

Senior Year Checklist

By: Ann Pike, GEAR UP Regional Technical Assistance Coordinator

Fall

- 1 ! Attend a FAFSA workshop with your parents.
- 1 ! Meet with your guidance counselor to keep her or him informed of your progress.
- 1 ! Create a master calendar noting all test dates, college application dates, early decision dates (your guidance counselor can help!).
- 1 ! Complete your college applications.
- 1 ! Complete your college essays.
- 1 ! Request recommendation letters.
- 1 ! Pull together a portfolio of accomplishments.
- 1 ! If you have a MySpace or Facebook site make sure that it represents you in a way you want college admission personnel to see you. (They do look you up!)
- 1 ! Up-date your resume to include all of your accomplishments, community service, volunteering, and work experience.

- 1 ! Up-date your ConnectEdu information.



Ten Ways for Schools to Promote Parent Engagement

By Pam Flood, Emily Liebling, & Ray Cook

Parent involvement is essential in improving student outcomes, but engaging parents in a meaningful way can be challenging. Here are some suggestions to help your school work more closely with parents and community members.

1. Host events where parents and students can learn and do things together. (Host a college planning night. See the Pie Night article for one example.)
2. Build trust and positive relationships with parents. Publish a parent newsletter with school events, good news, ways for parents to help, teachers' e-mail addresses.
3. Use a variety of media to communicate with parents. Some parents like traditional mail, others are comfortable on the phone; many have "gone digital" and can be reached with e-mail, an interactive website, text messages, phonecasts or podcasts. Deliver information using a variety of formats to ensure greater access. For example, post your newsletter on your school website, email copies to all parents, and have paper copies available in the office, library and some community organizations or businesses.
4. Actively involve parents and their children in academic planning and assessment. Hold student-led parent conferences twice a year. Remember to explain professional terms or replace them with layman's language.
5. Use your curriculum to promote parent interest in homework. Find one or two homework assignments for the first month of school that require students to involve their parents.
6. Host a series of parent support meetings. Recruit local professionals to discuss such issues as adolescent health, supporting homework, cyber-safety, graduation requirements, financial aid, and preparing for college.
7. Invite parents to learn about and discuss changes within the school community. Host an evening to discuss the new version of the Maine Learning Results, high school requirements, district consolidation.
8. Think about parent needs when hosting an event. Make your events as accommodating as possible: food, child care, transportation (a school bus could transport a large group of parents), a range of times of day, handouts and reports of the proceedings for parents who can't be there. Parents and children with disabilities may need special accommodations, so announce your events with enough time for planning.
9. Provide professional development for all school staff to encourage parent involvement. Invite parents to contribute to the training. The Parent Information and Resource Center at the Maine Parent Federation provides consultation and training to schools to comply with the parent involvement requirements of Title One and NCLB.
10. Invite a wide range of involvement. Parents, guardians, and grandparents, as well as other community members, have a great variety of skills and resources. Encourage them to invent their own ways to get involved and contribute to the school.



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Maine GEAR UP Newsletter

Fall 2007

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Getting Ready! Start College Planning Early

There are some really great college information resources on the internet today. One such resource that can provide you with information in planning and thinking about college is called The College Track. It can be accessed at www.thecollegetrack.com. There are some great quizzes on this site to assess what you know about financial aid and college facts. It also provides links to other college preparatory sites such as the College Board.

Below are some statistics the site offers about the rewards of a college education.

In Maine the median income difference between high school graduates and those with bachelor's degrees (18-64 year-olds) is \$10,000.



- Median income, statewide (ages 18-64): \$22,000
- Median income, less than HS grad: \$13,900
- Median income, HS graduate: \$20,000
- Median income, some college: \$20,000
- Median income, associate degree: \$26,000
- Median income, bachelor's degree: \$30,000
- Median income, master's degree: \$36,000
- Median income, professional degree: \$51,000
- Median income, doctorate: \$50,000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, based on 2000 Census (Retrieved August 6, 2007 from <http://www.thecollegetrack.com/whosin/income.php?state=ME>)



Raising Aspirations - New England Goes to College

Samoset Resort, Rockport, Maine, Monday, October 29 - Tuesday, October 30, 2007

New England state and partnership GEAR UP programs are invited to attend a two-day conference at the Samoset Resort in the beautiful coastal town of Rockport, Maine. Speaking at the conference will be Maine Department of Education Commissioner, Susan Gendron, as well as keynote speaker Dr. Russell J. Quaglia, President and Founder of the Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations. We will also hear from inspirational speaker Douglass Luffborough III about empowering youth and families.

All workshops will be interactive and have built-in time for Q&A. Tentative workshops include curriculum development, parent involvement, leveraging and aligning resources within a school, building alliances in your schools, and serving students with disabilities, as well as workshops targeted for program directors and another strand for program coordinators. We will also be hosting a call-in for principals to share strategies used at their schools to raise aspirations and promote a college-going culture. If there is a workshop you would like to lead at the conference, please consider submitting a proposal before September 1 (visit our website to download, www.gearupme.org).

Letter from a GU Graduate:

"I am writing to let you know how my spring semester went. As you know I graduated a semester early and went to Kennebec Valley Community College. With the help from GEAR UP I didn't have any out-of-pocket costs and I was able to use left-over money to buy a new computer and printer to continue my education at the University of Southern Maine. I will be going into my freshman year there with a 3.7 GPA which I would never have been able to do without the help of GEAR UP. I would also like to suggest that the GEAR UP students be able to give back to the program someday! Thank you so much for all the help!"





SPOTLIGHT ON:

Narraguagus High School

PIE NIGHT:

A FUN TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

NARRAGUAGUS HIGH SCHOOL hosted their first annual college night for all juniors and seniors! They titled the evening PIE Night: PIE stands for "Promoting Individual Education." The evening was a huge success; over 65 students and family members attended.

Corey Fleming, GEAR UP Liaison, and Brittany Ray, Guidance Counselor, coordinated the event and made sure that all of the students knew about and were excited about attending. Narraguagus alumni who are currently in college, as well as their parents, were invited to share their experiences with the group.

Not only did Narraguagus parents and students hear from their college-experienced peers, but financial aid information was shared with the participants. To make the evening even more inviting, a variety of pies were provided and several raffles were held. Each raffle included items students would find useful in college. One raffle gift was a laundry basket full of goodies such as shampoo, laundry detergent, and other college essentials. The evening was a wonderful social and learning event for everyone. Both family members and students felt the night was such a huge success! In fact, one local merchant has already donated \$500 to support the event next year.

Corey and Brittany shared the following advice for any other school with plans to host such an event:

1. Get the kids involved and excited!
2. Bring in high school graduates who are now in college, and their parents, to share their experiences.
3. Make sure you have someone who has a good connection with the students and parents to promote participation.
4. Promote, promote, promote the event with students in the days leading up to the event.
5. Make sure it is fun – food and raffles work.

Gearing-Up for College: Utilizing Cooperative and Celebratory Learning to Promote Systematic Change

By Pam Flood & Emily Liebling

Nancy Melhorne and Lucille Willey took time from their busy schedules to give us their thoughts about what is helping to secure a college-going culture within Narraguagus High School. According to Melhorne and Willey, the emphasis of ensuring all students are prepared for, and have aspirations to continue, their education past high school has expanded to include every student within the school. This is due in part to the comprehensive role that GEAR UP plays in their school. The GEAR UP goals and objectives of supporting GEAR UP students to achieve to a successful post-secondary education have become a part of the school's expectations for all students. Nancy noted that Brittany Ray, the school guidance counselor, and Corey Fleming, the GEAR UP Liaison, are taking the lead in ensuring all teachers, students, and their family members are thinking about what it takes to make sure all students can have access to, and understand the requirements of, college.

This emphasis on thinking about college can be seen all around the school. For example, Brittany has painted the name of every college that any Narraguagus student has attended on the walls of her guidance office. Brittany also coordinated the PIE Night in collaboration with the GU Liaison, Corey Fleming (see PIE Night article on left). Whenever a senior is accepted into a college, Melhorne sees that it is announced to the school. In addition, all of the teachers wear their college tee-shirts during different times of the year.

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Melhorne and Willey are extremely proud of the students and staff at Narraguagus High School who are dedicated to, and highly engaged in,

teaching and learning. Melhorne acknowledges that the support of the district in ensuring that their staff has professional development opportunities has played a very important role. There are Math and English teams, the staff participates in teacher rounds, and there is a literacy council. According to Melhorne "There is strong faculty support and administrative support for professional development and the administration continues to provide the floor for that...it is time consuming, but it supports what is happening in the classroom and beyond the classroom and GEAR UP is a part of that." In addition, according to Melhorne, administrators

...all teachers wear their college tee-shirts during different times of the year.

in re-what what work, the where get funding?... as an administrator it is my responsibility to figure out what we can provide for students." Melhorne also noted that Narraguagus has been involved in The Great Maine Schools Project and provides early college experiences for their students. Leveraging these types of experiences also supports the GU goals and objectives.

When asked what types of efforts their staff engaged in to involve the families of all Narraguagus students, Willey and Melhorne shared many ideas. Narraguagus offers student-led conferences and this has led to almost 100-percent of involvement. They offer an open house at the beginning of the school year, and a demonstration night three quarters of the way through the year. Additionally, Melhorne stated, "I encourage teachers to continuously be in contact with parents by phone – if they are having problems with a student or an outstanding achievement – I encourage them to be in touch frequently. We have to keep the lines of communication open – we all work well to do that."

We would like to thank the Narraguagus team for sharing their learning and successes. It is through sharing and learning together that we can help ensure that all Maine students attain the academic and social skills necessary to successfully complete their post-secondary school education.



Supporting Transitions: Elementary School to Middle School Middle School to High School

By Pam Flood & Emily Liebling

According to the National Middle School Association (NMSA) the transition from elementary to middle school is a pivotal time for adolescents. It is when they begin to make significant choices that influence their career and academic futures. The transition from middle school to high school can also be a challenge, especially in Maine where students may transfer from a small community middle school to a large high school that services multiple communities. The

advice NMSA offers to middle school educators is also important for high school educators to consider. We have taken their ideas and expanded them to address both middle school and high school transitions.

Remember that transition planning begins well before the students arrive at your door, but if you have not yet developed a plan it is not too late! Here are some ideas to get you started.

- 1 ! Make sure each new student has an adult contact in the school. The student needs to know how and where to receive support if necessary, and what supports are available. Make sure he has a connection with someone specific until he knows his way around the school.
- 1 ! Provide an orientation for new students. If you don't have time set aside in the school day, host some luncheons with the students to find out how they are doing. Offer some feedback opportunities, such as focus groups, interviews, or anonymous surveys to find out what is working and what is not.
- 1 ! Make sure everyone in the school understands the developmental and social needs of the youth they are working with, and the types of concerns and challenges youth face when making a major transition. Remember, attending to the emotional needs of students also promotes learning.
- 1 ! Create learning structures that promote healthy interactions. These can include cooperative learning activities, develop learning communities, utilize teaming structures, and so forth.
- 1 ! Create an environment of high expectations, appreciation, and respect for all. According to the Center for Human Policy, "Until everyone belongs we do not have a community."

According to the National Middle School Association (2002): "The young adolescent must feel successful in school, have opportunities for self-expression and decision-making, and feel cared for and respected as a person."

(Retrieved August 6, 2007, paragraph 3, from <http://www.nmsa.org/AboutNMSA/PositionStatements/TransitioningStudents/tabid/283/Default.aspx>).



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TRANSITION SUMMIT

GEAR UP MAINE recognizes the importance of successful transitions and last year GEAR UP co-sponsored The Transition Summit hosted by the Southern Maine Partnership. The Summit, held on April 10th, addressed the many issues associated with successfully transitioning students from middle to high school. Our co-sponsorship afforded the participation of GEAR UP students as members of building teams. There were three conference strands: (1) supporting success for middle school students, (2) developing smooth transitions – middle grades to high school, and (3) providing strong support systems for high school students. It was an exciting and successful day, and one way GU actively leveraged resources to support school staff and students in learning from, and with, colleagues to improve transition experiences for all students. For more information about learning opportunities for GEAR UP schools visit our website at www.gearupme.org.

Upcoming grant opportunity:

MELMAC Education Foundation
Connect Aspirations to a Plan
RSVP online at

www.melmacfoundation.org for the bidders' conference for the next round of grantmaking for Maine high schools and career and technical centers. The RFP will be emailed in mid August 2007 to registrants. MELMAC grantees work to increase the number of Maine students going to college.