



NATIONAL GEAR UP WEEK



A TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOL-
BASED PRACTITIONERS

SEPTEMBER 21-25, 2020

Start the Year Off Right

Join thousands of students, parents, teachers, partners, and college access professionals from across the nation to celebrate GEAR UP and the successes of your hard work and dedication!

National GEAR UP Week is an opportunity for you to raise awareness in your community about the positive impact GEAR UP is having locally. It's a time to engage all your strategic partners - local, state, and federal elected officials, funders, partners, as well as local, state, and regional media - to share your program's accomplishments and to get them more involved with your services to students and families.

- **Create awareness.**
- **Activate partners.**
- **Mobilize champions.**

Learn more: edpartnerships.org/national-gear-up-week

Hold a GEAR UP Week at your school and get students thinking about their plan after high school! Kick off the year with fun and exciting activities while promoting a college-going culture in your school and community.

You can also use these ideas for future activities, after National GEAR UP Week. This toolkit includes ideas, instructions, posters, and more to promote and celebrate GEAR UP and its mission.



CELEBRATING OUR EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

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Outreach and Messaging

- [Gubernatorial Proclamation](#) - WSAC will provide you with a copy of the Governor's Proclamation in early September. Use this document to recognize the week and raise awareness in your community about the importance of postsecondary planning and the positive impact GEAR UP is having locally. You may also use this [proclamation request template](#) to request a proclamation for National GEAR UP Week from your Mayor.
- [Media Advisory](#) - This template is to notify media outlets in your area to cover the event you are hosting. Media advisories are distributed ahead of the event so that outlets can schedule and plan to cover your event.
- [Press Release](#) - This template will help you create some "buzz" about your event. You can send it out before or after the event takes place, just make sure you edit it accordingly!
- [Op-Ed: Guidelines & Talking Points](#) - Op-eds are a great way to raise awareness about GEAR UP at the local and regional level. Follow the tips and use the template in this resource to submit your op-ed to your news outlet.
- [Thank You Cards to Congress](#) - Thank your U.S. Senators and Representatives for supporting GEAR UP and other college access programs with an oversized card or individual letters.
- **Take Pictures** - Take pictures of your students' hard work and share them with Washington State GEAR UP. Be sure and take pictures of students and staff. **Tag them: #GEARUPWorks #IHeartGEARUP**
- **Social Media** - Social media is a great way to stay connected with students. If you haven't already done so consider creating your own social media pages to remind students about upcoming GEAR UP events, deadlines, and activities you don't want them to miss. In addition, be sure and share the information WAGU posts on a weekly basis!
 - facebook.com/gearupwa
 - twitter.com/gearupwa
 - instagram.com/gearupwa

- **Connect with students.** Use Skyward (or your student information systems), text messages, a blog, the website, and meet students where they are - on social media. Use your school's social media accounts to share critical information about school activities, deadlines, and resources.
- **Host virtual drop in hours.**
- **If possible, help with meal distribution to connect with students.** This is a great time to distribute paper copies of information around National GEAR UP Week and available GEAR UP services to students and families.
- **Distribute GEAR UP Brochures or Family Newsletters. Resource: [Family Newsletters](#).**
- **Provide phone advising.** Conduct phone counseling and advising to ensure they will meet graduation requirements and have a 7th year plan and also know how to get support through the 12th Year Campaign.
- **Announcements.** Revise the following announcements about GEAR UP Week and getting ready for college to fit your school's GEAR UP needs. If you school is operating in a distance-learning mode, consider using Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, text messages, a blog, or a website, as allowed by your district.
 - **MONDAY:** It's National GEAR UP Week this week! There will be activities every day. Starting today, you have until Friday to decorate the door of your homeroom with the colors and logo of the college of your choice. The winners will get a special prize. Also, tomorrow is GEAR UP T-Shirt Tuesday! Wear your GEAR UP T-shirt or other college gear. Share what your plan is for college and career on www.facebook.com/gearupwa.
 - **TUESDAY:** Happy National GEAR UP Week! Did you know that there are over 4,000 colleges and universities across the country? There are also lots of options beyond high school including apprenticeships, on-the-job training, college career and technical education, customized training, non-credit education, certificates, certifications, and associate's degrees. Share what your post-high school dream is on the GEAR UP Dream Wall.
 - **WEDNESDAY:** The new, nationally recognized Washington College Grant (formerly the State Need Grant) makes education and

training beyond high school affordable. More families are eligible, and more programs and types of credentials are included. The program will also expand to provide support for apprenticeships.

- **THURSDAY:** National GEAR UP Week has been awesome! If your door is not yet decorated, you still have time. Door War Winners will be selected tomorrow. Speaking of selecting - have you investigated what scholarships are available to you? Check out theWashBoard.org and start a profile to search for scholarships you will want to apply for.
- **FRIDAY:** Thanks to everyone who has made National GEAR UP Week a huge success. We will be announcing the winners of the College Door Wars contest later today. Stay tuned!

College & Career Exploration

Virtual College Visits

Just because students can't physically visit campuses at this point doesn't mean they can't learn about what college might be the best fit. Take advantage of virtual campus tours (many can be found through [Common App's Explore Colleges profiles](#)) and scan colleges' websites and social media feeds to learn more about what each school has to offer.

Resources:

- [Get Ready for Virtual Visits](#). Includes best practices and resources to help plan meaningful virtual experiences for two- and four-year schools. Contains replicable, customizable tools.
- [Washington State Institutions Offering Virtual Tours](#)
- [Pathways and Exploration Tools](#). Includes best practices and resources to help plan meaningful in-person and online exploration. Contains replicable, customizable tools.

College & Career Compass Tool

Promote this interactive mobile-friendly tool, which can help students and even adult learners explore Identify educational pathways that can lead to promising careers and a brighter future. **Resource:** <https://compass.wsac.wa.gov/>

Virtual College and Career Learning

These activities from NCCEP's Career & College Clubs have been modified for students to complete on an individual basis.

Resources:

- [The College Advantage](#). In this activity, you will learn about some of the advantages of a college education and can reflect on those advantages.
- [College Life](#). This activity will help you dream about your future in college and identify your preferred college lifestyle.
- [Dream Board](#). This activity helps you to visualize your future success and dream life. Share your dream boards on social media and tag @edpartnerships.
- [Financial Aid Fact or Fiction](#). This activity informs you about your financial aid options, and when and how to apply for college financial aid.

Virtual Events

Student/Family Workshop

Consider hosting online events or workshops. For example, invite a local employer to serve as a guest speaker or a host a virtual employee panel to share about their job sector, specific work skills important to the career path, and what background was needed to pursue that path. These events could be pre-recorded or hosted live on YouTube, Zoom, or Event Facebook or Instagram Live.

Additionally, Washington State GEAR UP schools are required to offer a minimum of three family workshops per year. The focus of these workshops is financial literacy, college preparation, planning, and financial aid. Consider hosting one during National GEAR UP Week.

Resource: [GEAR UP Family Night Workshop Templates](#). These templates come pre-loaded with info and areas to personalize for your school.

Scholarship Workshop

Host a workshop to assist students in their scholarship hunt. Help students find and apply for scholarships. Share tips on how to write essays. Encourage students to check out [Big Future](#), [Unigo](#), [theWashboard.org](#), and [gearup.wa.gov](#)

for scholarship opportunities. Talk about strategies and play [Zombie Apocalypse! A Scholarship Activity on gearup.wa.gov.](#)

Sign Up Drives

College Bound Scholarship

- Ensure that all 9th grade students who are NEWLY eligible for the College Bound Scholarship complete the sign-up requirements by August 31. If you are not sure if you have eligible 9th grade students, contact Marcie Sample at marcies@wsac.wa.gov.
- Assist 7th and 8th grade students with sign up.

Otterbot

Promote Otterbot. Otterbot is WSAC's free texting service designed to help Washington high school seniors navigate financial aid for college and career education. Students can access Otterbot via text message 24 hours a day, seven days a week by texting "Hi Otter" to 360-928-7281. For more information on Otter visit wsac.wa.gov/otterbot

Games

College Knowledge Games & Activities

Check out this updated collection of ice breakers and college knowledge and cooperative learning games. Adapt for remote learning.

Resource: [GEAR UP College Knowledge Games & Activities](#)

College Knowledge Passport

Get your students, staff, and parents involved in this activity that can easily take place the whole week! Provide your students with their College Knowledge Passport. Think of this activity as a treasure hunt meets trivia. You will need to get your school staff on board - think of the teachers in this activity as the countries that students need to visit. Provide your staff with the list of College Knowledge Passport Questions/Statements (consider assigning certain staff specific questions to avoid staff asking students the same trivia questions).

Students take their passport and visit different school staff where they will be asked a College Knowledge Question. If the student gets the question right the school staff person signs the student's passport in the space provided. To get families involved in the game has 3 websites that students and families need to visit together. When the student and family have completed this the family member signs the student's College Knowledge Passport. Have students turn in their College Knowledge Passport at the end of the week to be eligible for a drawing to win a prize.

Resources: [College Knowledge Passport](#) and [Passport Questions/Statements](#)

Door Wars

Students and teachers work together and decorate their homeroom or advisory classroom door in a college theme. The winning door(s) get a special classroom prize. Be sure to have enough supplies to outfit the needs of all teachers and students participating. Set a start date and an end date. Consider having different "Best Of" categories such as: Out of State 4 Year, In State 4 Year, and 2 Year College. Consider inviting an elected official or local news reporter to help judge the doors and select the winners.

Draw Your Way to College

Use this game to help students become familiar with college lingo. Divide students into teams. Teams should designate one person to draw per round. Each team member should have the opportunity to draw at least once. The designated "artist" picks a clue/term from the moderator (GEAR UP staff). The artist should draw that clue for his/her team without speaking or hand gestures. The teams who are not drawing are not allowed to guess and should refrain from yelling out hints. If the drawing team successfully guesses the clue within the time limit, they get a point. Briefly discuss the term afterward to ensure students understand the meaning and relevance of that term as it relates to college. Play continues with the next team and the same format is followed. At the end of the game, the team with the most points wins!

GEAR UP Bingo

A. People Bingo: Download a blank GEAR UP Bingo Card. Type the descriptions into a blank BINGO card (be sure to mix the descriptions around on each card) or have your students write the descriptions on their card themselves. To play,

have students mingle and write the name of a classmate that fits a description on the card.

B: College Logo Bingo: Write the name of each college on a ping pong ball. Provide each student with a College Logo Bingo Card. Ask questions from the College Logo Bingo Trivia Sheet. Give participants the opportunity to guess the answer but be sure all students know the correct answer before moving on.

Resources: [Blank Bingo Cards](#), [College Logo Bingo Cards](#), [College Logo Bingo Trivia Sheet](#)

Reality Fair

Reality or life simulations are educational, interactive simulation events for high school students. They involve staff and often community members. Students are given scenarios that place them in the future after completion of a form of secondary education. The simulation gives students an opportunity to experience what life looks like on their own, with financial responsibilities.

Resources: [TXGU's Get a Life Game](#) or [WSECU's Digital Reality Fair](#)

Resources to Make Your Own Game

- **Word Searches and Crosswords:** <https://crosswordlabs.com/>
- **Game-based learning platforms** that students can access via web browsers.
 - **Kahoot:** <https://kahoot.com/>
 - **Gimkit:** <https://www.gimkit.com/>
 - **Quizlet:** <https://quizlet.com/latest>
 - **Quizizz:** <https://quizizz.com/>

Scavenger Hunt

Create a scavenger hunt throughout the school. Have GEAR UP students locate important college planning resources. Announce winners at a pep rally at the end of the week. Variation: Hide GEAR UP logos with college facts printed on the back all over the school. Give a prize to the student who finds the most.

SWAT College Readiness Game

Split into teams. Divide the whiteboard or poster paper into sections. Assign each team a section. Write college terms randomly on each side of the board

or paper. Both teams should have the same words but in different locations. Teams should choose a team name and pick one player to start as the “swatter”. Put a piece of masking tape on the floor several feet away from the board/paper. All team members except the “swatter” must stay behind the tape line. Give a fly swatter to each team’s starting player. Ask a college knowledge question. The first to swat the correct answer wins a point. Discuss to reinforce understanding. Teams choose a new “swatter” and repeat play. Continue until all questions have been answered. The team with the most points at the end wins.

College Spirit

#OneInAMillion Campaign

Answer a prompt below on a social media site and use #OneInAMillion in the post. Take a picture or selfie to use in your post. Sample prompts:

- How has GEAR UP inspired you?
- What are your plans after you graduate high school?
- Who inspires you to be the best person you can be?
- What challenges did you overcome while in school?
- What about your future makes you excited?
- Why is getting an education important to you?
- Why is GEAR UP an important program to you and your family?
- How has GEAR UP changed your outlook on education?

Don’t want to use any of the above prompts? That’s okay! Come up with your own and share it with us!

Resource: [The One in a Million Flyer](#)

GEAR UP in 1 Word

Using a piece of poster board or other large paper, ask students and teachers to share what GEAR UP means to them in one word. Take a photo with students and share with the GEAR UP office and elected officials.

GEAR UP or College Gear Day

Encourage students and teachers to wear their GEAR UP t-shirts, other college clothing, or college colors. Pass out shirts to new GEAR UP students. Have

students decorate a small paper shirt with the college they want to attend and then tape it to the front of their locker.

Resources: [Cut Out Shirt Option 1](#) and [Cut Out Shirt Option 2](#)

Dream Wall

Create a GEAR UP Dream Wall. Cover the wall of a school hallway with butcher paper, place a large National GEAR UP Week logo in the center with “Our GEAR UP Dreams” written underneath. Have students write their academic, professional, and personal goals on the wall or on a cut out to stick to the wall.

Additional Information: Setup a “College Dreams” photo booth! Have dry erase boards that students can write their College Dreams on and hold during the photo.

Show & Tell

Have students reach out to a college of their choice and request materials. Open the materials as a class or group and share the received information. Also, have students fill out a college fit worksheet and share their findings with their classmates.

Motivation

Pep Rally

Invite a guest speaker from a local college, apprenticeship program, or the community to share their educational journey and why education beyond high school is so important.

Community Success Stories

Host a “Community Success Stories” breakfast, coffee gathering or potluck luncheon as a thank you for dedicated GEAR UP partners, volunteers and parents. Consider inviting GEAR UP school administrators, teachers, parents, partners and student leaders, as well as local businesses, a service club or chamber of commerce and individuals from non-GEAR UP schools to discuss college access and the success that GEAR UP has had in your school district!

Get to Know GEAR UP/ Teacher Time Profile

This activity is designed for school staff to learn more about GEAR UP and how their support and involvement can positively impact students. Invite staff and educate them on what GEAR UP is all about. Explain the different services that GEAR UP will provide to students and families and programs and activities that will be hosted by GEAR UP. Have teachers fill out a profile that they can hang outside their classroom for students to read. Consider sending out the Teacher Time Profile to teachers through e-mail but also having some printed for staff to look at and possibly fill out at the Get to Know GEAR UP staff event.

Resource: [Teacher Time Profile](#)

Fail Forward

This activity is designed to help students embrace their failures, and use them to move forward, rather than to give up in defeat.

Provide large poster boards or banners. Place in the school hallways. Encourage fellow staff, students, family, and community members to write, share and view failures they have experienced. This activity can be anonymous. Later at an assembly, host a panel where panelists that consisted of faculty share their stories of failure and how they overcame it. For example:

- I lost a scholarship because I did not do well in school and didn't get help.
- I failed my Algebra class the first time I took it.
- I changed my major 4 times.
- I got rejected from my dream college.
- I didn't manage my money and spent too much on credit cards when I was a freshman.
- I waited too long to fill out the FAFSA.
- By sharing stories, you bring people together and begin a conversation that failure is an important part of growth and learning, especially first-generation students.

Resource: [Freedom to Fail Forward](#)

Additional Activity Ideas

- Watch a TED Talk.
- Bring in a guest speaker to talk with students, staff, and parents.
- Use daily trivia questions over morning announcements. Students submit an answer to become eligible for a drawing to win a prize.
- Have teachers talk about their educational and career journey during advisory to students.
- Hold a GEAR UP Family Orientation night with students, family, and staff.
- Invite college representatives to speak at orientation.
- Set up a GEAR UP table in the commons during lunch and recruit students to sign up for upcoming campus field trips.
- Create a GEAR UP video presentation to explain what GEAR UP is. Announce what GEAR UP activities will take place throughout the week.
- Host a Community Advisory Committee meeting. Include community, professionals, staff, and parents to student-led small group discussions. Ask students to how GEAR UP helps them.
- Hold a College Panel. Invite alumni or school staff. Have students ask teachers questions about their time in college.
- Host a Student Orientation Assembly as a kick-off assembly to discuss plans for the year. Get all the GEAR UP students together and build enthusiasm for the program.
- Create posters to decorate the commons/halls promoting different things related to higher education.
- Encourage students to interview faculty about their educational and career paths.
- Create a raffle for participating students to win college gear (hats, hoodies, t-shirts etc.).
- Host a College Fair. Include military, 2- year, 4-year, and technical schools.
- Create an online scavenger hunt.
- Share selfies in college gear or college colors! Host a trivia contest and award prizes.
- Highlight staff's education and career pathways through spotlights or profiles on social media.
- Place banners throughout the town or at in a frequented area.

Resources

GEAR UP Resources

- [GEAR UP College Knowledge Games & Activities for Students and Families](#). An updated collection of ice breakers and college knowledge and cooperative learning games. Adapt for remote learning.
- [WA State GEAR UP Student Resources](#). Share our resources with school staff, students, and families. Covers a variety of topics including:
 - Preparing for college (any education beyond high school).
 - Pathway exploration.
 - Campus visits.
 - Exam preparation.
 - College admissions.
 - Financial aid.
 - Scholarships.
 - Support and transitions.

Planning Tools

- Surveys: [Google Forms](#), [Qualtrics](#), [SurveyMonkey](#) to gather information
- Calendar scheduler: [Calendly](#) includes questionnaire during registration and syncs with calendar systems
- Note Taking: [Evernote](#), [Google Drive](#), [OneNote](#) for pre-meeting notes

Meeting Platforms

- [Cisco Jabber](#) (phone)
- [Google voice](#) (phone)
- [Zoom](#) (audio, video)
- [Bluejeans](#) (audio, video)
- [Microsoft Teams](#) (audio, video)
- [Skype](#) (audio, video, instant message)

Creating Online Content

- [Canva](#) for slide decks and infographics
- [Adobe Spark](#) or [Powtoons](#) for videos

Tech Tools and Distance Learning

- [Flipgrid](#) offers a platform for recording and sharing videos (free for educators)
- [Loom](#) allows you to capture your screen, voice and face and instantly share your video (free for educators).
- [My Blueprint](#) offers a platform for students to create portfolios (free access)
- [Nearpod](#) provides a platform for live lessons.
- [Talking Points](#) lets you translate your messages for students and families in any language (free access)
- [Wevideo](#) provides a platform for student-created videos (free to schools closed due to COVID-19).
- [Zoom](#) offers free resources for educators during school closures.

