

PROGRAM:

No Senior Left Behind...the 100% Challenge

OBJECTIVES:

Every senior will complete and submit an application to at least one post-secondary education institution. Each will complete a FAFSA and an application for financial aid.

LOCATION:

Rural high schools in Prosser, Highland, Royal, Othello and Wahluke School Districts

DESCRIPTION:

The project began with a “100% Solution” workshop at CWU in June. Each of the five GEAR UP districts sent a team including, at a minimum, the principal, counselor, site director and a teacher. The workshop agenda included greetings from the CWU Dean of Undergraduate Studies and presentations by the CWU Director of Admissions, Admissions counselors, NLA directors and Bridges Coordinator.

Each team then worked on a plan to ensure that every senior completed an application by identifying strategies to meet the needs of three groups identified as the “low, middle and high hanging fruit.” Strategies and timelines differed significantly for each of the three groups.

In the fall, a training workshop was conducted to ensure that all of the counselors, college student mentors, and administrative staff were on the same page, providing accurate information. The training workshop included principals, counselors, college student mentors (Bridges Program and School Psychology graduate students) and GEAR UP staff. Presentations were made by the CWU Director of Admissions, the GEAR UP staff, Parent Involvement Specialists, and authorities on financial aid and college admissions procedures.

GEAR UP staff worked with their sites to ensure that students who were already planning to enroll in college (low-hanging fruit) met the timelines for SAT/ACT testing, and submission deadlines for early admission as well as scholarship application research and application by mid November at the latest. They then turned their attention to the second group of students (middle hanging fruit) who were considering post-secondary education but who had not made up their minds. These students were paired with Bridges college mentors who helped them identify interests, research colleges and complete an application. There was a lot of hand-holding and checking on students to ensure that they had covered all of the activities on the college enrollment check-list. The deadline for this group was February/March.

The final group (high hanging fruit) required hands-on encouragement through May and even June. Bridges college students worked closely with these students to motivate and work with them side by side to complete necessary forms. The GEAR UP site directors took on many in this group, one on one, to provide intensive assistance and daily reminders. Parent leaders in some of the districts conducted workshops for other parents to help them navigate the college enrollment process.

The work resulted in 100% of seniors submitting an application in three of the districts and 98% in the other two districts. Many students, who never considered the possibility were waving acceptance letters and entertaining the idea of a different future than they had anticipated. GEAR UP covered the cost of submitting an application if funds were not available through other programs. Actually submitting the application is a step that has been missing in the past. It is this step that makes the entire process relevant.

In the summer, CWU Bridges students and counselors followed up with students to ensure that they had met all of the necessary deadlines to enroll.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE:

PREPARATION ACTIVITIES:

- June: GEAR UP Staff host a workshop for High School Teams to plan strategies for ensuring that all seniors enroll.
- September: GEAR UP staff host a training session for school staff, college mentors and GEAR UP staff to ensure that information is accurate and procedures and forms are streamlined.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

- September: Several schools incorporated the college enrollment process in the first quarter English class curriculum: researching colleges, personal statement, financial aid, scholarship applications, FAFSA, SAT testing.
- September-November: Staff members focus on the first group (low-hanging) fruit to ensure that they meet early admission deadlines.
- December-March: Staff members focus on the middle group of students who are eligible but need assistance.
- March-June: Staff members concentrate on the final group of students who have not considered college an option.
- March 15: Target date to provide list of students indicating where they have applied, where they have been accepted, where they have enrolled, scholarship/financial aid.
- June 15: Final documentation of data on all seniors.

- Site directors arrange college campus visits for students, especially those who need additional encouragement to actually enroll.
- Summer: Bridges College Mentors, school counselors and GEAR UP site directors follow up with students to ensure that they completed all forms to enroll.
- Fall: GEAR UP and High School staff use the National Clearinghouse and student surveys to determine where students actually enrolled.

COSTS OR COST CONSIDERATIONS:

Salaries and transportation for college student mentors to meet with high school seniors.

Transportation and lunch for two pre-planning sessions.

College application fee for those who need it to ensure that every student submits an application.

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ATTACHMENTS:

Article on Royal School District's 100% program. (next page)

RESOURCES:

Workshop Agendas, Training Agendas.

NO SENIOR LEFT BEHIND

THE 100% CHALLENGE AT ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL

By Stefanie Bafus, GEAR UP Site Director, Royal City, Washington

EVERY SENIOR? You mean every student? YES! The Central Washington University GEAR UP partnership has challenged every school in the CWU GEAR UP Partnership (Wahluke, Royal, Othello, Prosser and Highland school districts) to ensure that every senior completes and submits an application to a post- secondary institution. Royal High School has already met that challenge, and students are beginning to get responses from post-secondary education agencies.



How did we do it?

It was clear from the start that some of our seniors would apply to post-secondary education with minimal support and encouragement. Others would require time, support, more time

and some hand-holding, especially those whose families have no frame of reference for the college application process.

The scaffolding we set up for our seniors to accomplish our 100% goal included several support programs:

- Our senior English teacher began working with students the first day of school on completing an application, writing a personal statement, applying for a scholarship and financial aid. Each student was required to submit a post-secondary education and a scholarship application. Our GEAR UP program helped pay for the application and testing fees so that finances would not be a deterrent.
- We formed a parent outreach team composed of a well-known bilingual couple in the community. They set up home visits to discuss and walk parents through the application process.
- We established a college mentor partnership with the Central Washington University Psychology Department to assign graduate students studying to become school counselors to meet with each of our seniors a minimum of three times. 70% of our seniors participated.
- The GEAR UP site director kept track of every student's progress and met individually with those who had not completed an application by January 18.

All ninety-eight seniors at Royal High School submitted their applications by February 1, a phenomenal accomplishment for this rural school.

Their Stories:

Sal is a senior whose name I recognized immediately on my list of seniors because of the number of failing grades on his transcript. He was flagged as one we would have to literally hunt down to involve in the 100% project. I began talking with him each day. I learned quickly to catch him out of earshot of his buddies who did not think "college is cool." I finally resorted to "bribery" by offering him some coveted meal tickets. He agreed to sit down with me to complete the application together. He was interested in becoming a mechanic but did not have any idea how to prepare. In January, Sal ecstatically announced that he had been accepted to the community college he had applied to! He made the announcement in front of his buddies. Now, college is cool. Sal has some special needs especially with help in reading. In the next few weeks, I will take Sal to visit the community college and introduce him to people who can support him once he enrolls. What a story he will have to tell his kids and grandkids about his path to college.

Faith is a second year senior. She is behind because she had to drop out when she had a child two years ago. She will complete her high school diploma in January. I met with her for the first time in December. Faith wanted to attend college when she graduated mid-year but didn't have any idea how to go about applying. Teachers had not counted her in the 100% target group because she was a second year senior. It is as if she fell through the cracks and everyone forgot about her. I helped Faith to complete the application to the local community college and the financial aid form to help her get there.

These are just a couple of the success stories and there will be many more by the time students begin to receive notices of acceptance. I am most impacted by the relief that I see in the students' faces because they have a plan for the future. Today I spoke with Tony. I know he wants to go to college. I know his mom wants him to go. They have been to every family event GEAR UP has ever put on. Tony wants to become a police officer, so I was surprised to see him on the "has not applied yet" list and I pulled him out of class to talk with him about it. He told me that he had the paper application completed and just needed to go on-line to apply. But he had not yet applied for financial aid. I asked when we could meet to get going on his application and then asked, "or, would you rather just do it on your own?" His response was revealing. He quickly replied, "Oh, yes, I want someone to just sit with me in case I have questions. I am afraid of doing something wrong." I have to wonder how many students don't reach that final step because we don't stay with them for those "last few yards to the goal line."

Whatever it takes! No one will be left behind.

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