



GEAR UP IOWA

Issue 4
Spring 2016

Family Newsletter

Help Your Student Transition to High School

This fall is an exciting and important stage of your student's life. They will start making choices that will open doors for postsecondary opportunities, allowing them to pursue their goals and dreams. The transition from middle school to high school can be stressful, but your involvement, supervision and support are essential to ensure a smooth transition. Here are some tips to help your student through this transition:

Be informed:

- Attend family orientation meetings to learn about high school courses, graduation requirements and the importance of a good GPA (grade point average).
- Visit your school's website or **contact your student's guidance counselor** to learn more about four-year plans, how high school credits work and how many your student needs to graduate.

Be involved:

- Attend parent teacher conferences and school events.
- Ask your student about their hopes and goals for high school. Use open ended questions like: "What have you been learning?" and "How do you feel?"
- Encourage your student to **take the most challenging course level** in which he/she can be successful.

Monitor progress and set expectations:

- Set up after school routines at home to make sure homework is done.
- Check student's grades and attendance using the online parent portal offered through your school.
- Help your student **find a balance between academics and extracurricular activities**. It is better to be strongly involved in two or three extracurricular activities (sports & clubs, volunteering) than be overwhelmed with too many.

Don't be afraid to ask teachers, guidance counselors or other school staff for information as your student makes the move into high school. They can help answer any questions or concerns about your student's progress or this adjustment to a new environment.

What is GEAR UP Iowa?

GEAR UP (which stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a program made possible through a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education aimed at preparing students and families academically, financially and inspirationally to enroll and succeed in college.

Beginning in Fall 2014, this seven-year project supports nearly 6,300 students beginning in 7th grade and follows them as they progress through school. GEAR UP Iowa is a long-term partnership between Iowa College Student Aid Commission, 12 school districts and nearly 40 institutions of higher education and community-based organizations.

For more information, visit our website:
www.gearupiowa.gov

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Connect with GEAR UP Iowa!

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Alumni Success

Scott Son
Des Moines East High School
GEAR UP Iowa Alum

Each issue, GEAR UP Iowa recognizes the success of program graduates and their accomplishments beyond high school.

College: University of Iowa

Major: Undecided

College Activities: Treasurer of Vietnamese Student Association & President of Pi Alpha Phi Fraternity

Highlight: Joining Pi Alpha Phi Fraternity

Words of Wisdom & Encouragement:

It's going to take some work to get to college and the work in college is greater than expected but, when you make it, why not **go the extra mile** to complete your next goal?



GEAR UP Iowa Facilitator Corner

GEAR UP Iowa Facilitators work with school districts to offer support for students, families and school staff. By assisting with programming at schools, Facilitators help ensure students learn about their educational options, graduate from high school and move easily into their education beyond high school. In this issue, they discuss what they would have done differently in high school:

Denise Riley, B.S. Child, Adult & Family Services, Iowa State University

Cedar Rapids, Ottumwa and Sioux City

"I would have been **more open-minded to additional career paths**. In middle school, I decided I wanted to be an interior designer and then never explored other options throughout high school. It wasn't until college that I decided interior design wasn't the best fit for me and then felt lost, as I hadn't explored other careers."

Tiffany Berkenes, B.A. K-12 Art Education, Simpson College
Des Moines & Marshalltown

"I would have taken AP (Advanced Placement) or other **classes that would have better prepared me for the rigor of college classes** or had earned me free college credit. I would have also explored more volunteer opportunities in the areas I was thinking about studying in college."

Nathan Svare, B.S. Psychology, Bemidji State University & M.S. Social Responsibility, St. Cloud State University
Fort Dodge, Clinton, Columbus Junction & Davenport

"I would have visited more colleges to better determine which college was the right fit for me. I would also have **taken advantage of job shadowing** to determine if certain careers that I was initially interested in would have held throughout the job shadowing experience."

Flor Slowing, M.S. International Development, Iowa State University
Denison, Perry & Storm Lake

"I attended high school in my home country of Guatemala where the school system is very different than in the United States. All my high school courses were assigned to me and I did not have the opportunity to choose from elective courses to explore my interests. **Take advantage of elective courses and dual enrollment opportunities to explore your interests** and practice decision making!"

School Spotlight: March Madness in Sioux City

Students from all three middle schools in Sioux City used March Madness as an opportunity to learn more about some of the colleges in the NCAA men's basketball championship tournament as each 8th grade homeroom researched a school in the tournament and created posters to display.



"Our March Madness tournament allowed us to capitalize on the national spotlight that surrounds colleges," said Amber Kilburn, GEAR UP Coordinator for Sioux City School District. "It was a great way to have them **become familiar with researching colleges and college lingo.**"

Each homeroom was judged based on visual appeal and had to contain certain facts about the college such as enrollment numbers, location and majors offered. Prizes were awarded to the best overall poster and to the homeroom that drew the winning team during the tournament.

Parent Tip

Don't be afraid to ask for help. There is a lot of new information to learn during your student's transition to high school. The faculty and staff at your student's school is there to help guide you and your student, so don't be afraid to ask for help.

Building a Positive Foundation for 9th Graders

Your choices impact your future and your "application" for a two- or four-year college, apprenticeship or other training beyond high school starts the first day of your freshman year in high school. **This is an exciting opportunity for a fresh start, to set goals**, learn more about yourself and even start earning scholarship money! Here are some tips to help you kick off your first year of high school on a positive note:

- **Set personal and academic short-term and long-term goals.** Write them down and share with a positive mentor to help hold you accountable.
- **Meet with your school counselor or advisor** to create a 4-year high school plan and consider AP (Advanced Placement) and free college credit classes.
- **Explore new clubs or volunteer experiences in your school or community.** This can help earn scholarships and college acceptances!
- **Start a résumé** documenting your school and community activities, honors or awards, jobs and GPA. Save this electronically and continue to update it to refer to when you apply for jobs, scholarships and college admissions later in high school.
- **Start earning and looking for scholarships** through websites like Raise.me and collegegreenlight.com.
- **Learn and start good study habits** such as time management by using a planner.
- **Enjoy meeting new friends**, turn homework in on time, seek help when you need it, practice self-care and have fun!

Myth vs. Reality

Myth:

Ninth-grade classes, attendance and grades won't matter when applying for college.

Reality:

Colleges will look at students' entire transcripts from grades 9-12 when reviewing applications, so **every year is equally important.**



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Get Connected

Vocabulary.com is a free resource which combines the world's smartest dictionary with an **adaptive learning game** that will help your student master new words.

Students can explore on their own or the website can be used to **support what they are learning in the classroom**. Users accumulate points, achievements and badges and can compete with other users from around the world.

Students can create their own vocabulary lists or choose from Vocabulary.com's library of over 500,000 lists **to prepare for tests or master words used in books assigned for school**. The online version is free and signing up only takes a few minutes. Vocabulary.com also offers a paid app.

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vocabulary.com

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www.vocabulary.com
Twitter: @VocabularyCom
Facebook: "Vocabulary.com"

Check out our updated website!
www.gearupiowa.gov

Welcome to GEAR UP Iowa!

Congratulations, your child is
a GEAR UP Iowa student!

Look inside this newsletter for information on
GEAR UP Iowa programs at schools around the state,
plus tips and advice for helping
improve student success.

GEAR UP Iowa is a program of:



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