

TEXANS GETTING ACADEMICALLY PREPARED (TGAP)



Year Three Evaluation Report Executive Summary

September 2001 – August 2002

October 2002

Prepared for Texas Education Agency
By
Texas Center for Educational Research
Center for Public Policy at the University of Houston

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Executive Summary

Background

In October 1999, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) received a federal GEAR UP grant. TEA's project, Texans Getting Academically Prepared (TGAP), is a five-year effort beginning at the middle-school level to prepare low-income and minority students for higher education opportunities. TGAP includes interrelated activities supporting early awareness of and preparation for higher education among students, their families, and schools. TGAP's three overarching goals are:

- *Building capacity*—building the capacity of educators and students so teachers can adequately prepare students for successful participation in challenging college preparatory programs,
- *Increasing student and family awareness*—increasing student and family awareness of opportunities for college and financial aid assistance, and
- *Gaining business and community support*—providing meaningful incentives and support for high student achievement from the business community.

Prior to TGAP, several Texas initiatives promoted student access to higher education. The state developed the Recommended High School Program (RHSP) and Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) requiring students to take academically challenging courses to prepare for higher education. The state has also provided \$10.5 million annually to support the Advanced Placement (AP) program through exam fee subsidies, equipment grants, teacher reimbursement for professional development, and school incentives. Additionally, in 1999, the 76th Texas Legislature established the Toward Excellence, Access, and Success (TEXAS) Grant program to provide financial support for academically prepared students enrolled in Texas public or private, non-profit colleges or universities. The program was expanded by the 77th Legislature to provide grants to eligible students attending community colleges and technical colleges.

Project Partners

TGAP represents a partnership including the TEA, Texas A&M Precollege Outreach Centers in Alice and Laredo, Project GRAD, AMS Production Group, and the Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC). TGAP concentrates efforts on six school districts in south Texas (Alice, Corpus Christi, Jim Hogg County, Laredo, Robstown, and United ISDs) with a concentration of low-income, Hispanic students. TEA contracts with The Texas A&M University System to direct and manage the TGAP grant. TEA also works closely with the College Board regional office in Austin and the Region XIII Education Service Center (ESC) TGAP Production Center. The College Board provides AP course and vertical teaming training. The TGAP Production Center at Region XIII ESC oversees development of products for students, parents, and educators.

TGAP partners have developed a variety of products to increase higher education awareness. Products include *Pathways to Success*, a toolkit of videos designed to disseminate information about higher education readiness and awareness to parents, students, and the community, with print products accompanying each of the videos. In addition, brochures were distributed statewide to facilitate the dissemination of information about college readiness and awareness to parents and the community. Each TGAP campus also received copies of all products.

Participating Campuses

In total, 15 district campuses (9 mid-level schools and 6 high schools) participate in TGAP. Two area universities, Texas A&M International University and Texas A&M University-Kingsville, are also program participants through the Faculty Fellows program.

Each district has a designated TGAP coordinator to organize and facilitate campus and district activities that meet local goals as well as state GEAR UP objectives. Three districts pay 100% of the coordinator salary from grant funds; two use grant funds for a portion of the coordinator’s salary. In one district, where the high school principal serves as the TGAP coordinator, no grant funds are used for the position. Each district submits quarterly reports to the state project director detailing capacity building activities, efforts to increase student and family awareness, and incentives and support for student achievement from the business community. In year three, districts also submitted plans for sustaining TGAP activities beyond the grant period.

More than 17,000 students participate in TGAP. Each participating school district includes a feeder system consisting of at least one middle school “feeding” students into a high school. As Figure 1 shows, student enrollment in TGAP districts and campuses varies widely.

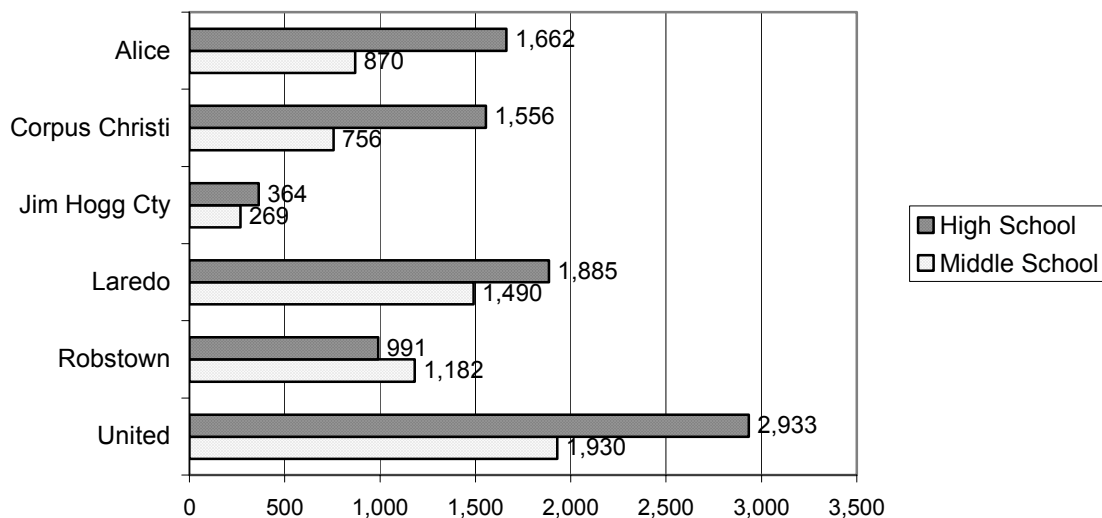


Figure 1. Student enrollment for TGAP districts by campus type (N=17, 352, AEIS 2001).

On average, middle schools have fewer students (772 students) than high schools (1,491 students). Hebronville Junior High (Jim Hogg County) has the lowest mid-level school enrollment, with 269 students, while Christen Middle School (Laredo) has the highest enrollment, with 1,490 students. The smallest high schools are Hebronville (364 students, Jim Hogg County) and Robstown (991 students), while United South High School (2,515 students) is the largest.

The TGAP student population is predominately Hispanic (94%), with less than 2% African American and just over 4% White students (Figure 2). By contrast, student distribution for the state is approximately 41% Hispanic, 14% African American, and 42% White. The percentage of Hispanic students in TGAP schools ranges from 82% at Driscoll Middle School and Miller High School (Corpus Christi ISD) to 99.8% at Garcia Middle School (United ISD). Overall, 77% of TGAP students are economically disadvantaged, compared with the state average of 49%.

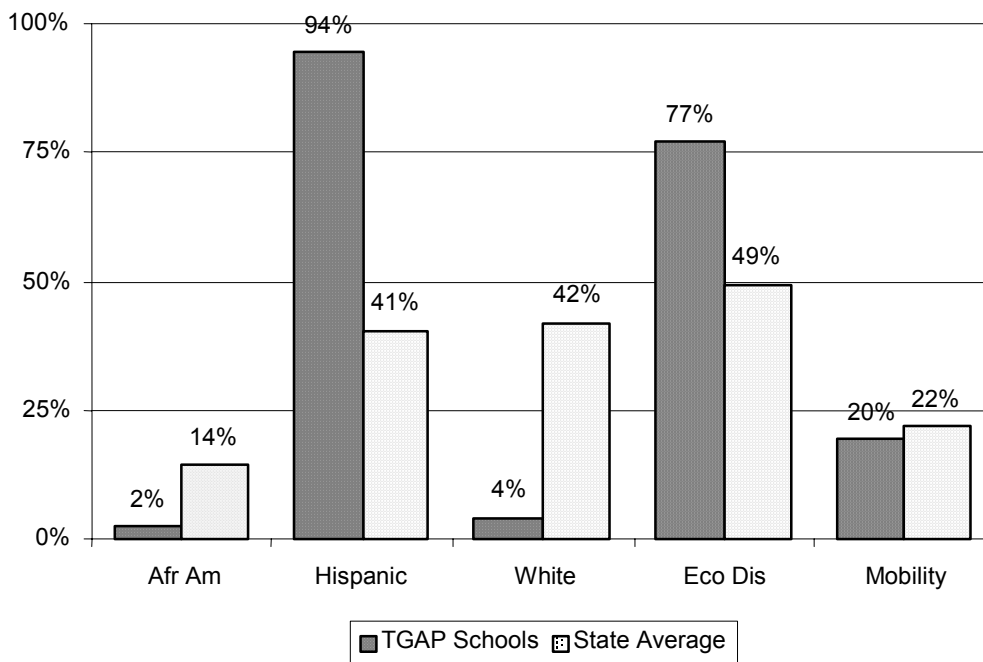


Figure 2. TGAP student characteristics, 2001.

Based on data reported by parent survey respondents, the overwhelming majority of TGAP parents are Hispanic or Latino (89%), with smaller percentages of White (5.9%), Black (2.7%), and other ethnic groups (1.3%). However, given that, according to AEIS data, 94% of students in TGAP districts are Hispanic, other ethnic groups may be slightly over-represented. Parent survey results also indicate that TGAP parents have low incomes. Nearly half (47%) have household incomes below \$25,000, and almost two-thirds (63%) have household incomes below \$35,000. The reported educational attainment of respondents is also low. One-third of parents interviewed (33%) indicate they have less than a high school education, an additional third (32%) indicate they have received a high school diploma or GED, and only a third (34%) report having some college, a college degree, or a graduate or professional degree.

Methodology

The year three evaluation (2001-02) assesses progress toward the project goals: *building capacity, increasing student and family awareness, and gaining business and community support*. Evaluation data include demographic and performance data from the Texas Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS); document reviews; surveys of teachers, university faculty, parents, and students; and site visits—including interviews with project partners, project personnel, school administrators, counselors, Faculty Fellows, and teachers; student focus groups; and classroom observations.

Results

Building Capacity

Capacity building seeks to ensure that economically disadvantaged students are adequately prepared for, pursue, and succeed in post-secondary education. As part of TGAP, TEA established or supported programs to build the capacity of participating schools, educators, students, and parents.

Teacher professional growth and development. During the 2001-02 school year, TGAP continued its support of teacher professional development including Advanced Placement (AP) training and workshops on instructional strategies. The College Board delivered AP, vertical team, and Building Success training; POCs sponsored Best Practices Institutes, Thinking Maps, Project CRISS, and other training events; and individual school districts offered a variety of training opportunities. As Table 1 shows, across three project years, 363 core-content area teachers who remain in the districts as teachers have participated in AP and vertical team training.

Table 1
Teachers Participating in Advanced Placement and Vertical Team Training

District	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	Total Number Trained	Number Retained in District ^a	Percent of Regular Teachers ^b
Alice ^c	--	27	31	58	55	31%
Corpus Christi	28	20	19	67	65	41%
Jim Hogg County	24	8	0	32	32	64%
Laredo	33	20	29	82	78	40%
Robstown	22	21	22	65	65	50%
United	35	17	18	70	68	21%
Total	142	113	119	374	363	41%

^a Teachers remaining in the district in 2001-02. ^b Percent based on total number of regular education teachers. Only core subject teachers were eligible to participate in Advanced Placement and vertical team training. ^c Alice ISD joined the project near the end of the first year.

Information in Table 2 illustrates the variety of training events attended by 1,026 teachers in 2001-02 (based on a duplicated count). Teacher survey results indicate that most teacher participants believe AP and vertical team training and other TGAP training events are useful and

help improve their teaching. The majority of teachers note challenges, however, in trying to implement new strategies due to time constraints, and teachers report a need for ongoing training and support. Teacher participation in training events also varies substantially by district.

Table 2
Number of Teachers Attending Training Events Sponsored or Funded by TGAP/GEAR UP

Event	Alice	Corpus Christi	Jim Hogg County	Laredo	Robstown	United	Total
Vertical teams	50	29	32	44	46	47	248
Curriculum planning	35	20	16	4	65	17	157
Best Practices*	24	5	33	11	17	16	106
Defiant Child*	14	53	6	6	2	4	85
Thinking Maps*	12	41	5	3	13	--	74
TEKS for Leaders*	13	9	5	9	21	4	61
Faculty Fellows	23	--	1	13	9	11	57
Building Success*	9	5	6	10	4	7	41
Parents as Partners*	9	9	2	14	4	--	38
Project CRISS*	19	7	4	4	--	--	34
Other events	--	11	47	12	48	7	125
Total	208	189	157	130	229	113	1,026

* Indicates professional development activity sponsored by POCs.

Curriculum alignment. Approximately 311 teachers (36% of those surveyed) report being a member of a vertical team for curricular alignment. While the majority of vertical team teachers (56%) believe the vertical team approach is at least *somewhat successful*, they also report challenges related to scheduling, lack of teacher participation, inadequate planning time, and lack of campus leadership. Figure 3, however, reveals there is wide variance in teachers' opinions of vertical team success by district.

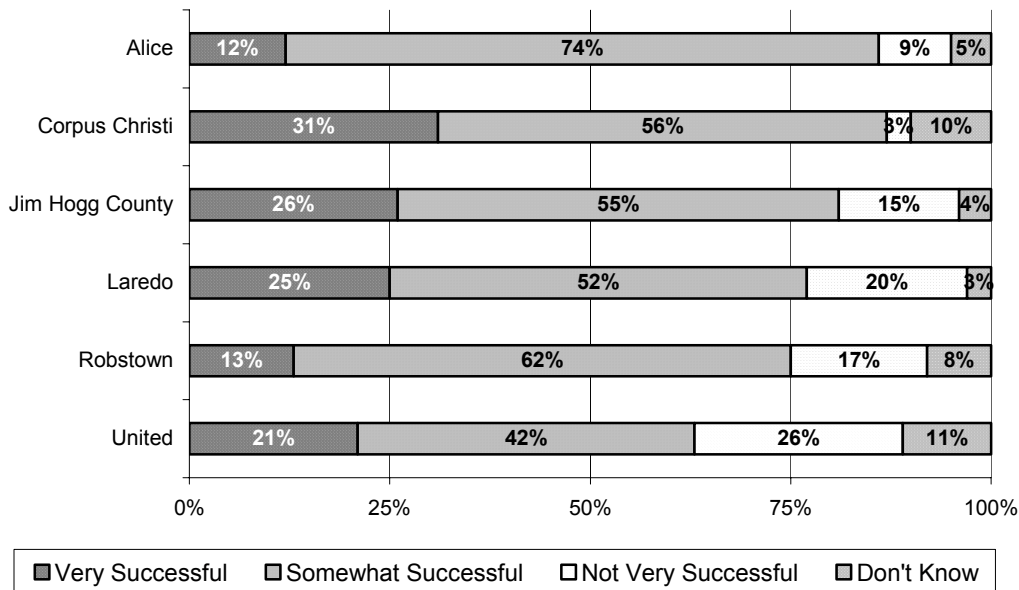


Figure 3. How successful is the vertical team approach in your school? (Responses for 307 vertical team teachers)

While 83% of Corpus Christi and Alice teachers rate the vertical team approach in their schools as *very* or *somewhat successful*, only 63% of United vertical team teachers assigned the highest ratings. Ratings of vertical teams as *not very successful* also varied by district, with higher percentages in United (26%) and Laredo (20%).

Advanced Placement program. Most TGAP districts have increased AP course offerings over the three project years; however, AP course offerings decreased in two districts.

Table 3
Combined AP and Pre-AP Courses Offered at TGAP High Schools by Year

Campus	Number of Courses			Percent Change
	Year 1 1999-00	Year 2 2000-01	Year 3 2001-02	
Alice High School	11	19	23	+ 109%
Hebbronville High School	9	15	15	+ 66%
Martin High School	17	16	14	- 18%
Miller High School	22	25	26	+ 18%
Robstown High School	21	22	22	+ 5%
United South High School	23	10	10	- 57%
Total	103	107	110	+ 7%

Note. Percent change = (Year 3 – Year 1) / Year 1.

Most AP teachers (67%) feel the AP program in their school is at least *somewhat successful* and report receiving and using AP materials. AP teachers’ recommendations for change included strengthening academic standards, enhancing teacher quality, and making organizational changes. Although most teachers perceive their AP program as successful and more students are enrolled in AP classes, passing rates on AP exams have showed little or no improvement since TGAP project inception.

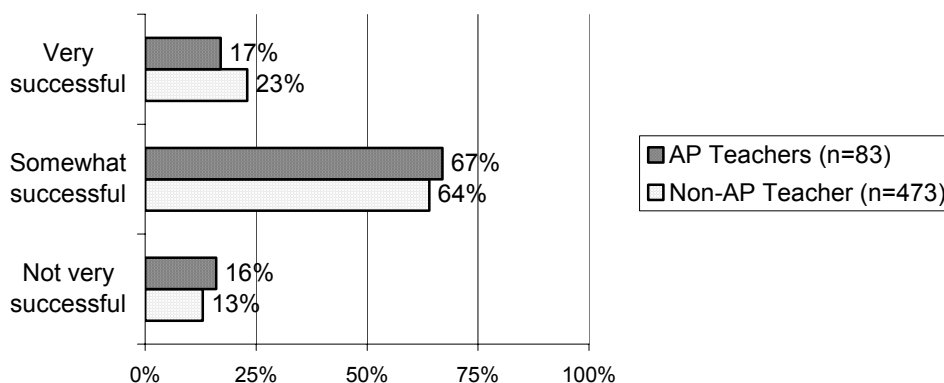


Figure 4. Overall, how successful is the AP program in your school?

Opportunity to learn in TGAP classrooms. Classroom observations provide a means for assessing the extent to which instructional strategies and methods introduced through teacher professional development are used in classrooms. To that end, evaluators conducted a total of 31 classroom observations of core-content area classes on 12 middle and high school campuses.

Observations conducted in AP and Pre-AP classrooms, unfortunately, indicate that instructional strategies presented during TGAP/GEAR UP training sessions are not being widely implemented. Information in Table 4 reveals that instruction is generally teacher-centered, with whole-group instruction occurring in 90% of classrooms for 73% of observed time. In addition, observed teachers seldom asked higher-order questions (e.g., asking students to explain, justify thoughts, reason), and students had infrequent opportunities to use subject-specific learning strategies promoted through training events (e.g., use graphic organizers, summarize ideas).

Table 4
Classroom Organization and Activities (N=31)

Classes Observed	Classrooms Observed		Mean % of Observed Time
	Number	%	
Classroom Organization			
Whole class	28	90%	73%
Individual students working alone	14	45%	49%
Small groups (3+ students)	4	13%	39%
Pairs of students	3	10%	61%
The teacher is...			
Directing whole group	23	74%	58%
Monitoring student work	14	45%	44%
Guiding interactive discussion with whole group	10	32%	50%
Managing behavior or materials	5	16%	72%
Facilitating or coaching	5	16%	46%
Giving test or viewing a video	3	10%	67%
Modeling for whole group (demonstrates a strategy)	1	3%	20%
Providing one-on-one instruction	1	3%	33%
Sitting at desk	0	--	0%
The students are...			
Listening to a presentation (majority of students)	19	61%	58%
Listening to discussion (majority of students)	11	35%	48%
Engaged in interactive discussion	9	29%	41%
Writing communication related to lesson	7	23%	39%
Engaged in problem solving, investigation	7	23%	50%
Taking notes	6	19%	45%
Engaged in focused discussion	2	7%	40%
Using graphic organizers/thinking maps	2	7%	53%
Engaged in reading and reflection	2	7%	20%
Using technology or audio-visual resource	1	3%	25%
Other (test taking, giving presentations, off-task)	15	48%	66%

Student preparation for higher education. In helping prepare students for higher education, some teachers report using data from EXPLORE and PLAN diagnostic assessments, but most either do not use the data or do not know about its availability. More than 70% of surveyed teachers, however, report giving students advice about careers, the RHSP/DAP, college admission, and college financial aid. Although two-thirds of teachers believe their school is doing an excellent or good job at providing students with advice about higher education, they also think more information and training, greater higher education involvement, more career counseling, and greater student and counselor involvement and responsibility would enhance effectiveness in raising students' awareness about post-secondary academic opportunities.

Faculty Fellows program. The Faculty Fellows program pairs high school AP teachers and university faculty members by subject areas. The program goal is for university faculty to assist AP teachers by enhancing their capacity to teach AP courses and to assist students by helping them prepare for AP exams. Student exposure to professors and the university environment is a secondary benefit. Faculty Fellows were required to attend an orientation meeting and an AP vertical team conference to help build their capacity to support partner teachers. Faculty members who established effective working relationships with partner teachers participated in a variety of activities including classroom presentations, campus visits, one-on-one discussions regarding content-specific issues or problems, resource sharing, team teaching, and AP exam preparation. Program effectiveness, however, was limited by barriers many Faculty Fellows experienced in attempting to communicate with teachers. Overall, the number of successful partnerships was limited, in part, by teacher resistance that stemmed from a lack of clarity concerning the objectives and benefits of the program and the absence of teacher input. Faculty also reported uncertainty about their roles and activities

Increasing Student and Family Awareness of Higher Education

Increasing student and family awareness of higher education is a central goal of the TGAP project. The POCs and participating districts developed a variety of strategies and services to heighten both student and parent awareness of higher education and provided both groups with advice, information, activities, and programs to help prepare students for successful participation in higher education. In addition, parents and students received a variety of TGAP products designed to increase higher education awareness.

Student Awareness

Student services. Data from student sign-in forms indicate that 10,196 students (59%) received a service from TGAP in year three—an increase of 7.5% from year two. The percentage of students receiving at least one TGAP service, however, varied widely by district (Figure 5).

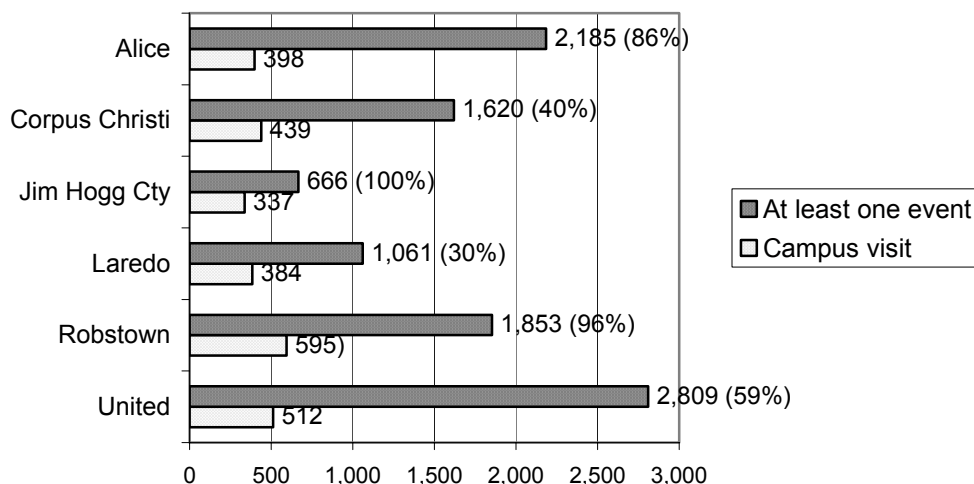


Figure 5. Number and percent of students participating in at least one TGAP/GEAR UP event, and the number of students making campus visits.

College-related TGAP activities included individual and group counseling by school counselors, financial aid workshops and fairs, visits to schools by college representatives, college campus tours, and classroom presentations by POC staff. In year three, 7,734 students (44%) received college-related services—an increase from 28% in year two. The number of students participating in a college-campus visit was 2,665 (15% compared to 9% of students in year two).

Student expectations and support. Similar to year two findings, student survey results indicate a majority of grades 6-12 students (66%) indicate they will pursue some kind of post-secondary education (i.e., four-year university, community/junior college, or vocational school). By their senior year, 79% of TGAP students expect to earn a degree that requires post-secondary education. Compared to parents, students have a less positive impression of the extent to which adults support them in pursuing a post-secondary education. Still, students identify parents/guardians (44%) and siblings (15%) as their most common information source on post-secondary education, with only about a fifth of students saying they rely on someone at school (teacher, counselor, principal).

Student awareness of higher education. Familiarity with higher education options (four-year universities, community colleges, and vocational-technical schools) increases as students advance to higher-grade levels. Compared to year two, however, the largest increases in the percentage of students professing familiarity with four-year institutions occurred in lower grades.

Student perceptions of financial ability. Across all grade levels, students are more familiar with TEXAS Grants in year three, with 42% saying they are at least “somewhat familiar” with the program (see Table 5).

Table 5
Percent of Students *Very Familiar* or
***Somewhat Familiar* with TEXAS Grants**

Grade	Percent	Change
6	30.2	+10.5
7	37.3	+13.2
8	39.1	+7.4
9	41.9	+14.2
10	37.8	+5.3
11	45.0	+20.0
12	62.5	+12.9
All	41.7	+12.1
Number	8,728	--

Even so, students are less confident about their ability to afford higher education. Consistent with year two findings, about two-thirds of students either do not know or over-estimate the cost of attending universities and community colleges, and students are most likely to identify costs (40%) as the main barrier to college participation. Moreover, as Table 6 shows, between 16% and 25% of students say they *probably can't afford* to attend a Texas higher education institution (community college or four-year university), a substantial increase from year two.

Table 6
If you decided to go a public, four-year university/community college in Texas,
how sure are you that you could afford it? (Percent)

Response	2002	2001	Difference
Four-year university			
Very sure	17.7	22.2	-4.5
Not sure	48.0	58.0	-10.1
Probably can't afford it	25.0	13.8	+11.2
Can't afford it	9.2	6.0	+3.2
Number	9,353	10,013	--
Community college (two year)			
Very sure	29.4	35.0	-5.6
Not sure	48.4	52.2	-3.8
Probably can't afford it	16.1	8.8	+7.3
Can't afford it	6.0	4.0	+2.0
Number	9,293	9,960	--

Encouragingly, familiarity with TEXAS Grants, as illustrated in Table 7, is positively associated with students' confidence in the affordability of college. In addition, students from families in which parents or older siblings have attended college are more likely to be familiar with colleges, to say they will take the SAT, to say they will take rigorous academic courses, and to have higher degree expectations for themselves.

Table 7
Student Familiarity with TEXAS Grant Program by Perceived Ability to Afford
University and Community College Tuition (percent)

Perceived Affordability	Familiarity with TEXAS Grants				
	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not very familiar	Not at all familiar	All
Public university					
Very sure	29.2	18.1	16.1	15.0	17.7
Not sure	43.3	51.0	50.9	43.2	48.2
Probably can't	19.4	24.1	24.9	28.4	25.0
Can't afford it	8.2	6.9	8.1	13.4	9.1
Student totals	904	2,910	3,006	2,450	9,270
Community college					
Very sure	44.6	31.8	27.7	23.3	29.5
Not sure	37.7	49.7	51.9	46.9	48.5
Probably can't	12.2	14.6	15.6	20.0	16.1
Can't afford it	5.6	3.9	4.8	9.8	5.9
Student totals	895	2,900	2,984	2,430	9,209

Relationship between TGAP exposure and student outcomes. Results of regression analyses of student outcomes (Table 8) indicate that the greater the number of TGAP events attended by a student, the more likely he or she is to report being familiar with four-year colleges or to say he or she will take an AP course, take the SAT, discuss school with parents, have visited a college, and be familiar with the TEXAS Grants.

Table 8
Probability Changes Corresponding to Changes in Student TGAP Exposure

Outcome	Initial Probability	Maximum Exposure Probability	Change in Probability Due to Exposure
4-year college familiarity	0.20	0.78	0.58
Taking an AP course	0.68	0.92	0.34
Visiting a college	0.54	0.95	0.41
Talk w/parent about school	0.12	0.39	0.27
Talk w/parent about college	0.09	0.50	0.41
TEXAS Grant familiarity	0.09	0.25	0.16

Parent Awareness

Parent services. Based on sign-in forms, 2,659 parents received TGAP services in year three (15% of all TGAP parents). This was an increase from 2,076 parents in year two. Services included a broad range of activities such as successful fathering, college counseling and workshops, material dissemination, college visits, parent education, and neighborhood walks. Although parent participation increased overall, available services varied widely by district, with Jim Hogg County, Alice, and Robstown ISDs serving markedly higher percentages of district households (see Figure 6). Compared to year two, however, there was a dramatic decline (17.7 percentage points) in the percentage of parents reporting they received counseling about their children’s classes and academic performance, and this decline was consistent with student survey results.

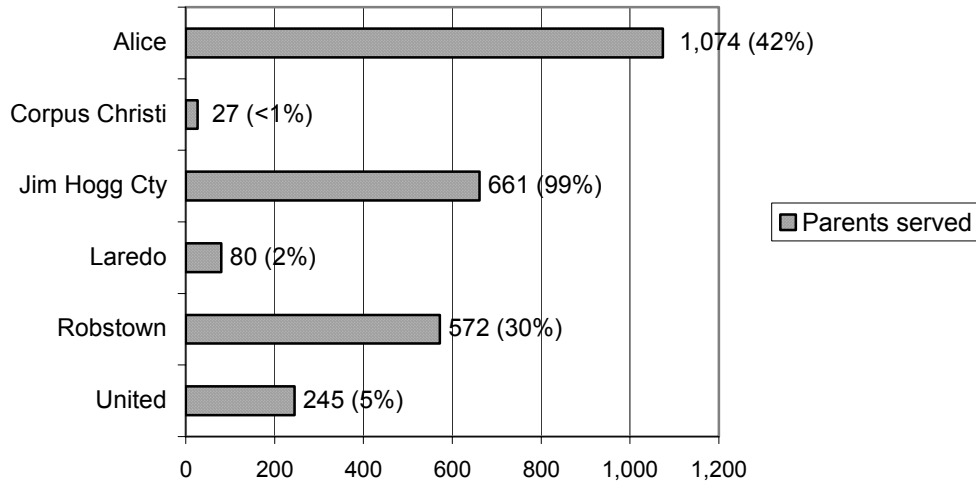


Figure 6. Number of parents and percent of district households served by TGAP districts.

Parent expectations and support. Most TGAP parents surveyed (69%) expect their children to earn a bachelor’s, graduate, or professional degree. Nearly 90% indicate their children have expressed an interest in attending college, and that they talk to their children about attending college at least sometimes. In contrast to students, parents most commonly indicate their children get information about post-secondary education from school personnel (counselors, 27%; teachers, 24%) rather than family members.

Parent awareness of higher education. There was an increase in the percentage of parents expressing at least some familiarity with the TGAP program and the percentages of parents who say their children participated in activities designed to increase their knowledge of and preparedness for college. Although parents received more services and information in year three, the percentage of parents who report they are adequately informed about opportunities for post-secondary education declined.

Parent perceptions of financial capacity. As with students, most parents either do not know or over-estimate the cost of higher education, and when asked what obstacle might keep their children from post-secondary education, 61% of parents cited cost—an increase of 5.6 percentage points from the previous year. Parents in year three also expressed less confidence in their ability to afford to send their children to community colleges (13.8 point decline) and public, four-year universities (4.3 point decline). In contrast, a higher percentage of parents report familiarity with TEXAS Grants (see Table 9), and parents who are familiar with TEXAS Grants and the Texas Tomorrow Fund have much higher levels of confidence about the affordability of post-secondary education for their children.

Table 9
How familiar are you with the TEXAS Grant Program?
How familiar are you with the Texas Tomorrow Fund?

Cost Estimate	TEXAS Grant		Texas Tomorrow Fund	
	Percent	Change ^a	Percent	Change ^a
Very familiar	9.5	+2.2	6.8	+1.5
Somewhat familiar	19.8	+7.6	12.6	-0.4
Not too familiar	20.2	-4.9	16.7	-2.6
Not familiar at all	49.5	-5.0	63.8	+1.4
Number	867	--	862	--

^a Reflects percent point change.

Relationship between TGAP exposure and parent outcomes. Results of regression analyses, reported in Table 10, indicate that parent exposure to TGAP has a positive estimated impact on 5 of 14 parent outcomes independent of the influences of other predictor variables. Greater TGAP exposure is associated with taking one’s child for a college visit, receiving counseling on college entrance requirements, familiarity with TGAP, and discussion of school and college with one’s child.

Table 10
Probability Changes Corresponding to Changes in Parent TGAP Exposure

Outcome	Initial Probability	Maximum Exposure Probability	Change in Probability Due to Exposure
Discuss college with child	0.36	0.85	0.49
Discuss school with child	0.29	0.70	0.41
Take child for college visit	0.30	0.81	0.51
Counseled on college entry	0.28	0.68	0.40
Familiarity with TGAP	0.31	0.79	0.48

Senior parent follow-up survey. In summer 2002, 212 parents of seniors who graduated from TGAP schools were interviewed to determine their children’s post-graduation plans. Over three-fifths (62%) of parent respondents said their children would be attending college or vocational school. Parents who reported they attended a TGAP activity or event were much more likely to also report their children would be attending college (19.2 percentage points).

Regression analyses indicated that TGAP exposure had a marked influence on the probability that students would attend college independent of other powerful influences. Figure 7 illustrates the estimated impact on the probability of college attendance for an advantaged student of changing the number of TGAP events in which the student participated. Advantaged students have both parents, a sibling who has attended or is attending college, parents of average education, and have attended high school in a district with a fairly high college attendance rate. If one varies the number of TGAP events a student participates in from 0 to 22 (the maximum value), the probability of college attendance increases from 0.68 to 0.99.

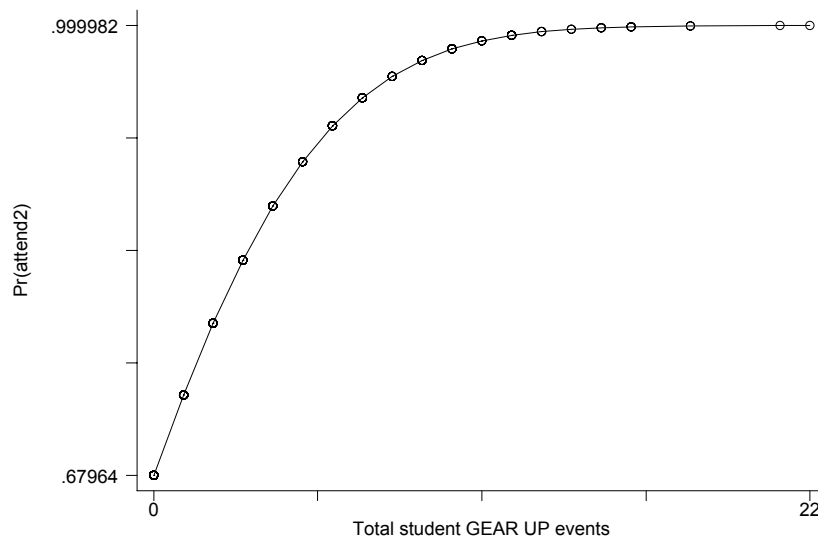


Figure 7. Probability of advantaged student attending college as a function of participation in TGAP events.

Figure 8 presents the impact of changes in student exposure to TGAP events on college attendance rates for a disadvantaged student. A disadvantaged student would be a student (a) in Alice, Jim Hogg County, or Robstown ISD; (b) from a single parent household; (c) whose parent had slightly more than a high school education and had attended the average number of TGAP events; and (d) who had no record of participation in TGAP events. If one circumstance were to change for this student—that is, instead of attending no TGAP events, he or she had attended 22 TGAP events—his or her probability of attending college would increase to 0.97. Thus, for a relatively disadvantaged student, the increase in probability of college attendance resulting from TGAP exposure was 92 points (0.05 to 0.97).

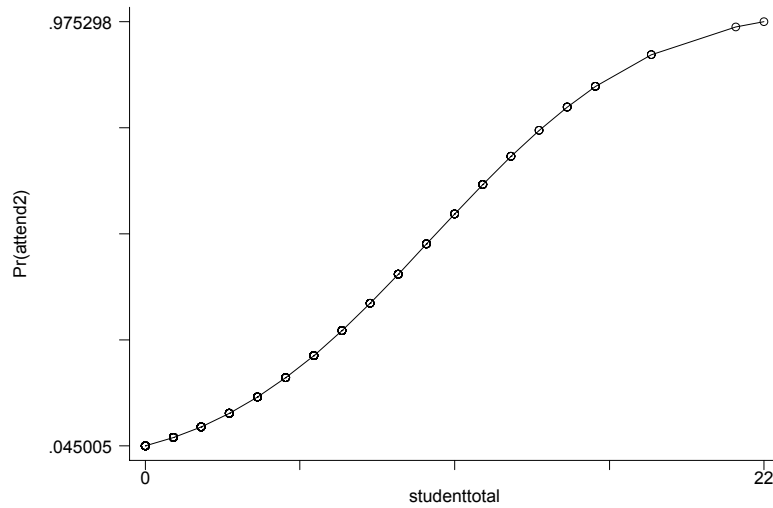


Figure 8. Probability of disadvantaged student attending college as a function of exposure to TGAP student events.

Gaining Business and Community Support

Business and community support for TGAP efforts has occurred through the Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC) and district TGAP task forces.

Texas Business and Education Coalition. TBEC has continued to advocate for the RHSP and has supported the statewide expansion of the TEXAS Grant program. TBEC has also supported TGAP districts through the development of web-based information delivery, community activities, and the promotion of rigorous academic standards. In addition, TBEC used TGAP funds to support paid staff positions at the Laredo and Corpus Christi Chambers of Commerce to promote business alliances that support TGAP schools. Chamber-sponsored activities included school presentations by chamber members, job shadowing, assistance with career fairs, public relations efforts, and assistance for TGAP coordinators. Although TBEC efforts within TGAP districts have grown since year two, inadequate documentation and the uneven provision of services across districts make the overall impact difficult to assess.

TGAP Task Forces. Each TGAP district agreed to create a TGAP Task Force to include district, business, and community representatives. In year three, task forces did not perform optimally in all districts. In some districts, task force effectiveness was limited by the demands of other “public-private” partnerships and the lack of real decision-making authority.

Campus and Student Performance

Although the TGAP project is in its third year of program implementation, campus and student performance outcome measures reflect only the first two implementation years because year three student-level PEIMS and AEIS performance data (2001-02) become available from TEA in the fall of the following school year. Thus, performance data are always one year behind program implementation and reflect earlier stages of the project. Despite this limitation, 2000-01 data establish informative baseline statistics and provide information that identifies areas for improvement.

Accountability ratings. While accountability ratings for TGAP schools show overall improvement between 1999 and 2001, the same trend is seen statewide. Because of this, and because TGAP is still a relatively new program, it is difficult to attribute accountability rating gains to TGAP implementation.

Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). As summarized in Table 11, TGAP campuses generally have increasing TAAS passing rates for all subject areas, although passing rates for most subjects continue to be lower than peer campuses and the state overall. Notable, however, are indications that grade 10 TGAP students begin closing the passing rate gap in both reading and mathematics. As grade 10 students have had the longest exposure to TGAP, it may be that this exposure plays a part in the increasing passing percentages.

Table 11
Percent Passing TAAS by Subject-Area Subtest

TAAS	TGAP Campuses				Peer Campuses				State			
	1999	2000	2001	Chg	1999	2000	2001	Chg	1999	2000	2001	Chg
Reading												
Grade 7	73	76	82	+9	75	75	84	+9	84	84	89	+5
Grade 8	82	82	86	+4	82	84	89	+5	82	82	92	+10
Grade 10	82	85	86	+4	82	85	86	+4	89	90	90	+1
Math												
Grade 7	80	83	85	+5	79	85	88	+9	85	88	90	+5
Grade 8	84	87	87	+3	82	87	90	+8	86	90	92	+6
Grade 10	74	85	86	+12	77	84	87	+10	82	87	89	+7
Social Studies												
Grade 8	54	47	58	+4	55	55	65	+10	70	72	77	+7
Science												
Grade 8	80	78	84	+4	79	81	88	+9	87	88	92	+5

Source. 2001 TEA AEIS Reports Note. Change refers to the difference between 1999 (baseline year) and 2001 (year two).

Algebra I performance. Little progress has been made toward enrolling middle school students in Algebra I. Only 12% of middle school students participated in Algebra I end-of-course examinations. And, although taking rates are similar for TGAP and peer campuses, peers have shown increases in percentages of students passing the Algebra I EOC exam, while TGAP campuses have not. A somewhat higher percentage of TGAP high school students are taking the Algebra I end-of-course exams (21%), suggesting that these students are waiting until high school to enroll (see Tables 12 and 13).

Table 12
Algebra I End-of-Course Examination Taking and Passing Rates for 8th Graders

	Percent Taking				Percent Passing			
	1999	2000	2001	Chg.	1999	2000	2001	Chg.
Adams MS	34.3	7.3	5.7	-28.6	53.7	90.5	94.0	+40.3
Driscoll MS	6.7	12.0	12.9	+6.2	97.1	100.0	98.4	+1.3
Hebbronville JH	9.1	11.3	12.2	+3.1	94.4	90.5	77.3	-17.1
Christen MS	13.6	24.0	24.0	+10.4	73.1	61.9	67.5	-5.6
Seale JH	3.3	2.9	5.3	+2.0	94.7	100.0	68.8	-25.9
Garcia MS	0.0	8.5	9.2	+9.2	--	45.0	45.0	--
United South MS	4.5	5.7	11.3	+6.8	54.2	67.6	47.9	-6.3
Group Average^a	10.2	10.2	11.5	+1.3	77.9	79.4	71.3	-6.6
Peer Campuses^a	8.9	9.9	10.4	+1.5	73.7	76.8	79.6	+5.9

Source. 2001 TEA AEIS Reports.

Note. Change refers to the difference between 1999 (baseline year) and 2001 (year two). ^aSimple average.

Table 13
Algebra I End-of-Course Examination Taking and Passing Rates for High School

	Percent Taking				Percent Passing			
	1999	2000	2001	Chg.	1999	2000	2001	Chg.
Alice HS	7.8	19.8	19.4	+11.6	1.0	10.2	19.3	+18.3
Miller HS	29.2	22.9	22.9	-6.3	15.8	18.8	15.2	-0.6
Hebbronville HS	19.8	14.7	14.6	-5.2	27.4	32.7	47.2	+19.8
Martin HS	16.4	17.9	19.8	+3.4	29.1	32.0	19.6	-9.5
Robstown HS	35.5	25.4	23.3	-12.2	17.1	29.0	29.3	+12.2
United HS	35.1	23.6	23.7	-11.4	12.3	21.0	18.8	+6.5
Group Average^a	24.0	20.7	20.6	-3.4	17.1	24.0	24.9	+7.8
Peer Campuses^a	24.1	23.4	21.7	-2.4	20.1	24.6	26.5	+6.4
State Average	18.0	17.6	17.2	-0.8	43.4	43.9	49.2	+5.8

Source. 2001 TEA AEIS Reports.

Note. Change refers to the difference between 1999 (baseline year) and 2001 (year two). ^aSimple average.

Advanced academic measures. Information on advanced academic measures is presented in Table 14. Between 1998 and 2000, the percentage of TGAP students completing the RHSP increased from 17% to 67%. Compared to peer campuses (46%) and state averages (39%), greater percentages of TGAP students completed the RHSP in 2000. The advanced course completion rate for TGAP schools, however, decreased slightly from 1999 to 2000 (18.2% to 17.5%), whereas average rates for peer campuses and the state increased.

College entrance exams provide another indicator of advanced academic performance. The percentage of TGAP students taking college entrance exams varied over the past four years (53%, 57%, 50%, and 53%, respectively); statewide, about 62% of students took ACT or SAT college entrance exams across years. Average ACT and SAT scores for TGAP campuses were well below state averages.

Table 14
Campus-level Performance, Advanced Academic Measures (percent)

Campus	Graduation Rate			Advance Course Completion			Recommended HS Program Completion		
	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000
Alice HS	NR	NR	NR	NR	16.3	13.2	21.1	0.0	80.9
Miller HS	70.7	65.6	75.1	0.0	20.3	23.2	0.0	0.0	21.0
Hebbronville HS	85.7	92.0	92.2	6.0	16.2	18.9	0.0	1.2	82.6
Martin HS	83.1	79.8	80.4	1.2	24.1	26.9	81.3	82.0	96.2
Robstown HS	82.9	87.6	75.7	1.7	20.1	5.9	0.0	30.7	48.8
United HS	82.6	81.1	85.3	2.0	11.9	16.9	0.0	0.0	71.0
Group Average^a	81.0	81.2	81.7	2.2	18.2	17.5	17.1	19.0	66.8
Peer Campuses^a	78.3	79.6	81.1	1.8	12.9	15.8	0.0	0.5	45.9
State Ave.	78.7	79.5	80.7	4.3	17.5	20.1	8.7	15.0	38.6

Source: 2001 TEA AEIS Reports. ^aSimple average. NR – Not Reported

Enrollment in Texas public, post-secondary institutions. Based on data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 54% of TGAP students graduating in 2001 entered Texas public post-secondary institutions. However, only 17% entered a four-year university, whereas 37% elected to continue their education at a community college or technical school. Nearly half of graduating seniors (46%) were classified as “not-located,” thus their post-graduation plans are unknown.

Table 15
TGAP Graduates Entering Higher Education

	University		Community/ Tech		Total		Not located	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Alice HS								
2000	106	32.2	80	24.3	186	56.5	143	43.5
2001	97	29.0	93	27.8	190	56.9	144	43.1
Hebbronville HS								
2000	36	44.4	12	14.8	48	59.3	33	40.7
2001	22	31.9	11	16.0	33	47.8	36	52.2
Martin HS								
2000	34	8.5	196	48.8	230	57.2	172	42.8
2001	32	8.5	206	54.6	238	63.1	139	36.9
Miller HS								
2000	27	9.6	87	30.9	114	40.4	168	59.6
2001	49	17.0	79	27.3	128	44.3	161	55.7
Robstown HS								
2000	67	30.5	76	34.6	143	65.0	77	35.0
2001	37	20.2	62	33.9	99	54.1	84	45.9
United HS								
2000	34	10.9	131	42.0	165	52.9	147	47.1
2001	51	12.5	154	37.8	205	50.4	202	49.6
TGAP 2000	304	18.7	582	35.8	886	54.5	740	45.5
TGAP 2001	288	17.4	605	36.5	893	53.8	766	46.2

TGAP Institutionalization

In the third project year, evaluators examined each TGAP district's progress toward program implementation and began to gauge the institutionalization of TGAP initiatives and the prospects for TGAP continuation, or sustainability, after GEAR UP funding ends in year five.

Teacher familiarity with TGAP. Most teachers surveyed (71%) are at least *somewhat familiar* with the TGAP program. Of teachers who are familiar with TGAP, 69% report attending at least one TGAP event—attendance, however, varied substantially by district. Additionally, 86% of these teachers think the program is at least *somewhat successful* in increasing the percentage of students taking academically challenging courses and 91% believe it is at least *somewhat successful* in increasing the percentage of students participating in higher education. Teachers indicated the program could be improved by increasing student participation, providing more information to students about higher education, making administrative changes, and improving curricular alignment and curriculum training.

Recruitment of students. TGAP aims to influence the decisions of students less likely to pursue post-secondary education. One way to influence such students is through the sponsorship of college campus tours for those students. Another method of influencing the decisions of students to attend college is through adequate academic preparation, such as through participation in AP classes. Unfortunately, interviews with counselors and principals suggest that selection criteria for AP enrollment and campus tour participation often favor the most advantaged, rather than the least advantaged, students. Changes in student recruitment practices are needed to maximize the value of TGAP activities.

TGAP impacts on districts. In some districts, TGAP appears to be having a noticeable impact on district culture. Principals, coordinators, counselors, and task force members can identify TGAP goals, are familiar with TGAP programs and services, and are able to identify specific indicators that measure progress toward program goals. However, in other districts, TGAP effects are less evident. In these districts, program implementation is less innovative, district personnel are often unfamiliar with TGAP programs and services, and measurable outcomes of program success have not been developed.

Preparation for TGAP continuation. Sustaining TGAP initiatives relies on the identification of successful TGAP elements, specific strategies for continuance, and future funding sources, as well as gaining business and community commitment and ownership. Interview responses and written summaries indicate that districts are at different stages in preparing for the post-grant period, though all districts have begun to think specifically about the need to sustain TGAP gains after GEAR UP funding expires. Districts often indicate that they intend to continue programs such as Walk for Success, Great Expectations presentations, and presentations to parents and students that provide information about Pre-AP and AP courses, graduation plans, and so on. The common denominator for these programs is that they incur small out-of-pocket costs. Although districts also commonly intend to continue vertical alignment of curricula and to offer AP and Pre-AP courses, they are unsure of their ability to afford to continue sending teachers to training institutes. Most TGAP districts have begun to formally prioritize TGAP activities according to benefits and costs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Capacity Building

Teacher professional development has been well received; however, implementation of learned strategies is not widespread. TGAP should continue to focus on teacher training and support for the implementation of instructional strategies. In particular, larger districts should demonstrate greater commitment to teacher development.

Trained teachers recognize the value of vertical teaming and report positive impacts, but greater campus-level leadership is needed to reduce implementation difficulties. TGAP districts should address scheduling and leadership difficulties that impede progress in curricular alignment.

In general, districts are making progress toward implementing Advanced Placement (AP) programs. TGAP teachers view the AP program positively, but express concerns about academic standards. Observations of AP classrooms also indicate that instructional strategies appropriate for all classrooms are not widely used. While some districts have increased AP course offerings, others have experienced a decline in AP courses. TGAP should continue to support campus AP programs through additional teacher professional development, support for the implementation of instructional strategies, and the identification of barriers to program growth.

Most teachers are engaging in activities to assist students in preparing for higher education and desire additional information and training in this area. Districts should capitalize on teachers' willingness to discuss higher education opportunities with students by making information and opportunities readily available.

The Faculty Fellows program appears to have great potential despite initial implementation difficulties. The Faculty Fellows program should be improved by changing teacher recruitment patterns to facilitate teacher buy-in and by establishing clearer program structures and guidelines.

Increasing Student and Family Awareness

Student participation in TGAP activities has increased, but students are less optimistic about the affordability of higher education. TGAP should continue to provide accurate information about the costs of higher education, especially targeting families without college experience.

Parent participation in TGAP activities has increased, but parents need more information about college and report being less optimistic about the affordability of higher education. TGAP should expand its parent education efforts to include more information about college costs, with particular attention to families with the greatest financial need.

Gaining Business and Community Support

TBEC continues to promote the RHSP and Texas Scholars program and a variety of local initiatives, but documentation of activities should be improved. TBEC should expand current efforts, work to provide similar services to all TGAP campuses, and improve the documentation of services provided for students.

School and Student Performance

While TGAP campuses have shown improvement on some student performance indicators, improvements often reflect statewide trends. Districts should continue their efforts to improve accountability ratings, standardized test scores, advanced course completions, and middle-school enrollments in Algebra I through the promotion of a rigorous academic curriculum. Commendably, the percentage of students completing the Recommended High School Program (RHSP) has increased dramatically since the TGAP project began.

The percentage of TGAP students taking college entrance exams has declined slightly and lags behind the state average. Districts should work more diligently to encourage additional students to take college entrance exams as preparation for participation in higher education.

TGAP Institutionalization

Most teachers are familiar with TGAP and believe the project is having a positive impact. Districts should continue efforts to increase teacher awareness of TGAP activities and encourage their participation.

Districts should take stronger action to institutionalize TGAP program components to ensure sustainability. All districts should continue to concentrate on the institutionalization of TGAP program components in year four.