

Curriculum Department Report to the Board of Education
Curriculum Department Highlights
June 25, 2025

To: Mr. Watts, Superintendent
Ms. Malone, Chairperson of the Board
Members of the Board of Education

Newport Curriculum Department Vision:

We envision a day when all Newport Independent Schools leaders exhibit high expectations and guarantee excellence of instruction, ensure equitable opportunities, and leverage all high-quality resources so that students, staff, and leaders maximize their fullest potential.

CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER / DIRECTOR DISTRICT-WIDE SERVICES

GEAR UP GRANT

Newport High has received the Gear Up grant, as written by the Chief Academic Officer. This grant is a 7-year commitment to the partnership. The partnership is for cohorts in grades 7 through 12, including 6th grade in the first year only. Eight schools/districts in the state of Kentucky were awarded this grant. It is a federal grant. This grant will provide a position for career and college readiness and provide resources to achieve the goals of GEAR UP and the school it supports.

The state is in the process of updating the grant. Partnerships will begin in October of 2025. More information to come as the state moves through the process required by the federal government.

The GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant is a federally funded, competitive program administered by the U.S. Department of Education. Established in 1998 as part of the Higher Education Act, it's designed to support low-income students beginning in middle school and continuing through high school and even into college through scholarships.

What GEAR UP Does:

1. Targets signs of disadvantage early

- Focus is typically on entire cohorts of 7th-graders in schools where at least 50% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch
- Students are supported through high school, and in some cases, into their first year of college

2. Provides a comprehensive service suite

- Academic support like tutoring, advanced coursework, and test prep

- College and career counseling
- Mentoring and social-emotional development
- Family engagement programs
- FAFSA and financial aid guidance, plus scholarships in many cases

Why It's Important for Middle & High School Students?

1. Starts early

- Targeting students by the 7th grade builds strong college and career aspirations right from the middle grades

2. Increases graduation and enrollment rates

- Goals include boosting high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment, often seen in strong performance metrics

3. Enhances equity for underserved students

- By concentrating on low-income areas, GEAR UP reduces opportunity gaps through financial aid and information access

4. Supports whole-student development

- Emphasizes not just academics but the social, emotional, familial, and community factors that contribute to student success

5. Engages families

- Workshops, messaging campaigns, and events ensure that parents and caregivers are partners in their child's education.

6. Fosters sustainable cultures of aspiration

- Local leadership and community buy-in help create long-lasting environments where college preparation becomes the norm

The **GEAR UP grant** (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) funds a wide range of services and supports designed to help low-income students succeed in school, graduate from high school, and pursue postsecondary education. Here's what the grant typically pays for:

Academic Support Services: Tutoring and homework help, Advanced coursework preparation (e.g., AP, dual credit), STEM enrichment and reading interventions, summer bridge programs to prevent learning loss

College and Career Readiness: College visits and campus tours, ACT/SAT test prep, Career exploration programs, Work-based learning opportunities

Mentoring and Advising: One-on-one or small group mentoring, Advisors and GEAR UP coordinators who track student progress, College application, and FAFSA completion help, Scholarship and financial aid guidance

Family and Community Engagement: Workshops for parents on college planning, financial literacy, and supporting their child's education, Community events that foster a college-going culture, Bilingual outreach materials for families

Technology and Learning Tools: Laptops, calculators, or digital tools to support learning, Access to virtual tutoring or academic platforms

Professional Development for Staff: Training for teachers and counselors in college and career advising, Workshops on culturally responsive teaching and trauma-informed practices

Postsecondary Transition Support: Bridge-to-college programs, Support during first-year college enrollment, College persistence advising (sometimes up to two years post-high school)

GEAR UP matters because it provides early, sustained, and broad-based support to students who might otherwise be left behind. By combining academic assistance, financial guidance, mentoring, and family involvement backed by federal resources and local partnerships, the program helps empower students to graduate high school and pursue college and career success.

Respectfully Submitted,

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