

Seniors:

- Make sure you have all applications required for college admission and financial aid. Check on application and financial aid deadlines for the schools to which you plan to apply.
- Register for the October/November SAT Reasoning Test and/or SAT Subject Test, or September/October ACT.

Juniors

- Register for the October PSAT.
- If you will require financial aid, start researching your options for grants, scholarships, and work-study programs.

Sophomores

- Talk to your guidance counselor about taking the PLAN and PSAT this fall.
- Take an interest survey to help determine your career path.

Freshmen

- Study hard and get excellent grades.
- Meet your high school guidance counselor and discuss your plans for the next four years.

We have complete checklists for all years on our updated website!

www.gearupme.org/students

Also on our student page, check out a listing of over 70 Maine educational summer opportunities.

It's never too early to start planning for summer!

www.gearupme.org/students/summer.php



Transition Planning in Washington County:
Creating a "Web" of Support

"Transitions" was the topic of a recent workshop for educators planned and facilitated by GEAR UP, the Washington County Consortium, and the Maine Transition Network/Downeast. Thirty-five educators and service providers gathered at the University of Maine at Machias on April 30 to focus on the importance of preparing all students for transitions into high school and on to college and careers.

Participants focused on questions concerning student supports, parent engagement, career awareness, and college expectations. School team members identified gaps to address, and questions to ask, in the breakout session. Representatives from a variety of organizations, schools, and programs shared information and resources with participants.

Teams worked through the day together and reported out on an action they planned to take to strengthen the transition process for students in their schools. To read the full article about this workshop, please visit: <http://www.gearupme.org/news/newsletter.php>.



Maine Content Literacy Project Update

At the Maine Content Literacy Project "Kick Off Institute" in early April, school literacy leadership teams met to develop, and begin implementing, their action plans for the year. Follow-up regional workshops on powerful literacy strategies were filled to capacity. Teams also participated in follow-up technical assistance calls with staff from Julie Meltzer's organization, which provided added support and feedback.

Literacy coaches have been identified to provide support in each school and in each region. A coaching network was initiated in August, with both internal school coaches and external regional coaches participating in a two-day training institute in Bangor. Also in August, both continuing school teams and new school teams met for a one-day literacy leadership institute to meet with their coaches, assess their progress, and flesh out their action plans. Thirty-nine schools from twenty-nine school districts are participating in the four-year project. Ten of these school districts receive GEAR UP funds.

High schools participating in the literacy initiatives have found that teaching literacy strategies across content areas can lead to an improvement in student achievement. Specifically, one of our GU high schools participating in the grant exceeded their literacy goals for last year in reading and saw improved scores on their students NWEA.

Photo Gallery



GEAR UP student Felicia Chase with her family at TRiO Day on February 18, 2009.



Staff from So. Aroostook lead a workshop breakout group through Skype at the NEOA Conference in NH on April 1, 2009.



GEAR UP Regional Coordinator Judy Pottle hears from a student at the Dropout Prevention Summit in Orono on July 27, 2009.

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- ★ Washington County Transition Planning
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- ★ NEOA Conference

Mt. Abram Student Attends GEAR UP Youth Leadership Summit



Brianna Thorndike

BRIANNA THORNDIKE, AN '09 GRADUATE from Mt. Abram High School, and thirty of her peers from across the country, were selected to participate in the Youth Leadership Summit (YLS) which took place at the national GEAR UP Annual Conference in San Francisco, California, this July. The students' mission at YLS was to identify issues in their schools that prevent many students from going on to higher education, and to propose solutions for these barriers. They broke into four groups, and each group focused on one of the following topics: Individual Determination, Outside Influences, Family/Life Obstacles, and School Environments. Their findings and ideas were compiled in a written report and presented to the two thousand Conference participants. Brianna played the role of the "expert" in their well-planned talk show format skit, and she even received a standing ovation!

"We not only identified the problems, but found solutions for them. If [we] take back what we learned, we could really make a difference."

She was most animated when speaking about the other students she met at the Conference. The students came from different GEAR UP programs nationwide, and many, like Brianna, had never been on a plane before. They all participated in group-building activities, and Brianna said, "if we hadn't opened up and felt comfortable with each other we wouldn't have accomplished all the work that we did." So are they keeping in touch? Definitely! "We're all on Facebook, and I get text messages from them all the time."

She said their work together was meaningful because "we not only identified the problems but found solutions for them. I think that if all of us take back what we learned, we could really make a difference. It may just start in our schools or our communities, but if we do

this every year and if we make a difference in even just the lives of those kids, things will really change. I plan to start a leadership group when I get to college, and I also want to go back to my high school and share what I learned with everyone there."



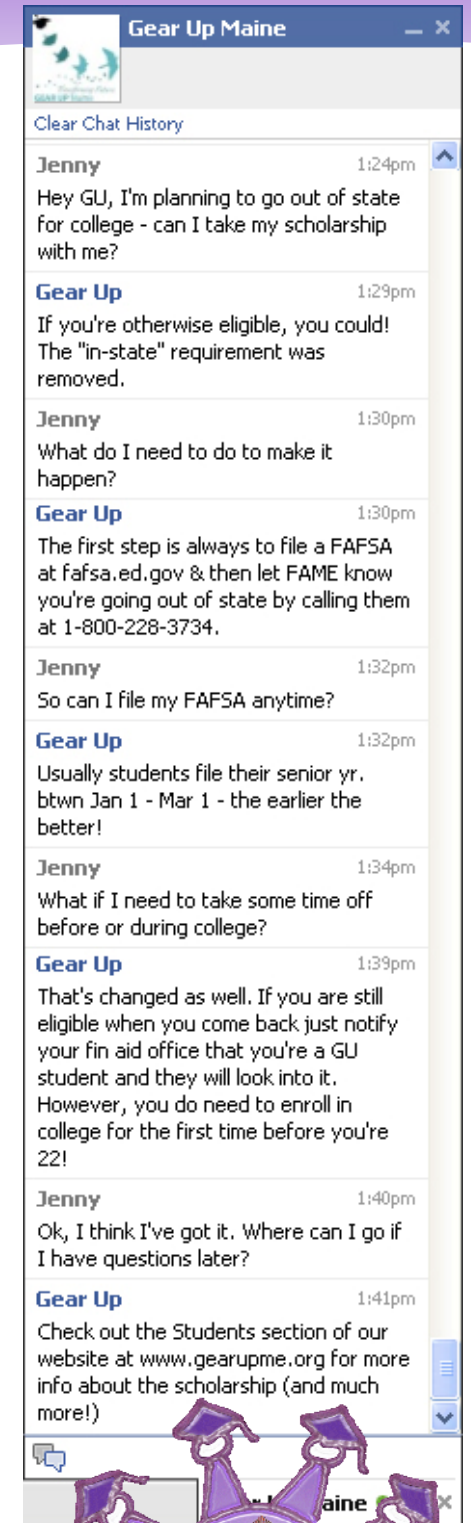
Images created by Conference attendee Brandi Herren from Blackwell, OK

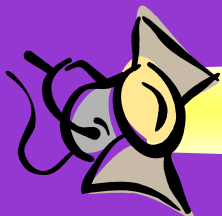


Conferences & Events With a College-Going Focus

<http://www.gearupme.org/news/events.php>

Maine State GEAR UP is pleased to announce a new resource developed for individuals interested in college access. Each year there are many opportunities available locally and nationally, but knowing what is out there, and planning/budgeting ahead of time, can be a challenge. Please visit our website for a listing of annual conferences and events, and contact us if you have something to add! Examples include events hosted by College Board, Finance Authority of Maine, GEAR UP, MELMAC, Maine Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, Maine Counseling Association, Maine Department of Education, Maine Educational Opportunity Association, Maine Parent Federation, National College Access Network, New England Opportunity Association, and TRiO.





SPOTLIGHT ON: LAWRENCE High & Junior High School

GEAR UP In the News!

GEAR UP Liaison Janet Avallone has been working hard with guidance counselors at Lawrence High School to ensure that students and their families have access to information about college, careers, and financial aid along with other college-going activities. One impressive result from these efforts is that all seniors at Lawrence High School filed a FAFSA and completed a college application this year!

At class night, many eyebrows were raised when the GEAR UP scholarships were announced, as school board members and the superintendent heard the impressive amount of the awards being given to GU students. Janet was asked by the superintendent and a school board member to present at the next school board meeting. Her presentation was a success. To find out more about the evening, read the article *Grants Draw Thanks, Criticism*, by Larry Grard that appeared in the Morning Sentinel June 19, 2009 at: <http://tinyurl.com/lawrencenews>

What is a Math Teacher/Coach exactly?

Based on a conversation with Nora Murray, Assistant Superintendent at MSAD 49.

Lawrence Jr. High and Lawrence High School are fortunate to have the opportunity to learn exactly what a Math Teacher/Coach's responsibilities are due to a new position made available by federal stimulus dollars. For the next two years, Laura Reynolds will serve the district in a newly created Math Teacher/Coach position. The focus of this new position is to support student achievement in mathematics by offering direct support to mathematics teachers.

The support provided through this initiative will take many forms. The Math Teacher/Coach will serve as a resource for classroom teachers by analyzing test data to determine areas of strength and weakness in our mathematics program, conducting research to find best practices to deepen teacher instruction, strengthening the alignment of curriculum with various documents such as NCTM Standards and current state assessments, working directly with classroom teachers through team instruction, and working with teachers to offer feedback about instructional practices. This past summer Laura joined the math teachers in a two-day math workshop on the district's math curriculum.

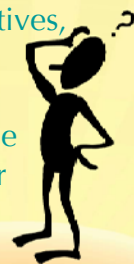
Laura brings her eighteen years of experience as a junior high and high school math teacher to this position. She views this new position as an

opportunity to tap into the talent of our teachers to provide a strong educational experience for our students. In her role she will be able to assist teachers in a variety of ways that will improve instruction for our students and ultimately improve student achievement for all Lawrence students in the area of mathematics. Through the support of a Math Teacher/Coach, MSAD 49 strives to reach their goal of preparing all students to be college ready.

New Career Center at Portland High School

Stephanie Doyle, GEAR UP Liaison for Portland Public Schools, is thrilled to announce the opening of a new Career Center, made possible with GEAR UP funds. The Career Center will host college representatives, provide information about postsecondary options,

highlight a career speaker series, and provide a link between Portland High School and the Greater Portland Community. "We are very excited about the Center and hope it will expand as the year moves forward," says Doyle. For more information, contact Stephanie Doyle at doyles@portlandschools.org or 207-874-8250.



Technology Page

Play Ball!

Jake Bailey, a junior at Piscataquis Community High School, led an exciting workshop at the MLTI Student Tech Team Conference this past spring. His workshop, entitled "Play Ball! Using Video and Your MLTI Laptop to Improve in Your Sport," used video technology to present an athletic analysis technique to students. His focus was specifically dealing with baseball, but that could be augmented and adapted to a variety of sports. First he explained how video recording pitching, fielding, and hitting techniques obviously allows the athlete to critique weaknesses within a given action. Secondly, he showed how video can help in determining pitching speed without having to buy an expensive radar gun. By video taping a pitcher's delivery (from a side vantage point) while having both the pitching mound and home plate within view, the speed of the pitch can be determined using a few simple pieces of data and mathematical equations.

"The thing I learned the most was how to conduct myself in front of a crowd..."

When asked about the experience, Jake wrote, "I would have to say the things I enjoyed most were getting lost on [the UMO] campus, and coming into the room I was supposed to present in expecting maybe at the most 10 students, but much to my surprise I was standing in a room that was packed beyond capacity and was standing-room-only with at least 50 students. Though the presentation started a little rocky I soon hit my stride and delivered a great presentation. The thing I learned the most was how to conduct myself in front of a crowd and, even with things going badly, to stay composed and try my best at what I'm doing. Overall it was a great learning experience and I'd do it again in a heartbeat."

GEAR UP Liaison Erick Murray assisted him in the workshop. Erick said, "The presentation was a hit, and I was very impressed and proud of him."



Old Town High School Uses Virtual High School to Expand Opportunities for Students

Based on a conversation with Joseph Gallant, spring 2009

At Old Town High School, learning isn't just taking place in the traditional classroom anymore. Beginning in the fall of 2008, Old Town introduced the use of Virtual High School in order to offer more classes to its students. Five students were enrolled in its first year, and 5 more are expected to take classes through VHS this fall. VHS is a non-profit collaboration of high schools, teachers, and students. Teachers who are certified in their specific discipline, and who have completed VHS's rigorous 15-week professional development program, facilitate and continually monitor all courses. In addition, VHS students benefit from small classes and personalized one-on-one attention from active high school teachers, while mastering subject matter and 21st century and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) skills that will aid in the success of future work and higher education. According to VHS statistics, 90% of VHS students complete their courses, as compared to a lag of 18-20% for traditional online courses, and 76% receive a grade of "C" or better. Old Town has a dedicated lab that VHS students can access at any time, and, with the support of the superintendent, has applied for its own site license, and will be introducing a new VHS application that will be open for all kids.

Three GEAR UP Schools Take Home the Prize!

Governor Baldacci recognized students' achievement in the first Northstar Wind Blade Competition at the University of Maine this past May. Twenty-six teams from schools across the state competed to design the most efficient wind-mill blade out of composite materials. The participants had just nine weeks to research wind-blade design and Performance, and then build their individual blade-design prototype to be tested at the Advanced Wood Engineering Composites (AWEC) lab at UMO. Dr. Habib Dagher, director of the AWEC Center, said "The four top winners today will be eligible for a research assistant job in our labs. So they can work and attend school here, earning \$50,000 over four years. The students should know the stakes are high."

Congratulations to:

- ★ Sumner Memorial High School: 1st Place
- ★ Machias High School: 2nd Place
- ★ Old Town High School: 3rd Place

Personal Learning Plans

Three GEAR UP schools shared how they personalize learning for their students at the NEOA Conference last spring. Thank you to staff from Sumner High School, So. Aroostook Community School, and Mt. Abram Regional High School for leading this informative session both in person and through Skype! GEAR UP will continue to keep personal learning plans at the forefront of our work, so stay tuned for more updates and contact Beth Achille beth@mainesupportnetwork.org with any questions. See *Photo Gallery* on the next page for an image from the Conference.