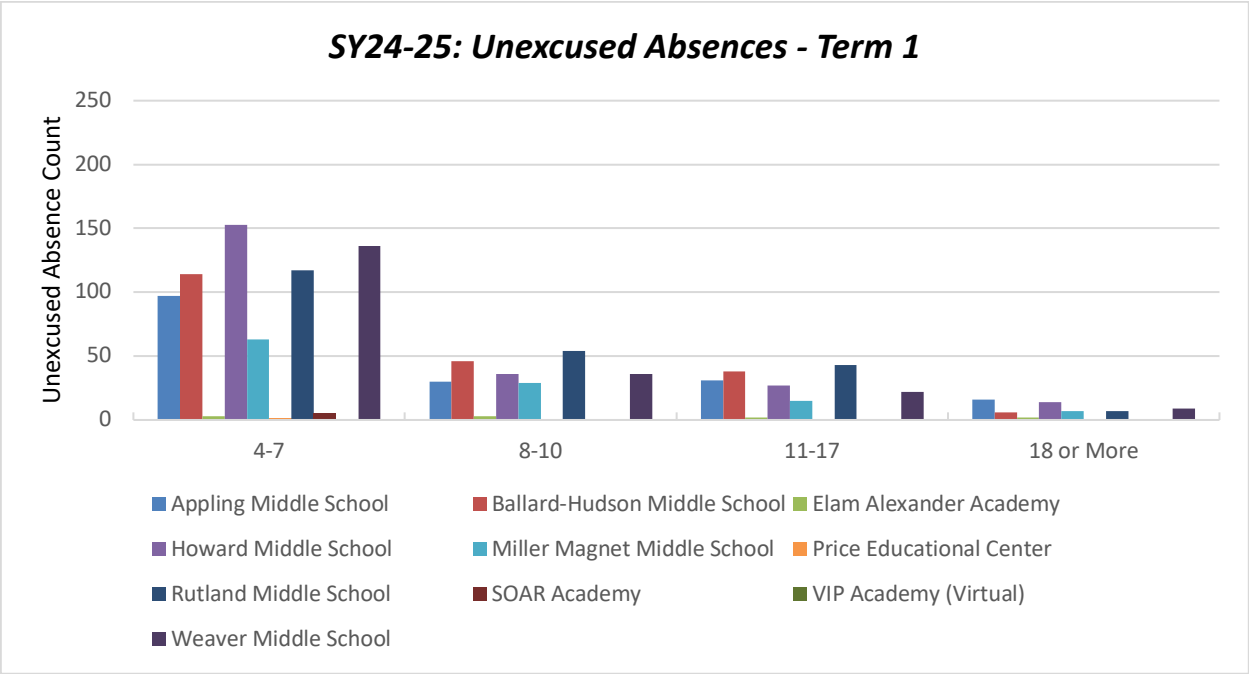
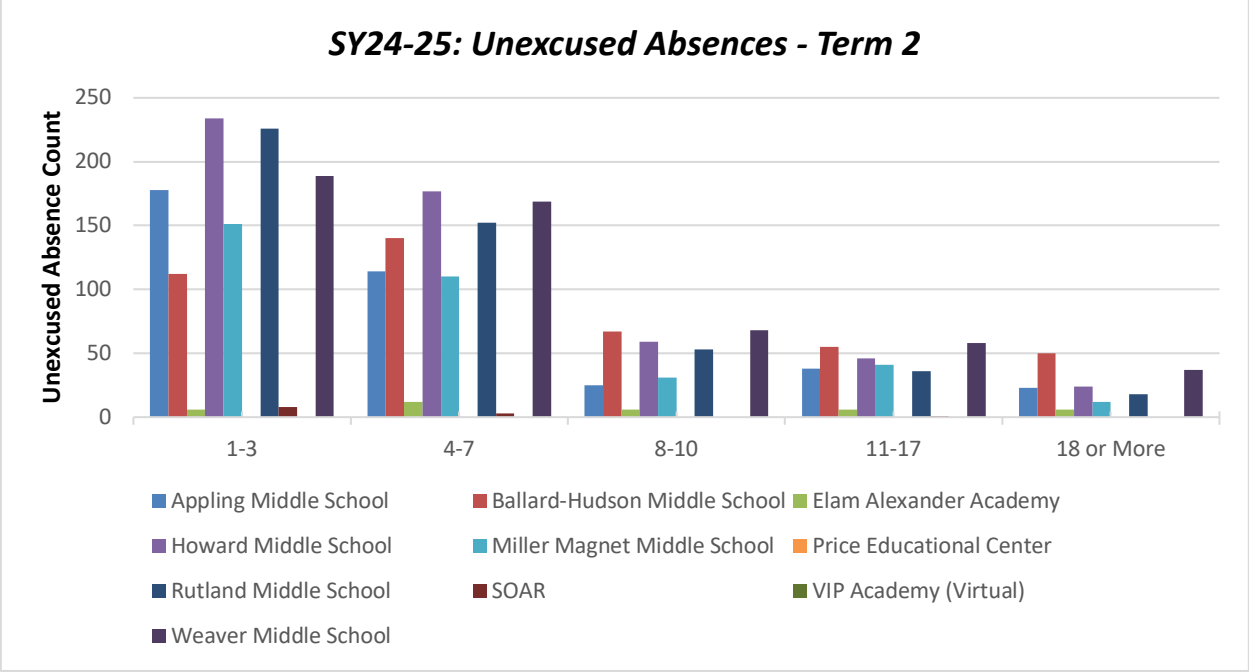


Figure 21.



Student Tardiness

Student tardiness also increased considerably between semesters. During Fall (Term 1), schools reported approximately 149 tardy incidents, while Spring (Term 2) increased to approximately 263 tardy incidents, representing more than a 100 percent increase.

The most notable increases occurred at:

- Howard Middle School
- Weaver Middle School
- Ballard-Hudson Middle School
- Miller Magnet Middle School

Although tardiness does not remove students from school entirely, repeated late arrivals reduce instructional time, interrupt classroom learning, decrease student engagement, and often serve as an early warning indicator for future attendance problems. These findings further support the need for early attendance intervention strategies.

Figure 22.

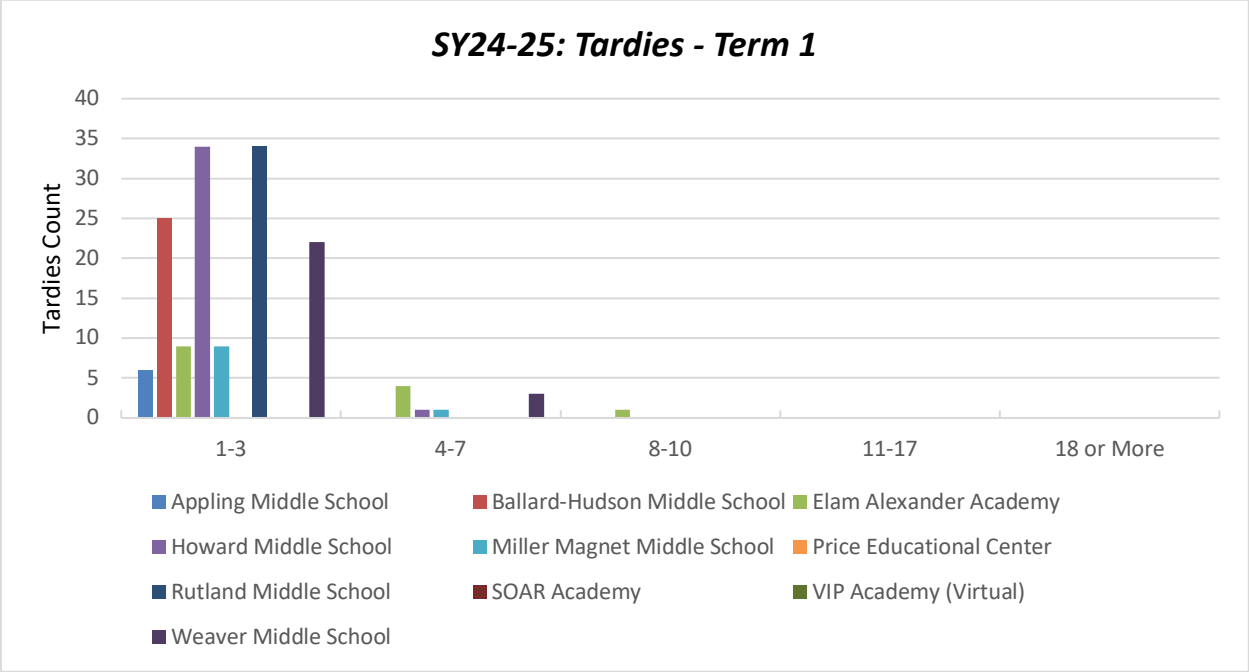
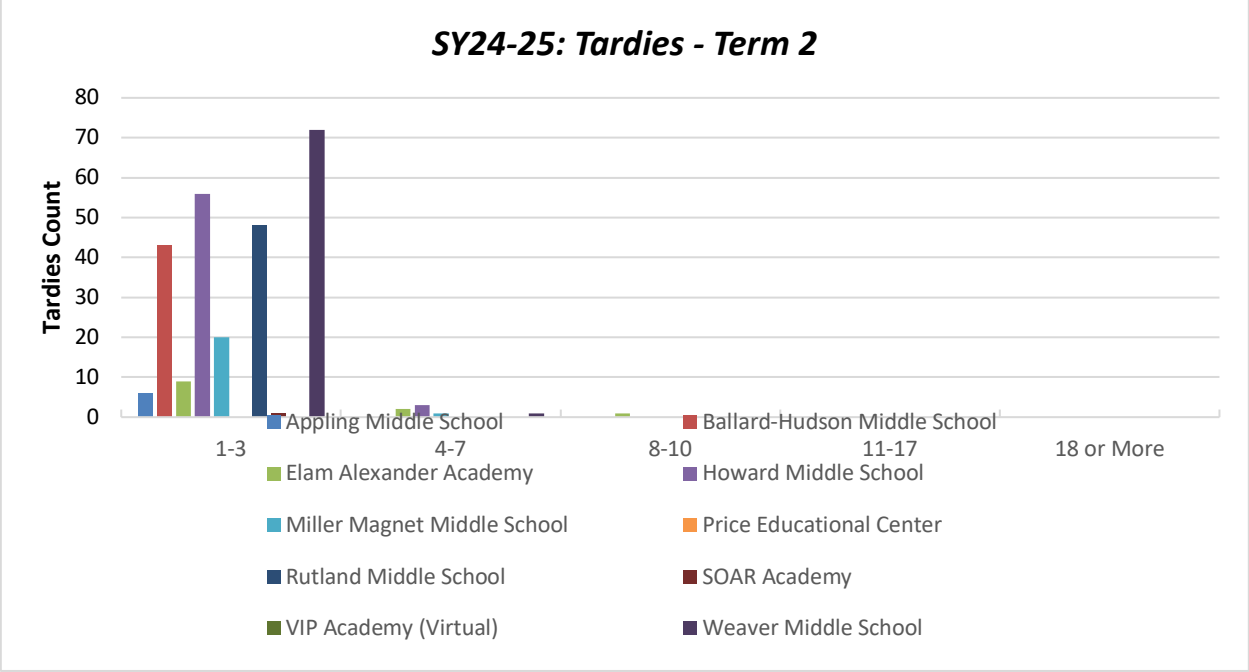


Figure 23.



Disaggregated Analysis

Attendance patterns varied across participating schools, suggesting that local school contexts, student demographics, transportation challenges, community factors, and school climate may contribute differently to attendance outcomes. An additional trend observed in the baseline analysis was an increase in attendance concerns in the Spring semester. Across nearly every attendance indicator, schools reported greater numbers of students accumulating higher absence categories later in the academic year. This trend suggests that attendance interventions should not only focus on students already exhibiting chronic absenteeism but also include preventive strategies implemented early in the school year, before attendance patterns become entrenched.

GEAR UP Strategies to Improve Attendance Outcomes

Improving attendance will remain a major priority during Year 2 and throughout the remaining years of the GEAR UP grant. With the successful hiring and placement of Graduation Advisors across participating schools, the project is significantly better positioned to provide proactive attendance interventions and individualized student support than was possible during the startup year. Graduation Advisors will utilize attendance data as an early warning indicator to identify students demonstrating patterns of chronic absenteeism or declining attendance before those patterns significantly affect academic performance. Advisors will collaborate with school administrators, counselors, school-based teams, teachers, families, and community organizations to develop individualized attendance improvement plans that address the underlying causes of absenteeism.

The project will implement multiple attendance improvement strategies, including:

- Weekly attendance monitoring and early warning reports.
- Individual student attendance improvement plans.
- Attendance mentoring and check-in/check-out systems.
- Student goal setting and attendance recognition programs.
- Parent communication and home outreach.
- Family attendance workshops emphasize the relationship between attendance, academic success, and college readiness.
- Case management services coordinated through Communities In Schools.
- Referrals, Placement, and Follow-Up for transportation assistance, housing support, mental health services, and other wraparound resources when attendance barriers are identified.
- Integration of attendance discussions into college and career readiness advising sessions.
- Collaboration with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and school attendance teams.

These coordinated interventions will address both academic and non-academic barriers to attendance while strengthening students' connection to school and increasing engagement in GEAR UP programming.

Action Steps and Recommendations

Based on Year 1 attendance findings, GEAR UP Built4Bibb will implement the following actions during Year 2:

- Establish Weekly attendance reviews using real-time student data.
- Utilize Graduation Advisors to conduct individualized attendance monitoring and intervention.
- Expand Communities In Schools case management services for students demonstrating chronic absenteeism.
- Increase parent engagement through attendance awareness campaigns and family conferences.
- Implement attendance incentive and recognition programs that encourage positive attendance behaviors.
- Strengthen partnerships with school attendance teams, counselors, social workers, and community agencies to address barriers affecting school attendance.
- Utilize attendance data alongside academic, behavioral, and social-emotional indicators to provide comprehensive student support.
- Utilize the TYS Data Management System to further examine attendance outcomes by race and ethnicity, gender, English Learner status, students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, foster youth, economically disadvantaged students, gifted students, and other special populations to ensure equitable access to attendance supports and identify any subgroup disparities requiring targeted intervention.

- Conduct ongoing evaluation of attendance interventions to determine effectiveness and make continuous improvements based on implementation data.

Conclusion

Year 1 attendance data established a critical baseline for monitoring one of the strongest predictors of student success throughout the GEAR UP grant. While many students maintained satisfactory attendance, increases in unexcused absences and tardiness during the Spring semester indicate that attendance remains a significant area of need for the GEAR UP cohort. Through the implementation of comprehensive attendance monitoring, individualized case management, mentoring, family engagement, wraparound supports, and data-informed intervention strategies, GEAR UP Built4Bibb will work to improve student attendance, strengthen academic engagement, increase grade-level promotion, and support the project's long-term goals of improving high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, and college and career success.

Student Outcome Data: Student Behavior, Social-Emotional Learning, and Affective Development

Student behavior, social-emotional development, and affective growth are critical indicators of educational success and play a significant role in academic achievement, attendance, grade-level promotion, graduation, and post-secondary readiness. Research consistently demonstrates that students who exhibit positive behavioral skills, emotional regulation, self-management, resilience, and strong interpersonal competencies are more likely to achieve academic success and persist through educational challenges.

Consequently, GEAR UP Built4Bibb (GU B4B) views social-emotional learning (SEL) and behavioral development as essential components of its comprehensive college and career readiness framework.

As part of Year 1 implementation, behavioral data were reviewed to establish baseline indicators of student conduct, school engagement, and social-emotional needs. Behavioral outcome data was obtained through district discipline reporting systems and student information databases. These data provide valuable insight into areas requiring intervention and inform the development of targeted supports designed to improve student outcomes and increase the likelihood of grade-level promotion and long-term educational success.

Behavioral Performance Summary

During Year 1, a total of 1,913 disciplinary incidents were recorded among students within the GEAR UP cohort. While many students demonstrated positive school engagement and appropriate conduct, the frequency and distribution of disciplinary incidents reveal important opportunities for intervention and support.

A review of disciplinary data indicates that many behavioral referrals were concentrated in three categories: Student Incivility, Disorderly Conduct, and Fighting. Student Incivility represented the largest category, accounting for 605 incidents (31.6 percent) of all disciplinary events. Disorderly Conduct accounted for 541 incidents (28.3 percent), while Fighting represented 535 incidents (28.0 percent). Collectively, these three categories accounted for nearly 88 percent of all behavioral incidents, indicating that most

disciplinary concerns were associated with interpersonal interactions, conflict management, emotional regulation, and behavioral self-control rather than serious safety violations. Behavior incident data are summarized in Figures 24-25 and provide a baseline understanding of student disciplinary trends, enabling the project to identify patterns that will inform targeted behavioral, social-emotional, and student-engagement interventions.

Figure 24

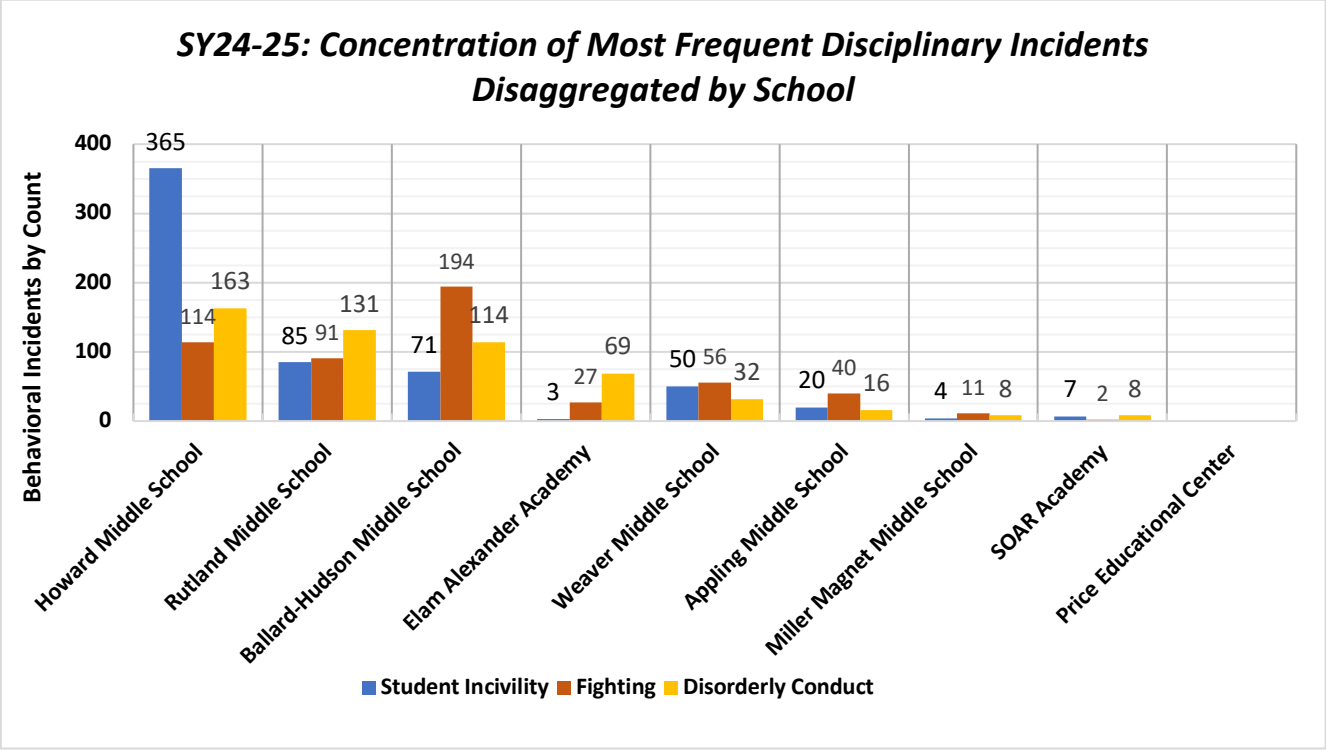
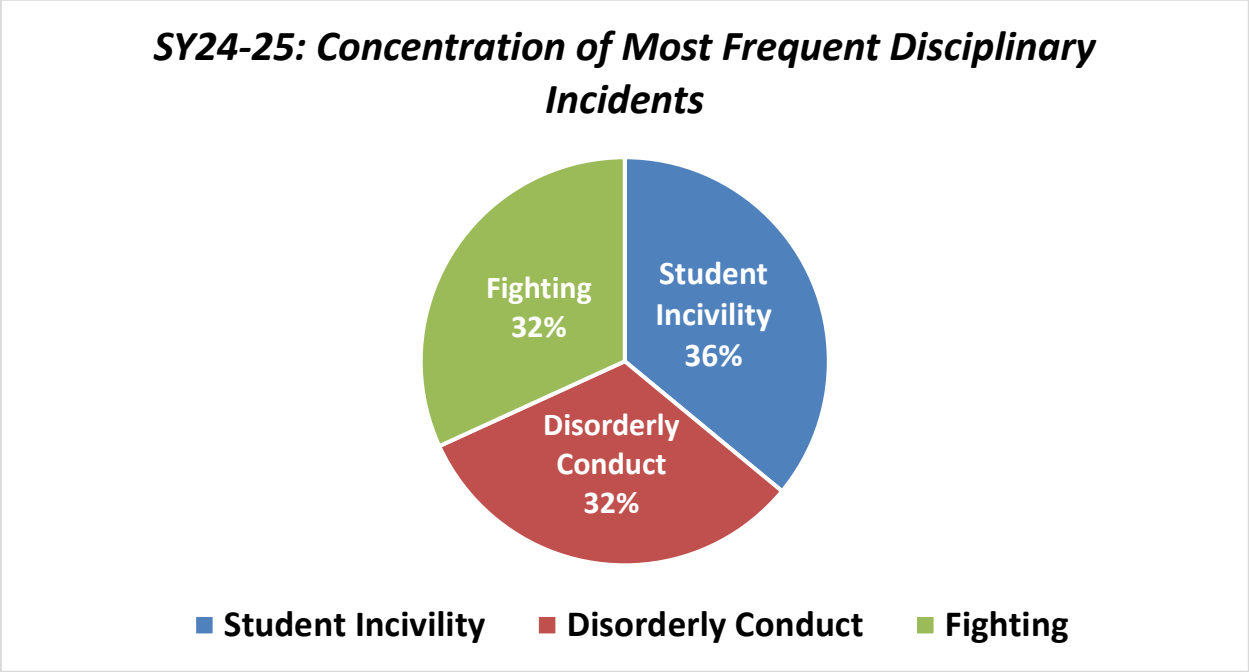


Figure 25.



Additional disciplinary incidents occurred less frequently but provided important insight into student support needs. Possession of Unapproved Items accounted for 94 incidents (4.9 percent), while Attendance-Related violations represented 51 incidents (2.7 percent). The category identified as Other accounted for 37 incidents (1.9 percent), and Technology Misuse accounted for 23 incidents (1.2 percent). Smaller numbers of incidents were reported for Larceny/Theft (9 incidents), Repeated Offenses (6 incidents), Threats or Intimidation (4 incidents combined), Academic Dishonesty (2 incidents), Gang-Related activity (2 incidents), and several isolated incidents involving more serious behavioral concerns.

Analysis of behavioral incidents throughout the academic year reveals important trends that can inform future intervention efforts. Incident levels were relatively low during the opening months of the school year, with 129 incidents recorded in August and 126

incidents in September. Referrals increased substantially during the fall semester, reaching 195 incidents in October and peaking at 272 incidents in November, the highest monthly total recorded during the year. Although incidents declined somewhat during the winter months, behavioral concerns increased again during the spring semester, with 234 incidents in March, 250 incidents in April, and 238 incidents in May. These patterns suggest that behavioral challenges tend to intensify during periods of increased academic pressure, testing preparation, student fatigue, and prolonged exposure to school stressors.

The timing of incidents demonstrates that student behavior is not evenly distributed throughout the academic year. Instead, behavioral concerns tend to cluster during predictable periods, creating opportunities for GEAR UP to strategically deploy social-emotional and behavioral interventions before incidents escalate.

Analysis of incident location data provides additional insight into student behavioral patterns and school climate needs. Many disciplinary incidents occurred in structured school environments where students spend most of their instructional time. Classrooms accounted for 879 incidents (45.9 percent), representing nearly half of all behavioral referrals during the reporting period. An additional 654 incidents (34.2 percent) occurred in general on-campus locations, while 127 incidents (6.6 percent) occurred in other indoor areas, 83 incidents (4.3 percent) occurred in restrooms, and 60 incidents (3.1 percent) occurred in cafeterias.

Smaller numbers of incidents occurred in bus loading areas (15 incidents), gymnasiums (30 incidents), other outdoor areas (12 incidents), school-sponsored transportation settings (7 incidents), and various off-campus locations (45 incidents

combined). Collectively, classroom and general on-campus incidents accounted for more than 80 percent of all behavioral referrals, suggesting that behavioral challenges are occurring primarily within instructional and school-based environments rather than in community settings.

The concentration of incidents within classrooms indicates that student behavior is closely connected to academic engagement, peer interactions, classroom management practices, and students' ability to regulate emotions and behavior within structured learning environments. These findings further reinforce the need for integrated academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions.

Disaggregated Analysis

Analysis of behavioral incident data reveals several important patterns. First, the overwhelming majority of disciplinary incidents involve interpersonal interactions, emotional regulation, conflict management, and behavioral self-control rather than severe safety concerns. Since Student Incivility, Fighting, and Disorderly Conduct collectively account for approximately 88 percent of all disciplinary events, the data suggests that many students require additional support related to social and emotional learning.

Second, the relatively small number of incidents involving theft, gang-related activity, threats, academic dishonesty, or serious misconduct suggests that the primary behavioral challenges facing the cohort are developmental rather than criminal or safety-related in nature. This distinction is important because it indicates that proactive social-emotional learning interventions may be highly effective in reducing future disciplinary incidents.

Third, the monthly discipline patterns suggest that behavioral concerns escalate during predictable periods of the school year. The sharp increase in incidents during October and November may reflect students adjusting to academic expectations, increased workloads, social pressures, and attendance concerns. Likewise, the increase observed during March through May coincides with Georgia Milestones preparation, end-of-year academic demands, and student fatigue. These findings suggest that behavioral interventions should be intensified before and during these high-risk periods rather than delivered uniformly throughout the school year.

Fourth, analysis of incident locations reveals that behavioral challenges are concentrated within instructional settings and common school areas. The concentration of incidents within classrooms suggests that behavioral challenges are often occurring during instructional activities rather than during extracurricular activities or transportation. Because classrooms represent the primary setting where students engage in learning, behavioral disruptions in these environments may have a direct impact on academic performance, instructional time, teacher effectiveness, and student promotion outcomes.

Similarly, the large number of incidents occurring in general campus locations, cafeterias, hallways, and other shared spaces suggests that peer interactions and less-structured periods of the school day contribute significantly to behavioral concerns. These environments require students to independently manage emotions, relationships, and conflict, making them critical targets for social-emotional learning interventions.

Attendance-related incidents further reinforce findings from other project outcome measures that student engagement and school connectedness remain areas of need.

Students who experience attendance challenges often demonstrate lower academic performance, weaker school attachment, and increased risk of course failure and retention. As a result, attendance improvement remains closely connected to both behavioral and academic intervention strategies.

Finally, the combination of timing and location data suggests that behavior concerns are concentrated not only during predictable periods of the year but also within predictable school environments. This creates opportunities for highly targeted intervention strategies that address student needs before behaviors escalate.

Findings and Implications

The Year 1 behavioral data indicate that social-emotional learning and affective development represent critical areas for continued investment throughout the grant period. Although most students successfully navigate school expectations, the frequency of behavioral incidents demonstrates that many students require additional support in developing the social-emotional competencies necessary for academic and personal success. The findings suggest that behavioral challenges are not primarily related to severe misconduct but rather to deficits in emotional regulation, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making. These competencies are foundational to both academic achievement and long-term post-secondary success.

Importantly, the timing and location of behavioral incidents provide valuable information for program planning and intervention. The concentration of referrals during October-November and again during March-May suggests that students may require

enhanced social-emotional supports during periods of heightened academic demand. Likewise, the concentration of incidents within classrooms and common school areas indicates that interventions must be integrated into the school day and embedded within students' daily educational experiences. Rather than responding only after incidents occur, GEAR UP can use these trends to proactively deploy interventions before behavioral concerns emerge. These findings suggest that classroom-based social-emotional learning, relationship-building activities, restorative practices, peer mediation, and student engagement strategies may have a substantial impact on reducing behavioral incidents.

The behavioral findings also have important implications for student promotion and academic outcomes. Consequently, addressing behavioral needs is not only a student support priority but also an academic intervention strategy directly connected to GEAR UP objectives related to promotion, graduation, and college readiness.

Further data suggest that strengthening school connectedness and fostering positive relationships between students, families, teachers, and support personnel may significantly improve both behavioral and academic outcomes.

GEAR UP Services Support Behavioral Growth, Social-Emotional Learning, and Student Promotion

GEAR UP Built4Bibb incorporates a comprehensive system of social-emotional and affective supports designed to improve student behavior, increase school engagement, and strengthen educational outcomes. These supports are intentionally aligned with the project's goals of increasing academic achievement, grade-level promotion, high school graduation, and post-secondary success.

A central component of the intervention model is the Graduation Advisor framework. Graduation Advisors provide individualized support to students through mentoring, relationship-building, goal setting, attendance monitoring, behavior coaching, and case management. Advisors work closely with students, families, teachers, counselors, and administrators to identify barriers to success and coordinate interventions before behavioral concerns escalate into academic failure. Students also participate in structured social-emotional learning activities that focus on self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, relationship skills, conflict resolution, communication, leadership development, and resilience. These experiences help students develop the affective competencies necessary to navigate academic challenges, manage interpersonal relationships, and persist through adversity.

The behavioral data present an opportunity for GEAR UP Built4Bibb to strategically align services with the periods and locations where students' needs are greatest. Starting in Year 2, Graduation Advisors, counselors, and project staff will implement a proactive behavioral support calendar aimed at addressing behavioral concerns before the historically

high-incidence periods. In August and September, the project will focus on relationship-building, goal setting, school connectedness, and social-emotional learning activities to establish positive behavioral expectations. Before the increase in referrals that typically occurs in October and November, students will participate in targeted small-group sessions that focus on conflict resolution, stress management, emotional regulation, and developing peer relationships.

Similarly, during January and February, the project will implement a Spring Readiness Initiative that reinforces resilience, attendance, academic motivation, and self-management skills before behavior incidents historically increase during the spring semester. Additional mentoring opportunities, leadership development activities, college visits, service-learning projects, and career exploration experiences will be strategically scheduled during these periods to strengthen engagement and reinforce positive decision-making. The location data also provides opportunities for targeted intervention. Because nearly half of all disciplinary incidents occurred within classrooms, Graduation Advisors and project staff will work collaboratively with teachers to reinforce social-emotional learning competencies, goal-setting activities, academic engagement strategies, and positive behavioral expectations within instructional settings. Classroom-based SEL lessons, restorative circles, and academic mentoring activities will help students develop the self-management skills necessary to succeed in structured learning environments.

Since a significant proportion of incidents occurred in common areas such as cafeterias, hallways, restrooms, and other campus locations, GEAR UP will collaborate with school administrators and student support personnel to provide proactive interventions

during transitions and other high-interaction periods of the school day. Mentoring sessions, leadership development opportunities, peer mediation activities, restorative practices, and relationship-building initiatives will be strategically implemented to strengthen students' interpersonal skills and reduce conflict. The project will also utilize an early warning system that integrates attendance, behavior, and academic performance data to identify students most at risk for disciplinary referrals. These students will receive individualized intervention plans, enhanced mentoring, family outreach, attendance supports, and case management services before challenges escalate into disciplinary actions.

Family engagement initiatives further contribute to behavioral growth by strengthening communication between schools and families and creating a shared commitment to student success. Research consistently demonstrates that students whose families are actively engaged in their education exhibit stronger behavioral outcomes, higher attendance rates, and increased academic achievement. By analyzing what behaviors occur, when they occur, and where they occur, GEAR UP Built4Bibb can move beyond reactive intervention models and establish a comprehensive prevention-focused framework that addresses behavioral challenges before they escalate. Through these integrated supports, the project seeks to create a positive school experience that promotes both academic success and social-emotional well-being while reducing disciplinary incidents and increasing student promotion rates.

Year 2 Action Steps and Recommendations

Based on Year 1 findings, the project will prioritize the following actions during Year 2:

1) Expand social-emotional learning programming focused on self-regulation, conflict resolution, and relationship-building skills.
2) Increase mentoring opportunities for students identified as having repeated behavioral referrals.
3) Strengthen Graduation Advisor interventions for students exhibiting attendance and behavior concerns.
4) Implement restorative practices that emphasize accountability, reflection, and relationship repair.
5) Utilize behavioral data to identify students requiring individualized intervention plans.
6) Increase family engagement activities focused on supporting positive student behavior and school engagement.
7) Strengthen partnerships with school counselors, social workers, and community mental health providers.
8) Expand leadership development opportunities that encourage positive peer influence and student ownership.
9) Monitor behavioral trends quarterly and adjust intervention strategies based on emerging needs.
10) Integrate social-emotional learning competencies across academic and enrichment programming.

11) Implement a proactive behavioral support calendar aligned to historically high-incidence months.
12) Utilize early warning indicators to identify and support students before behavioral concerns escalate.
13) Target classroom-based interventions and common-area supports in locations where behavioral incidents occur most frequently.
14) Use monthly and location-specific behavioral analyses to guide continuous improvement and resource allocation.

Through these coordinated efforts, GEAR UP Built4Bibb expects to reduce disciplinary incidents, strengthen social-emotional competencies, improve school engagement, increase attendance, and support higher rates of grade-level promotion and academic achievement. By addressing behavioral and affective needs alongside academic supports, the project is creating a comprehensive framework that prepares students not only for academic success but also for long-term college, career, and life success.

Student Outcome Data: Student Retention History and Promotion Readiness

Overview

Grade retention is one of the strongest indicators of future academic risk and is often associated with lower academic achievement, chronic absenteeism, disengagement from school, increased behavioral challenges, and reduced likelihood of high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment. Students who have been retained frequently require additional academic, social-emotional, and behavioral supports to successfully progress

through school and remain on track toward graduation. As part of the Year 1 evaluation of GEAR UP Built4Bibb (GU B4B), student retention history was analyzed to better understand the educational experiences of the cohort and identify students who may require additional interventions to support academic achievement and grade-level promotion. Retention data were obtained through district student information systems and historical student records. Understanding where retention has historically occurred provides valuable insight into the academic needs of participating students and helps the project strategically allocate resources to schools and student populations with the greatest need. The retention data establish an important baseline for monitoring future progress and evaluating the effectiveness of GEAR UP services designed to improve academic performance, strengthen school engagement, and increase promotion rates throughout the grant period.

Student Retention Summary

Analysis of retention history data revealed that a total of 190 GEAR UP cohort students had experienced grade retention at some point during their educational journey prior to Year 1 implementation. Although most cohort students had not been retained, the presence of nearly 200 students with retention histories highlights the need for comprehensive academic and social-emotional supports designed to prevent future retention and promote academic success. Retention history was not evenly distributed across participating schools. The largest number of retained students was found at Appling Middle School, where 48 students had previously been retained. Weaver Middle School reported 37 retained students, followed by Howard Middle School and Rutland Middle

School, each reporting 29 retained students. Ballard-Hudson Middle School reported 27 retained students, while Miller Magnet Middle School reported 12 retained students.

Alternative and specialized learning environments reported smaller numbers of retained students, including SOAR Academy with 5 students, Elam Alexander Academy with 2 students, and VIP Academy (Virtual) with 1 student. The concentration of retained students within several middle schools suggests that academic challenges requiring intervention begin prior to high school and reinforce the importance of implementing early supports designed to improve promotion outcomes before students reach critical educational transition points.

Disaggregated Analysis

Retention history varies considerably across participating schools. Appling Middle School reported the highest number of retained students, with 48 total students, including 29 sixth-grade students and 19 seventh-grade students. Weaver Middle School reported 37 retained students, with 16 sixth-grade students and 21 seventh-grade students, making it the school with the highest number of retained seventh-grade students. Rutland Middle School and Howard Middle School each reported 29 retained students, but their grade-level patterns differed. Rutland reported 27 sixth-grade students and 2 seventh-grade students, showing that retention is heavily concentrated among sixth graders. Howard reported 11 sixth-grade students and 18 seventh-grade students, indicating a stronger need for continued intervention among seventh-grade students. Ballard-Hudson Middle School reported 27 retained students, including 16 sixth-grade students and 11 seventh-

grade students. Miller Magnet Middle School reported 12 retained students, evenly divided between 6 sixth-grade students and 6 seventh-grade students.

Smaller numbers were reported at SOAR (5 students), Elam Alexander Academy (2 students), and VIP Academy (1 student). Price Educational Center reported no students with a history of retention. Overall, the largest concentrations of retained students were found at Appling, Weaver, Rutland, Howard, and Ballard-Hudson Middle Schools. Together, these five schools account for 170 of the 190 retained students, or approximately 89.5 percent of all students with a history of retention in the cohort. This concentration provides a clear direction for Year 2 intervention planning.

Figure 26.

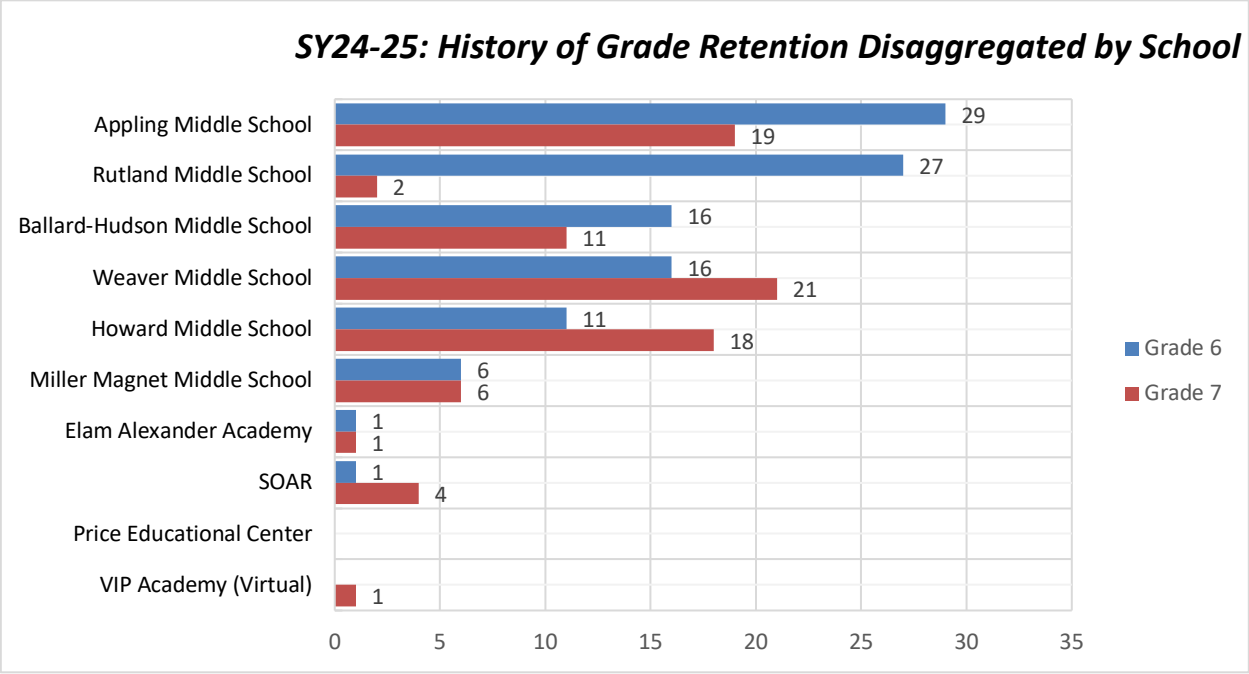
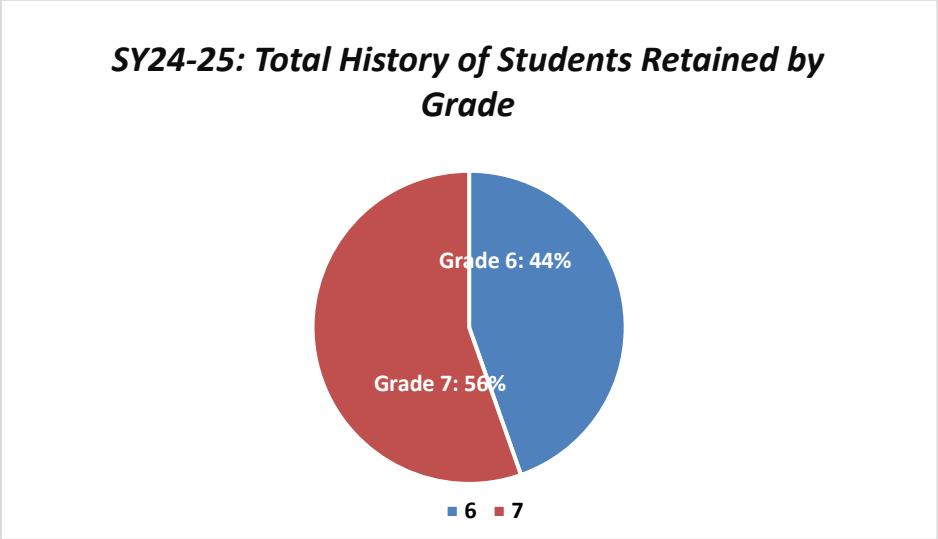


Figure 27.



Findings and Implications

The data show that grade retention is not evenly distributed across schools or grade levels. The larger number of retained sixth-grade students suggests that many students entered middle school already needing academic recovery and additional support. At the same time, schools such as Weaver and Appling show higher numbers of retained seventh-grade students, indicating that intervention must continue beyond sixth grade and may be limited to transition supports alone. These findings suggest that GEAR UP services should prioritize retained students for academic monitoring, tutoring, mentoring, attendance support, family engagement, and individualized success planning. Students with retention histories should be treated as a student population requiring coordinated academic and social-emotional intervention.

Additional important findings emerged from the grade retention analysis. First, although only a relatively small proportion of the overall cohort has experienced retention,

these students represent one of the highest-risk populations served by GEAR UP. Research consistently demonstrates that prior grade retention is associated with increased risk for future academic failure, chronic absenteeism, behavioral challenges, and ultimately high school dropout. Second, the concentration of retained students within four schools (Rutland, Weaver, Howard, and Ballard-Hudson Middle Schools) provides an opportunity to strategically focus intervention resources where they are most needed. These schools will become priority locations for enhanced academic monitoring, tutoring, mentoring, and Graduation Advisor support.

Third, differences in grade-level distributions suggest that retention challenges emerge at different points across participating schools. Some schools show a greater need among students entering middle school, while others indicate continued academic difficulties that extend into seventh grade. These findings emphasize the importance of sustained intervention across multiple years. Together, these indicators identify a special population of students who require coordinated academic, social-emotional, behavioral, and family supports to remain on track for graduation and postsecondary success.

GEAR UP Services Support Students with a History of Retention

The GEAR UP Built4Bibb project is intentionally designed to provide comprehensive supports that address many of the factors associated with student retention. Through a combination of academic interventions, mentoring, college and career readiness activities, family engagement, and social-emotional supports, the project seeks to increase academic achievement and ensure that students remain on track for promotion and graduation. A key

component of this effort is the Graduation Advisor model. Graduation Advisors work closely with students who demonstrate academic risk factors, including students with prior retention histories. Advisors monitor grades, attendance, behavior, and engagement indicators while coordinating individualized interventions designed to address barriers to success. Students with retention histories receive targeted academic support through tutoring, small-group instruction, progress monitoring, and individualized academic planning. These interventions are designed to strengthen foundational literacy and mathematics skills while improving classroom performance and confidence.

In addition to academic supports, GEAR UP provides mentoring, leadership development, college visits, career exploration experiences, and social-emotional learning activities that help students build resilience and develop a stronger connection between present academic performance and future educational opportunities. These experiences are particularly important for students who may have experienced academic setbacks and need additional encouragement to remain engaged in school. Family engagement activities further strengthen promotion efforts by helping parents and caregivers understand graduation requirements, promotion expectations, academic supports, and strategies for supporting student success at home. The project will also utilize early warning indicators that integrate academic, attendance, behavior, and retention history data to identify students requiring enhanced intervention. By proactively monitoring these indicators, GEAR UP can provide support before academic difficulties escalate into future retention concerns.

Strategic Focus for Students with Retention Histories

Since retention history represents a known risk factor for future academic difficulties, GEAR UP will prioritize retained students for ongoing monitoring and support throughout the grant period. Students with prior retention histories will receive:

1) Individualized success plans;
2) Frequent academic progress reviews;
3) Enhanced Graduation Advisor support;
4) Priority access to tutoring and intervention services;
5) Attendance monitoring and support;
6) Social-emotional learning opportunities;
7) College and career readiness programming;
8) Family engagement services; and
9) Continuous progress monitoring through academic and behavioral data reviews.

This targeted approach ensures that students who have previously experienced academic setbacks receive the resources necessary to achieve future academic success.

Year 2 Action Steps and Recommendations

Based on the retention analysis, the project will prioritize the following actions during Year 2:

1) Identify and monitor all students with prior retention histories through the early warning system.

2) Develop individualized academic success plans for students demonstrating multiple risk factors.
3) Expand tutoring and intervention services focused on literacy and mathematics achievement.
4) Increase Graduation Advisor contact with students who have previously been retained.
5) Strengthen attendance interventions and family outreach efforts.
6) Utilize quarterly academic reviews to monitor promotion readiness.
7) Expand mentoring and social-emotional learning opportunities for academically vulnerable students.
8) Provide targeted support during critical transition periods between grade levels.
9) Increase collaboration among teachers, counselors, administrators, and Graduation Advisors to coordinate interventions.
10) Use retention and promotion data annually to evaluate program effectiveness and guide continuous improvement efforts.

Through these coordinated efforts, GEAR UP Built4Bibb expects to reduce future retention rates, improve academic achievement, increase student promotion, strengthen graduation readiness, and advance progress toward the project's long-term goals of post-secondary enrollment and success. By providing targeted supports for students with retention histories, the project is helping ensure that prior academic challenges do not become barriers to future educational attainment and lifelong success.

Conclusions

The Year 1 grade retention analysis established an important baseline for identifying students at elevated academic risk and prioritizing interventions that support grade-level promotion and long-term educational success. While only 190 students were identified with a history of retention, these students represent a high-priority population requiring comprehensive academic, behavioral, attendance, and social-emotional supports. Through individualized Graduation Advisor support, the GEAR UP Built4Bibb team will expanded tutoring, scale progress monitoring, cultivate strong relationships related to family engagement, and coordinate wraparound services for cohort students. GEAR UP Built4Bibb will work to reduce future retention, improve academic achievement, increase promotion rates, and advance the project's long-term goals of high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment, and postsecondary success.

Partnership Development and Collaboration

The cornerstone of the GEAR UP Built4Bibb (GU B4B) initiative is the establishment of a comprehensive partnership infrastructure designed to leverage the collective expertise, resources, and services of educational institutions, community organizations, financial institutions, mentoring agencies, and workforce development partners to improve student outcomes and increase post-secondary success. Recognizing that college and career readiness cannot be achieved through schools alone, the project was intentionally designed as a collaborative partnership that aligns academic, social-emotional, financial, and post-secondary supports around the needs of participating students and families.

The GEAR UP Built4Bibb partnership operates through a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among Bibb County School District, Central Georgia Technical College, MidSouth Community Federal Credit Union, and United Way of Central Georgia. The agreement establishes a collaborative framework designed to improve the coordination, integration, accessibility, and effectiveness of services delivered to students attending GEAR UP target schools. The MOU further outlines the responsibilities of each partner organization and affirms a shared commitment to increasing educational attainment, college readiness, career awareness, financial literacy, and post-secondary success among participating students.

Throughout Year 1, the partnership focused on establishing governance structures, implementing communication protocols, coordinating service delivery systems, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and creating a sustainable framework for continuous improvement. The result is a comprehensive support network that expands the district's capacity to provide high-quality services while ensuring students have access to a broad range of opportunities that prepare them for post-secondary education and future careers.

Governance Structure

The governance structure for GEAR UP Built4Bibb (GU B4B) is designed to ensure accountability, effective implementation, shared decision-making, continuous improvement, and compliance with all federal grant requirements. The governance model establishes clear lines of responsibility while promoting collaboration among district

leadership, project staff, school personnel, community partners, higher education partners, and external evaluation personnel. This structure ensures that project activities remain aligned with approved grant objectives, annual performance targets, federal regulations, and district priorities while maintaining a strong focus on student outcomes and long-term sustainability.

Bibb County School District serves as the lead agency and fiscal agent for the project and is responsible for overall grant administration, financial management, program implementation, compliance monitoring, performance reporting, partnership coordination, and strategic oversight. Through a multi-tiered leadership framework, the district ensures that project activities remain aligned with approved grant objectives, district priorities, and the long-term goal of increasing academic achievement, educational attainment, post-secondary enrollment, and post-secondary success for participating students. District leadership also ensures that project resources are strategically deployed to address identified student needs, support evidence-based interventions, and maximize the impact of partnership contributions.

A critical component of the governance and accountability framework is the partnership with Towering Your Success, LLC, which serves as the project's independent external evaluator and data management partner. As a member of the project's broader leadership and accountability structure, Towering Your Success provides comprehensive evaluation, technical assistance, performance monitoring, longitudinal data management, and reporting services designed to ensure that project implementation remains aligned with grant objectives and produces measurable outcomes for participating students. The

evaluator works collaboratively with district leadership, project staff, school administrators, and community partners to support evidence-based decision-making, strengthen implementation fidelity, and promote continuous improvement throughout the grant cycle.

Consistent with the approved evaluation scope of work, Towering Your Success developed and maintains the project's comprehensive evaluation plan, which serves as the framework for measuring implementation fidelity, monitoring performance indicators, assessing progress toward project objectives, and evaluating long-term outcomes. Through both formative and summative evaluation activities, the evaluator assesses the effectiveness of project services, identifies implementation strengths and challenges, and provides actionable recommendations that inform program refinement and strategic planning.

Towering Your Success is also responsible for the design, administration, collection, analysis, and interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative data. The evaluator utilizes multiple sources of evidence, including student achievement data, attendance records, behavioral indicators, participation records, survey responses, focus groups, interviews, academic assessments, college and career readiness indicators, and post-secondary planning measures. Evaluation findings are regularly communicated to project leadership and stakeholders through progress monitoring reports, annual evaluation reports, data dashboards, presentations, and implementation reviews that support informed decision-making and continuous improvement efforts.

In addition to evaluation services, Towering Your Success maintains the project's comprehensive longitudinal data management system. This database facilitates the collection, storage, analysis, and reporting of project data across all participating schools

and student cohorts. The system enables project staff to monitor student participation, refine service delivery, evaluate implementation fidelity, calculate program dosage, assess outcomes, document partnership contributions, and generate reports required by the U.S. Department of Education and other stakeholders. Activity records include participant attendance, dates of service, activity categories, duration of participation, staff responsible for implementation, and alignment to project objectives, allowing project leadership to examine the relationship between service participation and student outcomes.

The evaluation system also monitors project outputs such as college visits, campus tours, career exploration activities, mentoring services, financial literacy workshops, family engagement events, professional development activities, post-secondary readiness lessons, volunteer contributions, publications, and outreach efforts. Additionally, the evaluator supports the documentation and reporting of in-kind contributions and cost-share commitments provided by district and community partners, ensuring accurate reporting of leveraged resources throughout the grant period.

As part of its technical assistance role, Towering Your Success works closely with the Department of Federal Programs and District Effectiveness, the GEAR UP Project and Program Director, Graduation Advisors, District leaders, and partner organizations to strengthen performance monitoring systems, improve data quality, address implementation challenges, and ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements. Towering Your Success facilitates leadership meetings, steering committee meetings, implementation planning sessions, and project events to provide evaluation expertise, facilitate data-informed discussions, and support project improvement efforts.

The governance structure consists of three interconnected leadership and implementation bodies: the Executive Leadership Team, the GEAR UP Steering Committee, and School-Based Implementation Teams. Together, these groups provide strategic direction, operational oversight, implementation support, continuous monitoring of project outcomes, and mechanisms for stakeholder feedback. Supported by rigorous evaluation and data management systems, this collaborative governance framework promotes transparency, accountability, shared ownership of outcomes, and continuous improvement throughout the life of the grant.

Executive Leadership Team

The Executive Leadership Team serves as the primary oversight and decision-making body for the GEAR UP Built4Bibb project. The team provides strategic leadership, fiscal accountability, implementation monitoring, and continuous improvement oversight to ensure successful project execution throughout the grant period. Membership includes senior district leadership, representatives from the Department of Federal Programs and District Effectiveness, the GEAR UP Project and Program Director, GEAR UP system-level personnel, and Towering Your Success, LLC, the project's external evaluator. Together, these stakeholders ensure that project activities remain aligned with grant objectives, district priorities, federal compliance requirements, and evidence-based improvement strategies.

The Department of Federal Programs and District Effectiveness serves as a central component of the governance structure and provides oversight related to grant administration, federal compliance, fiscal stewardship, strategic planning, performance

monitoring, and continuous improvement. The department works closely with project leadership to ensure adherence to U.S. Department of Education regulations, approved grant activities, performance measures, reporting requirements, and fiscal accountability standards.

Additionally, the department supports the use of data-driven decision-making processes to monitor student outcomes, assess implementation effectiveness, identify emerging needs, and align project activities with district improvement priorities.

The Executive Leadership Team meets bi-weekly to review implementation progress, student outcome data, fiscal performance, partnership contributions, evaluation findings, and strategic priorities. Through these meetings, leadership ensures that project resources are effectively coordinated, implementation challenges are addressed proactively, and all project activities remain focused on increasing academic achievement, grade-level promotion, high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, and long-term student success for GEAR UP participants.

GEAR UP Steering Committee

The GEAR UP Steering Committee serves as the primary advisory and implementation body for the project. Membership includes ad hoc representatives, partner organizations, CTAE and Hutchings College and Career Academy staff representatives, Graduation Advisors, and other individuals involved in the project's implementation.

The Steering Committee meets weekly to review implementation progress, monitor performance indicators, evaluate student participation data, discuss implementation

challenges, coordinate services among partners, and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. Committee members provide recommendations regarding program design, resource allocation, partnership coordination, family engagement strategies, college readiness programming, and student support services. The committee serves as an important communication bridge between district leadership, project staff, school personnel, and community partners, ensuring that project implementation remains responsive to student needs and aligned with project objectives.

School-Based Implementation Teams

School-Based Implementation Teams provide operational leadership at each participating school and ensure that GEAR UP services are effectively integrated into the school environment. Teams consist of principals, counselors, Graduation Advisors, and other student support personnel. These teams meet regularly throughout the school year to review academic, attendance, behavioral, and participation data; identify students requiring additional support; coordinate interventions; monitor implementation progress; and align GEAR UP activities with school improvement priorities. Through ongoing collaboration among school personnel and project staff, School-Based Implementation Teams help ensure that students receive coordinated, data-informed supports designed to improve academic achievement, grade-level promotion, graduation readiness, and post-secondary success.

Partner Roles and Contributions: Bibb County School District

As the lead agency and fiscal agent, Bibb County School District is responsible for overall project management, grant administration, fiscal oversight, implementation monitoring, data collection, partnership coordination, and strategic planning. The district provides a GEAR UP Project and Program Director, Graduation Advisors assigned to participating schools, administrative support, facilities, and operational infrastructure necessary to implement project activities. The district also coordinates leadership team functions, stakeholder meetings, annual program reviews, and collaboration with the external evaluator. Through Hutchings College and Career Academy and the CTAE Department, the district supports career fairs, job shadowing opportunities, STEM initiatives, guest speakers, internships, college and industry field trips, summer STEM camps, and career pathway development.

Central Georgia Technical College

Central Georgia Technical College serves as the project's institution of higher education partner and provides direct access to post-secondary experiences. The college supports students through dual enrollment opportunities, summer programs, campus tours, WorkKeys preparation, career pathway programming, college readiness activities, and workshops focused on career exploration, college fit, and financial aid awareness. These

services help students build post-secondary aspirations while strengthening their understanding of college and career pathways.

MidSouth Community Federal Credit Union

MidSouth Community Federal Credit Union serves as the project's financial literacy partner. The organization provides financial literacy instruction focused on budgeting, saving, economic literacy, financing higher education, tax preparation, and college savings strategies. MidSouth also conducts workshops for students and families and provides instructional materials that strengthen financial readiness and support post-secondary planning.

United Way of Central Georgia

United Way of Central Georgia supports financial literacy education, family engagement, and community resource coordination. Through its extensive network of community partnerships, United Way helps connect students and families to resources that address barriers to educational success while supporting broader college and career readiness goals.

Towering Your Success, LLC

Towering Your Success, LLC serves as the project's external evaluator and data management partner. In addition to conducting evaluations, the organization develops and maintains the project's evaluation plan, longitudinal database, performance monitoring systems, and reporting deliverables. Towering Your Success supports the collection and

analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, facilitates surveys and focus groups (as requested by the LEA), communicates progress reports, assists with Annual Performance Reports, and provides ongoing technical assistance designed to strengthen implementation fidelity and support data-driven decision-making. Through regular collaboration and communication with district leadership, school personnel, and project partners as needed, the evaluator helps ensure accountability, continuous improvement, and compliance with federal reporting requirements.

Beyond formal meetings, ongoing communication occurs through regular email correspondence, virtual meetings, phone conferences, shared planning documents, data reports, implementation updates, and project-specific communications. Graduation Advisors maintain frequent communication with school administrators, counselors, teachers, students, families, and community partners to ensure that students receive coordinated support and that emerging needs are addressed in a timely manner.

Collectively, this comprehensive communication structure promotes transparency, accountability, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement while ensuring that all partners remain informed, connected, and focused on achieving the shared goals of increasing academic achievement, grade-level promotion, high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, and post-secondary success for GEAR UP participants.

Evidence and Documentation

Evidence supporting partnership implementation during Year 1 includes executed Memoranda of Understanding, meeting agendas, Executive Leadership Team meeting records, School-Based Implementation Team meeting artifacts, partnership agreements, evaluation plans, Annual Performance Reports, participation records, service logs, college visit records, financial literacy workshop documentation, activity participation records, family engagement participation records, professional development documentation, cost-share records, in-kind contribution documentation, and longitudinal database reports. These records demonstrate active partner engagement and document the collaborative efforts supporting project implementation.

Findings and Implications

Year 1 implementation demonstrates that the GEAR UP Built4Bibb partnership has successfully established a strong governance and collaboration infrastructure. Partners fulfilled their designated responsibilities, implemented services aligned with project objectives, and contributed resources that expanded the district's capacity to support students and families. The partnership model has strengthened coordination among schools, community organizations, higher education institutions, mentoring organizations, financial literacy providers, and evaluation personnel, resulting in a more comprehensive support system for students. The addition of a robust evaluation and data management framework through Towering Your Success has significantly enhanced the project's ability to monitor implementation, assess outcomes, and make data-informed decisions.

These findings suggest that continued collaboration among partners will be essential to addressing identified academic, attendance, behavioral, and post-secondary readiness needs. Furthermore, the partnership infrastructure provides a strong foundation for scaling services, increasing stakeholder engagement, strengthening accountability systems, and sustaining project outcomes throughout the grant period.

Year 1 Organization Transition: The Mentor's Project and Communities In Schools of Central Georgia

During Year 1, The Mentor's Project of Bibb County notified GEAR UP Built4Bibb leadership that it could not fulfill its planned partnership responsibilities because of organizational capacity constraints. Leadership changes, staffing shortages, new internal initiatives, and increased demand for wraparound services limited the organization's ability to take on additional responsibilities while maintaining the quality of its existing programs. As a result, The Mentor's Project formally withdrew from the GEAR UP partnership.

After receiving notice of the withdrawal, Bibb County School District moved quickly to maintain service continuity and prevent disruptions to student support. Project leadership assessed participant needs and identified Communities In Schools (CIS) of Central Georgia as a strategic partner whose comprehensive student support model aligned with GEAR UP Built4Bibb goals. CIS brought an established, evidence-based approach focused on reducing barriers to student success through integrated supports, case management, mentoring, social-emotional development, family engagement, and community resource coordination. Its model emphasizes that students are more likely to

succeed when academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and basic needs are addressed through coordinated school-based interventions and community partnerships.

Through its partnership with GEAR UP Built4Bibb, Communities In Schools supplemented project services by providing individualized student support, attendance interventions, behavior support strategies, mentoring opportunities, social-emotional learning resources, family outreach, referral services, and connections to community-based resources. CIS site coordinators worked collaboratively with Graduation Advisors, counselors, administrators, teachers, and community partners to identify students requiring additional support and to develop intervention plans that addressed both academic and non-academic barriers to success.

The integration of the CIS model strengthened the project's capacity to address several areas identified through Year 1 data analysis, including chronic absenteeism, student discipline concerns, social-emotional development, family engagement, and student persistence. Through targeted case management and coordinated support services, CIS helped ensure that students experiencing academic, behavioral, attendance, housing, food insecurity, or other personal challenges received timely interventions designed to improve school engagement and educational outcomes.

Additionally, the CIS framework enhanced the project's ability to support special populations, including students experiencing homelessness, foster youth, students with disabilities, English Learners, and other students identified as needing additional support. By leveraging community partnerships and resource networks, CIS expanded access to services that addressed both immediate student needs and long-term educational goals.

The transition from The Mentor's Project to Communities In Schools demonstrates the strength and adaptability of the GEAR UP Built4Bibb partnership infrastructure. Although the original partnership could not be sustained due to organizational capacity limitations from the Mentor's Project, GEAR UP project leadership successfully identified and engaged an alternative organization capable of providing high-quality, evidence-based student supports aligned with grant objectives. As a result, services continued without interruption, and the project maintained its commitment to providing comprehensive academic, social-emotional, college readiness, and student success supports for participating students.

Moving forward, Communities In Schools will continue to have an important role in supporting student engagement, promoting positive school outcomes, strengthening family partnerships, and helping GEAR UP Built4Bibb achieve its goals related to academic achievement, grade-level promotion, high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, and long-term student success.

Year 2 Action Steps and Recommendations

Based on Year 1 implementation, the project will prioritize strengthening district and school-level engagement through:

1) Expanded data reviews and performance monitoring;
2) Increasing partner participation in school-based intervention planning and student support activities;

3) Expanding business and industry partnerships to increase career exploration and workforce development opportunities;
4) Strengthening collaboration with Central Georgia Technical College to increase post-secondary exposure and dual enrollment awareness;
5) Expanding mentoring opportunities through other community partners; increasing family engagement through coordinated partner-sponsored workshops and outreach activities;
6) Utilizing evaluation findings and performance dashboards to guide continuous improvement efforts;
7) Strengthening coordination of services for special populations, including students experiencing homelessness, foster youth, unaccompanied minors, English Learners, students with disabilities, students with 504 plans, and gifted and advanced learners, including high-potential students from underrepresented populations;
8) Expanding documentation of cost-share and in-kind contributions to demonstrate partnership impact and sustainability; and
9) Conducting an annual partnership effectiveness review to assess outcomes, identify opportunities for improvement, and strengthen long-term collaboration.

Collectively, these strategies position GEAR UP Built4Bibb to build upon its Year 1 successes while strengthening partnerships, improving service coordination, enhancing accountability, and increasing the likelihood of achieving the project's long-term goals

related to academic achievement, educational attainment, post-secondary enrollment, and post-secondary success.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

The Bibb County School District (BCSD) GEAR UP Built4Bibb project implemented a comprehensive evaluation and continuous improvement system during Year 1 to monitor program implementation, assess progress toward federal and grant performance goals, and support data-informed decision-making. The evaluation was conducted in partnership with Towering Your Success, LLC, the project's external evaluator, and used a mixed-methods approach that included both quantitative and qualitative measures. This framework supported the assessment of implementation fidelity, participant outcomes, overall project effectiveness, emerging needs, and opportunities for continuous improvement.

Throughout Year 1, the evaluation system examined the effectiveness of all major project components, including academic enrichment, tutoring and mentoring services, college and career readiness activities, family engagement initiatives, professional learning, social-emotional supports, STEM programming, summer learning opportunities, dual enrollment awareness, financial literacy education, and post-secondary planning activities. The evaluation framework included a comprehensive set of performance indicators designed to monitor participation levels, implementation fidelity, program outputs, short-term outcomes, and progress toward long-term project goals. These indicators enabled project leadership to evaluate implementation across participating schools and partner organizations while identifying opportunities to strengthen service delivery.

The evaluation design used formative, process, outcome, and summative methods to assess implementation and results. Formative and process evaluation activities occurred throughout the reporting period and focused on implementation quality, participation, service delivery, and stakeholder feedback. Outcome evaluation examined student achievement, attendance, behavior, barriers to college readiness, educational aspirations, and other indicators linked to post-secondary success. Summative evaluation assessed the overall effectiveness of Year 1 implementation and established baseline measures for tracking student growth and project impact over time. The framework also used cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses to document baseline performance and monitor changes in student outcomes across the grant cycle.

To support evaluation and reporting efforts, BCSD utilized the Towering Your Success (TYS) GEAR UP data management system as the project's centralized data collection and reporting repository. The TYS data system served as the repository for student education records, academic achievement indicators, attendance data, discipline data, standardized assessment data, and other data related to the GEAR UP grant objectives. The system enabled project staff and evaluators to collect, organize, analyze, and report data necessary for federal reporting requirements and continuous improvement activities. The platform also allowed project leadership to monitor implementation in real time and examine the relationship between participation in GEAR UP services and student outcomes.

Data collection occurred throughout Year 1 and incorporated multiple quantitative and qualitative data sources. Quantitative data included attendance records, discipline incidents, course grades, Georgia Milestones assessment scores, STAR Reading and STAR

Mathematics assessments, i-Ready diagnostic assessments, participation records, college and career readiness activities, financial literacy participation, and family engagement data. Student participation information was collected for tutoring sessions, mentoring activities, college visits, STEM enrichment opportunities, financial literacy workshops, career exploration experiences, and family engagement events. These data provided the foundation for monitoring implementation progress and assessing student outcomes.

Qualitative data collection complemented the quantitative analyses by providing additional insight into participant experiences and program effectiveness. Document analysis served as the primary qualitative method and included materials related to grant implementation. These data helped project leadership and evaluators assess student participation, program quality, family engagement, and design-related barriers to student success. Findings were analyzed to identify implementation strengths, challenges, and opportunities for program improvement.

A significant component of the evaluation framework involved the use of disaggregated analyses to monitor equity and access across student subgroups. Student outcomes and participation data were analyzed by race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability status, English learner status, school site, and grade level. These analyses enabled project leadership to identify disparities in academic achievement, participation rates, attendance patterns, behavioral outcomes, and college readiness indicators. Findings from these analyses informed targeted interventions and resource allocation decisions designed to address the unique needs of historically underserved student populations.

Evaluation findings revealed several important strengths during Year 1 implementation. First, the project successfully established the infrastructure necessary to support long-term implementation and performance monitoring. Systems were developed to collect participation data, monitor implementation activities, review student outcomes, and document partnership contributions. The project also successfully implemented academic enrichment activities, college and career readiness programming, professional learning opportunities, family engagement initiatives, financial literacy workshops, and STEM-related experiences across participating schools.

The evaluation also identified several areas requiring continued attention and improvement. Baseline academic achievement data revealed substantial gaps in mathematics and literacy performance among cohort students. Attendance and behavior data highlighted the need for expanded interventions focused on student engagement, social-emotional learning, mentoring, and family outreach. Document analysis findings indicated strong student participation in post-secondary education and career planning but also suggested opportunities to increase student knowledge related to college admissions, financial aid, career pathways, and educational planning. These findings informed Year 2 priorities and program modifications.

The project utilized a structured continuous improvement process to ensure that evaluation findings informed implementation decisions. Evaluation data were reviewed through regular meetings involving district leadership, the Department of Federal Programs and District Effectiveness, the GEAR UP Project and Program Director, Graduation Advisors, school administrators, partner organizations, and Towering Your

Success, LLC. Monthly implementation reviews, quarterly leadership meetings, evaluation briefings, and stakeholder discussions provided opportunities to examine trends, assess progress toward objectives, identify implementation challenges, and develop corrective actions.

The project followed a continuous improvement cycle consistent with the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) framework. During the planning phase, evaluation findings and implementation data were reviewed to identify priorities and areas requiring intervention. During implementation, project staff delivered services, monitored participation, and collected performance data.

During the evaluation phase, project leadership and evaluators analyzed outcomes, examined implementation fidelity, reviewed stakeholder feedback, and assessed progress toward objectives. During the action phase, modifications were made to programming, partnerships, service delivery models, and implementation strategies based on evaluation findings. This process ensured that program decisions remained evidence-based and responsive to student needs.

Several program modifications resulted directly from evaluation findings and implementation reviews. One of the most significant modifications involved the transition from The Mentor's Project of Bibb County to Communities In Schools of Central Georgia as a primary provider of mentoring, case management, attendance supports, social-emotional learning services, family engagement activities, and wraparound supports. Following the withdrawal of The Mentor's Project due to organizational capacity limitations of this external agency, project leadership successfully identified Communities In Schools as an

alternative partner capable of providing comprehensive, integrated student supports aligned with project goals. This transition ensured continuity of services while strengthening the project's ability to address attendance, behavioral, and social-emotional needs.

Additional modifications included scaling data collection procedures, standardizing participation documentation processes, expanding implementation monitoring activities, and increasing technical assistance provided to project staff and school personnel. Evaluation findings also led to an increased emphasis on attendance interventions, mentoring services, family engagement activities, literacy supports, mathematics interventions, and college readiness programming. These modifications were implemented to address identified needs and improve the likelihood of achieving project objectives. Evidence supporting the evaluation and continuous improvement process included participation records, attendance logs, academic achievement reports, discipline records, document reviews, stakeholder engagement among district officials, collaborative artifacts, implementation logs, family engagement documentation, professional learning records, college and career readiness participation data, financial literacy participation records, and evaluation reports. These artifacts were maintained within the project's data management system and served as the basis for performance monitoring, federal reporting, and continuous improvement planning.

Based on Year 1 findings, project leadership identified several priorities for future implementation. These priorities included scaling implementation fidelity monitoring across all schools, expanding attendance and behavioral interventions, increasing

participation in college and career readiness activities, strengthening family engagement efforts, expanding mentoring and social-emotional supports, and strategically utilizing the available disaggregated data analyses to guide targeted interventions for special populations and historically underserved students. Overall, the Year 1 evaluation process demonstrated that GEAR UP Built4Bibb successfully established a strong foundation for program implementation, performance monitoring, and continuous improvement. The evaluation framework provided meaningful information regarding program strengths, implementation challenges, and student needs while ensuring accountability to project objectives and federal performance measures. Through ongoing data collection, stakeholder engagement, rigorous evaluation practices, and evidence-based decision-making, the project continuously refined its implementation strategies and strengthened its capacity to improve academic achievement, educational attainment, college readiness, post-secondary enrollment, and long-term success for participating students.

Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

As with many newly awarded federal grants, GEAR UP Built4Bibb encountered several implementation challenges during Year 1. While these challenges created operational constraints, project leadership successfully implemented mitigation strategies that ensured continuity of services and maintained progress toward grant objectives. The most significant challenge involved staffing limitations resulting from the timing of the grant award and district hiring procedures. Additional challenges included the establishment of new data collection systems, coordination of services across fourteen

participating schools, partnership transitions, and the need to rapidly build awareness of the newly funded GEAR UP initiative among students, families, and school personnel.

Despite these challenges, the project successfully served GEAR UP students, established critical program infrastructure, implemented core academic and college readiness activities, engaged community partners, and developed systems necessary for long-term project success. The experiences of Year 1 provided valuable lessons that informed improvements in project implementation, staffing structures, communication protocols, and continuous improvement processes.

Staffing and Capacity Challenges

The most significant implementation challenge during Year 1 resulted from the timing of the federal grant award. GEAR UP Built4Bibb was officially awarded in September 2024, after the start of the 2024–2025 academic year. Due to the late award notification and district personnel procedures, Bibb County School District was unable to hire and place the project's Graduation Advisors during the first year of implementation.

Graduation Advisors were originally intended to serve as the primary school-based staff responsible for coordinating student services, monitoring student progress, facilitating family engagement, supporting college and career readiness activities, and serving as the primary liaison between the project and participating schools. The inability to hire these positions during Year 1 created a significant capacity challenge because the project lacked its planned frontline implementation staff across participating schools. The root cause of this challenge was not related to project management or district commitment, but rather the

timing of the federal award and the associated hiring and onboarding requirements necessary for district personnel. Since the grant was not awarded until after the school year had begun, the district was unable to complete recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and placement processes in time to deploy Graduation Advisors during the first year of implementation without disrupting current district and school operations.

Mitigation Efforts

To address this challenge, the GEAR UP Program Director and GEAR UP Coordinator assumed responsibility for planning, coordinating, and implementing many Year 1 project activities across all participating schools. These individuals significantly expanded their responsibilities to ensure that project implementation continued despite staffing limitations. Throughout Year 1, the Program Director and Program Coordinator collaborated directly with school administrators, counselors, teachers, district departments, and community partners to coordinate project services, organize events, facilitate student participation, monitor implementation, and manage project operations. Rather than limiting implementation until staff positions could be filled, project leadership adopted a centralized service delivery model that enabled the project to launch core activities while simultaneously building the infrastructure necessary for future expansion.

The Program Director and Program Coordinator developed college and career readiness workshops, organized college visits and career exploration activities, facilitated financial literacy programming, planned family engagement events, managed partnerships, monitored participation data, coordinated professional learning opportunities, and ensured compliance with grant requirements. Project leadership also worked closely with school

personnel to identify student needs and integrate GEAR UP activities within existing school improvement efforts. Although the absence of Graduation Advisors limited the project's ability to provide intensive school-based services, the mitigation strategy ensured that students still received meaningful access to academic enrichment, college awareness, career exploration, financial literacy, and family engagement opportunities during Year 1.

Data Collection and Infrastructure Development

Another implementation process involved significant coordination, including data collection, reporting, and monitoring systems across multiple schools and the district data systems during the initial year of grant implementation. Since GEAR UP was a newer initiative within the district, procedures for documenting participation, tracking services, collecting outcome data, and reporting performance measures had to be redeveloped and refined during Year 1. Project leadership received guidance from Towering Your Success, LLC, on establishing standardized reporting procedures, participation-tracking systems, implementation documentation protocols, and performance-monitoring processes. The project adopted the Towering Your Success Data Management Repository and developed procedures for collecting student participation records, activity logs, attendance documentation, survey responses, and outcome measures. While the initial implementation required significant staff collaboration and coordination across multiple district departments, these efforts resulted in a stronger data infrastructure that will support future program evaluation, reporting, and continuous improvement. The effective collaboration among the Department of District Effectiveness and Federal Programs, the BCSD Technology Department, the Department of Teaching and Learning, and Towering Your

Success ensured the GEAR UP Department's success in accessing the data required for grant reporting.

Partnership Transition Challenge

A third implementation challenge occurred when The Mentor's Project of Bibb County informed project leadership that it would be unable to fulfill its planned partnership responsibilities due to organizational leadership changes, staffing shortages, increased demand for existing services, and organizational capacity limitations.

The withdrawal of a key community partner had the potential to impact mentoring services, student support activities, and social-emotional learning initiatives. To mitigate this risk, project leadership quickly assessed partnership needs and identified Communities In Schools of Central Georgia as an alternative provider capable of delivering evidence-based integrated student supports. Communities In Schools supplemented project services through case management, mentoring, attendance interventions, family engagement activities, social-emotional learning supports, and resource coordination. The transition occurred without significant disruption to students and ultimately strengthened the project's ability to address attendance, behavioral, and non-academic barriers to student success.

Communication and Coordination Challenges

Implementing a new federal grant across seven schools and three special schools/programs created collaboration and coordination challenges during Year 1. School and district personnel were also managing multiple district initiatives, academic priorities,

and student support responsibilities. In response, project leadership established communication structures to clarify GEAR UP objectives, expectations, and available services. Regular communication protocols involving district leaders, school administrators, counselors, teachers, and community partners supported stronger coordination. Steering Committee meetings, leadership meetings, implementation planning sessions, and ongoing stakeholder communications helped integrate project activities into participating schools. These efforts increased awareness of GEAR UP services and strengthened collaboration among schools and partners as implementation progressed.

Lessons Learned

Year 1 implementation produced several lessons that will strengthen future project efforts. First, the project demonstrated the importance of flexible implementation strategies during the startup phase of large federal grants. The Program Director and Program Coordinator assumed expanded responsibilities, allowing implementation to continue despite staffing challenges. Second, project staff learned that strong partnerships and clear communication systems are essential for coordinating services across multiple schools and organizations. Regular communication improved collaboration and increased stakeholder engagement throughout the year. Third, establishing evaluation and data management systems early, supported by ongoing collaboration and technical assistance, positioned GEAR UP to conduct a strong evaluation of grant implementation and programming. These Year 1 investments created a solid foundation for future performance monitoring and continuous improvement. Finally, project staff learned that integrated

student support models are critical for addressing barriers to student success. The transition to Communities In Schools demonstrated the value of flexible partnership structures that can respond effectively to changing needs and circumstances.

Outcomes of Mitigation Strategies

Despite significant startup challenges, the project's mitigation efforts enabled GEAR UP Built4Bibb to launch successfully and establish a strong operational foundation. During Year 1, the project served GEAR UP students, implemented college and career readiness activities, provided financial literacy education, facilitated college awareness experiences, established partnerships, launched evaluation systems, and built infrastructure to support long-term success. The centralized implementation approach helped project leadership strengthen school relationships, establish operating procedures, develop reporting systems, and identify areas needing additional support. As a result, the project entered Year 2 with stronger systems, clearer expectations, improved communication structures, and a deeper understanding of student and school needs.

Findings and Implications

Year 1 implementation shows that startup challenges did not prevent the project from building essential infrastructure or delivering services to participating students. However, the lack of Graduation Advisors likely limited the intensity and frequency of school-based interventions during the first year. The findings indicate that increased staffing capacity, stronger partnerships, and improved communication systems will enhance implementation effectiveness going forward. Year 1 also underscored the importance of proactive planning,

flexible leadership, and continuous improvement when implementing large-scale federal initiatives.

Year 2 Action Steps and Recommendations

Based on the experiences from Year 1 of implementation, the project has identified several key priorities for Year 2. First, the district successfully hired and deployed Graduation Advisors to the participating schools, which has significantly increased the project's capacity to provide direct student services, case management, family engagement, and college readiness support. Second, project leadership will continue to enhance data collection and performance monitoring systems to ensure fidelity in implementation and effective program oversight. Third, partnerships will be expanded and leveraged to offer additional mentoring, social-emotional learning, workforce development, and post-secondary readiness opportunities. Finally, communication and coordination structures will be continuously refined to guarantee consistent implementation across all participating schools.

The actions taken collectively position GEAR UP Built4Bibb to build on the lessons learned during Year 1 while enhancing service capacity, improving implementation quality, and boosting outcomes for participating students. Although startup challenges presented obstacles during the initial year, the project's mitigation efforts ensured that services continued without interruption, established a solid operational foundation, and prepared the initiative for greater impact in the years to come.

Year 2 Action Plan

The Year 2 Action Plan for GEAR UP Built4Bibb (GU B4B) marks the next phase of implementation following a successful first year that established the systems, partnerships, infrastructure, and student support framework needed to achieve the project's long-term goals. During Year 1, the project served the GEAR UP cohort across seven participating schools and three special schools/programs while implementing a comprehensive continuum of services focused on academic support, college and career readiness, financial literacy, and family engagement. In addition, the project established governance, evaluation, professional development, and partnership structures that provide the foundation for sustained program implementation and continuous improvement.

Year 1 also generated critical baseline data on students' academic achievement, attendance, behavior, social-emotional development, and post-secondary readiness. Analysis of Georgia Milestones, STAR Reading and STAR Mathematics assessments, i-Ready diagnostic results, course grades, attendance records, discipline data, student retention, and document reviews identified significant opportunities to improve literacy and mathematics achievement. The evaluation also highlighted the need to strengthen student engagement, improve attendance, reduce disciplinary incidents, and expand access to college and career readiness experiences. Baseline findings showed that many students were performing below grade-level expectations in mathematics and literacy, while attendance and behavioral data underscored the need for more comprehensive student engagement supports. At the same time, the evaluation identified several program

strengths, including strong student interest in post-secondary education, high levels of participation in GEAR UP activities, effective collaboration among project partners, and a solid foundation for future growth.

Despite startup challenges associated with the September 2024 grant award and delays in hiring Graduation Advisors, project leadership successfully launched core program services across all participating schools. During the first year, the project established a robust evaluation and continuous improvement process, developed meaningful partnerships, and ensured that students received essential academic and college readiness services. Lessons learned during Year 1 reinforced the importance of school-based student supports, coordinated intervention systems, data-informed decision-making, and the integration of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional services. Under the leadership of the GEAR UP Program Director and GEAR UP Coordinator, the project built the organizational capacity necessary to support successful long-term implementation.

The Year 2 Action Plan builds directly upon these accomplishments and evaluation findings. With Graduation Advisors now fully deployed, stronger partnerships with higher education institutions and community organizations, and an established data management and evaluation system, the project is well positioned to expand both the scope and impact of its services. Year 2 will emphasize accelerating academic achievement, increasing grade-level promotion, improving attendance and behavioral outcomes, strengthening college and career readiness, expanding family engagement, and providing targeted supports for special populations and students demonstrating the greatest levels of need.

The action plan is organized around six strategic priorities informed by Year 1 evaluation findings, student outcome data, district collaboration, and continuous improvement efforts. Together, these priorities provide a roadmap for strengthening implementation, improving student outcomes, and advancing progress toward the project's long-term goals of increasing academic achievement, educational attainment, high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, and post-secondary success. Through intentional planning, strategic partnerships, data-driven decision-making, and coordinated student supports, GEAR UP Built4Bibb will continue building a comprehensive college and career readiness pipeline that empowers students and families to achieve long-term educational success.

Strategic Priority 1: Strengthen Academic Achievement and Grade-Level Promotion

Year 1 baseline data revealed substantial opportunities to improve academic achievement among GEAR UP cohort students. Mathematics assessments indicated that many students were performing below grade-level expectations, while literacy assessments identified significant needs in reading comprehension and writing proficiency. Course performance data also revealed opportunities to improve achievement in core academic subjects and increase the number of students earning grades that support grade-level promotion and long-term academic success.

During Year 2, the project will strengthen its academic intervention framework by expanding tutoring services, implementing targeted literacy and mathematics supports, increasing progress monitoring, and strengthening collaboration with school instructional

staff. Graduation Advisors will work closely with teachers, counselors, administrators, families, and students to identify students requiring additional academic assistance and connect them with appropriate interventions and support services.

Key activities will include expanded after-school tutoring, targeted literacy and mathematics interventions, increased use of academic support platforms, student progress monitoring conferences, academic goal setting, individualized student success planning, and enhanced collaboration with district instructional departments. Particular emphasis will be placed on supporting students performing below proficiency on Georgia Milestones, STAR Reading and STAR Mathematics assessments, i-Ready diagnostics, and other district benchmark assessments. Quarterly academic reviews will be conducted to monitor student progress, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and identify students at risk of academic failure or retention. Individualized academic intervention plans will be developed for students demonstrating persistent academic challenges. In addition, the GEAR UP program will ensure that gifted and advanced learners have access to acceleration opportunities, enrichment experiences, and talent development activities that support continued academic growth.

Strategic Priority 2: Improve Attendance, Student Engagement, and School Connectedness

Year 1 findings identified attendance as a significant area of need. Attendance trends suggested that many students experienced barriers that negatively impacted consistent school participation. Chronic absenteeism continues to represent one of the strongest predictors of academic failure, grade retention, and eventual dropout risk.

During Year 2, the project will implement a comprehensive attendance improvement strategy focused on prevention, intervention, relationship-building, and family engagement. Graduation Advisors, counselors, administrators, and community partners will collaborate to identify attendance concerns early and provide targeted supports to students and families.

Attendance initiatives will include attendance monitoring systems, attendance incentive programs, attendance improvement plans, mentoring services, individualized case management, family outreach efforts, student success conferences, and referrals to community resources when appropriate. Attendance data will be reviewed monthly to identify trends and evaluate intervention effectiveness. The project will prioritize students demonstrating chronic absenteeism, excessive tardiness, and other attendance-related concerns while utilizing attendance data to inform intervention decisions and support plans.

Strategic Priority 3: Strengthen Social-Emotional Learning, Behavior Supports, and Student Wellness

Behavioral data collected during Year 1 identified 1,913 discipline incidents among participating students. Analysis revealed that incidents peaked during the middle portion of the Fall and Spring semesters and frequently occurred in classrooms, common areas, and other high-interaction settings. Student incivility, fighting, disorderly conduct, and disruptive behaviors represented the most common disciplinary concerns. During Year 2, GEAR UP will strengthen social-emotional learning, mentoring, student wellness, and behavioral intervention efforts through collaboration with Communities In Schools of

Central Georgia, school counselors, administrators, teachers, and community partners. Services will focus on improving self-regulation, conflict resolution, decision-making skills, resilience, leadership development, emotional intelligence, and school connectedness.

Graduation Advisors will coordinate student support teams and facilitate interventions for students identified through behavioral data reviews. The project will also expand mentoring opportunities, restorative practices, leadership development activities, social-emotional learning workshops, and family engagement efforts designed to improve student behavior and strengthen relationships between students and schools. Special attention will be given to students demonstrating multiple disciplinary incidents, chronic absenteeism, social-emotional challenges, or other indicators of disengagement from school.

Strategic Priority 4: Expand College Readiness, Career Awareness, and Post-Secondary Planning

One of the most encouraging findings from Year 1 was the level of student engagement in college and career readiness activities. Students participated in college visits, career fairs, financial literacy workshops, post-secondary awareness initiatives, and career exploration activities that fostered educational aspirations and future planning. Building upon this momentum, Year 2 will significantly expand college and career readiness programming. Graduation Advisors will coordinate college readiness lessons, career exploration activities, college campus visits, workforce development experiences, financial aid awareness initiatives, post-secondary planning workshops, and educational aspiration activities.

The project will strengthen partnerships with Central Georgia Technical College, Hutchings College and Career Academy, local businesses, workforce development organizations, and industry partners to provide students with increased exposure to career pathways and post-secondary opportunities. Additional emphasis will be placed on STEM careers, dual enrollment awareness, career pathway exploration, industry credential opportunities, and workforce preparation. Students will participate in structured college and career planning activities designed to increase educational aspirations, improve post-secondary knowledge, strengthen financial literacy, and support long-term educational goal setting.

Strategic Priority 5: Increase Family Engagement and Support for Special Populations

Year 1 implementation highlighted the critical role families play in supporting student success. Evaluation findings identified opportunities to strengthen engagement among families of students experiencing homelessness, foster youth, English Learners, students with disabilities, students with Section 504 plans, gifted learners, and other special populations. During Year 2, the project will expand family engagement programming through workshops, parent academies, financial literacy events, college planning sessions, family conferences, parent leadership opportunities, and communication initiatives. Graduation Advisors will serve as direct points of contact for families and will work to strengthen relationships between schools, families, and community organizations.

Specialized supports will be coordinated for students experiencing homelessness, unaccompanied youth, foster youth, English Learners, students with disabilities, students

with Section 504 plans, gifted learners, and other students requiring targeted interventions, such as students enrolled at SOAR Academy, Price Academy, and Elam Alexander Academy. Community partners will assist in addressing non-academic barriers that may affect student success and educational attainment. Family participation data will be monitored regularly, and targeted outreach strategies will be implemented for families demonstrating limited engagement.

Strategic Priority 6: Strengthen Data-Driven Decision Making and Continuous Improvement

Year 1 successfully established the evaluation and accountability infrastructure necessary to support continuous improvement. The partnership with Towering Your Success, LLC and implementation of the Towering Your Success Data Management System provided the project with robust tools for monitoring implementation and evaluating outcomes. During Year 2, project leadership will scale the use of data to inform decision-making at the student, school, partner, and project levels. Implementation reviews, data meetings, annual evaluation reports, and performance monitoring processes will continue to guide project improvement efforts. Graduation Advisors will contribute to data collection, participation tracking, student monitoring, and intervention planning activities. The project will strengthen implementation fidelity monitoring, increase documentation of services and outcomes, and expand the use of disaggregated data analyses to identify achievement gaps and monitor equity outcomes across student groups. Evaluation findings will be used to guide resource allocation, partnership development, staffing decisions, program modifications, and strategic planning efforts throughout the year. Continuous

improvement cycles will ensure that project activities remain responsive to student needs and aligned with project objectives.

Performance Targets and Expected Outcomes

Through implementation of the Year 2 Action Plan, the project expects to increase participation in academic support services, improve attendance rates, reduce disciplinary incidents, increase family engagement, expand college and career readiness participation, and strengthen student academic performance. The project also expects to increase the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency in literacy and mathematics, improve promotion rates, strengthen educational aspirations, and increase participation in post-secondary planning activities. Additionally, the addition of Graduation Advisors during Year 2 is expected to significantly increase the project's capacity to provide individualized student support, case management, family engagement, attendance interventions, academic monitoring, and direct service delivery. This expanded staffing structure will allow the project to move from the centralized implementation model utilized during Year 1 to a comprehensive school-based support model that provides more intensive services to students and families.

Findings, Implications, and Recommendations

Year 1 implementation provided valuable insight into the academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and post-secondary readiness needs of the GEAR UP cohort. Findings demonstrated that students possess strong aspirations and significant potential but require targeted academic interventions, enhanced student supports, increased college and career

exposure, improved attendance, and stronger family engagement opportunities to fully realize their educational goals. The addition of Graduation Advisors, the expansion of community partner services, the scaling of evaluation systems, and the continued engagement of school and higher education partners position GEAR UP Built4Bibb to significantly increase its impact during Year 2.

Moving forward, the project's success will depend on sustaining strong partnerships, leveraging data-driven decision-making, delivering coordinated student supports, and continuously refining implementation through ongoing evaluation and stakeholder feedback. The Year 2 Action Plan provides a strategic framework for addressing identified needs, building upon Year 1 accomplishments, and accelerating progress toward the project's long-term goals of improving academic achievement, educational attainment, high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, and post-secondary success. Through intentional implementation, continuous improvement, and sustained collaboration among schools, families, and community partners, GEAR UP Built4Bibb is well positioned to expand educational opportunities and improve outcomes for the students and families it serves.

NOTE:

This GEAR UP Year 1 Summative Evaluation is a preliminary document. Concurrent review from the Bibb County School District and Towering Your Success is in progress. After any such changes are made, this document will then become a final evaluation document of the GEAR UP Year 1 Programming and Grant Implementation for the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs Grant for the Bibb County School District.

References

Governor's Office of Student Achievement. (2025). *Georgia School Grades: Bibb County School District (2024–2025)*. State of Georgia. https://public.gosa.ga.gov/noauth/extensions/SchoolGrades-Georgia/SchoolGrades-Georgia.html?lang=English&SchoolName=bibb-county