
TEXANS GETTING ACADEMICALLY PREPARED (TGAP)

The Texas Education Agency's
Gear Up Project

Year One Evaluation Report September 1999-August 2000

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Texans Getting Academically Prepared (TGAP)

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Executive Summary

In 1999, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) received a federal grant for a project known nationally as Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). The project's mission is to increase the number of low-income and minority students who are prepared academically and financially to enter and succeed in higher education. In this report, the term *higher education* refers to any education beyond high school at a college, university, vocational or trade school, or other institution leading to a degree or certification. TEA's GEAR UP project, one of 15 in Texas, is officially named Texans Getting Academically Prepared or TGAP. The five-year project began in the 1999-2000 school year and ends in 2004. TGAP has the following three overarching goals:

- *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.

Partners and Related Programs

Texas laid considerable groundwork before TGAP began, including the development of the Recommended High School Program (RHSP) and the related but more academically rigorous Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) by the State Board of Education. Shortly before TGAP was launched, the Texas Legislature established the Toward Excellence, Access, and Success (TEXAS) Grant program to provide financial aid to economically disadvantaged students who complete the RHSP or DAP.

TEA's partners in TGAP include the pre-college outreach centers (POCs) in Corpus Christi and Laredo, the Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC), and Project GRAD. The POCs help school districts prepare low-income and minority students for higher education. TBEC recruits and trains presenters for the Texas Scholars program, in which local employers and educators make presentations to motivate students to undertake and complete the RHSP or DAP. TBEC also recognizes students who complete the RHSP as Texas Scholars. Project GRAD, based in Houston, Texas, serves primarily as a model for school districts due to its extensive experience with entire vertical-feeder systems in the inner city to prepare students for higher education. With a corporate sponsor providing its base of support, Project GRAD has also provided stipends, scholarships, and other types of support for high student achievement.

Participating School Districts

Six school districts in south Texas, where there is a concentration of low-income and Hispanic students, participate in TGAP. Each school district has one high school and at least one middle school involved. Table 1 lists each district and the participating campuses. Altogether the sites include eight mid-level schools (one intermediate, two junior highs, and five middle schools) and six high schools, for a total of 14 campuses.

The students at the participating sites are overwhelmingly Hispanic and economically disadvantaged. The teachers at TGAP schools are three times more likely than their peers across the state to belong to a minority group. Teaching experience in TGAP schools is consistent with the state average.

Alice ISD was invited to participate in the project after West Oso ISD was dropped from the project in March 2000. Alice ISD received a grant in June 2000 to plan activities for the 2000-2001 school year. For

this reason, its activities are not covered in the first-year evaluation, although baseline data tables presented later in the report include Alice ISD.

Table 1
Districts and Schools Participating as Sites in TGAP

School District	Jr. High or Middle Schools	High Schools
Laredo ISD	Christen Middle School	Martin High School
United ISD	Garcia Middle School United South Middle School	United South High School
Jim Hogg County ISD	Hebbronville Jr. High School	Hebbronville High School
Corpus Christi ISD	Driscoll Middle School	Miller High School
Robstown ISD	Ortiz Intermediate School Seale Junior High School	Robstown High School
Alice ISD	Adams Middle School	Alice High School

Note: Alice ISD was just beginning to participate in TGAP when the first year of the project ended, so its TGAP activities are not covered in this report.

Due to a variety of circumstances, TGAP’s start up began slower than expected. Foremost, all of the original districts that agreed to participate in the state grant were also included in a local GEAR UP partnership application (Education Service Center Region 1) that received funding, so both Region 1 and TEA agreed that the state would seek new districts for the project. In addition to site recruitment delays, TEA had to hire staff, three of the six newly selected districts did not have TGAP coordinators in place until late in the year, and TEA did not hire a state director until early in the second year of the project. The POC in Corpus Christi, serving Corpus Christi, Robstown, and Alice ISDs, was fully functioning during the first year. The POC in Laredo, which was established during the first year as part of the TGAP project, worked with Laredo, United, and Jim Hogg County ISDs. TEA also established a new POC in Commerce to serve east Texas.

Evaluation

The evaluation is a longitudinal assessment of the efforts and effectiveness of the project to prepare low-income and minority students in the six districts in south Texas to enter and succeed in higher education. The first-year evaluation focused on the progress made toward accomplishing the three overarching goals. Evaluators conducted site visits to observe project activities and reviewed brochures, documents and other information about site activities throughout the year. Near the end of the 1999-2000 school year, evaluators conducted surveys of teachers, students, and parents to determine how knowledgeable and optimistic they were about TGAP, higher education opportunities, and financial aid. The teacher survey included items on training sessions and vertical teaming as well.

Baseline data from 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 include student and teacher demographics, student performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) reading and mathematics, attendance and dropout rates, completion of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and SAT and ACT testing patterns and scores. Baseline data also permitted comparisons between the TGAP schools and their peer-group campuses, as defined by TEA.

Student cohort analyses track students who transfer in and out of TGAP schools. Cohorts may include continuing students, outgoing transfer students, and incoming transfer students. Assuming sufficient numbers, the effects of one, two, three, or four years of participation in TGAP will be compared to students who participate all five years of the project.

Building Capacity

The primary capacity-building activity for the first year of TGAP involved organizing middle and high school teachers into vertical teams and training those teams in the four core areas: English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Five districts (Laredo, United, Jim Hogg County, Corpus Christi, and Robstown) sent teachers, counselors, and librarians for training on Advanced Placement vertical teaming in January 2000, and all districts sponsored additional professional development, primarily on curriculum writing. All five met again before the 2000–2001 school year to align and strengthen their curricula.

Results from the teacher survey showed that the first-year TGAP training sessions successfully built capacity. Nearly 25 percent of teachers in participating schools received some kind of vertical-team or AP/Pre-AP training. Compared to teachers who did not attend training, the teachers who received training were more knowledgeable about TGAP, more optimistic about higher education opportunities for the schools' low-income and minority students, and more approving of the work of their schools generally.

Teachers also provided feedback on making training more effective. The teacher survey preceded about half of the vertical-team training sessions, so the findings must be interpreted within that limitation. Based on their experiences, teachers suggested more frequent training, longer training, and more time to meet and plan. According to teachers, training and presentations should have a more practical focus, be more specific, be more practically oriented toward teachers' specific subject areas, and include more hands-on training. Teachers suggested offering training to all teachers or a larger number of teachers. They also recommended that training should include curriculum and lesson plan samples and focus more narrowly on curriculum. Finally, some teachers requested more coordination, collaboration, and communication across grades, disciplines, and schools.

Not surprisingly, teachers who attended vertical-team training were much more likely to have an opinion about vertical teaming in their schools. These teachers were considerably more likely to say that vertical teaming was at least somewhat successful. Teachers who did not attend vertical-team training knew little about it.

More than 95 percent of the respondents reported speaking to their students about college at least sometimes. Most, however, felt they did not receive enough information about college opportunities. Almost half felt their schools were no better than “okay” at telling students about college opportunities. Teachers who attended vertical-team training were more optimistic about the impact of college outreach on students.

To increase student awareness of higher education opportunities, teachers suggested providing more information about college and increasing counselors' efforts. Specific recommendations included more outreach to parents, a college night, college assemblies, career days, and field trips to colleges. Teachers also frequently suggested inviting guest speakers to talk about college opportunities, such as high school graduates now attending college, recent college graduates, “successful people,” Hispanic community leaders, and college faculty.

About 65 percent of teachers who had attended vertical-team training knew about EXPLORE and PLAN tests and the type of data they provide on student needs. Only 25 percent of the teachers believed their districts used university mentors, and only 13 percent reported having a mentor. Of those who had a

university mentor, 83 percent considered the guidance as at least somewhat useful, and 40 percent thought it was very useful. Better use of university mentors is clearly one way to build capacity in the second year of the project.

While TGAP primarily supported the activities of six school districts, TEA also used first-year funding to develop materials for statewide use, including a brochure and a tool kit to publicize the RHSP, DAP, TEXAS Grant program, and other financial aid information. These materials were the centerpiece of a training-of-trainers session, and subsequent workshops included more than 600 middle school counselors during the first year. TEA also developed a video for Spanish-speaking parents entitled *Antes De Que Sea Demasiado Tarde (Before It's Too Late)*. This video with English subtitles demonstrated how higher education can be affordable.

Increasing Student and Family Awareness of Higher Education

In the first year, sites targeted activities for middle school students and for students not previously considered college bound. The school districts and TGAP partners offered a variety of services, including summer institutes, preparation and distribution of literature, counseling, college fairs and career nights, field trips to colleges and universities, and in-school presentations such as Great Expectations, a feature of the Texas Scholars program that stresses the value of completing the RHSP.

Several schools offered orientation sessions for incoming middle school or high school students and their parents. Three schools held summer academies to help fifth graders and eighth graders make the transition to the new school. At summer institutes, students received mathematics or science instruction. They also learned about the RHSP and DAP, SAT and ACT tests, and other matters relevant to higher education preparation.

Only a small percentages of students were involved in college tours, summer academies, and other intensive outreach activities. While this probably reflected time and money constraints, efforts should be made to provide such activities for more students. Another first-year concern related to data collection. Districts were not uniformly diligent in collecting sign-in sheets and reporting the number of students participating in TGAP activities.

Based on student survey results, about 80 percent of twelfth-grade students received information on financial aid or other college information from their schools; less than 40 percent of students in other grades reported receiving such information. Nearly 70 percent of all students said their parents had discussed college with them, with this percentage varying by grade. About 80 to 85 percent of eleventh and twelfth graders, respectively, said their parents had discussed college with them, while only 61 percent of sixth graders reported such discussions.

Approximately 65 percent of students intended to pursue higher education, and nearly half intended to go to a four-year university. However, the overwhelming majority of students in TGAP schools (96 percent) believed that college was somewhat or very important in accomplishing what they wanted to do in life. The motivation to attend college did not increase with grade, and motivation did not vary appreciably by race or ethnicity.

Slightly more than 25 percent of student respondents identified insufficient funds as the reason they would not continue their education. Interestingly, a much larger percentage of students expressed doubts about paying for college compared to parents (who responded to a similar item). Students and parents also differed on homework. Higher percentages of parents (65 percent) reported that they had helped their children with homework at least once a week compared to students (20 percent). Students who indicated

that their parents had talked to them about college were more likely to say that college was very important compared to students whose parents had not discussed college.

As a part of the project, TEA required each district to form a TGAP task force including parents and business and community representatives as well as administrators, teachers, and counselors. In some districts, task forces did not include parents, did not meet often, were grafted onto a pre-existing committee for which TGAP was only one of many concerns, or did not exist at all.

Evaluators offered the following suggestions for improving parent outreach during the second year:

- Involve parents more in TGAP task forces;
- Explore more active, innovative means of reaching parents. College fairs, telephone calls, home visits, and other forms of direct communication with parents should result in greater parent response;
- Organize parent auxiliary groups, which can yield substantial dividends if they assume responsibility for contacting other parents about early student preparation for higher education; and
- Continue efforts undertaken in the first year to include children in earlier grades and their parents in college awareness activities.

Gaining Businesses and Community Support

The third overarching goal of TGAP was to involve business and community representatives, particularly to help provide students with incentives, rewards, and other support for high achievement. Toward this end, TBEC held various meetings with the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce and trained approximately 80 business representatives to work with students and parents in the Houston area. Project GRAD also worked with businesses in Houston to obtain scholarships for students pursuing higher education.

Each district's TGAP task force was required to include business and community representatives. Few business and community leaders, however, served on the TGAP task forces during the first year. Recommendations for creating stronger and more effective task forces included:

- Business and community representation on TGAP task forces should be increased;
- If the task force is grafted onto a pre-existing committee, a subgroup could constitute the actual TGAP task force and meet in separate sessions to address TGAP matters; and
- The task forces should make meaningful decisions about TGAP resources, programs, and policies. Otherwise, community and business leaders may lose interest.

Baseline Data

The evaluation included baseline data on student and school performance prior to TGAP participation to help determine the effects of TGAP on the achievement of students and schools participating in TGAP over time, especially in comparison to their peer-group campuses. Although TGAP schools had similar student populations, they exhibited wide variation in performance. On average, student performance in reading and mathematics improved somewhat from 1998 to 1999, and TGAP schools surpassed their peer-group campuses and the state average in completing advanced courses.

The proportion of students at TGAP schools taking college entrance examinations was comparable to the state average. The percentage of students scoring above the state-established criterion¹ on these examinations was less than 10 percent, while the state average was 27 percent. TGAP schools averaged slightly lower ACT scores and much lower SAT scores compared to the state.

Performance on TAAS reading and mathematics tests revealed strikingly similar patterns for the seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade cohorts. For all cohorts, passing rates and TLI values fell below those for the state as a whole, with the largest gaps pertaining to the percentage of students mastering all objectives.

¹ The criterion is 1110 on the SAT I or 24 on the ACT, according to TEA's *Pocket Edition: 1999–2000 Texas Public School Statistics*.

Introduction

“GEAR UP ... is a partnership with low-income kids that says, if you’ll aim high and aspire to college, we’ll help you get there with counseling, mentoring, tutoring and financial aid.”

President Clinton, September 2000

In October 1999, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) received a federal grant for the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) project. The mission of GEAR UP is to significantly increase the number of low-income and minority students who are prepared academically and financially to enter and succeed in higher education. In this report, the term *higher education* refers generally to any education beyond high school at a college, university, vocational or trade school, or other institution leading to a degree or certification.

There are 15 GEAR UP projects in Texas. In addition to the state grant that TEA received, 14 other academic institutions received GEAR UP partnership grants. TEA’s state GEAR UP grant is officially named Texans Getting Academically Prepared (TGAP). TGAP begins at the middle-school level to prepare low-income and minority students (at certain sites in Texas) for higher education opportunities. TGAP includes interconnected activities that support early awareness of and preparation for higher education among students, their families, and schools. TGAP outlined eight specific goals, each with supporting objectives, which appear in Appendix A, but the project has the following three overarching goals:

- *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.

TGAP is a five-year project beginning with the 1999-2000 school year, continuing its second year in the 2000-2001 school year, and ultimately finishing in 2004. The evaluation is a longitudinal assessment of the efforts of school districts, campuses, parents, community groups, business groups, and higher education institutions to encourage and support low-income and minority students to take challenging academic courses in secondary school and ultimately to succeed in higher education.

Project Description

Project Partners

TEA’s three TGAP partners include:

- the pre-college outreach centers (POCs) in Corpus Christi and Laredo;
- the Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC), a statewide organization; and
- Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) in Houston.

The POCs help school districts prepare low-income and minority students for higher education by offering or assisting with services such as summer programs for academic enhancement, workshops on choosing a college or completing financial aid applications, and arranging tours of college campuses. The

POC in Corpus Christi works with Corpus Christi, Robstown, and Alice ISDs. The new POC in Laredo, established as part of the TGAP project, works with Laredo, United, and Jim Hogg County ISDs. TEA also used TGAP funds during the first year to establish a POC in Commerce to serve East Texas.

TBEC spearheads the Texas Scholars program, which encourages businesses and foundations across the state to offer incentives for students to complete the Texas graduation plan called the Recommended High School Program (RHSP). As a TGAP partner, TBEC encourages business representatives to work with TGAP schools and to provide incentives to the students at these schools.

Project GRAD is an education reform project based in Houston, Texas. Working primarily with Houston ISD's inner-city schools, Project GRAD emphasizes curriculum alignment and enhancement through a vertical feeder system. It actively works with businesses to secure scholarships, arrange student internships, and obtain other types of support for students pursuing higher education. Parents in Project GRAD's Parent University complete their GEDs, take courses to improve their English skills, and become instructional aides at their children's schools. Because Project GRAD has considerable experience preparing students for higher education in vertical feeder systems, it serves as a model for the school districts participating in TGAP.

Other organizations provide support as well. The College Board's regional office in Austin, Texas provides training on Advanced Placement (AP) courses and administers AP tests and college admission tests. The Production Center at the Region XIII Education Service Center developed materials for teachers and counselors to use with students and parents.

Project Initiation

TGAP's start up began more slowly than expected, primarily because the districts TEA had included in its state grant also were included in another GEAR UP grant, Region I Education Service Center (ESC) in Edinburg. Region I ESC and TEA agreed that the state agency would seek new districts for its project. Identifying and negotiating with new districts extended the time needed to launch the project.

Participating Sites

Six school districts in south Texas with a concentration of low-income and Hispanic students participate in TEA's TGAP project. The selected districts are Laredo, United, Jim Hogg County, Corpus Christi, Robstown, and Alice ISDs. In total, the sites include 14 campuses (eight mid-level schools and six high schools).

Alice ISD joined the project near the end of the first year. When West Oso ISD was dropped from the TGAP project in March 2000, Alice ISD was invited to participate and received a grant to plan activities for the 2000-2001 school year. For this reason, Alice ISD's activities are not included in the first-year evaluation report, although baseline data tables presented later in the report do include the district.

Appointing Project Staff

Hiring a state-level project director, district TGAP coordinators, and other key staff took longer than expected. As the first year drew to a close, TEA hired a new project director to begin October 1, 2000. Each TGAP district hired or designated a GEAR UP coordinator, and each cluster of districts designated an academic facilitator and a counselor facilitator. The academic facilitators meet with school staff regularly and perform such duties as arranging professional development and assisting with curriculum alignment.

Establishing Pre-College Outreach Centers

As stated previously, the POC in Corpus Christi works with Corpus Christi, Robstown, and Alice ISDs. TEA also established a new POC in Laredo. TEA appointed the director of the POC in May 2000, and the director quickly initiated awareness activities for students in Laredo, United, and Jim Hogg County ISDs.

Forming TGAP Advisory Committees

Project launching also required each district to form a TGAP advisory committee or task force composed of administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, community members, and business representatives. Engaging business leaders to serve on the TGAP task force has been a challenge to the districts in Corpus Christi and an even greater challenge to the smaller, more rural districts. To date, few community members and business representatives serve on the task forces, although many volunteer in more *ad hoc* ways under TBEC's leadership.

Developing District Plans

The first task for each TGAP task force was to develop a district plan of activities designed to address the goals of the TGAP project. Once those plans were completed and submitted to TEA for approval, all districts conducted sessions on the purpose of TGAP and its goals for teachers, counselors, students, parents, and community members. Some sites also used the media to publicize TGAP, including an appearance on a local television show.

Related Programs

Before TGAP began, the Texas State Board of Education developed the RHSP and the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP). Both the RHSP and DAP are 24-credit high school programs in which students take challenging academic courses to better prepare for higher education, with some emphasis on gaining sophisticated skills and knowledge in mathematics, science, technology, and communication. A DAP graduate must also complete four advanced measures, such as an original project.

In the TBEC-sponsored Texas Scholars program, local employers and educators make presentations to motivate students to undertake and complete the RHSP (or DAP). TBEC recognizes students who complete the RHSP as Texas Scholars. Project GRAD also delivers presentations about the Texas Scholars program to middle school and high school students and their parents.

TGAP districts are required to use EXPLORE and PLAN, student assessments from the developers of the ACT test. EXPLORE is an eighth-grade assessment, while PLAN is a tenth-grade assessment of English, math, reading, and scientific reasoning. Along with these assessments, activities are designed to help students set educational and career goals and monitor their progress toward those goals.

Shortly before TGAP began, the Texas Legislature established the Toward Excellence, Access, and Success (TEXAS) Grant program to provide financial aid to students who complete the RHSP or DAP². The TEXAS Grant program was the first to be linked to the type of high school program completed. The

² Texas Education Code § 56.301–56.311.

legislation requires middle schools to notify staff, students, and parents of available opportunities under this new program.³

TGAP and the TEXAS Grant program have similar aims: (a) promoting higher education opportunities for economically disadvantaged youth, (b) focusing on middle school as the starting point for college preparation, (c) stressing participation in rigorous academic courses, and (d) involving parents in promoting higher education for students.

Brief descriptions of the RHSP, DAP, Texas Scholars, and other related programs appear in Appendix C.

Purpose of the Evaluation

TGAP assists low-income and minority students to “gear up” for higher education by encouraging them to take a coherent sequence of challenging courses. The project also helps students and their parents overcome the financial and logistical challenges of higher education. The evaluation seeks to describe site and partner activities during the first year around the three overarching TGAP goals: (a) building capacity, (b) increasing student and family awareness, and (c) gaining business and community support. The evaluation assessed progress toward the goals through site visits to districts and schools and surveys of teachers, students, and parents about their expectations concerning higher education. Some data also serve as a baseline of participants’ attitudes and expectations. The evaluation also establishes baseline demographic and performance data for school and student comparisons in subsequent project years. As a whole, the first-year evaluation, which was primarily formative, encompasses the major issues that arose during project initiation and approximately six months of implementation.

Method

The evaluation relied on a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods and data. The major data collection approaches included document and product reviews; site visits involving interviews, observations, and discussion groups; and teacher, student, and parent surveys. Data collection approaches described in the following sections are organized by methods of assessing progress toward project goals and establishing baseline and demographic performance data.

Progress Toward Goals

Document and Product Reviews

Evaluators gathered and reviewed brochures, documents, and other information about activities at the sites throughout the year. More specifically, they collected documents from school districts, the College Board, and the POCs. These documents included notices about training sessions, materials to inform parents or students of outreach events or college requirements and opportunities, and sign-in sheets for various outreach efforts for students and parents. Sign-in sheets also identified teachers who participated in training sessions

Site Visits

Evaluators conducted site visits to project sites during spring 2000. During visits to TGAP schools, evaluators observed Advanced Placement (AP) and Pre-AP classes, vertical-team training for teachers, and events for students held at college campuses. TGAP administrators, counselors, and task force members participated in discussion groups during site visits. The director of the POC at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi was also interviewed.

³ Texas Education Code § 28.026.

Teacher Survey

Near the end of the 1999-2000 school year, the TGAP schools received questionnaires for teachers designed to gauge teachers' awareness of and attitudes toward TGAP and its objectives. To allay possible fears that answering candidly might subject teachers to negative scrutiny, teachers did not identify themselves on the questionnaire and a stamped envelope addressed to the University of Houston's Center for Public Policy accompanied each questionnaire.

Student Survey

In May 2000, TGAP schools received student questionnaires. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine if students received information about attending college from their schools, how involved the students perceived their parents to be in their education, and what attitudes and aspirations they had concerning higher education. A more general purpose was to gather baseline information on students' perceptions about school outreach activities.

Parent Survey

Also in May 2000, telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of parents by a research firm under contract with the Center for Public Policy. The purpose of the survey was to determine the income and education levels of the parents, if parents had received information about higher education from their children's schools, if they expected their children to attend a higher education institution, how involved they were with their children's education, and what attitudes they had concerning the affordability of higher education. A more general purpose was to gather baseline information on parents' perceptions about school outreach activities.

Baseline Demographic and Performance Data

Baseline data for the evaluation were derived from two primary sources: (a) the Texas Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and (b) the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). TEA designs and oversees PEIMS and AEIS data collection systems. An overview of these systems appears in Appendix D. TEA systematically collects and compiles standard information each year to produce the comprehensive PEIMS database that provides comparative statewide statistics for schools. The PEIMS database includes campus and district data on student and staff demographics and on student attendance and program participation. Data from the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) are combined with PEIMS to allow complete analyses of school performance.

AEIS includes a wide range of information on student performance in schools and districts. Performance on a number of indicators (e.g., criterion-referenced tests, attendance rates, dropout rates) are disaggregated by ethnicity, special education, and low-income status. AEIS reports also provide extensive information on school and district staff, finance, programs, and demographics. Evaluators used both student- and campus-level AEIS data for the TGAP evaluation.

TEA also compares each campus with 40 other "peer-group" campuses. The peer-group campuses of a particular school are similar to the school in size, grades served, region, and student demographics. This evaluation is structured around three student cohorts (in grades 7, 8, and 9) and their peer-group campuses. The evaluation also tracks students who transfer in and out of TGAP schools. Although the evaluation is anchored on the 1999–2000 school year, TGAP's initial year, it includes some student data prior to 1999-2000 to firmly establish demographic and performance trends. By tracking students who attended TGAP schools in 1999-2000 and comparing TGAP schools over time with their peer-group campuses, the evaluators will determine changes in the following:

- socioeconomic status
- program participation (LEP, gifted and talented, special education, migrant)

- student status (e.g., retained in grade, transferred out, dropped out)
- performance on state tests (TAAS)
- completion of challenging courses (AP and International Baccalaureate, if applicable)
- performance on SAT, ACT, and AP tests
- school completion by diploma type (distinguished, recommended, minimum, and GED)
- attendance rates
- dropout rates

A more complete description of the initial data appears later in this report. Performance trends for TGAP schools and their peer-group campuses establish a baseline for exploring the long-term effects of TGAP in subsequent years. In years 2 through 5, evaluators will track changes in performance, course taking, retention in school, school completion, and other measures. An overview of the evaluation plan appears in Appendix E.

Characteristics of Participating Sites

As mentioned earlier, six school districts in south Texas with predominantly low-income and Hispanic students participate in TGAP. Each school district has one high school and at least one middle school involved in the project. Table 1 lists each of the six districts and the participating campuses. A list of the sites also appears in Appendix B. Altogether the sites include 8 mid-level schools (one intermediate, two junior highs, and five middle schools) plus 6 high schools, for a total of 14 campuses.

Alice ISD replaced a school district near Corpus Christi that was dropped from the project. Because Alice ISD joined the project near the end of the first year, its GEAR UP activities are not covered in the first-year evaluation report. However, some baseline data tables presented later in this report include Alice ISD.

Table 1
Districts and Schools Participating as Sites in TGAP

School District/City	Jr. High or Middle Schools	High Schools
Laredo ISD/Laredo	Christen Middle School	Martin High School
United ISD/Laredo	Garcia Middle School United South Middle School	United South High School
Jim Hogg County ISD/ Hebbronville	Hebbronville Jr. High School	Hebbronville High School
Corpus Christi ISD/ Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle School	Miller High School
Robstown ISD/Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate School Seale Junior High School	Robstown High School
Alice ISD/Alice	Adams Middle School	Alice High School

Each year, Texas schools receive accountability ratings based on TAAS performance, attendance rates, and dropout rates. The rating categories are Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, and Low Performing. Details on the differences between ratings appear in Appendix D. Descriptive information and

accountability ratings for the TGAP sites appear in Table 2. In 1999, 12 of 14 schools received Acceptable ratings, while 2 received Recognized ratings.

Table 2
Schools Participating in TGAP

District	School	Grade Span	Number of Students (1999-2000)	1999 School Rating
Laredo	Christen Middle	6-8	1,441	Acceptable
Laredo	Martin High	9-12	1,984	Acceptable
United	Garcia Middle	6-8	677	Acceptable
United	United South Middle	6-8	831	Acceptable
United	United South High	9-12	2,251	Acceptable
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	6-8	282	Recognized
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	9-12	368	Acceptable
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	6-8	780	Acceptable
Corpus Christi	Miller High	9-12	1,715	Acceptable
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	5-6	603	Recognized
Robstown	Seale Jr. High	7-8	572	Acceptable
Robstown	Robstown High	9-12	1,006	Acceptable
Alice	Adams Middle	8-9	955	Acceptable
Alice	Alice High	10-12	1,226	Acceptable

Source: 1999 TEA AEIS Reports

As Tables 3a and 3b show, the vast majority of students at TGAP schools is Hispanic and economically disadvantaged. Across all schools, 93 percent of students are Hispanic, 5 percent African American, and 2 percent White. By contrast, the state average is about 40 percent Hispanic, 15 percent African American, and 45 percent White. The average proportion of economically disadvantaged students at TGAP schools is almost 80 percent, compared to a state average of 50 percent. Overall, demographic data confirm that the TGAP project targets low-income and minority students in accordance with the GEAR UP mission. Student mobility at TGAP schools averages 20 percent, which is comparable to the state average of 22 percent.

Table 3a
Students' Ethnic Characteristics at TGAP Schools

District	School	African American	Hispanic	White
Laredo	Christen Middle	0.1	98.3	1.5
Laredo	Martin High	0.1	98.2	1.6
United	Garcia Middle	0.1	98.8	0.7
United	United South Middle	0.0	97.8	1.8
United	United South High	0.1	98.8	1.0
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	0.0	95.7	3.5
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	0.0	95.9	4.1
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	12.1	80.6	7.1
Corpus Christi	Miller High	11.5	81.3	6.5
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	0.7	96.8	2.3
Robstown	Seale Jr. High	0.9	98.1	0.9
Robstown	Robstown High	1.2	97.4	1.4
Alice	Adams Middle	0.8	85.8	13.1
Alice	Alice High	1.1	80.2	18.1
Average		2.1	93.1	4.5

Source: 1999 TEA AEIS and Comparable Improvement Reports

Table 3b
Students' Socioeconomic Characteristics at TGAP Schools

District	School	Economically Disadvantaged	Mobility
Laredo	Christen Middle	92.4	18.4
Laredo	Martin High	92.2	22.0
United	Garcia Middle	99.0	21.7
United	United South Middle	88.8	14.7
United	United South High	75.0	23.3
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	71.6	11.7
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	72.3	11.6
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	75.1	33.6
Corpus Christi	Miller High	61.9	31.3
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	91.4	12.2
Robstown	Seale Jr. High	84.6	21.3
Robstown	Robstown High	77.6	21.1
Alice	Adams Middle	55.0	16.7
Alice	Alice High	42.7	13.5
Average		77.1	19.5

Source: 1999 TEA AEIS Reports

Table 4 shows that teachers at TGAP schools are far more likely to belong to a minority group (more than 75 percent) than teachers in the state as a whole (25 percent). Otherwise, TGAP teachers resemble

teachers across the state: 8 percent are beginning teachers compared to 7.7 percent for the state overall, and TGAP teachers average 11 years of teaching experience, while the state average is 11.8 years.

Table 4
Teachers' Characteristics at TGAP Schools

District	School	Percent Minority Teachers	Percent Beginning Teachers	Average Teacher Experience
Laredo	Christen Middle	96.4	5.5	12.8
Laredo	Martin High	87.5	6.7	12.9
United	Garcia Middle	82.4	17.6	7.1
United	United South Middle	84.0	12.7	6.6
United	United South High	86.7	9.9	8.2
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	83.0	7.3	12.6
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	83.2	3.1	13.8
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	67.9	7.7	10.6
Corpus Christi	Miller High	52.5	2.6	12.5
Robstown	Seale Jr. High	70.3	6.4	10.1
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	80.8	11.2	11.2
Robstown	Robstown High	57.4	4.5	12.4
Alice	Adams Middle	66.8	10.4	11.6
Alice	Alice High	58.6	6.9	11.0
TGAP Average		76.8	8.0	11.0
State Average		25.0	7.7	11.8

Source: 1999 TEA AEIS Reports

Progress Toward Goals

This section describes progress toward the three overarching goals:

- Building the capacity of schools to prepare students earlier for higher education,
- Increasing student and family awareness of higher education and financial aid opportunities, and
- Gaining the support of business representatives and community organizations to provide incentives and support for high student achievement.

This evaluation documents the TGAP activities and strategies undertaken by participating schools and assesses progress toward project goals. This enables the identification of possible improvements in the second year of the project.

Building Capacity

Capacity-building refers to school improvement activities that raise students' expectations and enhance a schools' and its partners' ability to help students thrive in school, take challenging courses, learn about scholarships and financial support, and apply to a higher education institution for further study. A synonym for capacity-building might be "creating infrastructure"—the infrastructure in school districts, universities, POCs, and communities that is necessary to advance the goals and objectives of the TGAP project.

Capacity can be expanded by improving the knowledge, expectations, and motivation of school administrators, teachers, counselors, students, and parents; adding resources such as additional personnel, materials, or technology to the system; or reorganizing how work is done or how services are delivered. In general, any activity that increases the education system's ability to meet its goals qualifies as capacity building. Capacity-building strategies for the first year of the project included:

- Organizing educators into vertical teams and providing release time to develop an aligned middle school through high school curriculum in the four core areas;
- Providing vertical-team training and other professional development for identified teams of teachers;
- Developing and distributing information and materials for counselors to share with students and their families about higher education;
- Adding AP classes, Pre-AP programs, and summer institutes for students;
- Mentoring for teaching staff by local universities and businesses;
- Enhancing student tutoring and mentoring services;
- Encouraging students and their families to consider higher education as a viable option; and
- Exploring financial alternatives with students and their families, such as AP credits and financial aid, that would make higher education more affordable.

The evaluators collected data on capacity building in a variety of ways. First, during site visits to TGAP schools, evaluators observed AP and Pre-AP classes, vertical-team training for teachers, and events for students held at college campuses. TGAP administrators, counselors, and TGAP task force members participated in discussion groups during the site visits. The director of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi POC was also interviewed. Second, evaluators conducted surveys of teachers, students, and parents. Third, they collected documents from school districts, from the College Board, and from the POCs. These documents included training session notices, materials informing parents or students of outreach events or of college requirements and opportunities, and sign-in sheets for various student and parent outreach efforts. Sign-in sheets also identified teachers who participated in training sessions. Additionally, data on the number of teachers at each school were obtained from TEA's web site.

The first-year evaluation addressed capacity building by focusing primarily on teachers and counselors and the development of materials for their use.

Teachers

In the following sections, teacher and counselor findings are organized by vertical teaming and vertical-team training, attitudes toward TGAP, counseling students about higher education, use of student data, mentors for teachers, and adding Advanced Placement (AP) and Pre-AP classes to the curriculum. Much of the information in this section came from teacher surveys.

A total of 277 teachers completed 23-item questionnaires including both fixed-response and open-ended items related to vertical team training, the TGAP project, community outreach support, and teacher perspectives. Table 5 presents the number of respondents from each school. The average years of teaching experience for the 275 respondents who provided the information was slightly more than 13 years, which is slightly higher than the average of 11 years based on TEA’s data for all teachers in TGAP schools.

Table 5
Number of Respondents by School

District	School	Number of Respondents	Percent
Laredo	Christen Middle School	18	6.5
Laredo	Martin High School	10	3.6
United	Garcia Middle School	4	1.5
United	United South Middle School	5	1.8
United	United South High School	9	3.3
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High School	8	2.9
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High School	13	4.8
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle School	12	4.4
Corpus Christi	Miller High School	51	18.5
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	29	10.5
Robstown	Seale Junior High School	33	12.0
Robstown	Robstown High School	83	30.2
Total		275*	100.0

* Two respondents did not identify the schools at which they taught.

Vertical Teaming and Vertical-Team Training

According to the College Board, an AP vertical team “is a group of teachers from different grade levels in a given discipline who work cooperatively to develop and implement a vertically aligned program aimed at helping students acquire the academic skills necessary for success in the Advanced Placement Program.” TEA required each school district to form vertical teams consisting of language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science teachers for each grade level beginning with the sixth grade. With seven grade levels (6–12) and four core-area teachers per grade level, each school district committed to sending at least 28 teachers for vertical-team training and curricular-development sessions. TEA expected the vertical teams, at a minimum, to attend vertical-team training and to receive five days of release time to work on aligning the curriculum across grade levels.

From mid-January to September 2000, teachers from the 12 project schools participated in a variety of internal and external vertical-team training sessions. Two initial training workshops sponsored by the College Board occurred in January 2000. The first of these, which took place at the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, served English and social studies teachers. The second training session, for mathematics and science teachers, took place at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Table 6 shows the number of teachers that attended these two initial training sessions. All of the districts sent the required 28 teachers to the training, with United ISD sending 12 more teachers from its additional middle school. As a result, each participating district satisfied its obligation for vertical-team training in the first year of the TGAP project.

Table 6
Number of Teachers Receiving Vertical-team Training by District and School

District	School	Number of Teachers Receiving Training by School	Number of Teachers Receiving Training by District
Laredo	Christen Middle	15	28
	Martin High	13	
United	Garcia Middle	12	40
	United South Middle	12	
	United South High	16	
Jim Hogg	Hebbronville Jr. High	12	28
	Hebbronville High	16	
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	12	28
	Miller High	16	
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	4	28
	Seale Jr. High	8	
	Robstown High	16	
Total		152	152

During the spring and summer months, other sessions occurred within the school districts. These sessions focused on vertical-team building and curriculum writing. In all, the districts reported a total of 15 different training sessions, with some training sessions occurring over the course of several days. Of teachers receiving some form of vertical-team training, 67 percent attended at least one training session, 33 percent attended two or more training sessions, and 20 percent attended five or more sessions. Of the combined 894 teachers in the 12 schools, 218 (24.4 percent) received some form of vertical-team training.

Table 7 shows the varying levels of district participation in external training by the College Board and internal training. Of the 218 teachers who received some type of vertical-team training, 35 percent were from Corpus Christi ISD, 28 percent from Robstown ISD, and 15 percent from United ISD. The two remaining school districts each contributed less than 15 percent of the participating teachers.

Table 7
Percent of Each District's Teachers Who Received Training

District	Percent of Teachers Attending Training by District*	Percent of Each District's Teachers Who Received Training**
Corpus Christi ISD	35	45
Robstown ISD	28	26
United ISD	15	19
Laredo ISD	10	11
Jim Hogg County ISD	12	46

*Percent based on the total number of teachers who received training.

**Percent based on total number of teachers in each district.

Almost half (46 percent) of the teachers in Jim Hogg County ISD received some type of vertical-team training, by far the largest proportion. Corpus Christi ISD also trained a significant share of its teachers, 45 percent. Robstown trained 26 percent, United ISD trained 19 percent, and Laredo trained 11 percent of its teachers. It should be noted that these percentages merely provide an indication of the impact of training on the entire school, and they vary depending on the size of the faculty. All districts satisfied their commitments for vertical team training (28 teachers); however, United and Laredo ISDs trained a much smaller percentage because the districts had more teachers.

Table 8 shows the overall teacher participation rates in vertical-team training by school type. The number of middle school teachers who received some form of vertical-team training was 104, accounting for nearly 28 percent of all middle-school teachers at TGAP schools. A slightly smaller proportion of eligible high school teachers participated in the training; of the 518 high school teachers at TGAP schools, 22 percent received some form of vertical-team training.

Table 8
Number and Percent of Teachers Receiving Vertical-team Training by School Type

Type of School	Number of Teachers Who Received Training	Percent Who Received Training*
Middle/Junior High Schools	104	27.7
High Schools	114	22.0
Total	218	24.4

*Percents based on total number of teachers for each school type.

On the teacher survey, 272 teachers answered the question, “Have you attended vertical-team training this year?” Of these, 48.5 percent indicated they had attended such training.⁴ Additionally, as shown in Table 9, teachers were asked to indicate if the training they attended was external (“offered by someone other than your district”), internal (“offered by your district or campus”), or both. Nearly half of the teachers who attended training said they attended both types, external and internal training.

⁴ This percentage is inconsistent with sign-in sheets and records maintained by the College Board indicating that about 24 percent of the teachers at TGAP schools received some kind of teacher training. The survey respondents may not comprise a representative sample; those who attended vertical-team or AP/Pre-AP training may have had a greater tendency to complete and return the questionnaires.

Table 9
Teacher Survey Responses Regarding Attendance

Type of Training	Number	Percent
External	45	33.3
Internal	26	19.3
Both	64	47.4
Total	135	100.0

Note: Findings include three respondents who reported that they did not attend the training; nevertheless, they indicated that the training (which they did not attend) was internal, external, or both.

Teachers were also asked, “If it was external/internal training, how useful did you find the training?” As shown in Table 10, the majority of respondents for both internal and external vertical-team training said that the training had been very useful.

Table 10
Responses to the Question:
“How useful did you find the training?”

Responses	Internal		External	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Useful	49	56.3	58	52.3
Somewhat Useful	35	40.2	46	41.4
Not Very Useful	3	1.1	7	6.3
Total	87	100.0	111	100.0

An additional item asked teachers if their schools provided adequate release time for vertical team planning. Of the teachers who reported attending some form of vertical-team training, 82 (64.1 percent) said they received adequate release time, while 46 (35.9 percent) said they did not. A few teachers indicated that release time for vertical-team planning would be available only during the first year and would be curtailed in the coming year. Likewise, one of the most frequent responses to an additional question regarding recommendations for changes was increasing time for vertical team planning, coordination, and communication among teachers.

Teachers also rated the success of vertical-team teaching in their schools. While a few noted in the margins of their surveys that vertical-team teaching had not actually begun in their schools, responses provide a useful means of gauging teacher perceptions of the initial training and planning efforts. Response frequencies are compared in Table 11 for teachers who attended vertical-team training, and those who had not.

Table 11
Responses to the Question:
“How successful is the vertical-team teaching in your school?”

Responses	Attended Training		Did Not Attend Training	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Successful	18	14.2	4	10.9
Somewhat Successful	61	48.0	12	36.1
Not Very Successful	18	14.2	10	13.9
Don't Know	30	23.6	49	39.1
Total	127	100.0	75	100.0

Not surprisingly, teachers who attended vertical-team training were more likely to have an opinion about vertical teaming in their schools. Furthermore, among those who had an opinion, teachers who attended training were considerably more likely to regard vertical teaming as at least somewhat successful (62.2 percent to 47.0 percent).

Improving Vertical-Team Training and Vertical Teaming

In addition to forced-choice items, teachers responded to two open-ended questions: “If you could make one or two changes to make vertical-team training more effective, what would they be?” and “If you could make one or two changes to make vertical-team teaching more effective, what would they be?”

With respect to improving vertical-team training, the open-ended responses fell into five categories. Teachers most frequently suggested that they have more frequent training, longer training, or more time to meet and plan (33 responses). It is important to note, however, that the survey of teachers occurred at the close of the spring semester. Half of the vertical-team training sessions occurred later, and many of the early participants attended vertical-team training several more times after survey administration.

The second most frequent suggestion (22 responses) was for training and presentations to have a more practical focus, be more specific, more practically oriented toward teachers’ specific subject areas, and include more hands-on training. The suggestion to extend training to include all teachers or at least a larger number of teachers (16 responses) was third. The fourth most frequent suggestion was for training to include specific samples of curriculum and lesson plans or focus more narrowly on curriculum. Finally, nine teachers asked for more coordination, collaboration, and communication across grade levels, disciplines, and schools.

Respondents voiced similar concerns about the effectiveness of vertical teaming. More time for planning and communicating, particularly during the school day, was by far the most frequent suggestion for improvement. Respondents also frequently recommended increased communication and cooperation across grades and schools, as well as the need to include all teachers or a wider variety of teachers in vertical teaming. Teachers also sought greater specificity in defining vertical-team teaching and curriculum writing.

Attitudes Toward TGAP

Additional teacher survey items addressed familiarity with the TGAP program and teachers’ expectations for it. Although many documents received from the school districts referred to the program as “TGAP,” many teachers seemed unfamiliar with the term or had never heard of it. This is possibly because they

knew the program as “GEAR UP.”⁵ Nonetheless, the number of responses indicating unfamiliarity with TGAP suggests that name confusion alone does not explain why teachers lacked familiarity with the project.

Teachers who participated in vertical-team training were expected to be more familiar with TGAP. Still, it is important to know how familiar teachers are with the program, even if they did not participate in the training. Again, the success of this multi-faceted program depends not just on those who receive vertical teaming and training to teach AP and Pre-AP courses, but also other teachers in the schools who interact with trained peers.

In the following three tables, teachers’ responses are displayed by whether or not they attended vertical-team training. As shown in Table 12, four out of five teachers who attended vertical-team training recognized the term “TGAP” and were at least somewhat familiar with the program—this was true for only about three out of ten teachers who did not attend vertical-team training.

Table 12
Familiarity with TGAP

Responses	Attended Training		Did Not Attend Training	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Familiar	23	17.4	2	1.5
Somewhat Familiar	82	62.1	38	27.9
Not Familiar	27	20.5	96	70.6
Total	132	100.0	136	100.0

Note: Chi-square = 72.437, degrees of freedom = 2, $p < .001$.

Next, teachers were asked how successful they expected the TGAP program to be in encouraging students to take more academically demanding courses and in encouraging them to continue their education after high school. The results appear in Tables 13 and 14.

Table 13
Responses to the Question:
“How successful do you expect TGAP to be in increasing the percentage of students taking academically demanding courses?”

Responses	Attended Training		Did Not Attend Training	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Successful	51	39.5	23	18.1
Somewhat Successful	64	49.6	47	37.0
Not Very Successful	1	0.8	6	4.7
Don’t Know	13	10.1	51	40.2
Total	129	100.0	127	100.0

⁵ Future surveys will refer to the program as “GEAR-UP” to avoid any confusion.

Table 14

**Responses to the Question:
“How successful would you expect TGAP to be in increasing the percentage
of students who continue their education after high school?”**

Responses	Attended Training		Did Not Attend Training	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Successful	71	55.0	32	24.8
Somewhat Successful	45	34.9	41	31.8
Not Very Successful	0	0.0	3	2.3
Don't Know	13	10.1	53	41.1
Total	129	100.0	129	100.0

Note: Chi-square = 42.195, degrees of freedom = 3, $p < .001$.

Nine of ten teachers (90 percent) who attended vertical-team training expected TGAP to be at least somewhat successful in increasing the percentage of students who took academically demanding courses and who continued their education after high school. This expectation held for fewer than sixty percent of teachers who did not attend training.

Teachers were also asked, “If you could make one or two changes to make TGAP more effective, what would they be?” The responses were consistent with the findings in Tables 12, 13, and 14. The most common suggestion (27 responses) for improving the program’s effectiveness was to provide more information and training, to increase communication with teachers, and to expand the program to include all teachers or a wider variety of teachers. The second most common suggestion (eight responses) was to provide more TGAP training. The third most common (six responses) was for parents be involved in the TGAP program.

As with vertical teaming, teachers who attended vertical-team training were more familiar with TGAP than those who had not. Furthermore, among those in both groups who claimed some familiarity, those who attended training were more likely to expect the program to succeed.⁶

These responses point to an opportunity to build capacity by increasing the frequency and effectiveness of communication about TGAP with teachers. While it is not surprising that many teachers who did not attend vertical-team training indicated they knew little about TGAP, this finding raises the question of how students encounter the services and reforms in the program. Even teachers who have not been explicitly involved in vertical teaming can help to explain TGAP and its benefits to students and parents if they are knowledgeable about the project.

While some teachers who had not been recruited for vertical teaming seemed curious about it, others seemed mildly hostile. They appeared to resent being excluded from the project and its resources. Many teachers stated emphatically that the program should be more inclusive. Again, the success of TGAP depends not only on the teachers who are directly responsible for implementing it, but also on the indirectly involved teachers with whom students spend a considerable part of the school day. The capacity for encouraging students to take academically rigorous courses and to consider continuing their education

⁶ There is, of course, a question of causality. The evaluators believe that enlisting teachers to implement the program through vertical-team training generated support for TGAP’s goals and raised expectations for its success. It is possible, however, that teachers deemed most likely to support the program and be optimistic about its benefits were selected to receive vertical-team training.

beyond high school would be meaningfully enhanced by enlisting the support of all teachers for vertical teaming and its benefits.⁷

In some cases, teachers’ responses were inconsistent with the facts or ambiguous in light of what was known about TGAP. For instance, some teachers said that vertical-team teaching in their schools was very successful, even though vertical teaming had yet to be implemented in those schools. There was also wide disagreement among teachers in the same school as to whether districts made student data available to help teachers address student needs. Often, however, the real question was not whether teachers were factually correct, but what their perceptions and attitudes were. If teachers are involved in the implementation of TGAP reforms, it is important that they *perceive* the program to be a good one and *expect* it to be successful.

Counseling Students about Higher Education

Teachers responded to four survey items regarding college outreach activities—how frequently they counseled students, how good the information was that they received from colleges, how effective their schools were in talking to students about college, and what they would do to improve that communication.

Table 15 presents teachers’ responses to the question, “How often do you give your students any counseling or advice about college?” More than 95 percent of teachers reported speaking to their students about college at least sometimes.

Table 15
Responses to the Question:
“How often do you advise students about college?”

Responses	Number	Percent
Often	145	54.3
Sometimes	111	41.6
Never	11	4.1
Total	267	100.0

Note: A chi-square test indicated no statistical difference between teachers who had attended vertical training and those who had not in the frequency with which they advised students about college.

In contrast, teachers believed they did not receive enough information about college opportunities. When asked, “In your opinion, are K–12 educators given enough information regarding admissions and course placement at state universities,” only 19.4 percent of those with an opinion answered affirmatively. This may be because this information is usually given to counselors.

As reported in Table 16, teachers were asked, “How good a job do you think your school is doing at making all students aware of college opportunities?” It is of some concern that more than 45 percent of the teachers felt their schools were no better than “okay” at telling students about college opportunities. This may be because many teachers were not aware of their schools’ activities. Some teachers, however, were able to identify an array of student outreach activities. As before, teachers who attended vertical-team training were more optimistic about the impact of college outreach on students than teachers who

⁷ As noted above, the teacher survey was conducted in May. Much of the first-year teacher training was conducted during the summer, so concerns about training more teachers and familiarizing those who were not trained with TGAP were probably addressed at least in part by summer activities.

did not attend. Hopefully, as more information is disseminated to teachers about TGAP, as more teachers participate, and as outreach activities improve, more teachers may come to feel that their schools' efforts are effective.

Table 16
Responses to the Question:
“How good a job do you think your school is doing at making all students aware of college opportunities?”

Responses	Attended Training		Did Not Attend Training	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Excellent	33	25.2	29	21.3
Good	55	42.0	43	31.6
Okay	25	19.1	28	20.6
Needs Improvement	18	13.7	36	26.5
Total	131	100.0	136	100.0

Note: Chi-square = 7.806, degrees of freedom = 3, $p = .050$

On one open-ended item, teachers were asked, “How can your school be more effective in making students aware of college opportunities?” Teachers mentioned several kinds of activities. General suggestions were frequently made to provide more information about college to students and for counselors to increase their efforts in this area. The most frequent suggestion was to invite guest speakers to address students about college opportunities (53 responses). The second most frequently mentioned strategy was to have student field trips or *more* student field trips to colleges (40 responses). Other recommendations were for activities or events already included within the scope of TGAP. For instance, teachers frequently said there should be more outreach to parents (11 responses). Many suggested holding a college night, college assemblies, career days, or less specifically defined presentations to students about college opportunities (25 responses). Teachers frequently recommended that more information should be provided specifically to them (9 responses).

Teachers identified various innovative speakers. Some believed students who were currently in college or recent college graduates would make effective presenters. Others suggested community leaders, “successful people,” and prominent Hispanic community leaders. (This suggestion dovetails with the Great Expectations presentations of the Texas Scholars program.) Teachers also suggested that college faculty visit their schools as guest speakers. Finally, several teachers suggested that efforts to interest students in college should “start early.” Unfortunately, other teachers, who said that efforts to inform students about college needed improvement, offered no specific advice for improvements.

Use of Student Data

One teacher survey item related to the use of student data. As shown in Table 17, a large proportion of respondents wrote “don’t know” or simply failed to answer the question, “How often does your district make data available from the EXPLORE or PLAN student assessments, or other kinds of data, to help you address the needs of students?” Teachers, evidently, were not familiar with EXPLORE and PLAN or other data available to address student needs. Together with the teachers who answered “never” to this question, these respondents comprise 54 percent of the sample.

More than half of the teachers who attended vertical-team training (66.4 percent) reportedly received EXPLORE, PLAN, or other data to help them address student needs; less than half (43.8 percent) of the teachers who did not attend training thought they received such data.

Table 17

**Responses to the Question:
 “How often does your district make data available from the EXPLORE or PLAN student assessments, or other kinds of data, to help you address the needs of students?”**

Responses	Attended Training		Did Not Attend Training	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Often	32	26.9	16	14.3
Sometimes	47	39.5	33	29.5
Never	31	26.1	42	37.5
Don't Know	9	7.6	21	18.8
Total	119	100.0	112	100.0

Note: Chi-square = 14.042, degrees of freedom = 3, $p = .003$.

Mentors for Teachers

Each of the teachers who completed the initial vertical-team training in January had an assigned email mentor. Email mentors were AP teachers on active and successful vertical teams who provided follow-up and ongoing professional development for teachers. Unfortunately, TGAP participants initiated little contact with their email mentors.

Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) collaborated with Laredo ISD to provide TAMIU faculty mentors for high school AP teachers in the same disciplines. District representatives frequently indicated, however, that this program, called University Fellows, would not be fully implemented until the second year of the project.

The results of a teacher survey item related to the use of university mentors for teachers' training and curriculum design appear in Table 18. Teachers who received vertical-team training were more likely to report using university mentors than teachers who did not receive training. Even so, a high percentage of trained teachers did not know whether their districts used university mentors. This is reasonable since only one district had university mentors.

Table 18

**Responses to the Question:
 “Does your district use university mentors?”**

Response	Attended Training		Did Not Attend Training	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	40	31.3	26	19.7
No	50	39.1	40	30.3
Don't Know	38	29.7	66	50.0
Total	128	100.0	132	100.0

Note: Chi-square = 11.560, degrees of freedom = 2, $p = .003$.

As Table 19 shows, about one teacher in five who had attended training reported having a university mentor. Only about 1 in 16 teachers who had not attended training reported having such a mentor. Altogether, 25 percent of the surveyed teachers believed their districts used university mentors, but only 13 percent said they personally had a university mentor.

Table 19
Responses to the Question:
“Do you have a university mentor?”

Response	Attended Training		Did Not Attend Training	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	26	20.6	8	6.3
No	99	78.6	118	93.7
Don't Know	1	0.8	0	0.0
Total	126	100.0	126	100.0

Note: Chi-square = 12.193, degrees of freedom = 2, $p = .002$.

Teachers also addressed the question, “How useful is the guidance you receive from your university mentor?” Of those who said they had a university mentor, 83.2 percent said the guidance they received was at least somewhat useful, and 40.5 percent said it was very useful.

TEA envisions close cooperation between TGAP schools and institutions of higher education, and one form of this cooperation is university faculty mentoring teachers in participating schools. Full use of university mentors is clearly one way to build capacity in the second year of the project.

Counselors

As of May 2000, many counselors had attended three different training sessions. Like the teachers, they participated in internal vertical-team training. They also received training on the eighth-grade EXPLORE and tenth-grade PLAN assessments, precursors to the ACT. While some counselors stated that much of the AP training was repetitive, they did suggest that additional vertical-team training be conducted.

At a counselors’ institute for the Corpus Christi cluster that occurred in March 2000, College Board personnel, a university admissions officer, and the director of college counseling at a private school trained middle and high school counselors on successful counseling strategies, activities, and materials to use in preparing students and their families for the college experience. Specific topics included the importance of early preparation for academic success; college entrance examinations; the use of data, technology, and the Internet in counseling; the state’s uniform college admissions process; effective letters of recommendation and application essays; school profiles; higher education options; and strategies for marketing their students.

The POC in Corpus Christi helped organize and conduct much of the training for teachers and counselors in the Corpus Christi cluster. In particular, the Corpus Christi POC facilitated teacher training on AP courses in the four core areas (mathematics, science, English, and history) and assisted with a College Board Guidance Institute and an ACT Counselor Workshop.

Materials Development

While TGAP’s originally intended to support six districts, it also provided funding in 1999-2000 for the development of materials for statewide use, including a brochure to publicize the RHSP, DAP, and TEXAS grant program; a video for parents; and a tool kit primarily for counselors.

Video

TEA developed a video for Spanish-speaking parents with English subtitles. *Antes De Que Sea Demasiado Tarde (Before It's Too Late)* portrays two Hispanic students, one optimistic and the other

pessimistic about their opportunities for higher education in the face of financial difficulty. The mother of the optimistic student explains to the other student's mother how AP courses make college more affordable by avoiding the cost of taking those courses in college. Other scenes in the video provide information about preparing for higher education both academically and financially.

Tool Kit

TEA also developed a tool kit for middle school counselors, including a PowerPoint presentation about RHSP and the TEXAS Grant program. The tool kit was introduced at a middle school training-of-trainers session for the 20 education service centers and the 33 largest school districts in Texas. This training included presenters from TEA, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, TBEC, and the Texas Mentor School Network (TMSN). Subsequent sessions conducted by ESC and school district staff in all 20 regions provided information to more than 600 middle school counselors. The tool kit also included electronic and hard copy materials that teachers and counselors could adapt for their own presentations to students and parents about local opportunities and resources. TEA added some of the tool kit materials to its GEAR UP web page.

Software for Monitoring Students' Completion of Requirements

TBEC began development of software that would allow counselors to keep a record of student coursework and student completion of requirements for the state graduation plans, such as RHSP or DAP. Corpus Christi ISD counselors provided input into the development of this graduation plan software, which is actually a software patch that works with existing management information software. TBEC provided demonstrations for Corpus Christi counselors, registrars, and management information directors in July 2000 and again at a TGAP Partners meeting in August 2000. The software will be provided to Alice ISD, Robstown ISD, and technical personnel in Corpus Christi ISD early in the second year of the project.

Course Development

Project GRAD developed "Foundations of Algebra," a Summer 2000 institute for eighth graders in middle schools participating in Project GRAD.

Increasing Student and Family Awareness of Higher Education

The success or failure of the TGAP effort will ultimately hinge on student outcomes. This means making students aware at an early age of the need to prepare for life after high school, to take academically challenging courses, and to prepare in advance to meet college entrance requirements, identify financial strategies, and decide on a college suited to their needs and abilities. The following sections will first describe activities offered to students and student survey results. Then, parent outreach activities and parent survey results are presented.

Activities Offered to Students

In the first year of the project, Corpus Christi POC was the only fully-functioning POC. A full-time director for the POC located at TAMIU in Laredo was hired in May 2000, and the director has planned a full range of programs for the second year of TGAP. TEA established an additional POC in Commerce, although it is not expected to offer a full complement of programs in the second year.

As a result of TGAP, the POC in Corpus Christi expanded its target population to include middle school students and many more students previously not considered college-bound by school staff, the students themselves, or their parents. According to POC records, the Corpus Christi POC increased the number of students it served dramatically, from 458 students in 1998-1999 to 5,447 in 1999-2000.

In spite of less than full implementation, the school districts and TGAP partners offered a variety of services, including summer institutes, preparation and distribution of literature, counseling, college fairs and career nights, field trips to colleges and universities, and in-school presentations such as Great Expectations, a feature of the Texas Scholars program for eighth graders. Great Expectations presentations done by community business people examine a hypothetical budget of expenses for a person making a yearly income of \$24,000, followed by a discussion about the education necessary to have a starting salary of \$24,000.

Eighth graders in the Robstown and Corpus Christi ISDs attended the thirteenth annual “Science, Technology and YOUth” Symposium. This symposium, sponsored by Texas A&M Association of Former Students, exposed students to the science professions; actual research in science and technology; university programs; facilities including a wind-tunnel, water-tunnel, and animal hospitals; and demonstrations of chemical reactions with everyday and ordinary items.

Robstown ISD’s extensive efforts to expose students to college opportunities included:

- Field trip for 40 Seale Jr. High School grade 7 students to the University of Texas at San Antonio and to the University of Incarnate Word;
- Field trip for 120 grade 8 students from Seale Jr. High School to the “Science, Technology, and YOUth Symposium” at Texas A&M University-College Station;
- Field trip for Robstown High School students (grades 9, 10, and 11) to Texas A&M University-College Station, The University of Houston, Sam Houston State University, Stephen F. Austin University, and Baylor University;
- Field trip for Robstown High School students to University of Texas at San Antonio, St. Mary’s University, The University of Texas at Austin, Baylor University, and Texas A&M University-College Station;
- Field trip for 13 Robstown High School students (grades 11 and 12) to “Island Day” at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi;

- Presentation to Robstown High School students by Texas A&M Kingsville physics and chemistry professors; and
- Presentations to Robstown High School students by former RHS students who were attending various Texas universities.

Districts in the Laredo cluster organized field trips on their own initiative. Jim Hogg County ISD took students to Laredo Community College, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, and TAMIU at various times during the first year of TGAP. However, most of the trips were for students in grades 11 and 12, with only two for middle school students. United ISD organized field trips to the University of Texas, University of Texas San Antonio, Texas A&M University, Laredo Community College, and TAMIU.⁸

The Corpus Christi POC arranged for guest speakers from Southern Methodist University and the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation to make presentations in participating schools on a variety of college-related topics. These presentations reached 88 students at Miller High School (Corpus Christi ISD), 423 students at Driscoll Middle School (Corpus Christi ISD), and 298 students at Ortiz Intermediate School (Robstown ISD). In 1999, the POC held a series of meetings with the seventh and eighth graders at Seale Junior High School, attended by 775 students. A second meeting at Ortiz Intermediate was attended by sixth grade students and parents. In addition, the Corpus Christi POC coordinated “College 101” for tenth and eleventh graders, reaching 47 students. The program provided information on the dates of SAT examinations, the Texas Common Application, and what to expect in college.

Several of the participating schools offered orientation meetings for students just entering middle school or high school and their parents. In United ISD, Garcia Middle School, United South Middle School, and United South High School held summer academies to help fifth and eighth graders make the transition to the next grade. At these summer institutes, students received special mathematics instruction to help prepare for mathematics at the next level (middle school or high school). United South High School held a “Fish Camp” for incoming freshmen, distributing handbooks that covered the RHSP and DAP, SAT and ACT tests, and other issues relevant to student preparation for higher education. Jim Hogg County ISD held “Fish Camps” for incoming sixth and ninth graders in July.

The “Jump Start Camp” held at Del Mar Community College was designed to improve mathematics and science skills. It allowed 30 students from Driscoll Middle School (Corpus Christi ISD) to experience a simulated college schedule for four days and culminated with field trips on the fifth day.

With help from the Corpus Christi POC, Driscoll Middle School also offered a Physics and Algebra Academy, a program that reached 15 students.

The following activities were new for the Corpus Christi POC in 1999–2000:

- Aggieland Saturday, campus visit to Texas A&M University-College Station;
- Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi Island Day;
- Texas A&M University, Kingsville Senior Day;
- Texas College Tours for Middle School Students;
- Student Update Presentations for High School Juniors and Seniors; and
- Student Mentoring Program.

⁸ United ISD did not submit sign-in sheets or other documents to indicate the grade levels of the students involved in various campus visits.

In addition to these new activities, Corpus Christi POC expanded the the following existing programs in 1999-2000:

- Science, Technology & YOUth Symposium, from 35 students to 120 students;
- Texas College Tour for High School Students, from 40 students to 125 students; and
- Application Nights in conjunction with Texas colleges and universities, from 3 sessions to 6 sessions.

In an interview with evaluators in Summer 2000, the Director of the Corpus Christi POC indicated that the POC was working to strengthen its partnerships with Del Mar Community College and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi so that admissions staff from those institutions could schedule presentations to participating TGAP schools. The tours of Texas colleges and universities arranged by the Corpus Christi POC included meetings with admissions officers at each of the schools the tour visited. The POC also worked to publicize its activities through mailings and advertising in school newspapers and magazines.

At Aggieland Saturday, 48 Miller High School students (Corpus Christi ISD) received admissions and financial aid information about Texas A&M University-College Station. The POC also sponsored a similar trip to Texas A&M University-Kingsville for 48 Miller High School students, and 85 Miller High School students participated in a trip to five Texas colleges and universities. Forty-five students in grade 8 at Driscoll Middle School (Corpus Christi ISD) participated in another college trip.

Finally, the Corpus Christi POC organized field trips for TGAP students to such places as the Texas State Capitol, the USS Lexington, and the San Antonio missions. These field trips were a natural outgrowth of teachers revising their courses to make them more rigorous and more meaningful to low-income students who may have never visited such places as Austin or San Antonio. More than 500 students took advantage of these opportunities.

In all of the participating districts, counselors provided students, and sometimes parents, with information about TGAP, RHSP, and DAP and worked with students either individually or in groups to determine the courses they needed to complete their chosen graduation plans. In various districts, counselors provided applications for college admission and financial aid. Corpus Christi ISD, for example, invited students and parents to individual meetings with counselors to hear about the RHSP, AP and Pre-AP courses, college entrance exams, and financial aid. Counselors at Robstown High School made career and technology presentations to grades 9, 10, and 11 students. The program included a presentation by representatives of the Corpus Christi POC.

Districts carried out other college awareness activities with students. One unique effort was the “Get A Jump” curriculum in Driscoll Middle School (Corpus Christi ISD). Incorporated into the weekly instructional routine of the school, the curriculum made students aware of college opportunities and requirements as early as grade six. Project GRAD and the Corpus Christi cluster offered ACT and SAT review courses to students.

Most districts are using a variety of activities, both internal and external to the schools, to make students more aware of the need to prepare early for higher education. Documents indicated that some districts have been quite energetic in their efforts to reach students. With the Laredo POC added this year, all districts now have a variety of resources available to them through the POCs.

One concern of the evaluators in the first year is that districts have not been uniformly diligent in collecting sign-in sheets and providing numbers of students reached through various activities (particularly college field trips).

Student Survey Results

In May 2000, evaluators distributed copies of student questionnaires to all students at TGAP schools. The purpose of the survey was to determine if students received information about attending college from their schools, how involved students perceived their parents to be in their education, and what attitudes and aspirations they had concerning college. A more general reason for the student survey was to establish baseline information on students' perceptions about school outreach activities. Table 20 lists the schools that returned student surveys and provides the number of student respondents at each school.

Table 20
Distribution of Student Respondents by School

District	School	Number of Respondents	Percent
Laredo	Christen Middle School	565	13.5
Laredo	Martin High School	302	7.2
United	Salvador Garcia Middle School	384	9.2
United*	United South Middle School	155	3.7
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	257	6.2
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High School	308	7.4
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle School	419	10.0
Corpus Christi	Miller High School	680	16.3
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	276	6.6
Robstown	Seale Jr. High School	263	6.3
Robstown	Robstown High School	561	13.5
Total		4,170	100.0

*United South High School did not return any surveys.

Response rates for student surveys from participating schools and districts were reasonably high. Grade-level distributions are presented in Table 21. Additional analyses showed that respondents were nearly evenly distributed by gender—2,021 were male students (48.9 percent) and 2,109 were female (51.0 percent).

Table 21
Distribution of Student Respondents by Grade

Grade	Number of Respondents	Percent
6	900	21.8
7	742	18.0
8	502	12.2
9	672	16.1
10	586	14.2
11	423	10.2
12	303	7.3
Total	4128	100.0

Student Awareness of College

To assess student awareness of school outreach, students were asked two questions: “Have you received any information from your school about financial aid?” and “Have you received any other information about colleges/universities from your school?” The response patterns for these questions appear in Table 22. Overall, 32.4 percent of the student respondents received information about financial aid, and 40.9 percent received information about colleges and universities.

Table 22

**Responses to the Questions:
“Have you received any information from your school about financial aid?” and
“Have you received any other information about colleges/universities from your school?”**

Responses	Financial Aid		Other Information	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	1347	32.4	1703	40.9
No	1959	47.1	1776	42.7
Don't know/don't remember	854	20.5	681	16.4
Total	4160	100.0	4160	100.0

Table 23 presents student responses to these two questions sorted by grade level. As expected, students in the upper high school grades were more likely to have received outreach materials than students in grade 6. It is also likely that high school students were more conscious of receiving materials or attending outreach events, since they will soon make decisions about life beyond high school. As an example, 80 percent of the high school seniors that responded to the survey said they had received information from their schools about financial aid, and 82 percent said their schools had provided other kinds of information about college. In contrast, only 37.9 percent and 39.6 percent of sixth graders, respectively, received information about financial aid and information about college. While the vast majority of seniors received information about college from their schools this year, in future years, rising percentages of students in the lower grades should be answering, “yes” to these questions for the TGAP program to be successful.

Table 23

**Responses by Grade Level to the Questions:
“Have you received any information from your school about financial aid?” and
“Have you received any other information about colleges/universities from your school?”**

Grade	Received Financial Aid		Received Other Information	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6	338	37.9	356	39.6
7	211	28.5	206	27.9
8	116	23.2	165	33.1
9	137	20.4	182	27.2
10	135	23.1	270	46.1
11	157	37.5	259	62.0
12	239	79.4	245	81.9

Students were also asked if they had received college brochures or other information from a college or university, and if they had visited colleges or universities to learn more about how to prepare for college. Response patterns for these questions appear in Table 24. Overall, 39.5 percent said they received literature, and 35.3 percent of students reported visiting a college.

Table 24
Responses to the Question:
“Have you received college literature or visited a college?”

Responses	Received College Literature		Visited a College	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	1,643	39.5	1,469	35.3
No	2,518	60.5	2,693	64.7
Total	4,161	100.0	4,162	100.0

In Table 25, responses to these questions were disaggregated by grade. In general, as grade level increased, higher percentages of students reported receiving literature and visiting a college. Of responding seniors, 83 percent had received literature from a college or university, and 52 percent had visited a college or university. The percentage of eighth graders who reported visiting a college or university was surprisingly high (53.6 percent).

Table 25
Responses to the Question:
“Have you received any literature from a college or university, or have you visited a college or university?”

Grade	Received College Literature		Visited a College	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6	232	25.9	275	30.7
7	155	21.0	199	26.9
8	137	27.3	268	53.6
9	187	28.0	184	27.5
10	327	55.9	182	31.3
11	333	78.9	184	43.6
12	252	83.2	158	52.1

Finally, to assess preparedness for college, students were asked if they were taking courses that were part of the RHSP. Data in Table 26 show that overall, 49.1 percent of the students said they were taking such courses; 18 percent did not know.

Table 26

**Responses to the Question:
“Are you presently taking courses in the Recommended High School Program?”**

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	2042	49.1
No	1364	32.8
Don't Know	754	18.1
Total	4160	100.0

As shown in Table 27, about 70 percent of twelfth graders reported taking courses in the RHSP. As noted previously, a substantial number of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students also thought they were taking RHSP courses. Only 18 percent of sixth graders, for instance, thought they were taking RHSP courses. Nevertheless, the percentages were higher than they should have been, suggesting that these mistaken responses from sixth, seventh, and eighth graders possibly reflect a generic understanding of the term “Recommended High School Program.”

Table 27

**Responses by Grade Level to the Question:
“Are you presently taking courses that are part of the Recommended High School Program?”**

Grade	Number	Percent
6	153	17.6
7	222	30.0
8	232	46.3
9	415	62.2
10	439	75.2
11	347	82.4
12	210	69.5

In each of the previous five sections, student responses were sorted by grade for the variables—school information on financial aid and college in general, whether students had received literature from a college or visited one, and whether students were taking courses in the RHSP. In each case, the number of responses increased with increasing grade level, though the pattern was somewhat erratic for college visits. The relationships between grade and all five variables passed a chi-square test of significance with $p < .001$.

Student Perception of Parent Involvement

Students were asked, “Have your parents ever discussed college with you?” As shown in Table 28, nearly 70 percent said “yes,” and the percentage of affirmative responses increased by grade. About 85 percent of twelfth graders and 80 percent of eleventh graders said their parents discussed college with them, while only 61 percent of sixth graders reported having had such a discussion with their parents.

Table 28

**Responses by Grade Level to the Question:
“Have your parents ever discussed college with you?”**

Grade	Number	Percent
6	546	60.8
7	481	65.0
8	298	59.5
9	469	69.8
10	431	73.9
11	337	79.9
12	255	84.7

Students were also asked how frequently their parents helped them with their homework. As shown in Table 29, the majority of students said their parents helped either “once-in-a-while” (50.1 percent) or “never” (29.9 percent).

Table 29

**Responses to the Question:
“How often do your parents help you with your homework?”**

Response	Number	Percent
Always	266	6.4
Often	567	13.7
Once-in-a-while	2079	50.1
Never	1240	29.9
Total	4152	100.0

Interestingly, there was a disparity between students’ and parents’ perspectives on this issue. Sixty-eight percent of parent survey respondents said they helped their children with homework at least once a week, while only about 20 percent of students said that their parents helped them that often.

Students were also asked if their parents ever volunteered at their schools. Only 20 percent reported that their parents volunteered at their schools; 67 percent said their parents did not, and 13 percent said they did not know.

Student Expectations and Attitudes about Higher Education

To understand students’ expectations about higher education, they were asked what they planned to do after high school. The results appear in Table 30. Altogether, about 65 percent of student respondents indicated that they intend to acquire some kind of education after high school, including university, community college, and vocational school. Nearly half intended to go to a four-year university. Although this proportion is substantial, it is still considerably lower than the percentage of students who regarded college as very important in accomplishing what they wanted in life. (See Table 31.)

Table 30

**Responses to the Question:
“What do you plan to do when you leave high school?”**

Response	Number	Percent
Attend a four-year university	1972	48.3
Attend a junior- or community-college	655	16.0
Work	334	8.2
Join the military	299	7.3
Vocational school	66	1.6
Other/Don't know	755	18.5
Total	4081	100.0

Students were also asked, “If you do not plan to continue your education after high school, is it because you don’t believe you or your family can afford it?” Slightly more than 25 percent of student respondents indicated that insufficient funds was the reason they would not continue their education. Interestingly, a much larger percentage of students expressed doubts about paying for college compared to parents who responded to a similar question.

Importance Students Place on Higher Education

Another survey question related to students’ expectations concerning higher education asked, “How important do you think it is to have a college education to be able to do the things that you want in life?” Evaluators regarded this as a critically important question because students who think college is unimportant are less likely to exert the effort required to earn a college education.

Responses shown in Table 31 indicate that the overwhelming majority of the students in TGAP schools (96 percent) thought that attending college was important in achieving the lives they had imagined for themselves. Of those students, 7 percent believed that college was at least somewhat important, and the vast majority (88.7 percent) thought it was very important. These figures are promising and suggest that almost all students in TGAP schools value a college education.

Table 31

**Responses to the Question:
“How important do you think it is to have a college education
to be able to do the things you want in life?”**

Responses	Number	Percent
Very important	3685	88.7
Somewhat important	303	7.3
Not important	37	0.9
Don't know	128	3.1
Total	4153	100.0

Motivation to attend college did not increase with grade level. In fact, sixth grade had a highest percentage of students who thought college was very important (91.7 percent). Moreover, the motivation to attend college did not vary appreciably by race or ethnicity. Asian students had the lowest percentage

saying that college was very important (85.0 percent), and Latino students had the highest percentage (89.0 percent). However, the small differences among groups were not statistically significant.

In addition to motivation, the perceived ability to pay for college had no impact on student perceptions of the importance of attending college. Of the students who feared they could not afford college, 87 percent still said that it was very important. About 88 percent of those who did not express doubts about being able to afford college thought it was very important, but differences between the two groups were not statistically significant.

Other variables, in contrast to those mentioned above, *were* associated with the degree of importance students place on college. In Table 32, the degree of importance students place on college is cross-tabulated with relevant variables. Overall, higher percentages of students who had parents who discussed college, were female, received information from school, planned to attend a four-year university, and were taking the RHSP considered college as “very important.”

Table 32
Variables Associated with the Importance Students Place on College

Variable	Percent of Students Who Considered College “Very Important”
Parents have discussed college	93.1
Parents have not discussed college	78.6
Male	85.9
Female	91.5
Received college information from school	92.4
Did not receive college information from school	86.8
Plan to attend four year university	96.7
Plan to work	70.7
Is taking RHSP	91.0
Is not taking RHSP	87.9

In interpreting these results, the direction of causality is problematic. For instance, does taking courses in the RHSP convince students that college is very important for them, or does thinking that college is very important motivate them to take more rigorous courses? Put differently, would persuading more students to enroll in the RHSP increase the percentages that consider college very important? These data do not answer such questions.

It is also possible that students who plan to work after high school are simply rationalizing when they say that college is unimportant. It was not surprising to find that a smaller percentage of such students say that college is very important for their future plans, but would a smaller percentage of students say they planned to go to work after high school if they were persuaded that college would improve their ability to live a satisfying life? Again, these data do not provide a definitive answer.

The importance placed on college differed by gender. Males were somewhat less likely than females to consider college very important. This result is consistent with previous findings that male minority

students are less likely to try to excel in educational settings than their female counterparts.⁹ Of course, gender is not a variable over which TGAP has control, but there is an indication here that more work needs to be done with male students.

Implications for TGAP

First and foremost, students were more likely to say that college was very important if they had received college information from their schools. This implies that schools should increase their efforts to inform students about college opportunities. Second, students were 18 percent more likely to say that college was very important if their parents had discussed college. Thus, schools should also increase outreach to parents, particularly if the outreach activities facilitate parents talking to their children about college.

In some cases, student responses to survey questions did not reflect what was known to be true. For instance, 612 students in grades 6, 7, and 8 thought they were taking courses that were part of the RHSP. Also, when students said their schools had not provided them with information about college, they were possibly forgetting or ignoring outreach activities that had taken place. Nevertheless, student perceptions are an important measure of the extent to which schools succeed in reaching out to them. Though student perceptions may not always mirror reality, it is ultimately student perceptions that the TGAP project must change. Some measure of those perceptions at the beginning of the TGAP effort is useful in order to assess changes in perceptions in coming years.

TGAP Parent Outreach Activities

Outreach to parents took several forms. Often, parents were invited to school events at which presentations were made about specific TGAP areas of emphasis, such as AP courses or financial aid. Robstown ISD, for instance, used annual events such as Texas Public School Week to make presentations to parents about the TGAP program. Sixth grade students and parents attended a meeting at Ortiz Intermediate. A presentation at Seale Jr. High on preparing for college reached 50 parents of eighth graders. Robstown High School held an incoming freshman parent orientation. At the orientation, middle-school students and their parents heard presentations about the Texas RHSP; the ACT, SAT, and TASP tests; AP and Pre-AP courses; and financial aid including the Texas Grant, other grants and loans, and work-study opportunities. Similar orientations were offered to parents of incoming students in grades 6, 7, 8, and 9 in United ISD. For the most part, these were not new events created specifically to serve the purposes of the TGAP program but were existing events for which the traditional agenda was extended to include TGAP concerns.

Corpus Christi ISD took a different approach to parent outreach by inviting parents and students to individual meetings with counselors. Roughly the same subjects were addressed at these individual meetings that were addressed in the assemblies organized by Robstown ISD—the RHSP, AP and Pre-AP courses, college entrance exams, and financial aid.

A concern related to parent outreach was the number of parents who were actually contacted. Freshman orientation for parents and students in Robstown ISD reached about 77 students and their parents. In Corpus Christi ISD, 54 parents attended counseling sessions at Driscoll Middle School and Miller High School. These numbers represent fairly small percentages of the parents in participating schools. Percentages of parents exposed to outreach might be increased by using multiple notification techniques—posters in the community, for instance, and personal invitations where possible. It might also be possible to use public service announcements in the local print and electronic media, a method used by

⁹ See, for example, Ronald F. Ferguson and Helen F. Ladd, “How and Why Money Matters: An Analysis of Alabama Schools,” in *Holding Schools Accountable: Performance-based Reform in Education*, Helen F. Ladd, ed. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, pp. 265-298.

United ISD. The director of the Laredo POC initiated a program of distributing materials and talking to students and parents at football games.

In sum, the data gathered by the evaluators indicate that during the first year, school districts created the capacity to inform parents on areas of major concern in the TGAP Program. Parents who availed themselves of these opportunities received information about the need for students to take academically rigorous courses, the RHSP, Pre-AP and AP courses, requirements for college admission and placement, and opportunities for financial aid. An opportunity for capacity building in subsequent years will be finding ways to reach more parents.

The TGAP grant application indicates that parents should eventually be trained to make presentations to other parents and inform them in the areas of outreach discussed above. It is possible that through TGAP, some parents will attend state and national conferences that address parent outreach issues, as well as addressing the question of academic success for students in groups that are traditionally underserved by colleges. The evaluators encountered no activities in the first year in any of the TGAP districts that either trained parents in effective methods of outreach to other parents or provided opportunities for parents to attend state and national conferences. Only Project GRAD, one of the TGAP Partners, currently has in place programs that involve parents to this extent. United ISD, however, has made plans to carry out a neighborhood walk during the second year of the TGAP program to inform parents of school activities and to involve them more directly in their children's education.

The TGAP grant application also indicates that parents should be an active component of the TGAP task forces in participating school districts. The documents collected by evaluators, as well as discussions with TGAP task force members, indicate that there is room for improvement in this area. TGAP task forces in all of the districts are comprised predominantly of school administrators, counselors, and teachers. No more than two or three parents are included on any task force. In at least one instance, the parents that are listed on the task force roster are also teachers. In another, although a parent representative is included on the task force, the task force had only two meetings in the initial year. Parents were not present at group discussions with TGAP task force members conducted during site visits. Documents from United ISD indicate that district officials are aware of the need to involve parents and other community representatives on the TGAP task force and will make efforts in the second year to increase parent representation on the task force.

Parent Survey Results

To achieve the goals and objectives of the TGAP program, parents must play an important part. Parent attitudes toward higher education and expectations are among the most powerful predictors of the success or failure of their children in the education system. With this in mind, evaluators conducted a parent survey. During the first half of August 2000, 749 parents of students in TGAP schools participated in telephone interviews. The children of the surveyed parents were predominantly in grades 7, 8, and 9 in fall 2000. The parents receiving interviews were selected randomly from the rosters of all TGAP schools.

As Table 33 indicates, the households were overwhelmingly Hispanic. Almost 95 percent of the parent sample were Hispanic, consistent with TEA data indicating that about 92 percent of the students in TGAP schools are Hispanic.

Table 33
Race/Ethnicity of Respondents

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Black, Non-Hispanic	14	1.9
Asian/Asian-American	1	0.1
Hispanic	709	94.7
White, Non-Hispanic	21	2.8
Other	2	0.3
Don't Know/Refuse	2	0.3
Total	749	100.0

Information in Tables 34 and 35 show that parent respondents tended to be distributed more heavily in lower socioeconomic status categories. The most frequently identified income category was less than \$15,000 per year, and the most frequently identified education category was “less than high school.”

Table 34
Yearly Household Income

Income Category	Number	Percent
Less than \$15,000/year	279	37.2
\$15,000 - \$24,999/year	183	24.4
\$25,000 - \$34,999/year	102	13.6
\$35,000 - \$49,999/year	77	10.3
\$50,000 - \$75,000/year	56	7.5
More than \$75,000/year	10	1.3
Don't Know/Refuse	42	5.6
Total	749	100.0

Table 35
Parent's Highest Education Level

Education Level	Number	Percent
Less than high school	279	37.2
High school diploma or GED	253	33.8
Some college	128	17.1
College degree	68	9.1
Post-college education	17	2.3
Don't know/Refuse	4	0.5
Total	749	100.0

The majority of respondents (533 or 71.2 percent) preferred to be interviewed in English. The remainder chose to be interviewed in Spanish. Half of those interviewed (373 or 49.8 percent), however, indicated that they spoke Spanish in the home. Another 334 respondents (44.6 percent) indicated that they spoke English in the home, and 41 (5.5 percent) said that they spoke both English and Spanish at home.

Communication Between Parents and Their Children about Higher Education

Items related to parents' expectations for their children's education are presented in Table 36. A large majority of respondents (80.5 percent) reported that they had spoken with their children about what they planned to do once they finished high school, and even more (86.9 percent) said that their children had expressed interest in going to college. Of the parents who indicated they had spoken with their children about post-high-school plans, more than 90 percent (91.4 percent) said their children had expressed interest in attending college. Almost 95 percent said they expected their children to attend college. Only 16 parents did not expect their children to attend college, and of those, 6 said that it was because college was too expensive.

Table 36
Parents' Expectations for Their Children's Education

Measure	Number	Percent
Parent has talked to child about post-high-school plans	603	80.5
Child has expressed interest in going to college	651	86.9
Expect child to go to college	707	94.4

Parents were also asked what kind of college they wanted their children to attend. Results appearing in Table 37 show that more than half of respondents want their children to attend a four-year college inside or outside the state of Texas. Another quarter indicated that they wanted their children to attend a community college. The relatively high number choosing the community college option may explain why many parents in the sample did not think expense was a barrier to sending a child to college. Overall, these parents seemed relatively knowledgeable about higher education and may understand that community colleges provide an affordable option, even for low-income families.

Table 37
Responses to the Question:
"Which type of college do you want your child to attend?"

Type of College	Number	Percent
Community/Junior College	191	25.5
Four year college in Texas	344	45.9
Four year college outside of Texas	32	4.3
Other	23	3.1
Undecided	102	13.6
Don't Know/Refuse	19	2.5
Total	711	100.0

College attendance rates for low-income, minority children are low, and one of the possible explanations is that parents and students do not think that college as an option. One might expect this to be particularly true for this sample of parents because the majority do not speak English in the home. In such cases, the family might be isolated from the mainstream of American discourse about college. On the contrary, the parent respondents in this sample were aware of college as an option, and they appeared motivated to send their children to college. Furthermore, the relatively low household incomes for this sample did not lower parents' expectation that their children will attend college. Although some parents did not expect their children to attend college, it was not, for the most part, because college was too expensive.

Communication Between Parents and Schools about Higher Education

TGAP aims to increase communication between parents and schools, so it was important to determine how schools contacted parents with information about curriculum and college opportunities. In the survey, parents were asked if they received information from their children's schools about college opportunities, scholarships and financial aid, and the RHSP (RHSP). They were also asked if they had attended a college fair and if they had visited a college or university to familiarize their children with college environments. The parent outreach results appear in Table 38.

Table 38
Form of Outreach to Parents

Form of Outreach	Number	Percent
Received information from school about RHSP	198	26.4
Received info from school about college admissions/costs	145	19.4
Received info from school about financial aid	113	15.1
Attended a college fair	85	11.3
Visited a college or university	239	31.9

Results indicate there is considerable room for improvement in parent outreach activities. Relatively small numbers of parents received information from their children's schools about college opportunities, requirements, and financial aid, and even smaller numbers said they attended a college fair. This probably reflects the fact that this sample includes parents of younger students. Traditionally, efforts to inform children and parents about college requirements and opportunities have focused on high-school students. This sample includes many pre-high-school children and parents. One of the anticipated benefits of the TGAP program is that it will extend these efforts into middle schools and junior high schools, and, in some cases, even into elementary schools.

One of the key measures of TGAP program success in coming years will be the degree to which the percentages in Table 38 increase. The fact that more than a quarter of parents of children who had not yet begun high school had heard of the RHSP probably indicates that efforts of schools to communicate in this area have had some effect. These areas of outreach represent opportunities for both the schools and the POCs to increase parent awareness.

Steps Parents Have Taken to Make Higher Education a Reality

Nearly a third of the respondents (235 or 31.4 percent) indicated that they had begun to save for college. Half of these respondents said they began to save for college when their children were nine years old or younger. Nearly a quarter of parents (23.2 percent) were aware of the Texas Tomorrow Fund, but only about 3 percent claimed to be putting money into the fund.

While only about 11 percent of parents reported attending a college fair, nearly 32 percent said they had visited a college or university campus to better prepare their children for college. This relatively high level of college visitation indicates that many parents are interested in higher education for their children and want to introduce them to a college environment. This is another indication that TGAP parents think about college as an option for their children and are motivated to make college a reality.

Implications for Enhancing Parental Involvement

Parent involvement is one of the primary objectives of the state's TGAP effort. Parental involvement is envisioned as a key means of motivating middle- and high-school students to prepare for success in higher education while they are still in school. The state GEAR UP application identified a number of

parent involvement dimensions. The first-year student survey results confirmed the wisdom of this emphasis. Students who indicated that their parents had talked to them about college were more than 18 percent more likely to say that college was very important than students whose parents had not discussed college with them.

In year one, hiring delays hampered parent outreach to some degree. United ISD did not hire the TGAP coordinator until mid-year, and Robstown and Laredo ISDs did not select TGAP coordinators until the end of the 1999-2000 school year. Laredo POC did not have a director until the end of the school year. With key positions now filled, parent outreach should be a strong focus for TGAP during the second year.

Evaluators offer the following suggestions for the improvement of parent outreach:

- Build more active and representative TGAP task forces. Task forces offer one effective means for involving parents; however, the task forces do not exist in some districts. In others, they do not include parent representation. In still others, the task forces do not meet very often, or they are grafted onto a pre-existing committee for which TGAP is only one of many concerns.
- Explore more active, innovative means of reaching parents. Contacting parents via forms sent home with children may not be effective unless it is coupled with other methods of getting parents' attention. College fairs and other kinds of parent outreach that take place in schools are good ways of conveying information, but the critical variable is the effectiveness with which parents are made aware of these opportunities. Active forms of contact in which someone communicates directly with parents, such as telephone calls, or Project GRAD's "Walk for Success" to students' homes, and other innovative means of notifying parents, will probably result in greater parent response.
- Organize parents' auxiliary groups to assist in contacting other parents about early preparation for college and about information on college opportunities available from schools. Such groups can yield substantial dividends.
- Continue efforts undertaken in the first year to include children in earlier grades and their parents in college awareness activities.

Gaining Business and Community Support

Texas Business and Education Coalition Activities

As a TGAP partner, the Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC) played a major role in encouraging students to pursue the RHSP. TBEC worked with Chambers of Commerce and other business entities to expand Texas Scholars and recognized students as Texas Scholars if they completed the required RHSP coursework. More specific information about TBEC's activities at the sites follows.

Corpus Christi ISD

GEAR UP funds made it possible for TBEC to work with the local Chamber of Commerce to rejuvenate Texas Scholars. The Chamber and TBEC helped to create an employer-led steering committee comprised of many of the 25 largest employers in the region, including Southwestern Bell and Central Power and Lighting. This steering committee met six times throughout the course of the year to work with the school district to reestablish Texas Scholars.

TBEC hosted a kick-off reception with the superintendent and 15 major employers to outline the Texas Scholars program and the GEAR UP project. In collaboration with the Junior League and Del Mar Community College, the steering committee recruited more than 200 employer presenters to talk with 122 classes of eighth graders about the importance of completing the RHSP. At graduation, TBEC and Southwestern Bell recognized the Texas Scholar graduates for completing the RHSP by presenting each with a Texas Scholar medallion.

Robstown ISD

During the 1999-2000 school year, TBEC assisted a local college and a local Rotary Club with 13 presentations to eighth grade students about Texas Scholars. Combined, these presentations reached more than 300 eighth graders.

Laredo ISD and United ISD

Prior to the GEAR UP grant, Martin High School (Laredo ISD) had been a pilot school for Texas Scholars. In 1999, more than 80 percent of their graduates had completed the RHSP to become Texas Scholars. For the GEAR UP grant, TBEC planned to expand the Texas Scholars program district-wide in Laredo ISD and United ISD. In collaboration with the Laredo Chamber of Commerce, TBEC established a local steering committee of five businesses to implement Texas Scholars. TBEC presented the Texas Scholars program to a variety of education and business groups. The education groups included Region One ESC, district administrators, Laredo ISD and United ISD middle school and high school counselors, Laredo Community College, and TAMIU. The business groups were the Chamber of Commerce Education Committee, Laredo Morning Times, Laredo Women's Club, Human Resources Association, Hotel-Motel Association, Time Warner, and the H.E.B. grocery store chain. The ultimate goal is to recruit 100 volunteers to present the Texas Scholars program to 1500 eighth-grade students in the two districts combined.

TBEC has also worked with TAMIU to change three admissions policies. First, TAMIU will add a question to its entrance application on whether applicants have completed the RHSP. Second, TAMIU will have its recruiters promote completion of the RHSP to all applicants in their service area. Third, TAMIU will consider either immediately guaranteeing admission to all students who complete the RHSP or raising its minimum entry requirements to the RHSP by 2005 or 2006.

TGAP Task Forces

Each TGAP district must have a task force or advisory committee composed of educators, parents, and community members to guide implementation of the GEAR UP project. The TGAP task forces are critically important to the TGAP effort, representing perhaps the most important channel through which the community can exercise buy-in to the TGAP project and its goals. To a great extent, the sustainability of TGAP after federal funding expires will depend upon the value the community places on it.

To achieve effectiveness, task forces must have the following characteristics:

- *Inclusive membership.* The task forces should have strong representation of parents, community organizations, and the business community in terms of both absolute numbers and percentages. Having only a small percentage of such members on the decision-making body may create the perception that districts are not serious about seeking community input.
- *TGAP as a central focus.* Regardless of structure, the task forces should focus on TGAP, planning a TGAP strategy, monitoring progress, and ultimately achieving TGAP goals. If the task force is grafted onto a pre-existing committee, it might be wise to create a subcommittee as the actual TGAP task force or to have the group meet in separate sessions as the TGAP task force.
- *Real input into decision-making.* If parents and community and business leaders are to buy into TGAP and its goals, they must feel that their input makes a difference. They must make meaningful decisions about TGAP resources, programs, and policies. Otherwise, community and business leaders may lose interest.
- *Frequent meetings.* An effective task force must meet often enough to create policies and oversee implementation.

TGAP task forces were a central component of the evaluation of capacity building. The task forces were meant to include school district administrators, staff, teachers, parents, members of community organizations, and business people. To assess the extent to which task forces with the characteristics listed above were in place, the evaluation team visited school districts and met with TGAP task force members; carried out phone interviews of task force members when group discussions could not be arranged during site visits; and collected task force rosters, meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes. Based on existing evidence, none of the TGAP districts had a task force with all four desirable characteristics. In some cases, TGAP was simply added to the responsibilities of an already existing committee or advisory group. In other cases, a new group was formed, but none had much business or community involvement.

One district came closest to the task force goals. The district's task force, which was constituted fairly early in the year, meets monthly. The task force is a new body created specifically to oversee TGAP effort, and the task force focuses exclusively on TGAP. Members were familiar with the major goals and objectives of the TGAP project, and members indicated that the task force had meaningful input into district decisions about TGAP resources and policy. One limitation of the district's task force is its lack of inclusiveness. Of the 25 task-force members, only three were listed as community members—two parents and one business representative. Furthermore, the two parents were also teachers in district schools. There were no members of community groups such as the local chamber of commerce or service organizations such as the Rotary or Kiwanis Clubs. District representatives explained the lack of business representation on the task force by saying, "there are no businesses..." This is an exaggeration, but it is a community with few large business enterprises. All-in-all, however, this district has been conscientious in creating a TGAP task force that meets most of the requirements envisioned in the TGAP application, and they should be able to become more inclusive with creativity and assistance from TGAP partners.

Another district did not have a single TGAP task force, but had task forces at each of its participating schools. These task forces were existing planning committees in place prior to the inception of TGAP. The committees meet monthly, but TGAP is not their primary focus. In fact, according to meeting agendas, TGAP is not always discussed. Evaluation team members met with most of the members of the school planning committees, and task force members were knowledgeable about TGAP goals and objectives. All agreed that the committees had meaningful input into district decisions about TGAP programs and resources. However, the lack of parents, community organizations, and business representatives was a shortcoming. Two parents sit on the committees (presumably one for each school), but they were not present during discussions with the evaluation team. No mention was made of members who represented community organizations.

In a third district, the TGAP task force has eight members, six school employees, one parent representative, and one community business member. This particular task force met only two times during the first year of TGAP.

In a fourth district, the TGAP task force includes only general members, and committees that represent particular schools. There was no evidence of regularly scheduled task-force meetings, and no agendas or minutes were available. The membership of the general task force was composed entirely of school district employees. Correspondence between the TGAP coordinator and principals of participating schools indicated that parents should be included on site committees in the second year, although their participation would be less influential because the TGAP budget for the second year had already been finalized.

In the fifth district, it was unclear whether a TGAP task force existed in the first year.

In sum, a fundamental assumption of TGAP is that success depends upon enlisting community support. The TGAP task force is central in the process of involving the community in planning and carrying out TGAP. The results of the first-year evaluation indicated that parent, business, and community representation on the task forces is an area in need of improvement during the second implementation year.

Baseline Data

Changes in student and school performance will be examined over the course of the TGAP project. For year one, data establish a baseline for student and school comparisons in subsequent project years.

Method

Data Sources

Baseline data for the participating districts and schools were derived from two primary sources: (a) the Texas Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and (b) the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). TEA designed and oversees the PEIMS and AEIS data collection systems. TEA systematically collects and compiles standard information each year to produce a comprehensive PEIMS database that provides comparative statewide statistics for schools, including campus and district data on student and staff demographics and on student attendance and program participation. Data from the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) are combined with PEIMS to allow complete analyses of school performance.

AEIS includes a wide range of information on student performance in each school and district. Performances on a number of indicators (e.g., criterion-referenced tests, attendance rates, dropout rates) are disaggregated by ethnicity, special education, and low-income status. AEIS reports also provide extensive information on school and district staff, finance, programs, and demographics. Evaluators used both student- and campus-level AEIS data to create the baseline data for the TGAP evaluation. State-level data permit selected contrasts between TGAP schools and state averages.

Peer-Group Comparisons

Baseline data provide student and school performance levels prior to TGAP and help to assess TGAP effects on the achievement and educational success of students and campuses over time. Furthermore, each campus has a corresponding peer group composed of 40 campuses that have similar student ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Peer groups are based on demographics and not performance, but it is important to stress that student demographics correlate strongly with performance at the state level. Campus performance of TGAP schools can be compared to that of their peer groups to explore the effects of TGAP on student achievement and on campus educational success.

Student Cohort Analyses

The evaluation will also track students who transfer in and out of TGAP schools. Each student cohort may be divided into three subgroups: (a) continuing students who attended TGAP schools throughout the entire project, (b) outgoing transfer students who initially attended a TGAP school but later moved to another “control” school, and (c) incoming transfer students who initially attended another “control” school but later enrolled in a TGAP school. Assuming that their numbers are sufficient, these subgroups make it possible to examine the effects of one, two, three or four years of TGAP participation on academic performance and course completion in comparison to students participating in TGAP throughout all five years of the project.

Student Demographic Data

As shown in Table 39, student demographic data from PEIMS span from the year in which each cohort was in second grade to the anchor year (1999–2000). These data permit evaluators to determine the former LEP status and low-income status for students who currently may not be identified as such. Older students in middle and high school are less likely to report this information, and matched records from previous school years may provide a more accurate picture of student needs. Thus, data cover five years

for cohort 1 (1994-1995 to 1998-1999); six years for cohort 2 (1993-1994 to 1998-1999); and seven years for cohort 3 (1992-1993 to 1998-1999).

Table 39
Timelines for Student Cohort Groups:
Data Collection Before and After the Anchor Year of 1999-2000

School Year	1992 1993	1993 1994	1994 1995	1995 1996	1996 1997	1997 1998	1998 1999	1999 2000	2000 2001	2001 2002	2002 2003	2003 2004
Cohort 1's Grade Level*	-	-	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Cohort 2's Grade Level**	-	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Cohort 3's Grade Level	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	-

Note. The shaded cells represent the anchor year, 1999-2000.

*Cohort 1 will be the first TGAP participants to take EXPLORE in grade 8.

**Cohort 2 is scheduled to graduate at the end of the TGAP project.

Student Performance Data

For each cohort and subgroup, student performance data for three years (1997-1998, 1998-1999, and 1999-2000) constitute the baseline for the project. Cohort 1 (seventh graders) will be the first to take EXPLORE in the eighth grade. Grade 7 is also the anchor grade for reporting school dropout and completion rates. Cohort 2 (eighth graders) will be seniors in the final year of the TGAP project (2003-04). Evaluators will track this group to estimate the impact of the project on rate of school completion and type of diploma completed. Cohort 3 (ninth graders), which is due to graduate one year before the end of the TGAP project, will provide a baseline for comparison with Cohorts 1 and 2, both within TGAP schools and among peer-group campuses.

Demographics

Student Characteristics

As Tables 40a and 40b show the vast majority of students at TGAP schools are Hispanic and economically disadvantaged. On average, 93.1 percent of the students were Hispanic, 2.1 percent African American, and 4.5 percent White. By contrast, the state average is 39 percent Hispanic, 14 percent African American, and 44 percent White. Peer-group campuses have slightly more White students on average and slightly fewer African American students than the state or TGAP campuses.

The average proportion of economically disadvantaged students across all 14 TGAP schools is 77.1 percent, which is comparable to the average of 80.6 percent at the peer-group campuses, but the proportion is considerably higher than the state average of 50 percent. Student mobility rates for TGAP schools, their peer-group campuses, and the state are all around 20 percent. Peer-group campuses have slightly higher percentages of economically disadvantaged and mobile students.

Table 40a
Students' Ethnic Characteristics: TGAP Schools and Peer-Group Campuses

District	School	TGAP Schools			Peer-Group Campus		
		Afr Amer	Hisp	White	Afr Amer	Hisp	White
Laredo	Christen Middle	0.1	98.3	1.5	0.1	98.5	1.2
Laredo	Martin High	0.1	98.2	1.6	0.2	97.8	1.9
United	Garcia Middle	0.1	98.8	0.7	0.1	98.7	1.0
United	United South Middle	0.0	97.8	1.8	0.1	98.1	1.5
United	United South High	0.1	98.8	1.0	0.4	97.1	2.3
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	0.0	95.7	3.5	0.1	96.5	3.1
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	0.0	95.9	4.1	0.3	96.2	3.2
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	12.1	80.6	7.1	6.6	82.0	10.3
Corpus Christi	Miller High	11.5	81.3	6.5	6.1	83.5	9.3
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	0.7	96.8	2.3	0.2	97.6	2.0
Robstown	Seale Jr. High	0.9	98.1	0.9	0.1	98.4	1.3
Robstown	Robstown High	1.2	97.4	1.4	0.3	97.0	2.4
Alice	Adams Middle	0.8	85.8	13.1	1.0	86.1	12.4
Alice	Alice High	1.1	80.2	18.1	1.4	80.5	17.4
Group Average		2.1	93.1	4.5	1.2	93.4	5.0
State Average		14	39	44			

Source: 1999 TEA AEIS and Comparable Improvement Reports

Table 40b

Students' Socioeconomic Characteristics: TGAP Schools vs. Peer-Group Campuses

District	School	TGAP Schools		Peer-Group Campuses	
		Econ Disadv	Mobile	Econ Disadv	Mobile
Laredo	Christen Middle	92.4	18.4	91.0	19.4
Laredo	Martin High	92.2	22.0	83.4	23.4
United	Garcia Middle	99.0	21.7	92.1	20.2
United	United South Middle	88.8	14.7	90.0	19.0
United	United South High	75.0	23.3	82.4	23.9
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	71.6	11.7	86.1	18.2
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	72.3	11.6	78.3	22.9
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	75.1	33.6	78.2	23.0
Corpus Christi	Miller High	61.9	31.3	61.6	24.7
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	91.4	12.2	89.1	18.6
Robstown	Seale Jr. High	84.6	21.3	90.3	20.3
Robstown	Robstown High	77.6	21.1	81.6	23.7
Alice	Adams Middle	55.0	16.7	68.9	17.0
Alice	Alice High	42.7	13.5	55.5	19.9
Group Average		77.1	19.5	80.6	21.0
State Average		50	22		

Source: 1999 TEA AEIS and Comparable Improvement Reports

As shown in Table 41, TGAP students' participation rates in bilingual or ESL programs and special education are only somewhat higher than the state averages. On average, 15.2 percent of the students at TGAP schools receive bilingual or ESL services, and 14.5 percent participate in special education. The state averages 12 percent for both types of programs. Participation rates, however, vary greatly by district and school.

Table 41
TGAP Students' Program Participation

District	School	Percent Bilingual or ESL	Percent Special Education
Laredo	Christen Middle	27.6	18.5
Laredo	Martin High	24.9	14.4
United	Garcia Middle	59.8	20.5
United	United South Middle	31.9	16.7
United	United South High	16.1	11.2
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	0.4	16.7
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	0	11.7
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	15.3	18.8
Corpus Christi	Miller High	20.4	15.7
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	3.3	16.6
Robstown	Seale Jr. High	3.1	14.5
Robstown	Robstown High	3.2	9.3
Alice	Adams Middle	4.4	9.6
Alice	Alice High	2.4	9.1
Group Average*		15.2	14.5
State Average		12.1	12.1

Source: 1999 TEA AEIS and Comparable Improvement Reports

*Group Average is a simple average of campus values.

Fiscal data included in Appendix I show that TGAP schools spent roughly the same per student amount on instruction as the state overall, but the percentage of total dollars spent on instruction was lower for TGAP schools (63.6 percent) compared to the state (71.3 percent). TGAP schools had an average tax rate comparable to that of the state, but their average district wealth, slightly more than \$104,000, was significantly lower than the state average of more than \$190,000.

Teacher Characteristics

Teachers at TGAP schools, as shown in Table 42, are more likely to belong to a minority group (more than 75 percent) than teachers across the state as a whole (25 percent). In most other categories, however, TGAP teachers are comparable to the state: 8 percent in TGAP schools are beginning teachers compared to 7.7 percent for the state, and TGAP teachers average 11.0 years of teaching experience versus a state average of 11.8 years.

Table 42

Teachers' Characteristics at TGAP Schools

District	School	Percent Minority Teachers	Percent Beginning Teachers	Average Teacher Experience
Laredo	Christen Middle	96.4	5.5	12.8
Laredo	Martin High	87.5	6.7	12.9
United	Garcia Middle	82.4	17.6	7.1
United	United South Middle	84.0	12.7	6.6
United	United South High	86.7	9.9	8.2
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	83.0	7.3	12.6
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	83.2	3.1	13.8
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	67.9	7.7	10.6
Corpus Christi	Miller High	52.5	2.6	12.5
Robstown	Seale Jr. High	70.3	6.4	10.1
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	80.8	11.2	11.2
Robstown	Robstown High	57.4	4.5	12.4
Alice	Adams Middle	66.8	10.4	11.6
Alice	Alice High	58.6	6.9	11.0
Group Average*		76.8	8.0	11.0
State Average		25.0	7.7	11.8

Source: 1999 TEA AEIS Reports

Performance Measures

TAAS scores are an important part of the Texas school accountability ratings. For reading, mathematics, and all tests combined, the percentage of students in each student group passing the test is one factor used to calculate campus accountability ratings. In addition to passing rates, the Texas Learning Index (TLI) is calculated for TAAS reading and mathematics tests to indicate how far a student's performance is above or below the passing standard, as opposed to a "raw score" that only indicates how many items were answered correctly.¹⁰ The TLI is used to determine student progress from one year to the next. Within limitations, if the score in the current year is the same as the score from the previous year, the student has demonstrated one year of progress. If the TLI score rises, then the student has made more than one year's academic progress. Similarly, if the score declines, the student has made less than one year's learning gain.

Reading and Mathematics TAAS Tests

Tables 43a and 43b present information on student performance in reading and mathematics as measured by TAAS. In reading (Table 43a), the average passing rate for students in TGAP schools increased slightly from 77 percent in 1998 to 79 percent in 1999, with TLI scores of approximately 75 percent for both years. The student performance pattern was comparable for the peer-group campuses. In mathematics (Table 43b), the average passing rate at TGAP schools increased from 73 percent in 1998 to 79 percent in 1999, and TLI scores remained around 75 for both years. Again, the peer-group campuses

¹⁰ TEA web site <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/tli.htm>, January 16, 2001.

had a similar student achievement pattern.¹¹ It should be noted that while the student populations are relatively homogeneous in ethnic makeup, there is wide variation in student performance among the TGAP schools.

Table 43a
Percentages Passing the Reading TAAS Test

District	School	TGAP Schools				Peer-Group Campuses			
		% Passing		TLI Value		% Passing		TLI Value	
		1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999
Laredo	Christen Middle	68	72	69	73	70	75	70	73
Laredo	Martin High	74	73	74	75	80	80	78	77
United	Garcia Middle	52	56	64	69	66	73	68	72
United	United South Middle	76	78	74	76	72	78	71	74
United	United South High	73	73	77	76	81	82	78	77
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	94	93	80	79	78	81	72	75
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	84	93	77	80	83	83	79	77
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	80	75	74	74	74	78	72	74
Corpus Christi	Miller High	83	86	79	78	83	80	78	77
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	86	88	79	78	72	77	71	74
Robstown	Seale Jr. High	76	74	72	70	69	75	69	73
Robstown	Robstown High	79	77	77	77	82	81	78	77
Alice	Adams Middle	76	86	73	75	81	84	71	75
Alice	Alice High	79	85	71	76	84	87	72	78
Group Average*		77	79	74	75	77	80	73	75

Source: TEA AEIS Reports, TEA Student Assessment Division Reports.

* Group Average is a simple average of campus values.

¹¹The 1998 TAAS passing rates are from the 1998 AEIS Report. In the 1999 AEIS Report, 1998 TAAS passing rates were recomputed to include special education students (not included in passing rate calculations in 1998), resulting in slightly different passing percentages from those reported in the 1998 AEIS Report.

Table 43b
Percentages Passing the Mathematics TAAS Test

District	School	TGAP Schools				Peer-group campuses			
		% Passing		TLI Value		% Passing		TLI Value	
		1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999
Laredo	Christen Middle	76	78	73	74	73	79	72	74
Laredo	Martin High	66	74	71	73	70	77	74	74
United	United South Middle	74	83	73	76	77	83	73	74
United	Garcia Middle	67	66	70	72	68	78	71	73
United	United South High	64	66	74	73	70	77	74	75
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	90	94	78	78	81	86	73	75
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	71	80	73	77	75	77	75	75
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	75	82	73	75	76	79	72	73
Corpus Christi	Miller High	71	74	73	73	69	73	73	73
Robstown	Ortiz Intermediate	87	92	77	79	73	81	72	74
Robstown	Seale Jr. High	72	80	73	72	70	78	71	73
Robstown	Robstown High	66	77	71	74	72	77	74	75
Alice	Adams Middle	76	86	73	76	82	85	73	76
Alice	Alice High	69	75	70	72	75	82	71	74
Group Average*		73	79	73	75	74	79	73	74

Source: TEA AEIS Reports, TEA Student Assessment Division Reports

* Group Average is a simple average of campus values

Advanced Courses

As Table 44 shows, TGAP schools surpassed their peer-group campuses and the state averages with respect to the percentage of students completing and receiving credit for advanced courses, such as Pre-Calculus, AP English, and Honors Chemistry I.¹² More than 20 percent of TGAP students completed advanced courses in both 1997 and 1998, compared to peer group and state averages that fell slightly below 20 percent.

Attendance and Dropout Rates

Student attendance averaged about 92 percent at the TGAP schools, 93 percent at their peer-group campuses, and 95 percent across the state. It should be noted, however, that the inclusion of elementary schools boosts the state average. Dropout rates showed a reverse pattern. The dropout rate for TGAP schools declined somewhat from 4.1 percent in 1998 to 2.5 percent in 1999, but these figures exceeded the average dropout rates for the peer-group campuses (1.8 and 2.0, respectively) and the state average of 1.6 percent for both years. (See Table 44.)

¹² This indicator is based on a count of the students who complete and receive credit for at least one advanced academic course in grades 9-12. Districts report course completion information through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) at the end of the school year. TEA designates which courses are advanced and lists them at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/2000/glossary.html#appendc>.

Table 44

Advanced Course Completion, Attendance, and Dropout Rates

District	School	Percent Completing Advanced Courses		Attendance Rate		Dropout Rate	
		1997	1998	1997	1998	1997	1998
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	29	18	93.5	94.5	3.8	0.0
Alice	Alice High	22	20	90.7	90.4	3.0	2.2
Corpus Christi	Miller High	11	26	87.9	87.0	7.0	4.3
Robstown	Robstown High	31	18	91.3	91.6	3.2	2.7
Laredo	Martin High	19	24	95.3	94.0	4.6	3.6
United	United South High	29	27	92.8	91.9	2.7	2.2
Group Average*		24	22	91.9	91.6	4.1	2.5
Peer Group*		15	16	93.2	93.4	1.8	2.0
State Average**		18	19	95.2	95.3	1.6	1.6

Source: TEA AEIS Reports

* Simple Average

** State Average includes Elementary, normally higher than high schools

College Entrance Exams

As shown in Table 45, the percentage of students at TGAP schools who took college entrance exams increased from 53 percent in 1997 to 57 percent in 1998, while peer-group campuses declined from 56 to 53 percent. Both TGAP schools and their peer-group campuses fell consistently below the percentages for the state, which exceeded 60 percent in both years. Furthermore, the percentage of students at TGAP schools and peer-group campuses who scored above the state-established criterion on the examinations was well below the state average of 27 percent.

The 1997 and 1998 ACT averages for TGAP schools and their peer-group campuses were similar. The average ACT score was 17.2 for TGAP schools and 17.6 for peer-group campuses in 1997, and 17.5 for both campus groups in 1998. These averages were below the state average of 20 in both years. TGAP schools averaged 857 on the SAT in 1997 and 886 in 1998, while peer-group campuses had a somewhat higher average in 1997 (865), but a considerably lower average in 1998 (849). Average SAT scores for both campus groups were consistently lower than the state average of 992.

Table 45
College Entrance Examinations

District	School	Percent Taking Exams		Percent Over Criterion		ACT Average		SAT Average	
		1997	1998	1997	1998	1997	1998	1997	1998
Laredo	Martin High	36	37	5	4	16.4	16.5	836	820
United	United South High	36	32	5	4	17.4	18.3	801	799
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	63	79	5	11	17.6	18.4	834	868
Corpus Christi	Miller High	45	48	11	9	16.5	17.0	843	851
Robstown	Robstown High	67	66	7	3	16.9	17.1	856	961
Alice	Alice High	68	77	12	15	18.3	18.3	969	1019
Group Average*		53	57	8	8	17.2	17.6	857	886
Peer Group*		56	53	7	6	17.5	17.5	865	849
State Average		64	62	27	27	20.1	20.3	992	992

Source. TEA AEIS reports.

Studies by the publishers of the ACT and SAT (among others) indicate a positive correlation between completing advanced courses and scoring well on the examinations. Interestingly, these schools do not follow this pattern. While TGAP schools have somewhat higher percentages of students completing advanced courses, their average scores on the ACT and the SAT were slightly lower than those of their peer groups and considerably lower than the state average.

TAAS Performance by Student Cohort Groups

When TEA initiated the TGAP project, evaluators compiled performance data for three cohorts: seventh graders, eighth graders, and ninth graders in the 1999-2000 school year. For each student cohort, evaluators gathered additional TAAS data for those students who had been enrolled in the districts before TGAP began (the 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 school years). TAAS information was gathered on students in the seventh grade cohort, for example, who attended both fifth and sixth grades in the district (although not necessarily the same school for those two years). Tables 46a and 46b present TAAS data for those specific students. Information shows the 1998 and 1999 TAAS passing rates, TLI scores, and percent of students mastering all TAAS objectives for the reading and mathematics tests.

Table 46a

Performance of Seventh Grade Cohort on TAAS Reading Tests

District	Number of Students Matched from Year to Year	Percent Passing		Percent Mastering All Objectives		TLI Values	
		1998 5th	1999 6th	1998 5th	1999 6th	1998 5th	1999 6th
Laredo	285	76.5	72.6	28.8	18.9	80.7	78.8
United	224	74.1	79.0	15.6	22.3	77.9	81.0
Jim Hogg County	65	90.8	92.3	27.7	32.3	83.1	84.9
Corpus Christi	149	83.2	74.5	24.8	18.1	80.8	78.3
Robstown	216	86.1	94.9	30.1	28.7	82.7	85.1
Group Average*		82.1	82.6	25.4	24.1	81.0	81.6
State Average**		85	84	39	35	83.7	84.3

Table 46b

Performance of Seventh Grade Cohort on TAAS Mathematics Tests

District	Number of Students Matched from Year to Year	Percent Passing		Percent Mastering All Objectives		TLI Values	
		1998 5th	1999 6th	1998 5th	1999 6th	1998 5th	1999 6th
Laredo	149	79.9	75.7	22.5	12.4	77.6	77.0
United	216	88.0	94.9	27.6	19.8	80.5	83.3
Jim Hogg County	285	85.5	81.0	30.1	8.0	79.5	78.4
Corpus Christi	224	82.3	87.5	27.2	12.1	78.4	80.3
Robstown	65	95.1	93.4	31.1	6.6	81.8	81.2
Group Average*		86.2	86.5	27.7	11.8	79.6	80.0
State Average**		85	86	36	25	80.7	81.2

Source: Analysis of Individual Student Data (Note: Alice ISD is not included in this table).

* Group Average is based on student-level calculations.

** TEA Student Assessment Division Reports (passing and mastering reported in whole numbers only).

In reading, the TLI values and the average percentage of seventh-grade cohort students *passing* TAAS were slightly below the state average; however, the gap between TGAP schools and the state average was much wider with respect to the percentage of students *mastering* all objectives. In mathematics, the percentage of TGAP students who passed TAAS was slightly higher than the state average, and the TLI scores were consistent with the state. Again, a gap existed between the percentage of TGAP students who mastered all objectives and the percentage of students throughout the state who did so.

Tables 47a and 47b show similar trends for the eighth-grade cohort. Differences in passing rates and TLI values between TGAP schools and the state were about the same. Data for the ninth-grade cohort shown in Tables 48a and 48b reveal similar student achievement patterns.

Table 47a

Performance of Eighth Grade Cohort on TAAS Reading Tests

District	Number of Students Matched from Year to Year	Percent Passing		Percent Mastering All Objectives		TLI Values	
		1998 6th	1999 7th	1998 6th	1999 7th	1998 6th	1999 7th
Laredo	304	60.5	69.7	10.9	30.9	73.4	75.0
United	329	59.1	67.6	11.5	34.2	73.1	75.6
Jim Hogg County	68	91.2	85.3	36.8	57.4	84.9	84.3
Corpus Christi	163	74.2	75.5	13.5	36.2	77.7	78.1
Robstown	192	89.1	83.9	23.4	42.7	84.2	82.1
Group Average*		74.8	76.4	19.2	40.3	78.7	79.0
State Average**		82	83	30	53	82.4	82

Table 47b

Performance of Eighth Grade Cohort on TAAS Mathematics Tests

District	Number of Students Matched from Year to Year	Percent Passing		Percent Mastering All Objectives		TLI Values	
		1998 6 th	1999 7 th	1998 6 th	1999 7 th	1998 6 th	1999 7 th
Laredo	304	70.2	78.0	16.8	18.4	75.3	78.3
United	329	67.5	77.6	15.6	9.2	74.6	76.3
Jim Hogg County	68	88.2	94.1	27.9	22.1	81.1	82.6
Corpus Christi	163	75.3	82.1	17.3	17.9	76.2	79.3
Robstown	192	87.1	86.6	28.4	19.1	80.5	80.2
Group Average*		77.7	83.7	21.2	17.3	77.5	79.3
State Average**		82	84	28	24	79.2	80.4

Source: Analysis of Individual Student Data (Note: Alice ISD is not included in this table)

* Group Average is based on student-level calculations aggregated to the campus level

** TEA Student Assessment Division Reports (passing and mastering reported in whole numbers only)

Table 48a

Performance of Ninth Grade Cohort on TAAS Reading Tests

District	Number of Students Matched from Year to Year	Percent Passing		Percent Mastering All Objectives		TLI Values	
		1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999
		7th	8th	7th	8th	7th	8th
Laredo	351	64.3	77.6	28.9	37.7	74.7	79.4
United	434	63.9	77.0	28.4	33.0	73.8	78.2
Jim Hogg County	67	97.0	98.5	67.2	64.2	87.6	89.6
Corpus Christi	308	79.6	82.8	32.4	39.5	78.0	80.4
Robstown	196	81.3	72.2	46.5	37.4	81.3	77.6
Group Average*		77.2	81.6	40.7	42.4	79.1	81.0
State Average**		82	88	48	50	81.3	83.9

Table 48b

Performance of Ninth Grade Cohort on TAAS Mathematics Tests

District	Number of Students Matched from Year to Year	Percent Passing		Percent Mastering All Objectives		TLI Values	
		1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999
		7th	8th	7th	8th	7th	8th
Laredo	351	71.8	82.1	19.9	29.6	75.9	78.5
United	434	67.4	76.9	12.1	21.0	73.0	76.4
Jim Hogg County	67	88.2	94.1	30.9	38.2	81.4	83.3
Corpus Christi	308	74.4	85.3	17.6	22.1	76.5	78.8
Robstown	196	83.2	80.7	31.0	23.9	79.8	78.2
Group Average*		77.0	83.8	22.3	27.0	77.3	79.0
State Average**		79	85	26	34	78.1	80.0

Source: Analysis of Individual Student Data (Note: Alice ISD is not included in this table)

* Group Average is based on student-level calculations aggregated to the campus level

** TEA Student Assessment Division Reports (Passing and mastering reported in whole numbers only)

Appendices

Appendix A

Goals and Objectives

- Goal 1:** Increase the number of underrepresented (low-income and minority) students who are prepared to go to college.

- Goal 2:** Increase the number of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Hispanic students who successfully graduate and attend college or other post-secondary education.

- Goal 3:** Strengthen academic programs and student services at participating schools.

- Goal 4:** Build an academic pipeline from school to college.

- Goal 5:** Develop effective and enduring alliances among schools, colleges, students, parents, government, and community groups.

- Goal 6:** Improve teaching and learning.

- Goal 7:** Provide students with intensive individualized and coordinated support.

- Goal 8:** Raise standards of academic achievement for all students.

The table below shows the specific objectives and strategies for each goal.

Table A1

Goal 1: Increase the number of underrepresented (low-income and minority) students who are prepared to go to college

Goal 1, Objective 1: By the end of the project’s 2 nd year, information, workshops and student internship opportunities aimed at linking college attendance to career success will be available to 100% of the cohort students and their parents.	Strategy 1: Use presentations and assessments to help students and parents relate what they are doing in the classrooms to future career and educational goals.
Goal 1, Objective 2: By the end of the project’s 2 nd year, at least 50% of parents will have attended at least one college awareness activity.	Strategy 2: Hold sessions for parents on college awareness
Goal 1, Objective 2	Strategy 3: Train parents to present sessions relating the high academic option and early college awareness.

Goal 1, Objective 2	Strategy 4 Assist parents in applying for financial aid for their children.
Goal 1, Objective 3: By the end of the 3 rd year of the project, 50% of the middle school students in participating schools will be enrolled in Pre-AP curriculum, including algebra I and/or Spanish.	Strategy 3: Project GRAD and the Pre-College Outreach Centers will enroll middle school students in Pre-AP preparatory Summer Institutes and programs.
Goal 1, Objective 3	Strategy 4: Tutoring and mentoring will be made available to all students via the Pre-College Outreach Centers and the Project GRAD CIS offices
Goal 1, Objective 4: By the end of the third year of the project, at least 25% of the 8 th grade cohort will take an AP course as reflected on the AEIS	Strategy 1: Project GRAD and the Pre-College Outreach Centers will enroll middle school students in Pre-AP preparatory summer institutes and programs.
Goal 1, Objective 4	Strategy 6: Teachers will attend Pre-AP and AP summer institutes.
Goal 1, Objective 5: By the end of the project's 4 th year, the number of students taking and passing AP examinations will meet or exceed the state average as reflected on the AEIS.	Strategy 2: Tutoring will be provided for students
Goal 1, Objective 5	Strategy 3: Project GRAD's Summer Institutes will provide Pre-AP training and other courses.
Goal 1, Objective 6: By the end of the project's 5 th year, the number of students completing and graduating with the Recommended High School Program will meet or exceed the state average as reflected on the AEIS.	Strategy 1: Provide mentoring to students in middle and high school to assure academic success.
Goal 1, Objective 6	Strategy 2: Provide incentives and scholarships to encourage students to stay in school and complete the recommended curriculum.
Goal 1, Objective 6	Strategy 3: Use presentations and assessments to help students relate what they are doing in the classrooms to future career and educational goals.
Goal 1, Objective 6	Strategy 4: Emphasize student attendance, retention, on-time promotion and graduation to parents.
Goal 1, Objective 7: Implement and maintain a new Project GRAD program in at least one feeder system (all the elementary and middle schools that feed into one high school) in a major urban area of Texas.	Strategy 1: Set up a Project GRAD/TGAP/GEAR-UP coordination office, to be supported by hiring one new staff member and devoting a portion of the Houston's staff's time to the project.
Goal 1, Objective 7	Strategy 2: Coordinate activities with TGAP partners.
Goal 1, Objective 7	Strategy 3: Begin discussion with various inner-city districts (Dallas, San Antonio, etc.) about Project GRAD / GEAR-UP / TGAP and with the Ford Foundation about their matching grant funds.

Goal 1, Objective 7	Strategy 4: Begin discussions with potential university / college, business and CIS partners who will provide the tutoring / mentoring programs, college awareness and activities for parents and students, continuing parent education, the Summer Institute programs, Project GRAD Local Scholarship fund, and counseling components.
Goal 1, Objective 7	Strategy 5: District buy-in vote (a majority of teachers and administrators must vote in favor of implementing Project GRAD's comprehensive program).
Goal 1, Objective 7	Strategy 6: Begin teacher and counselor training for the first Project GRAD programs to be implemented. Programs are implemented in successive years, due to the large amount of training required for each one. Hire additional teachers and staff for programs – MOVE IT Math, Success For All, CMCD, CIS. Teachers are paid a stipend by Project GRAD for participating in the training.
Goal 1, Objective 7	Strategy 7: Program implementation in a school feeder system begins.
Goal 1, Objective 7	Strategy 8: Provide ongoing financial and technical assistance to feeder system.
Goal 1, Objective 7	Strategy 9: If Ford Foundation and other funding permits, implement program in a second feeder system elsewhere in the state.
Goal 1, Objective 7	Strategy 10: Evaluate program and process and incorporate feedback and results into program.
Goal 1, Objective 7	Strategy 11: Help district raise funds to ensure the program's long-term success; work with district to set up a local Project GRAD office that will handle the ensuing years' program maintenance and training needs.

Goal 2: Increase the number of LEP Hispanic students who successfully graduate and attend college.

Goal 2, Objective 2: By the end of the 3 rd year of the project, 30% of LEP students will participate in Pre-AP and AP courses; by the end of year 5, the number of LEP students in Pre-AP and AP courses will meet or exceed the state average.	Strategy 1: Students in participating districts will be enrolled in AP Spanish courses offered in middle school.
Goal 2, Objective 2	Strategy 2: Use the Success For All reading program Spanish version in the Project GRAD inner-city feeder system schools and make it available to all GEAR-UP districts.
Goal 2, Objective 3: By the end of the third year of the project, 25% of LEP students will take AP Spanish in middle and high school so they can have college credit before graduating.	Strategy 2: Develop Spanish language materials that explain to parents and students the educational and financial benefits of taking AP courses and distribute them.

Goal 3: Strengthen academic programs and student services at participating schools.

Goal 3, Objective 1: By the end of the 1 st year of the project, at least one team on teachers at the middle and high school will have participated in AP vertical team training	Strategy 3: Provide ongoing technical assistance, both online and on-site, throughout the five years of the project and beyond.
Goal 3, Objective 2: By the end of the second year of the project, at least 75% of the 8 th grade students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on results of teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data.	Strategy 1: Provide tools to assist counselors to increase college awareness and enrollment in advanced classes.
Goal 3, Objective 2	Strategy 3: Provide and coordinate mentoring programs for students based on assessment and instructional data.
Goal 3, Objective 2	Strategy 4: Contact local colleges to arrange for tutors for middle and high school students at all levels who need additional assistance.
Goal 3, Objective 2	Strategy 5: Provide early intervention programs for students in elementary schools as part of a total feeder system approach in Houston and the new Project GRAD site(s) and provide information on doing so to other GEAR-UP sites via the Project GRAD staff.
Goal 3, Objective 2	Strategy 6: Involve middle and high school counselors in all training provided teachers so that they are aware of academic programs and understand their importance in increasing student expectations and success.
Goal 3, Objective 3: By the end of the 4 th year of the project, 50% of the students in participating high schools will graduate with either AP or concurrent enrollment credit.	Strategy 5: Teachers will attend Pre-AP and AP Summer Institutes.

Goal 4: Build an academic pipeline from school to college

Goal 4, Objective 1: Increase state commitment to building an academic pipeline designed to allow all students the opportunity to attend college	Strategy 3: Emphasize the importance of a kindergarten through college educational services continuum by publishing Project GRAD data and the data from the Texas TGAP GEAR-UP schools.
Goal 4, Objective 2: By the end of the 2 nd year of the project, at least 30% of the students will be involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level and to increase college awareness	Strategy 1: Establish summer activities including both residential and day programs on available area university campuses.
Goal 4, Objective 3: By the end of the 2 nd year of the project, all students and parents will have access to information about college, financial aid and career requirements.	Strategy 2: Provide tours of local college campuses.

Goal 4, Objective 3	Strategy 4: Use presentations and assessments to help students relate what they are doing in the classrooms to future career and educational goals.
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Goal 5: Develop effective and enduring alliances among schools, colleges, students, parents, government, and community groups.

Goal 5, Objective 1: By the end of the first year of the project, existing school / college programs will be expanded by 25% and new programs will be created.	Strategy 1: Plan and coordinate university activities for students and parents in participating schools.
Goal 5, Objective 2: By the end of the 2 nd year of the project, counseling to parents and students will be available at Project GRAD sites.	Strategy 1: Support students with academic or personnel problems by making a professional counselor available to each participating campus.
Goal 5, Objective 3: By the end of the second year of the project, all communities will have business alliances formed that support higher student achievement.	Strategy 2: Obtain support of local businesses, corporations, and foundations to develop an additional scholarship program for the students in the Project GRAD feeder system.
Goal 5, Objective 3	Strategy 3: Support students with academic or personal problems by making a counselor available to each campus.
Goal 5, Objective 4: By the end of the project's 2 nd year, all participating campuses will have formed alliances with governmental entities and community groups that enhance the information available on scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.	Strategy 3: District TGAP task forces provide representatives to state GEAR-UP Task Force so project can be modified as needed.
Goal 5, Objective 4	Strategy 4: State GEAR UP task force links all projects in Texas so innovative ideas may be easily exchanged and infused into other interested partnerships
Goal 5, Objective 4	Strategy 5: POCs and Project GRAD assist parents in applying for financial aid and offer programs to support parents to increase college awareness.
Goal 5, Objective 4	Strategy 6: Offer continuing education programs (literacy, financial workshops, computer skills, etc.) to parents to help them increase their ability to support their children's education.

Goal 6: Improve teaching and learning

Goal 6, Objective 1: By the end of the project's 1 st year, at least one team of teachers at the middle and high school will have participated in AP vertical team training.	Strategy 5: Teachers will attend Pre-AP and AP Summer Institutes.
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Goal 6, Objective 2: By the end of the second year of the project, middle and high school teachers and counselors will understand how to use data appropriately to plan individual student programs.	Strategy 2: Provide participating high school teachers with SAT workshops, updates on college options and expectations, and changes in regulations at the state level.
Goal 6, Objective 2	Strategy 3: Project GRAD provides ongoing support and training for all teachers in their programs
Goal 6, Objective 2	Strategy 4: Involve middle and high school counselors in all training provided teachers so that they are aware of academic programs and understand their importance in increasing student expectations and success.

Goal 7: Provide students with intensive, individualized and coordinated support.

Goal 7, Objective 1: By the end of the 2 nd year of the project, 75% of the students will have the opportunity to receive mentoring and / or tutoring services.	Strategy 1: Provide mentoring to students in middle and high school.
Goal 7, Objective 1	Strategy 2: Project GRAD and partner universities will provide tutoring for middle and high school students in the PG feeder systems on a weekly, intensive basis.
Goal 7, Objective 1	Strategy 3: Coordinate existing tutoring programs in schools.
Goal 7, Objective 2: By the end of the 2 nd year of the project, 75% of the students will have the opportunity to receive counseling services as needed.	Strategy 1: Involve middle and high school counselors in all training provided teachers so that they are aware of academic programs and understand their importance in increasing student expectations and success.
Goal 7, Objective 2	Strategy 2: Support students with academic or personal problems by making a professional counselor available to each participating campus.

Goal 8: Raise standards of academic achievement for all students

Goal 8, Objective 1: By the end of the third year of the project, at least 50% of the cohort will take Pre-AP or AP courses.	Strategy 1: Project GRAD and the Pre-College Outreach Centers will enroll middle school students in Pre-AP preparatory Summer Institutes and programs
Goal 8, Objective 1	Strategy 6: Teachers will attend Pre-AP and AP Summer Institutes
Goal 8, Objective 2: By the end of the 5 th year of the project, 75% of students will score at or above the state average on the Texas Learning Index (TLI) of the TAAS test.	
Goal 8, Objective 3: By the end of the 5 th year of the project, 50% of the students will score at or above the state average on the SAT.	Strategy 1: Students will enroll in summer courses designed to familiarize them with the SAT.

Goal 8, Objective 4: By the end of the 5th year of the project, the number of students attending two- or four-year colleges from each school will have met or exceeded the state average.

Appendix B

School Sites

1. Laredo
 - Christen Middle School
 - Martin High School
2. United ISD
 - Salvador Garcia Middle School
 - United South Middle School
 - United South High School
3. Jim Hogg County ISD
 - Hebbronville Junior High School
 - Hebbronville High School
4. Corpus Christi ISD
 - Driscoll Middle School
 - Miller High School
5. Robstown ISD
 - Ortiz Intermediate School
 - Seale Junior High School
 - Robstown High School
6. Alice ISD
 - Alice Middle School
 - Alice High School

Appendix C

Program Descriptions

Recommended High School Program (RHSP) and Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP)

The Recommended High School Program (RHSP) encourages students to set targets beyond the minimum graduation requirements and to pursue their own interests in various college-preparatory courses. The program, which entails 24 credits, requires challenging academic courses that better prepare students to complete higher education. RHSP helps the students to have sophisticated skills and knowledge in mathematics, science, technology, and communication necessary to succeed in the real world after graduation (TEA brochure, Spring 2000). Since the 1997-98 school year, the number of RHSP graduates has been part of the state's Academic Excellence Indicator System or AEIS. (See Appendix D for more information on the state's data systems.)

The Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) requires students to complete the 24-credit RHSP, one additional credit of a language other than English, plus four advanced measures that reflect work at the college or professional level, as assessed by outside evaluators. Specifically, DAP students must complete four advanced measures from the list below in any combination except that the number of original projects is limited to two.

- Earn a score of 3 or above on a College Board Advanced Placement exam or a score of 4 or above on an International Baccalaureate (IB) exam. Each exam can count as one measure.
- Complete original research or a project judged by a panel of professionals in the field that is the focus of the project or conducted under the direction of one or more mentors and reported to an appropriate audience (limited to 2).
- A score on the PSAT that qualifies a student for recognition as a Commended Scholar or higher.
- A grade of 3.0 or higher on courses that count for college credit.

EXPLORE and PLAN

EXPLORE is an eighth grade assessment that is the entry point into ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS). EXPLORE includes objective assessments in English, math, reading, and scientific reasoning. It also includes activities that help students begin the process of career and educational exploration. EXPLORE provides data for monitoring student progress through the high school years. It is linked to two other EPAS components: PLAN and the ACT Assessment.

PLAN is a tenth grade assessment of English, math, reading, and science reasoning. Its educational and career planning activities are tailored to the needs of students who are preparing to make decisions about life after high school. PLAN provides a midpoint review of the tenth-grader's progress toward their educational and career goals, at a point when there is still time to make changes.

Project GRAD

Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams), TGAP partner, is a significant education reform project based in Houston, Texas that emphasizes curriculum alignment and enhancement in inner-city vertical feeder systems. It works with businesses to secure scholarships and stipends, arrange student internships, and obtain other types of support for students who enter higher education. Project GRAD

delivers presentations about the Texas Scholars program to middle school and high school students and their parents. Project GRAD's Parent University has enabled parents to complete their GEDs, to take courses to improve their English, and to become instructional aides at their children's schools. Project GRAD has expanded to other cities, most notably Newark, New Jersey, whose teachers communicate with Houston teachers about curricular issues through a network called the Houston-Newark Teacher Telecollaboration.

Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC)

The Texas Business and Education Coalition is a statewide organization that promotes high educational goals for all students and seeks to motivate students with information, incentives, and recognition. TBEC recruits and trains local business representatives to make "Great Expectations" presentations to students; formally recognizes students who complete the RHSP as Texas Scholars; and encourages higher education institutions to adopt admission and financial aid policies that reward students for completing the RHSP.

Texas Scholars is a program that involves local employers and educators in motivating students to undertake and complete the RHSP. The program recognizes students who complete the RHSP as Texas Scholars. Developed and promoted by the Texas Business and Education Coalition, Texas Scholars trains and encourages local businesses to:

- make a presentation called "Great Expectations-Great Rewards" that stresses and quantifies the value of completing the RHSP to all eighth grade and possibly ninth grade students (and their parents) before they plan their high school course schedule;
- Recognize and support students potentially on track to become Texas Scholars;
- Hold an awards ceremony or similar event to bestow the title of Texas Scholar to each senior who completes at least the coursework required in the RHSP. Local newspapers, school newsletters, and radio and TV stations may recognize these students as well; and
- Encourage local businesses to understand the benefits of hiring Texas Scholars and even to give them preference in hiring. A Texas Scholars brochure and directory aid in this effort.

TBEC developed a statewide Texas Scholars Implementation Kit that supports local district efforts by providing templates for program forms, student brochures, and other materials important for the program. The program conveys the message that students who complete the RHSP are better prepared for higher education and the world of work.

University Fellows

University Fellows is a program that links public-school teachers with university faculty who serve as mentors to the teachers, assisting them in learning the latest developments in their content areas, sharing new research, and offering suggestions and recommendations for further study. In addition, the program gives teachers permission to participate in university activities and to use the university library and other university facilities. Initiated by TEA and the Texas A&M International University (TAMIU), the grant proposal calls for the program to be fully implemented by the end of the second year.

Pre-College Outreach Centers (POCs)

The Texas Legislature created the POCs in 1987 under the joint auspices of the Texas A&M University system and The University of Texas at Austin to help underrepresented students prepare for higher education. POCs offer or assist with such services as summer programs for academic enhancement; workshops on choosing a college and completing college and financial aid applications; and arranging tours of college campuses. The POCs in Corpus Christi and Laredo are TGAP partners.

Appendix D

Data Systems in Texas

Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS)

Developed in the 1980s, PEIMS provides school and district data on student and staff demographics, student attendance, student course-taking records, and program participation. The system also reports school and district data on revenue, expenditures, and personnel. PEIMS data are available from TEA upon request or may be downloaded from the TEA web site (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us>).

Texas Assessment System

The Texas Assessment System is the data system that contains the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) scores for each student and each test taken. Data are available from TEA upon request at the student, school, district, region, and state levels. (Texas is divided into 20 regions, each served by a Regional Education Service Center.)

Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS)

The Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) combines data elements from PEIMS and the Texas Assessment System to report performance and to measure accountability in Texas. AEIS data are available from TEA upon request or may be downloaded from the TEA web site (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us>). A school accountability rating is derived from a subset of performance measures. The 1999 criteria used to determine whether a school is Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, or Low-performing appears in the table below.

School Rating	Performance on TAAS Tests	Attendance Rate	Dropout Rate
Exemplary	At least 90% of students pass each TAAS test (reading, mathematics, and writing)	94% or higher for all students and each student subgroup	1% or less
Recognized	At least 80% of students pass each TAAS test (reading, mathematics, and writing)	94% or higher for all students and each student subgroup	3.5% or less
Acceptable	At least 45% of students pass each TAAS test (reading, mathematics, and writing)	94% or higher for all students and each student subgroup	6% or less
Low-performing	Below 45% of students pass each TAAS test (reading, mathematics, and writing)	94% or higher for all students and each student subgroup	Above 6%

College Admission Tests/College Entrance Exams

ACT scores, SAT scores, and Advanced Placement test scores are available from other data sources such as the College Board. The publishers of both the SAT and ACT report scores to TEA. TEA then reports average scores for these examinations as well as the percentage of students taking the examinations and scoring above certain criterion points. Data are reported when the students are scheduled to be seniors, regardless of when they took the examinations.

Appendix E

Baseline Data Structure

Cohort	Group									State Average
	Target Campuses			Peer Campuses			Controls			
7 th Graders	Math	% Pass	% Master	Math	% Pass	% Master	Math	% Pass	% Master	
in 1999-2000	Reading	% Pass	% Master	Reading	% Pass	% Master	Reading	% Pass	% Master	
School Year	Writing	% Pass	% Master	Writing	% Pass	% Master	Writing	% Pass	% Master	
8 th Graders	Math	% Pass	% Master	Math	% Pass	% Master	Math	% Pass	% Master	
in 1999-2000	Reading	% Pass	% Master	Reading	% Pass	% Master	Reading	% Pass	% Master	
School Year	Writing	% Pass	% Master	Writing	% Pass	% Master	Writing	% Pass	% Master	
9 th Graders	Math	% Pass	% Master	Math	% Pass	% Master	Math	% Pass	% Master	
in 1999-2000	Reading	% Pass	% Master	Reading	% Pass	% Master	Reading	% Pass	% Master	
School Year	Writing	% Pass	% Master	Writing	% Pass	% Master	Writing	% Pass	% Master	

Additional Measures

Texas Learning Index (TLI) TLI measures the progress a student makes from year to year. The same TLI score from one year to the next means the student made one year's progress. A student whose TLI score increased made more than a year's progress.

SAT Scores

ACT Scores

Completion Rates

Dropout Rates

% Completing Advanced Placement (AP) Courses

Note: Except for the TLI, the additional measures pertain mostly to high schools. With some exceptions, AP classes are not generally offered in middle school.

Comparison Groups

Target Campuses: Sites for the TGAP project in Corpus Christi, Laredo, and nearby locations, which receive support from TEA and its partners.

Peer Campuses: The set of 40 campuses identified in the state education accountability system as being similar to a particular school with respect to student demographics. Each school has its own set of peer campuses, so the peer campuses for one school differ from those of another school.

Controls: Controls are students who initially attend a TGAP school but then move to another non-TGAP school after one, two, three, or four years. If the number of controls is sufficient for analysis, the amount of time in a TGAP school will be examined for its effect on student achievement.

Appendix F

Teacher Survey

This survey is being carried out by the Texas Center for Educational Research and the Center for Public Policy of the University of Houston for the Texas Education Agency. It is part of the evaluation of the "Texans Getting Academically Prepared" (TGAP) program. As a part of that evaluation, we are very interested in the experiences and opinions of teachers in TGAP schools. Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey and return it in the enclosed, postage-paid envelope.

Confidentiality: Teachers are not asked to include their names on the survey, and the evaluators have purposefully refrained from asking questions that might reveal the identity of respondents. Only the evaluators will see the completed surveys. The only information that will be shared with school districts is summary data on the responses of all teachers returning surveys.

Name of School _____

- 1) Have you attended vertical-team training this year?
 - a. yes
 - b. no

- 2) If yes, was it external training offered by someone other than your district, internal training offered by your district or campus, or both?
 - a. external
 - b. internal
 - c. both

- 3) If it was external training, how useful did you find the training?
 - a. very useful
 - b. somewhat useful
 - c. not very useful

- 4) If it was internal training, how useful did you find the training?
 - a. very useful
 - b. somewhat useful
 - c. not very useful

- 5) If you could make one or two changes to make vertical-team training more effective, what would they be?

- 6) How successful is the vertical-team teaching in your school?
 - a. very successful
 - b. somewhat successful
 - c. not very successful
 - d. I don't know

- 7) If you could make one or two changes to make vertical-team teaching more effective, what would they be?

- 8) Does your school provide you with adequate release time for vertical-team planning?
- yes
 - no
- 9) How familiar are you with your school's TGAP program?
- very familiar
 - somewhat familiar
 - not familiar
- 10) How successful would you expect TGAP to be in increasing the percentages of students taking academically demanding courses?
- very successful
 - somewhat successful
 - not very successful
 - I don't know
- 11) How successful would you expect TGAP to be in increasing the percentages of students who continue their education after high school?
- very successful
 - somewhat successful
 - not very successful
 - I don't know
- 12) If you could make one or two changes to make TGAP more effective, what would they be?
- 13) Does your district use university mentors for teacher training and curriculum design?
- yes
 - no
 - I don't know
- 14) Do you have a university mentor?
- yes
 - no
- 15) If yes, how useful is the guidance you receive from your university mentor?
- very useful
 - somewhat useful
 - not useful
- 16) How often do you give your students counseling or advice about college?
- often
 - sometimes
 - never
- 17) How good a job do you think your school is doing at making all students aware of college opportunities?
- excellent
 - good
 - okay
 - needs improvement

18) How can your school help you be more effective in making students aware of college opportunities?

19) How often does your district make data available from the EXPLORE or PLAN student assessments or other kinds of data to help you address the needs of students more effectively?

- a. often
- b. sometimes
- c. never

20) Will you attend a summer institute at a college or university?

- a. yes
- b. no

21) In your opinion, are K-12 educators given enough information regarding the admission and remediation/course placement policies of state universities?

- a. yes
- b. no

22) Could you briefly describe the courses you teach and the types of students who take them (i.e. general track, honors track, or AP)?

23) How many years have you been teaching? _____

Thank you for responding to this questionnaire. Please return it to _____ by _____.

Appendix G

Student Survey

Student Name _____

Date of Birth _____

School Name _____

Grade _____

Please circle if you are male or female.

male

female

- 1) Have you received any information from your school about financial aid for college?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. I don't know

- 2) Have you received any other information about colleges/universities from your school?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. I don't know

- 3) Have you visited any colleges or universities to learn more about how you can prepare for college?
 - a. yes
 - b. no

- 4) Have you received any brochures or other types of information from a university?
 - a. yes
 - b. no

- 5) Have your parents ever discussed college with you?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. I don't remember

- 6) Are you presently taking courses that are part of the recommended high school program?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. I don't know

How often do your parents help you with your homework?

- a. never
- b. once in a while
- c. often
- d. always

8) Do your parents volunteer at your school?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. I don't know

9) How important do you think it is to have a college education to be able to do the things you want in life?

- a. very important
- b. somewhat important
- c. not important
- d. don't know

10) What do you plan to do when you leave high school?

- a. attend a four year university
- b. attend a junior or community college
- c. work
- d. enlist in the military
- e. attend a vocational school
- f. other
- g. I don't know

11) If you do not plan to continue your education after high school, is it because you don't believe you or your family can afford it?

- a. yes
- b. no

12) Please indicate your race or ethnicity.

- a. African-American
- b. Asian
- c. Latino/Hispanic
- d. White
- e. other

13) Please list the courses you are presently taking with your teachers' names.

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire. When you finish, please return it to

_____.

Appendix H

Parent/Guardian Survey

Record school name: _____

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm calling from _____ for the Texas Education Agency. The Texas Education Agency requires an evaluation of a federally funded program intended to increase the number of students from _____ ISD attending college. I'd like to ask you about your experience and your child's experience at _____ school. May I speak to the parent or guardian of (STUDENT'S NAME)?

1. Have you received any information from your school about the courses in the Recommended High School Program in Texas?
 1. yes
 2. no
 3. don't know/refused to answer

2. Do you and your child talk about your child's plans for when she or he finishes high school?
 1. yes
 2. no
 3. don't know/refused to answer

3. Has your child expressed interest in going to college?
 1. yes
 2. no
 3. don't know/refused to answer

4. Are you a member of the PTO/PTA?
 1. yes
 2. no
 3. don't know/refused to answer

5. Do you volunteer to help at your child's school?
 1. yes
 2. no
 3. don't know/refused to answer

6. Have you received any information from your child's school about college admission requirements, the costs of college, and/or related issues?
 1. yes
 2. no
 3. don't know/refused to answer

7. Have you received any information about college financial assistance from your child's school? (grants, loans, etc.)
 1. yes
 2. no
 3. don't know/refused to answer

8. Have you attended a college fair?

1. yes
2. no
3. don't know/refused to answer

If yes, which college fair did you attend? _____

9. To better prepare your child for college, have you ever visited a college or university campus?

1. yes
2. no
3. don't know/refused to answer

If yes, which campus(es) did you visit? _____

10. Do you expect your child to attend college?

1. yes
2. no
3. undecided
4. don't know/refused to answer

IF YOU CHECKED YES OR UNDECIDED, PLEASE CONTINUE WITH QUESTION 12.
IF YOU CHECKED NO, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 11, THEN TO QUESTION 16.

11. If you do not expect your child to attend college, is it because college is too expensive?

1. yes
2. no
3. don't know/refused to answer

12. Which type of college do you want your child to attend (choose one)?

1. Community College or Junior College in Texas
2. Four Year University in Texas
3. Four Year University outside of Texas
4. Other, please specify _____
5. Undecided
6. don't know/refused to answer

13. Have you started saving money for your child's college expenses?

1. yes
2. no
3. don't know/refused to answer

If you checked yes:

How old was your child when you started saving? _____

14. Are you aware of the Texas Tomorrow Fund?

1. yes
2. no
3. don't know/refused to answer

IF RESPONDENT ANSWERS YES, PLEASE CONTINUE WITH QUESTION 15. IF
RESPONDENT ANSWERS NO, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 16.

15. If yes, are you putting money into the fund?

1. yes
2. no
3. don't know/refused to answer

16. How often do you help your child with his/her homework?

1. every day
2. several times a week
3. once a week
4. a few times a month
5. never
6. don't know/refused to answer

17. How many times a year do you visit your child's school?

1. never
2. once
3. two-three times
4. more than three times
5. don't know/refused to answer

18. Name _____

19. Grade level of child in this study _____

20. Gender of child in this study _____

21. Birthdate of child in this study _____

22. What language do you speak at home?

1. English
2. Spanish
3. Vietnamese
4. Other
5. don't know/refused to answer

23. What is your marital status?

1. single
2. married
3. divorced
4. widowed
5. single living in marriage-like relationship?
6. don't know/refused to answer

24. How many years has your child attended his/her present school?

1. less than one year
2. one year
3. two years
4. three years
5. more
6. don't know/refused to answer

25. What is your child's age?
26. What is your current work status?
1. employed full-time
 2. employed part-time
 3. unemployed
 4. other
 5. don't know/refused to answer
27. What is your relationship to the child in the study?
1. parent
 2. relative
 3. legal guardian
 4. don't know/refused to answer
28. What is your country of origin? _____
29. What is your race/Ethnicity (check one):
1. Black, non-Hispanic
 2. Asian/Asian-American
 3. Hispanic
 4. White, non-Hispanic
 5. Other _____
 6. don't know/refused to answer
30. What is your highest education level:
1. less than high school
 2. high school diploma or GED
 3. some college
 4. college degree
 5. post-college education
 6. don't know/refused to answer
31. What is your yearly household income:
1. below \$15,000/year
 2. \$15,000-\$24,999/year
 3. \$25,000-\$34,999/year
 4. \$35,000-\$50,000/year
 5. \$50,000-\$75,000/year
 6. over \$75,000
 7. don't know/refused to answer

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!

Appendix I

Fiscal Data on TGAP Schools

District	School	Instructional Dollars per Student	% Expenditures for Instruction	District Wealth	Tax Rate
Corpus Christi	Driscoll Middle	2,922	76	\$147,772	1.55
Corpus Christi	Miller High/Center for Communications and Technology	3,298	74.4	\$147,772	1.55
Robstown	Solomon P. Ortiz Intermediate	2,932	75.1	\$38,035	1.56
Robstown	Robstown High	3,591	68.2	\$38,035	1.56
Laredo	Christen Middle	3,501	72.6	\$54,988	1.22
Laredo	Martin High	4,831	68.7	\$54,988	1.22
United	United South Middle	2,447	66.5	\$136,086	1.41
United	United South High	3,651	68.4	\$136,086	1.41
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville Jr. High	3,594	67.3	\$195,529	1.55
Jim Hogg County	Hebbronville High	3,383	62.7	\$195,529	1.55
Group Average		3,105	63.6	104,075	1.3
State Average		3,049	71.3	\$190,769	1.5

Source: 1999 TEA AEIS Reports

Appendix J

Resources

Brochures

Brochures are available on the Recommended High School Program and the Distinguished Achievement Program from the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Contact: Division of Advanced Academic Services
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Ave.
Austin TX 78701-1494
512-463-9455

Brochures on the Texas Scholars program are available from the Texas Business and Education Coalition.

Contact: Drew Scheberle
Texas Business and Education Coalition
400 West 15th Suite 809
Austin TX 78701
drewtbec@swbell.net
www.tbec.org
512-480-8232 / Fax: 512-480-8055

Counselor Tool Kit

TEA developed a tool kit for counselors that includes a PowerPoint presentation about RHSP and the new TEXAS grant program, a CD-ROM, and hard-copy materials that teachers and counselors can adapt for their own presentations to students and parents about local opportunities and resources. Some of the tool kit materials also were added to TEA's GEAR UP webpage.

Contact: Liant Software Services
Attn: Sales
8711 Burnet Road, Building C
Austin TX 78757
512-371-7028

Software for Student Record-keeping

TBEC developed software that allows high school counselors to determine which courses a student has taken and which requirements the student lacks toward completing any of the state graduation plans. Counselors provided considerable input into the development of this graduation plan software, which is actually a software patch that works with existing MIS software. Plans are to distribute the software more widely to districts early in the second year of the project.

Video

Antes de que Sea Demasiado Tarde (Before It's Too Late)

This video for Spanish-speaking parents about Advanced Placement and pre-Advanced Placement classes portrays two students learning about Advanced Placement and pre-Advanced Placement classes at a time when they are contemplating their future in the face of the financial difficulty and seemingly little opportunity. Region One Education Service Center in Edinburg, Texas produced the video.

Contact: Division of Advanced Academic Services
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Ave.
Austin TX 78701-1494
512-463-9455

Websites

Texas Education Agency:

<http://www.teagearup.org/>

Texas Business and Education Coalition

www.tbec.org

Texas Center for Educational Research:

www.tasb.org/tcer/

University of Houston, Center for Public Policy:

U.S. Department of Education

www.ed.gov/think college/early

U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education
(includes a link to "Resources")

www.ed.gov/gearup/