MPS TEAM GEAR UP 2016 Evaluation Report

Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year Program

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SREED
Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education

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About MPS TEAM GEAR UP

In 2011, Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) was awarded a 7-year, $14.87 million federal TEAM GEAR UP (GEAR UP) grant to promote college awareness and readiness. The grant provides outreach to students from the high school classes of 2017 and 2018, through a variety of programming and support systems at 8 high schools: Audubon, Bay View, Bradley Tech, Hamilton, James Madison, Milwaukee High School of the Arts, Marshall (formerly Morse-Marshall), and Vincent.

MPS TEAM GEAR UP consists of two primary objectives: Objective 1 seeks to increase educational expectations for participating students and family knowledge of postsecondary education, options, preparation, and financing. Objective 2 seeks to increase academic performance, high school graduation, and post-secondary readiness and enrollment. Six design principles were followed to achieve these objectives: 1) high academic standards and rigorous course content, 2) Tutoring and targeted supports for underperforming students and those at risk of dropout, 3) supports for transitions to high school, 4) parental involvement, 5) access to post-secondary education, and 6) accountability at the student, school, and systems levels.

Executive Summary

MPS TEAM GEAR UP provides students in the classes of 2017 and 2018, attending eight high schools, with college and career readiness programming. TEAM GEAR UP has been working with these students from when they were in sixth grade and will continue until they graduate. The primary objectives for TEAM GEAR UP are to increase high school graduation rates, as well as improve student college and career readiness.

Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year (GUGSY), one of several offerings of TEAM GEAR UP, has two core objectives: to better prepare students for their senior year and to improve students' likelihood of successfully transitioning to college or a career. GUGSY was first offered in August 2016 for students entering their senior year in 2017 at all eight GEAR UP sites. Programming occurred over three consecutive days, with content focused on developing college and career readiness skills across four areas: résumé building, college applications, college application essays, and local scholarships.

The following summarizes key evaluation findings from August 2016 based on participation and results of pre-program and post-program surveys.

GUGSY was successfully implemented at all GEAR UP locations.

> Participation. Across all high schools, attendance varied by day of the program. Overall, the average attendance per site per day was 20 students. In addition, a majority of participants reported attending all three days.

> GUGSY responded to an identified need. Pre-program survey results confirmed that while participants had some confidence related to the steps required to go to college, there was a need for education and support related to the four areas.

> GUGSY provided essential information to students across all four content areas. Observations confirmed that GUGSY facilitators provided information and resources across each of the four content areas. Results of the post-program survey showed increased knowledge in each area tested in comparison to pre-program surveys.

GUGSY made progress in helping students prepare for their senior year and improve college readiness.

Participants feel more prepared for their senior year of high school. Post-program respondents were significantly more likely to report feeling "prepared" or "very prepared" for their senior year of high school than respondents in the pre-program survey.

Knowledge increased significantly. Statistically significant increases were found between pre-program respondents and post-program respondents for each of the four aspects of knowledge related to the steps necessary to go to college; the FAFSA process; the UW system application process; and how to obtain local scholarships.

Confidence showed gains. Students showed increases in confidence from pre-program to post-program surveys related to three areas of post-secondary transition: doing well in one's senior year, the ability to successfully transition from high school into college, and ability to create a good résumé. However, the only statistically significant difference was found in relation to creation of a résumé.

Students enjoyed their experiences in GUGSY.

Most participants reported a positive experience in GUGSY. Nine of ten student participants reported that they had a "good" or "very good" experience with GUGSY on the post-program survey.

Most participants found GUGSY helpful in preparing for senior year. All participants reported the program helped prepare them for senior year on the post-program survey. Better than nine in ten respondents reported that GUGSY helped them prepare "a lot" or "some" for their senior year. Only 4% identified that the program helped "a little," and no students indicated that the program did "not at all" help them prepare for senior year.

Recommendations. There are three recommendations to consider for future Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year programming:

1. Complete pre-program groundwork to prepare students for the program.
2. Recruit more adults to help students in the program.
3. Develop an implementation guide and resource bank for GUGSY.

Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year Program

Senior year is an important time for students. They are working to meet graduation requirements while also exploring and navigating the post-secondary education pathway. To help students meet the challenges they face during their senior year, MPS TEAM GEAR UP designed and implemented the Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year (GUGSY) program. Occurring over three days in August 2016, the primary objectives of the program were to better prepare students for their senior year and to improve students' likelihood of successfully transitioning to college or a career.

The challenge of low-income students transitioning from high school to college

Nationally, 68% of high school graduates in 2014 enrolled in a two or four-year college the following fall. For low-income students, those in the bottom 20% of family income levels, that number shrinks to 52%.[1] Students need support through the college search and application process to improve their likelihood of enrolling in college. A 2008 study of Chicago students revealed that only 41% of seniors who aspired to attend a four-year college took the required steps necessary to apply and enroll in a four-year school during their senior year[2].

In MPS, where the great majority of students are economically disadvantaged[3], students also need support to successfully transition out of high school and enroll in a postsecondary educational institution. In the 2015 graduating class, only 37% of graduating seniors enrolled in a postsecondary institution the following fall.[4] However, results from the MPS Senior Exit Survey administered in spring 2015 found that 67% of students planned on continuing their education at

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[1] National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *The condition of education: immediate college enrollment rate.* Institute of Education Sciences. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cpa.asp

[2] Roderick et al. (2008). *From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College.* University of Chicago Consortium of School Research. Retrieved from: http://consortium.uchicago.edu/downloads/1835ccsr_potholes_summary.pdf

[3] Office of Accountability & Efficiency (2015). *Economically disadvantaged students WI average vs. MPS.* Milwaukee Public Schools. Retrieved from http://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/en/District/About-MPS/School-Board/Office-of-Accountability-Efficiency/Economic-Information.htm

[4] Wisconsin Information System for Education Data Dashboard (2016). *Initial postsecondary enrollment by all students 2014-15.* Department of Public Instruction. Retrieved from http://wisedash.dpi.wi.gov/Dashboard/portalHome.jsp

either a two or four-year institution[5]. This sizable gap between intention and actual enrollment suggests a need to provide students with assistance during this time to ensure they complete the necessary steps along the path to post-secondary application and enrollment.

Helping GEAR UP students prepare to transition from high school to post-secondary life

In response to these student needs, MPS TEAM GEAR UP created the Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year (GUGSY) Program in 2016. Content and instruction focused on developing college and career readiness skills across four areas: Résumé Building, College Applications, College Application Essays, and Local Scholarships (See Appendix A for the GUGSY Theory of Change). Students from all eight GEAR UP schools participated in GUGSY in August 2016.

The results of a survey[6] completed by 65 GUGSY participants immediately prior to starting the program further validated that MPS students need support to successfully make the post-secondary transition to college or career. The pre-program survey found that -

- Nearly half (45%) reported that they felt only "somewhat confident" or "not confident" about their ability to successfully transition from high school to college or career.
- Only 11% stated they knew "a lot" about the steps they have to go through to go to college.
- Fewer than half (46%) indicated they were confident or very confident that they could create a good résumé.
- Two-thirds (67%) knew either "a little" or "nothing" about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process.

The following activities and descriptions reflect unstructured observations of the GUGSY program at three high schools (James Madison, Bradley Tech, and Bay View) by evaluation staff. One day of the three-day program was observed at James Madison and Bradley Tech, while two days were observed at Bay View. As such, not all activities were observed at each site.

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[5] Office of Innovation & Information-Research & Evaluation (2015). *Senior Exit Survey Results for the 2014-15 School Year.* Retrieved from http://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/MPS-English/CIO/Senior-Exit-Surveys/2014-15SENIOREXITSURVEY-DISTRICT.pdf

[6] The pre-program and post-program surveys were created by SREed in collaboration with MPS TEAM GEAR UP staff to gauge student knowledge, confidence, and preparation at start and after completion. This information was used to determine the level of change over time.

Résumé Building

During the résumé building section of the program, students were instructed to create a résumé (also referred to as an activities list) for colleges and/or employers. Students were encouraged to highlight their academic accomplishments and/or employment backgrounds, as well as any extracurricular involvement. Résumés were created in Google Docs using the Résumé Builder App in Career Cruising[7] to facilitate the process.

At Bay View High School, students were encouraged to think about their accomplishments and activities, and how to organize these in an appealing way on a résumé for an employer or an application for an admissions officer. The objective of this activity was for students to hand in a résumé draft as an attachment in Google Docs so that GUGSY staff could provide feedback. At other sites, less emphasis was placed on résumé creation, but students were still shown the résumé builder component on the Career Cruising App. Students were also instructed on who (and how) to ask for letters of recommendation in the college application process. Students were shown a template for a generic letter of recommendation that the facilitator shared on a projector.

College Applications

GUGSY worked to increase student understanding of college application requirements and how to navigate the different college application systems. Students were given instructions on preparing for the application process, beginning with the creation of a Gmail email account to establish a means of contact after graduation. Instructors helped students understand the application systems for the University of Wisconsin (UW), the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) Promise Initiative[8], the Equal Opportunity Program (EOP) at Marquette[9], the Common App[10], and the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Common

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[7] Career Cruising is a subscription website available for MPS students to explore information about possible career and college pathways to develop their ACP (Academic and Career Plan): www.careercruising.com

[8] MATC Promise provides free college education for area high school graduates who meet program eligibility requirements.

[9] The EOP is a program at Marquette that offers steep tuition discounts to first generation low-income high school students of color, as well as specific academic supports before and during college.

[10] Common App is an undergraduate college admission application that can be used at almost 700 colleges and universities across the United States.

Application[11]. Collectively, these resources form a large representation of college options for MPS students.

At two of the sites, students were shown the different types of schools in Wisconsin and received three types of guidebooks listing Wisconsin technical colleges, two-year UW colleges, and four-year UW colleges, respectively. An interactive, facilitated dialogue at Bradley Tech discussed how students could use these guidebooks to search for a school to meet their needs, with an emphasis on ensuring that a school they select has the major they want to pursue. Students asked questions and responded to the guidance counselor's prompts.

College Application Essay

Students worked closely with instructors to begin drafting their college essays. For many students, this appeared to be the most difficult process to navigate. Students were encouraged to select an essay question and begin drafting a response.

The Common App contains a set of standardized essay questions that change every two years. At Bay View high school students were encouraged to select an essay question currently found on Common App, since it could be used to apply to hundreds of colleges and universities. Some students had difficulties beginning their essays. At this school, an English teacher along with the guidance counselor assisted students in composing, editing, and revising their essays.

At James Madison, a member of the EOP (educational opportunity program) at Marquette University visited to tell students about the essay requirements for that program, as well as important admissions deadlines. Students began but did not necessarily finish essays. Some were also able to get feedback on their progress. In addition, the guidance counselor facilitated an interactive discussion with students about selecting essay prompts and how to begin writing. She provided students an opportunity to select an essay question from a list, and asked students to share which question they selected. Students struggled to select a question. The guidance counselor broke down each question into parts and rephrased the question. Students were given time to re-select questions and provide responses. After this process, students were given the opportunity to write their essays. Students worked in small groups of two to four students with

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[11] The HBCU Common App is a standard application accepted by 50 Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

an adult facilitating the discussion. The presence of the teacher and counselor assisted students to formulate ideas and stay on task.

<u>Local Scholarships</u>

Lastly, instructors focused on increasing increase student knowledge of scholarships, especially locally available opportunities. Instructors provided an overview of local scholarships and eligibility requirements to students. The goal was to make students aware of the various opportunities that exist locally to lessen the cost of attending a college or university.

Specific time was taken at Bay View to discuss the MATC Promise initiative with students. This is an opportunity for students to receive free tuition to MATC for up to five semesters if they fulfill certain obligations and maintain a set level of academic achievement and standing. At James Madison, students began filling out the application for MATC Promise. It was unclear if students completed the application, but the final day of the program was not observed and it is probable that applications were submitted at that time.

Also at Bay View, the counselor shared an example of a student who did not go to college because her parents said she was unable to afford to go to school. This example was shared to illustrate to students that there are a multitude of options to assist students in financing their college education, which most students who attend college need to utilize, since the cost of tuition is so high. As the program covered the MATC Promise, the Marquette EOP program, and the FAFSA process, it was obvious that the emphasis was on showing students ways to offset the cost of attending college. The guidance counselor at Bay View also talked about the following local scholarship opportunities for students: the Kelben Scholarship[12], American Association of University Women (AAUW) scholarships[13], the Herb Kohl Excellence Scholarship[14], and the Grace Scholars program.[15] Some of the scholarships discussed are reserved specifically for MPS

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[12] A scholarship for graduating seniors from the Milwaukee Public School System in WI, who rank in the top 50 percent of their class, intend to pursue a four-year college degree, and demonstrate a need for financial assistance.
[13] Scholarships for women to close the funding gap in higher education
[14] A scholarship for graduating high school seniors in Wisconsin who intend to enroll in a post-secondary educational institution
[15] Covers 85% of tuition for students planning to attend Mount Mary who are graduating from MPS and who display leadership and have a need for assistance.

graduates. Scholarship discussions were on the agendas for different days as the observations at Bradley Tech and James Madison and were likely discussed at that time.

Other Topics

There was additional content that was covered during the GUGSY sessions that was not on the original agenda, but was relevant for high school seniors preparing for college.

At Bay View High School, facilitators segued from résumé-building to talk about other relevant topics for seniors to think about in getting ready for college. This occurred before getting into the specifics of the college application section of the program. The facilitator spent time talking about social media, specifically how colleges may review the accounts of student applicants. Students were warned to be mindful of who might be looking at the content they post on their accounts. Students were also provided instructions on how to retake the ACT if they were not happy with their scores (students first took the exam as juniors). After the application section of the program, students were provided an overview of the FAFSA process, a key financial component in being able to successfully enroll and stay in college. Special emphasis was placed on the earlier FAFSA availability and deadlines for the 2016-17 school year.

At Bradley Tech, on the first day, half of the students left after lunch due to an educational opportunity at Marquette University. Remaining students stayed to re-register for the ACT. Each student was provided individualized assistance by the guidance counselor to complete registration. Time was also provided to address any individual questions of students.

While the order of activities and facilitation methods varied slightly by school, overall observations indicated that similar material was covered in each of the three observed schools.

How many students participated?

Across all high schools, attendance varied by day of the program, ranging from 207 students on the first day to 108 students on the last day. However, Milwaukee High School of the Arts (MHSA) only offered the program for two days instead of three. Overall, the average attendance per site per day was 20 students.

Attendance by school by day is shown in Table 1. MHSA had the highest average attendance with 42 students per day, while Vincent and Bradley Tech had the next highest average

attendance with 29 and 25 students per day respectively. Bay View had the lowest overall average attendance with 5 students per day. Aside from Bay View, all other sites had a minimum of 12 students attending each day of the program.

Table 1: GUGSY program attendance by school, by day, 2016

School	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Daily Average
Audubon	17	16	19	17
Bay View	2	6	6	5
Bradley Tech	32	26	17	25
Hamilton	22	12	15	16
JMAC	12	16	18	15
Marshall	13	12	13	13
MHSA	70	13	n/a	42
Vincent	39	27	20	29
TOTAL	**207**	**128**	**108**	**162 daily overall 20 per session**

Pre-Program and Post Program Survey Results

To determine the impact that GUGSY had on participants across the four focus areas of the program, the evaluation team created pre-program (baseline) and post-program surveys in collaboration with TEAM GEAR UP staff. The baseline survey had 10 closed-ended, multiple choice questions, and was administered on-site at the beginning of the first GUGSY session. The post-program survey had 15 items, 13 of which were closed-ended, multiple choice and 2 open-ended questions. The additional items on the post-program survey related to participant evaluation of the overall experience. Participants completed the post-program survey after conclusion of the GUGSY sessions[16]. There were eight items in common across both surveys, and no identifying information other than school attended for the sessions was collected. The survey was developed and administered online using Qualtrics. Surveys are included in Appendices B and C.

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[16] Students at Hamilton, Milwaukee High School of the Arts, and Vincent did not complete either the pre-program or post-program surveys.

In this section, the results of the pre-program (baseline) survey and post-program survey will be discussed separately. The survey results suggest that students felt more prepared, confident, and knowledgeable about the transition to college and career than they did before.

Responses by survey and school. Across all sites, 65 out of 207 students (31%) in attendance at the first GUGSY sessions completed the pre-program survey at the beginning of the program. At conclusion of the last sessions, 53 of 108 students (49%) in attendance completed the post-program survey.

Bradley Tech had the most survey responses for the pre-program survey with 22 completions, followed by James Madison Academic Campus with 15 completions. Twelve surveys (19%) did not report the school site for the pre-program survey. For the post-program survey, Audubon had the most completions (15), and three other sites each had 9 completions. A similar proportion of missing (no responses) were found for the post-program surveys (20%).

Table 2: Pre- and post- program survey responses by school, 2016

School	Pre-Program Surveys	Post-Program Surveys
Audubon	18	15
Bay View	2	0
Bradley Tech	22	9
Hamilton	0	0
JMAC	15	9
MHSA	0	0
Marshall	0	9
Vincent	0	0
Missing / No response	8	11
TOTAL	**65**	**53**

Number of days attended. Respondents were asked to indicate the number of days they attended the GUGSY sessions only on the post-program survey. Students could indicate one, two, or three days. As seen in Table 3, the most frequent response was three days, the entire length of the program, with 42% of responses. A quarter of students (25%) reported attending two days and

13% reported only 1 day. One in five respondents (20%) did not indicate the number of days attended.

Table 3: Number of Days Attended, 2016

Number of Days	Count	Percentage
One day	7	13%
Two days	13	25%
Three days	22	42%
Missing/no response	11	20%
TOTAL	**53**	**100%**

Prepared for senior year of high school. Students were asked: *How prepared do you feel for your senior year of high school?* As seen in Figure 1, students reported feeling more prepared after GUGSY than at the beginning. Prior to the start of GUGSY sessions, about three in five students (59%, 34 respondents) felt "prepared" or "very prepared" for their senior year of high school. In contrast, four out of five students (80%, 42 respondents) felt "prepared or "very prepared" for their senior year at the end of GUGSY programming.

How prepared do you feel for your senior year of high school?

Pre	40%	40%	19%
Post	21%	42%	38%

■ Not Very Prepared ■ Somewhat Prepared ■ Prepared ■ Very Prepared
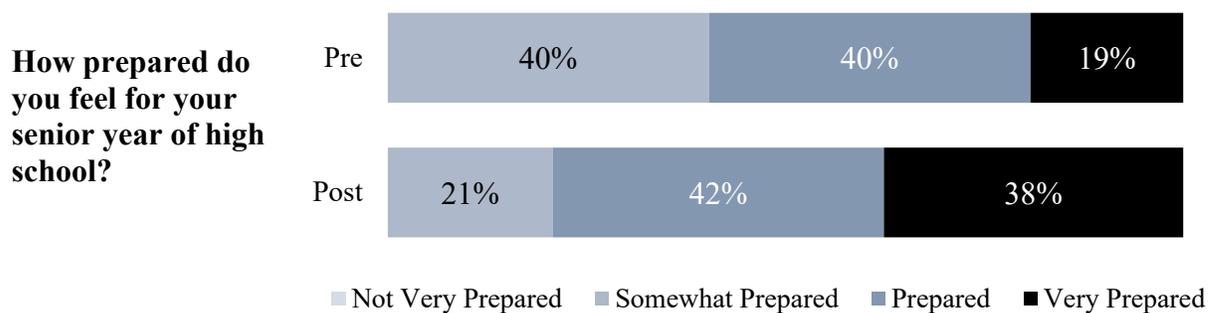
Figure 1: Preparedness for senior year, pre and post-program results

Confidence in doing well in senior year of high school. Students were asked: *How confident are you that you will do well in your senior year?* There was an increase in the level of confidence of students in doing well in senior year from the start to the end of programming. At pre-program, just over half of students (74%, 42 respondents) indicated that they were "confident" or "very confident" that they will do well in their senior year. This grew to nearly seven in eight students

(86%, 43 respondents) at post-program who were "confident" or "very confident" that they will do well in their senior year.

How confident are you that you will do well in your senior year?
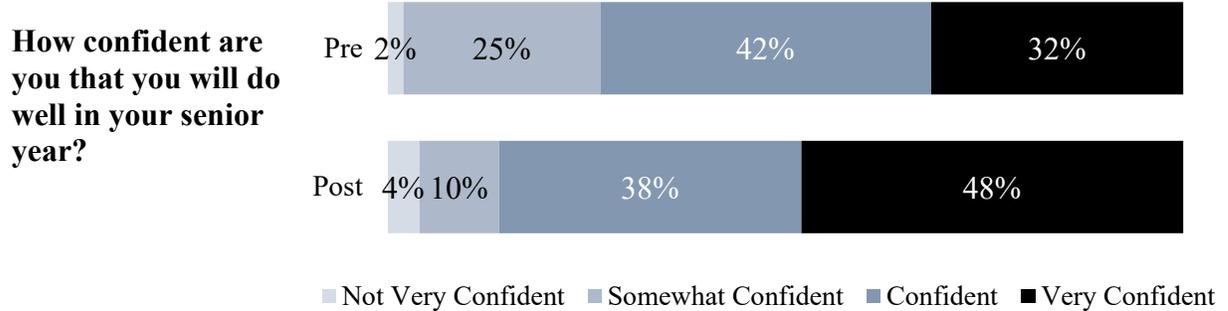
Figure 2: Confidence in doing well in senior year, pre and post-program results

Confidence in successful transition from high school into college. The next survey item asked students to report confidence that they can successfully transition from high school into college. Like the previous items, the level of confidence grew from pre-program to post-program. Just more than half of students (55%, 31 respondents) indicated at pre-program that they were "confident" or "very confident" that they can successfully transition from high school into college. At post-program, two-thirds of students (69%, 36 respondents) reported being "confident" or "very confident" that they can successfully transition from high school into college.

How confident are you that you can successfully transition from high school into college?
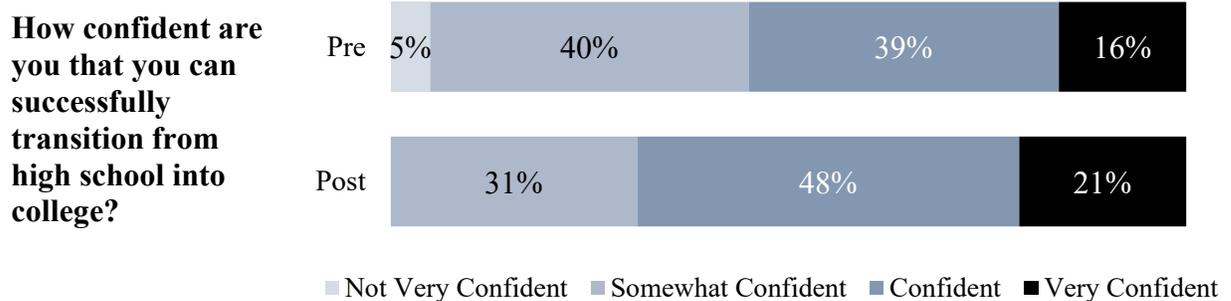

Figure 3: Confidence in successful transition from high school into college, pre and post-program results

Do students have a résumé. Students were asked whether they had a résumé they had created, with response options of "yes", "no", and "not sure." As seen in Table 4, a greater percentage of

students had created a résumé at the end of the program. About one in four respondents (23%) at pre-program responded "yes" that they had a résumé they'd created, while this doubled to just under half (47%) at the end of the program. Reciprocal to this, more than half of students (56%) at the start of the program indicated "no" with a decrease to only a third (32%) at post-program. Additionally, 9% of respondents at pre-survey 9% were not sure if they have a résumé, which increased to 17% at post-program.

Table 4: Do students have a résumé they've created

	Pre-Program Survey		Post-Program Survey	
Response	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Yes	15	23%	25	47%
No	36	56%	17	32%
Not Sure	6	9%	9	17%
No Response	8	12%	2	4%
TOTAL	**65**	**100%**	**53**	**100%**

Confidence that student can create a good résumé. Related to the previous item, students were asked how confident they were that they can create a good résumé. Again, overall confidence grew from pre-program to post-program. Just under half of students (46%, 26 respondents) on the pre-program survey reported being "confident" or "very confident" that they can create a good résumé. At post-program this number increased to just over two in three students (70%, 37 respondents) being "confident" or "very confident" that they can create a good résumé.
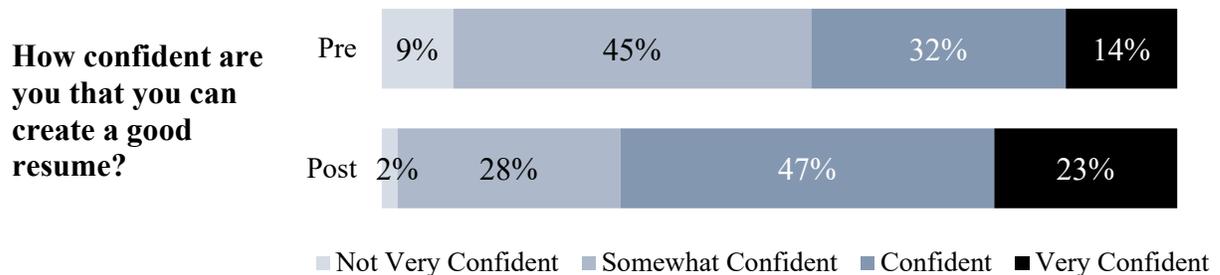

Figure 4: Confidence in ability to create a good résumé, pre and post-program results

The surveys had a block of four items related to perceived knowledge about various aspects of getting into and going to college.

Knowledge about steps to go through to go to college. Students were asked: *Overall, how much do you know about the steps that you have to go through to go to college?* From pre- program to post program survey, student reported knowledge about the steps to go through to go to college showed a large increase. At pre-program, about three in five students (57%, 32 respondents) reported knowing "some" or "a lot" about the overall steps to go through to go to college. This rose to nearly nine in ten students (88%, 46 respondents) at post-program indicating knowing "some" or "a lot" about the overall steps to go through to go to college. See Figure 5.

Overall, how much do you know about the steps that you have to go through to go to college?

Pre	43%	46%	11%
Post	12%	50%	38%

■ Nothing ■ A little ■ Some ■ A lot
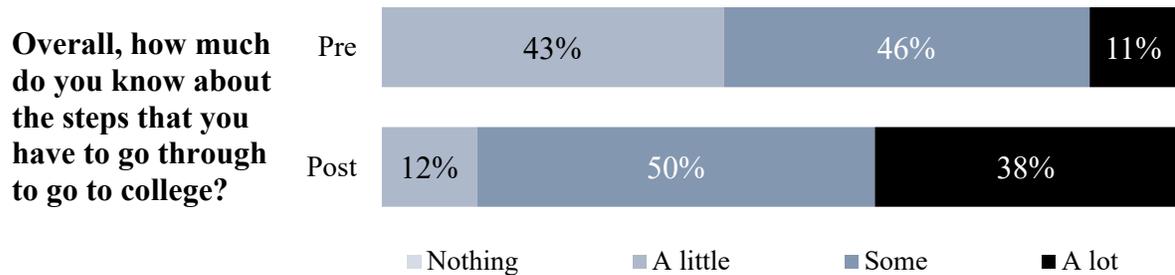
Figure 5: Knowledge about steps to go through to go to college, pre and post-program results

Knowledge about the FAFSA process. Students were asked their level of knowledge related to the FAFSA process, a key early step in going to college. Results from pre- program to post program survey showed a large increase in student reported knowledge about the FAFSA process. One third of students (33%, 19 respondents) reported knowing "some" or "a lot" about the FAFSA process at pre-program. However, just over two out of three students (68%, 36 respondents) at post-program indicated knowing "some" or "a lot" about the FAFSA process. See Figure 6 on the next page.

**Overall, how much do you know about the FAFSA process?**
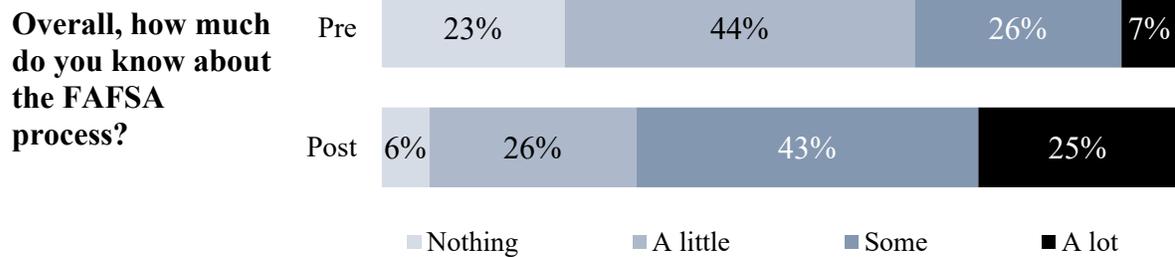
Figure 6: Knowledge about the FAFSA process, pre and post-program results

<u>Knowledge about the UW system application process</u>. Another item asked students about their level of knowledge related to the UW system application process. Post-program survey results were much more than pre-program perceived knowledge of the UW system application process. At pre-program, only about one in four students (23%, 13 respondents) reported knowing "some" or "a lot" about the UW system application process. At post-program, three in four students (75%, 40 respondents) reported knowing "some" or "a lot" about the UW system application process.

Overall, how much do you know about the UW system application process?
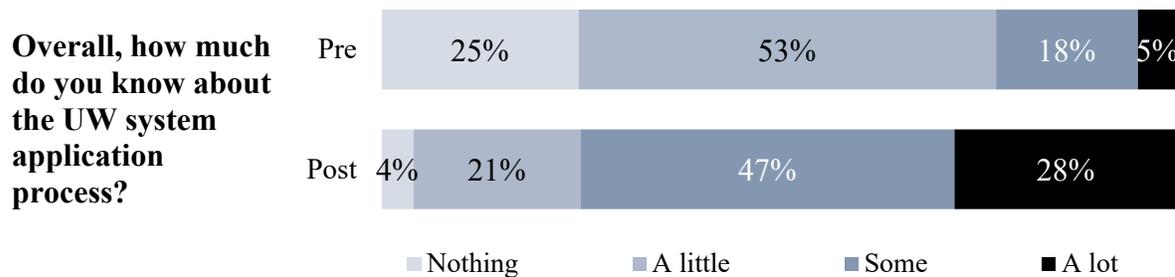
Figure 7: Knowledge about the UW system application process, pre and post-program results

<u>Knowledge about how to get local scholarships</u>. The last knowledge-related item was concerned with level of knowledge about how to get local scholarships. As with the other three knowledge items, there was considerable growth from pre-program to post-program results on this. As seen in Figure 8, just under half of students (38%, 21 respondents) indicated knowing "some" or "a lot" about how to get local scholarships at pre-program. This grew to about four in five students (78%, 41 respondents) knowing "some" or "a lot" about the UW system application process at post-program.

**Overall, how much do you know about how to get local scholarships?**
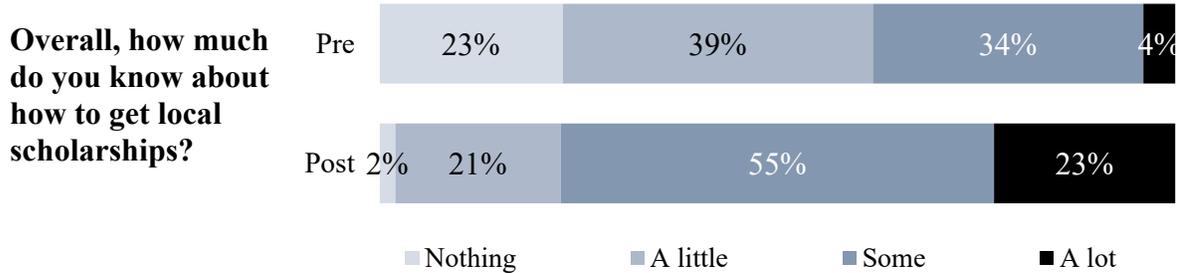
Figure 8: Knowledge about how to get local scholarships, pre and post-program results

Four additional items on the post-program survey only related to the student opinions and experience in the Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year Program in 2016. These results are reported below.

Rating the overall experience attending the GUGSY program. Students were asked to rate their overall experience attending the Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year, with responses ranging from "very poor" to very good." Nine in ten students (91%) reported a positive experience with the GUGSY program ("good" or "very good"). Just over half of the participants (55%) indicated their experience was "very good", while somewhat more than third (36%) indicated their experience was "good". Only 6% reported that the experience was "fair." Only one respondent indicated their experience attending GUGSY was "very poor" (2%), and no respondents selected "poor."

Table 5: Overall experience attending the Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year program, 2016

Response	Count	Percentage
Very Good	29	55%
Good	19	36%
Fair	3	6%
Poor	0	0%
Very Poor	1	2%
No Response	1	2%
TOTAL	**65**	**100%**

How much did the GUGSY program help prepare students for senior year. Students were asked to indicate how much the GUGSY program helped them prepare for their senior year, from "not at all" to "a lot." Responses showed that all participants felt the program helped at some level. Just over half the students (55%) indicated that GUGSY helped them prepare "a lot" for their senior year. Another 38% reported the program helped "some", while an additional 4% identified that the program helped "a little." No students indicated that the program did "not at all" help them prepare for senior year.

Table 6: How much did the Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year program help prepare students for senior year, 2016

Response	Count	Percentage
A lot	29	55%
Some	20	38%
A little	2	4%
Not at all	0	0%
No Response	2	4%
TOTAL	**65**	**100%**

What else would help prepare students for senior year. The first of two open-ended questions asked students: *What else would help you prepare for your senior year?* Of the 53 students who took the post-program survey, 25 students (47%) provided a relevant response to this question. Responses were coded into themes and subthemes (see Table 7).

The three most common themes among responses related to Post-Secondary Planning, Student Actions, and School Staff Support.

Post-Secondary Planning. Two in five respondents (40%) indicated post-secondary planning as an area that they could use help in preparing for their senior year. These responses associate senior year with getting ready for college, and includes assistance in all facets of the post-secondary transition process, including college tours, college applications, college selection, FAFSA, and scholarships.

- The most commonly cited subtheme in post-secondary planning was around the college application process. An example of a response includes: "*learning more about applying to colleges and scholarships.*"
- Another subtheme was having more time for planning. An example of a response was "*having more time to sign up for colleges and apply for scholarships would help me be more prepared for senior year.*"

Student Actions. About a third of respondents (28%) identified Student Actions as an area that could help them prepare for their senior year. More specifically, these responses exemplified students reflecting internally, and involved a change in student behavior(s) that could help them prepare for their senior year. Examples include a change in motivation, increased focus, and developing better habits.

- Two of the most common subthemes were increasing focus and developing better habits. This was encapsulated in a single response: "*having good habits, and staying on task*"
- Additional subthemes under Student Actions indicated by one respondent included: increasing confidence, completing assignments, coping with stress, improving time management, and staying focused.

School Staff Assistance. One in five respondents (20%) reported School Staff Assistance as something that could help them prepare for their senior year. These responses referenced help from staff members as something that could benefit them.

- An example of a subtheme involved supportive staff members. An example of a response was "*Encouraging teachers that take the extra mile to help when asked. Supportive school staff members.*"
- Other singly-identified subthemes under the School Staff Assistance theme are increased counselor input, awareness of support opportunities, and improved outreach from staff.

Table 7: Summary of what else would help prepare students for their senior year[17]

Theme/ Sub Theme	Count	Percentage
Post-Secondary Planning	**13**	**41%**
Financial assistance	4	13%
More time for planning	3	9%
College Selection	2	6%
College Application Process	2	6%
College tours	2	6%
Student Actions	**9**	**28%**
Develop better habits	2	6%
Increased motivation	2	6%
School Staff Assistance	**6**	**19%**
Supportive staff members	3	9%
Supplemental Academic Supports	**2**	**6%**

How to improve the GUGSY program next year. Students were also asked the following open-ended question: *What feedback do you have to improve the program for next year's students?* Out of the 53 students who took this survey, 22 students (42%) provided a relevant response to this question. Responses were coded into themes and subthemes. A listing of themes and sub-themes can be found in Table 8.

The two most common themes among responses related to Program Content and Program Timing.

Program Content. A quarter of respondents (25%) indicated that modification in Program Content would improve GUGSY for next year. This refers to the activities in the GUGSY program.

- An example of a subtheme in program content was to diversify college information presented. An example of this was "*Have more speakers from various colleges that they possibly would be interested in attending.*"

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[17] Subthemes with only one response are not included in Table 6.

- Another example in this subtheme was "*more information about out-of-state colleges."*
- Additional subthemes with only had one comment each are as follows: information on college course selection, information on applying to colleges, including college tours, and including small group activities.

Program Timing. One in eight respondents (12%) provided Program Timing as how they would improve GUGSY for next year. These responses suggest modifying when or for how long the program was offered to improve accessibility and attendance for the following year. An example of this was "*If the program times could be edited to fit the student schedules, I wanted to attend the entire thing…"*

Table 8: Summary of feedback to improve the program for next year's students[18]

Theme/ *Sub Theme*	**Count**	**Percentage**
Program Content	**8**	**27%**
Diversify college information	2	9%
More activities	2	9%
Program Timing	**4**	**18%**
Change scheduling	2	9%
Recruitment and Attendance	**4**	**18%**
Ensure students attend full program	3	14%
Nothing	**5**	**23%**

What was the impact of the GUGSY program?

While the post-program survey results suggested that students felt better prepared for the transition process, this section provides a comparison of items common to both surveys to determine whether the responses are statistically better after participation. When appropriate, responses were converted to numerical values to obtain mathematical averages, and independent two-tailed sample t-tests were conducted to compare outcomes before and after the program. For

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[18] Subthemes with only one response are not included in Table 7.

one item, responses were recoded into dichotomous options, and analyzed using the chi-square test (cross-tab), noted in the text.

The results of independent sample t-tests suggest that student responses were significantly better after the program across most components focus areas.

A limitation on analyses: Because of the anonymous survey process, it is unclear how many students who took the baseline survey also took the post-program survey. It is not clear to what extent these two groups of students are comparable.

Feeling prepared for senior year of high school. Regarding feeling prepared for one's senior year of high school, post-program respondents were significantly more likely to report feeling prepared than respondents in the pre-program survey. As shown in Figure 9, the average rating of preparedness for senior year for pre-program students was 2.8, just below that of "prepared." However, the average rating of preparedness for students on the post-program survey was 3.2, somewhat above the level of "prepared." This was a statistically significant difference ($t(108) = -2.653$, $p=0.009$).
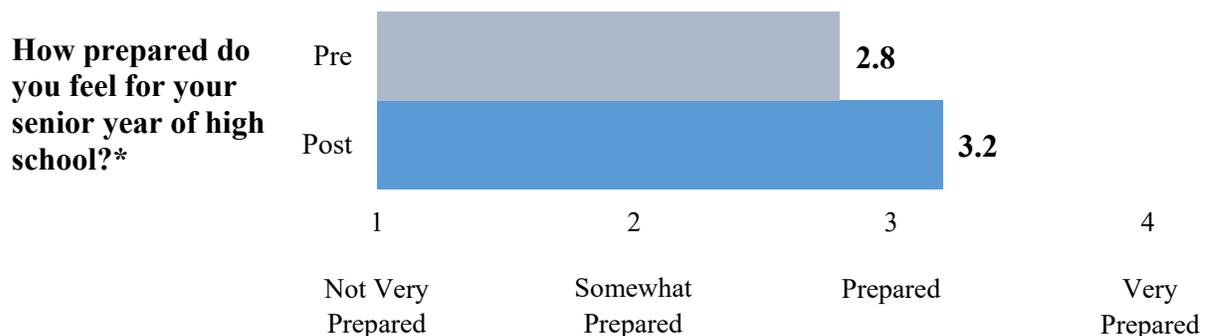

Figure 9: Average preparedness for senior year, pre-program and post program

* Statistically significant difference, $p < 0.05$

The surveys also asked students about their level of confidence related to three different areas of post-secondary transition: doing well in one's senior year, the ability to successfully transition from high school into college, and ability to create a good résumé. Students showed an increase in confidence in all areas, although the only statistically significant difference was found in relation to creation of a résumé.

Confidence in doing well in senior year. Confidence is similar for students who responded to the pre-program and post-program survey related to doing well in one's senior year. For pre-program respondents, the average confidence rating was 3.0, right on the level of "confident." For post-program respondents, the average confidence was somewhat higher at 3.3 – somewhat above "confident." However, the difference was not statistically significant.
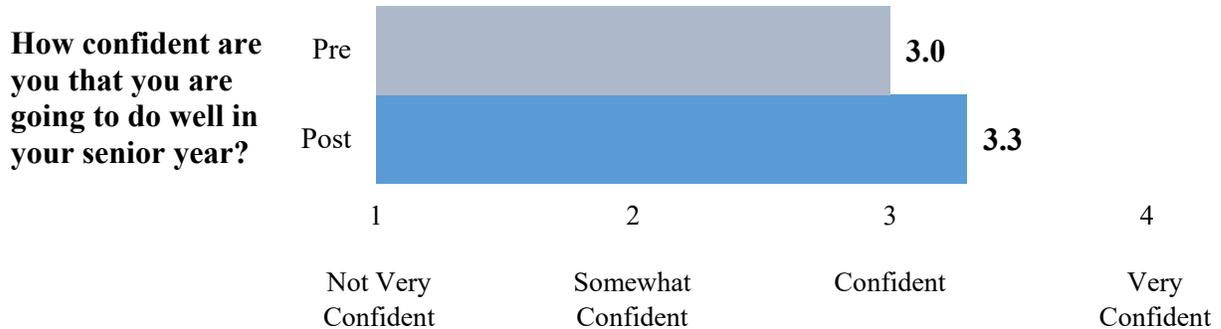
Figure 10: Average confidence to do well in senior year, pre-program and post program

Confidence in successful transition from high school into college. As with the previous comparison, confidence levels are similar between respondents on the pre-program and respondents to the post-program survey. Neither reaches the level of "confident." The average confidence rating for pre-program respondents for successful transition from high school into college was 2.7, midway between "somewhat confident" and "confident." For post program respondents, average somewhat higher at 2.9, still below that of "confident." The difference was not statistically significant.
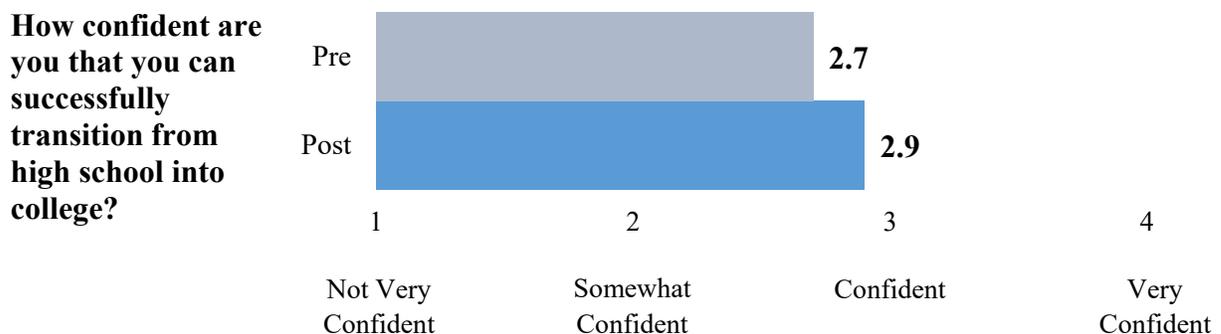

Figure 11: Average confidence in ability to successfully transition from high school into college, pre-program and post program

Confidence in creating a good résumé. Respondents to the post-program survey were more confident than those who responded to the pre-program survey related to the ability to create a good résumé. Pre-program respondents had an average confidence of 2.5 for being able to create a good résumé. This is exactly between "somewhat confident" and "confident." In contrast, post-program respondents had a higher level of confidence at 2.9 – just below that of "confident." This was a statistically significant difference ($t(107) = -2.493$, $p=0.01$).
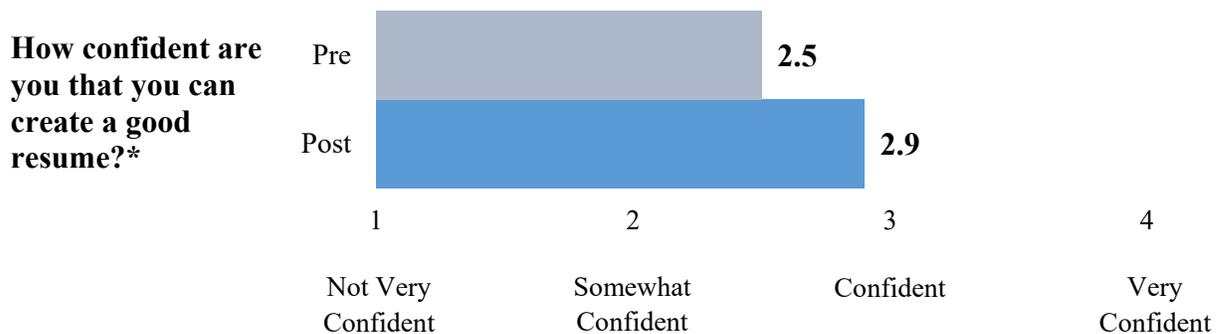

Figure 12: Average confidence in ability to create a good résumé, pre-program and post program

* Statistically significant difference, $p < 0.05$

Experience creating a résumé. In addition to asking about confidence in building a résumé, students were asked to share whether they had created one or not. There was a statistically significant increase in the number of students who indicated having a résumé they created. Prior to the start of the program, one in four students (26%, 15 respondents) indicated they had created a résumé, while almost half (49%, 25 respondents) did so at the end of the program. This was a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2(1)= 5.950$, $p=0.015$).
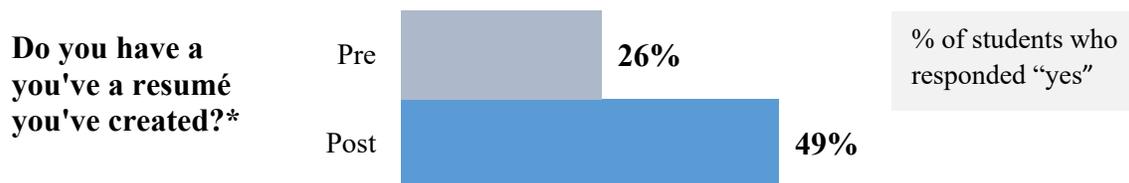

Figure 13: Percentage of students who have created a résumé, pre-program and post-program

* Statistically significant difference, $p < 0.05$

Four items sought to determine the level of knowledge about fours aspects vital to post-secondary transition. These related to the steps necessary to go to college; the FAFSA process; the UW system application process; and how to obtain local scholarships. Statistically significant differences were found between pre-program respondents and post-program respondents for each of the four aspects.

Knowledge of overall steps to go through to go to college. Post-program survey respondents had a significantly higher average knowledge of the overall steps to go through to go to college. As shown, the average knowledge of pre-program respondents on this aspect was 2.7, between knowing "a little" and "some." However, post-program respondents had an average knowledge rating of 3.3, somewhat above the level of "some." This was a statistically significant difference ($t(106) = -4.633$, $p<0.0001$).
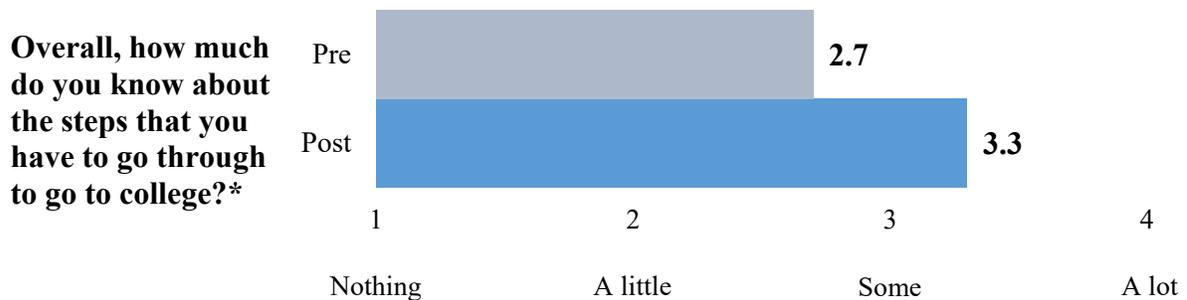
Figure 14: Average knowledge overall of the steps to go through to go to college, pre-program and post program

* Statistically significant difference, $p < 0.05$

Knowledge of the FAFSA process. A significant difference was found related to knowledge of the FAFSA process between pre-program and post-program survey respondents. Post-program survey respondents had a significantly higher average knowledge of the FAFSA process in comparison to pre-program respondents. Average knowledge of this aspect was 2.2 for pre-program respondents. This is only somewhat above "a little" knowledge. In contrast, post-program respondents had an average knowledge rating of 2.9 related to FAFSA, nearly a full category higher ("some" knowledge). This was a statistically significant difference ($t(108)= -4.208$, $p<0.0001$).

How much do you know about the FAFSA process?*

Pre 2.2

Post 2.9

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Nothing | A little | Some | A lot |
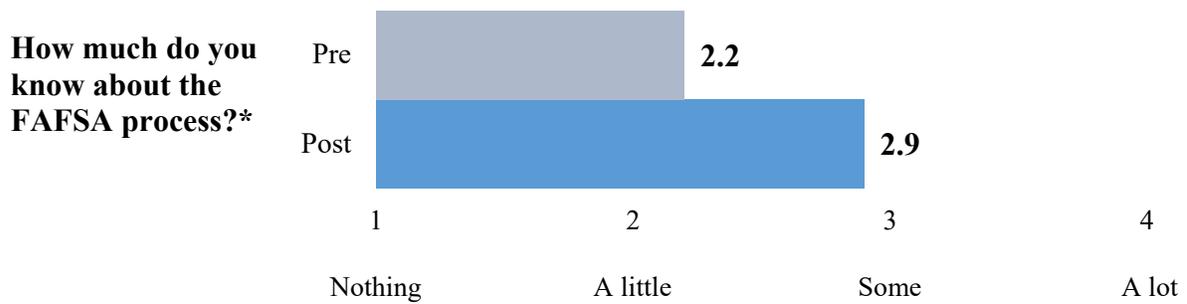
Figure 15: Average knowledge of the FAFSA process, pre-program and post program

*Statistically significant difference, *p* < 0.05

Knowledge of the UW system application process. Post-program survey respondents had a significantly higher average knowledge of the UW system application process than did pre-program respondents. In fact, this was the largest difference found. As shown, pre-program respondents had an average of "a little" knowledge (2.0). Post-program respondents had an average knowledge rating of 3.0, a full point and category higher, at "some" knowledge. This was a statistically significant difference (*t*(108) = -6.284, *p*<0.0001).

How much do you know about the UW system application process?*

Pre 2.0

Post 3.0

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Nothing | A little | Some | A lot |
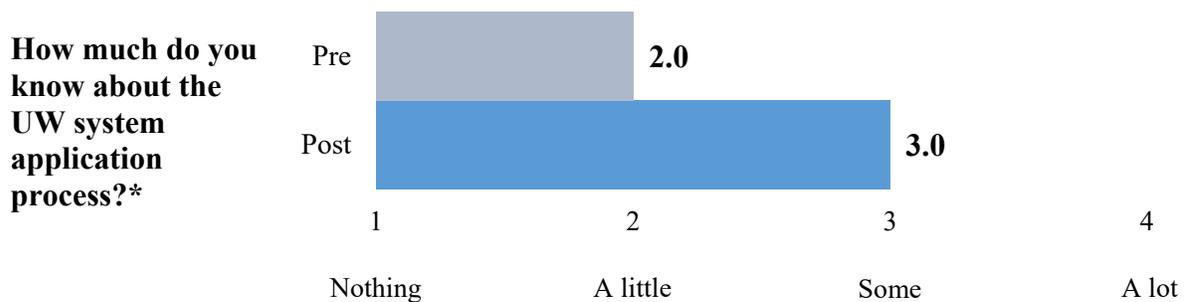
Figure 16: Average knowledge of the UW system application process, pre-program and post program

*Statistically significant difference, *p* < 0.05

Knowledge of how to get local scholarships. The difference between pre-program and post-program respondents on the knowledge related to getting local scholarships was significant. For pre-program respondents, the average knowledge was 2.2, just above that of "a little" knowledge. Post-program respondents, in contrast, had an average knowledge rating of 3.0 on

this aspect, solidly at "some" knowledge. This was a statistically significant difference ($t(106.142) = -5.387$, $p<0.0001$).
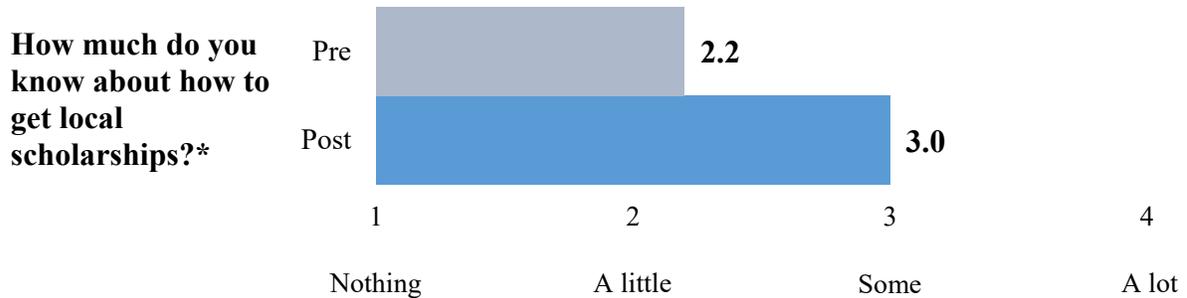

Figure 17: Average knowledge of how to get local scholarships, pre-program and post program
* Statistically significant difference, $p < 0.05$

Conclusions

GUGSY was successfully implemented at all GEAR UP locations. Implementing a program for the first time across multiple locations can be difficult. There were implementation challenges: student preparedness for the program, lack of adult participation, and inconsistency in administration of program content. However, GEAR UP staff did successfully implement the program at every GEAR UP high school. Each program was held on the dates specified, and students at all locations followed the same general outline for the program. It is notable that GEAR UP launched the program at eight different sites, and successfully recruited students to attend during the summer recess.

Through the various methods, the SREed evaluation team were able to confirm that GUGSY delivered the content in each of their four focus areas: résumé building, college applications, college essays, and local scholarships.

- Résumé building activities occurred at each of the observed sites, as students worked with staff members to organize and begin building their résumés. The activities were validated by a significant increase in student confidence in their ability to create a good résumé on the survey.
- Students were also observed receiving information on many different types of college applications systems from their facilitators, with a special emphasis on Milwaukee Area

Technical College, and the UW-System schools. Navigating college applications is an important skill for seniors to learn, and the survey again showed significant increases in knowledge of the steps to go through to go to college, the FAFSA process, and the UW system application process.

- In addition, GUGSY devoted significant time to the college essay process, which is important because the writing process is intensive and time-consuming. The observations confirmed that students spent time developing their college essays at different sites. The need was confirmed through observations; at one site students struggled selecting an essay prompt to begin writing, and at another site it was noted that students had difficulty writing their essays. This section in particular really benefited from staff feedback and assistance, since the process appeared to be the most difficult areas for students to navigate independently.

- It was important for GUGSY to offer a local scholarships focus area. Many students in MPS high schools are economically disadvantaged. Coupled with the rising cost of attending college, the ability to pay for post-secondary education is a serious problem. The GUGSY program discussed many types and options to help students pay necessary costs, as well as programs and scholarships that lower burdensome tuition payments. Students were informed about local scholarship opportunities, as well as programs such as EOP at Marquette or MATC Promise, where students not only get financial assistance, but also academic and social supports as well. At post-program, student knowledge how to get local scholarships increased significantly. The FAFSA process was discussed in a different focus area, but its inclusion also fulfilled the same need for many of the students in MPS.

GUGSY made progress in helping students prepare for their senior year and improve college readiness. The Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year pre-program survey revealed that students in the 2017 GEAR UP cohort had confidence in their ability to transition from high school to college, but they lacked knowledge on the specific steps required for the transition. Based on the difference in survey responses before and after the program, students were more likely to be "confident" or "very confident" that they could successfully transition from high school to college. In addition, more students felt that they knew "a lot" about the steps to transition from high school to college after the program. The post-program survey also suggested that students had increased their knowledge of the steps to go through to go to college, the FAFSA process,

the UW system application process, how to get local scholarships, and their ability to create a good résumé. Finally, most students who took the post-program survey indicated that the program helped "a lot" to prepare them for their senior year. Based on student survey responses, the program succeeded in improving student knowledge in the following focus areas of the program: résumé building, college applications, and local scholarships.

Students enjoyed and benefited from their experiences in GUGSY. Students were asked on the post-program survey to "rate their overall experience attending the Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year Program." After the program, 49 (93%) students said the experience was "good" or "very good". It is a positive finding that students had positive experiences in the first year of the program. The student survey also allowed for open-ended comments. One student commented that the "*program was extremely helpful*." In response to the same question, another student mentioned, in reference to other students, "*I would recommend that they come to all three days cause* (sic) *this really helped me get a start on my senior year*." Lastly, another student talked about the program helping them prepare for their future:

"I will say it was a great experience, it really helped me excel and prepare myself for college and have given me knowledge towards my future and future outlooks on college and where I want to attend at and my future career. Great informative and representative informational videos and applications, and overall great program."

These testimonials in conjunction with the specific question responses demonstrate that attendees perceived the program to be helpful.

Recommendations

Complete pre-program groundwork to prepare students for the program. Some individual components of the program tended to be time-consuming and difficult to do in a group setting with only one adult. Items such as creating a Gmail account and beginning a college essay draft are important in the process of getting ready for college. However, some of these items could be started or completed prior to the program, such as during the prior school year. This could provide students with more time to explore other activities in greater depth, such as FAFSA, the different types of applications, and the scholarship opportunities. GEAR UP might ask participants for information on the registration form, such as a vision statement, or a list of

schools of interest to students for applying. This information could be a relatively quick and easy way to modify the program to best meet student needs, and allow for deeper exploration of other areas.

Recruit more adults to help the students in the program. At some sites, school counselors were alone in conducting and facilitating the program. Sites with multiple staff present could provide more individualized assistance to students. Having co-facilitators at sites would be beneficial to assist in management as well as student questions. If this is not an option, it would be helpful to consider community partners such as businesses, foundations, or universities to provide volunteers to help work with students on some of the more intensive portions of the program, such as drafting college essays. Extra support would also be valuable in answering questions on college applications and college course selection, an area that students indicated they would like to learn more about.

Develop an implementation guide and resource bank for GUGSY. For the counselors who did help facilitate the program, a detailed implementation guide or PowerPoint would help keep content standard across sites, and could help facilitators pace their presentations. When asked how to improve the program next year, some students mentioned they would like to see more organization and better time management included. The existence of a structured presentation would aid in this process, and may help improve student learning outcomes and satisfaction with the program. The development of a "resource bank" could house retrievable and updatable activity instructions and resources online (e.g., links, forms, etc.). This would serve three important purposes: first, students could continue to access the content after the program ends. Secondly, this would allow other schools to be able to create and implement similar programs for their students. Finally, this would allow new staff and supportive staff to implement the program with greater ease year to year.

Appendix A: Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year Theory of Change

ACTIVITIES				OUTCOMES		

ACTIVITIES

Prepare staff

Recruit students

Senior Bridge (3-days) — Content

Resume Building — Resumes

College Applications
- College email
- Letter of rec.
- UW-System Application
- Common App
- MATC Promise
- Tip Grant
- HBCU application
- FAFSA

College Essays
- Google docs
- Email attachments
- College essays by school

Local Scholarships
- Local scholarship opportunities

OUTCOMES

Increased College Readiness

Resume builder

- Gmail account
- ACT re-registration
- Career cruising account
- Common app account
- College applications
- MATC / EOP applications

- Google document
- College essays

Funding sources identified

Students are **prepared for** their **senior year**

Students **successfully transition** from high school **to college** and other **post-secondary plans**

Appendix B: Pre-Program Survey

Intro: We want to know what you learned in the Gearing Up For a Great Senior Year Program, so we are checking to see what you know now, and then to see what you know after. This is NOT a test. There are NO wrong answers. Your answers are confidential. No one will be told what you answered. Your answers will be combined with those of other students in the program, to describe what students think, do, and experience. These connections allow us to understand more about the Gearing Up For a Great Senior Year Program. This survey is voluntary. You do NOT have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer, but we hope you will answer as many questions as you can. Thank you for your help!

Q1 What school are you attending the Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year Program?
- ⚪ Audubon
- ⚪ Bay View
- ⚪ Bradley Tech
- ⚪ Hamilton
- ⚪ Madison (JMAC)
- ⚪ Milwaukee High School of the Arts
- ⚪ Morse Marshall
- ⚪ Vincent

Q2 How prepared do you feel for your senior year of high school?
- ⚪ Not Very Prepared
- ⚪ Somewhat Prepared
- ⚪ Prepared
- ⚪ Very Prepared

Q3 How confident are you that you are going to do well your senior year?
- ⚪ Not Very Confident
- ⚪ Somewhat Confident
- ⚪ Confident
- ⚪ Very Confident

Q4 How confident are you that you can successfully transition from high school into college?
- ⚪ Not Very Confident
- ⚪ Somewhat Confident
- ⚪ Confident
- ⚪ Very Confident

Q5 Do you have a résumé that you've created?
- ⚪ Yes
- ⚪ No
- ⚪ Not Sure

Q6 How confident are you that you can create a good résumé?
- ○ Not Very Confident
- ○ Somewhat Confident
- ○ Confident
- ○ Very Confident

Q7 How much do you know about how to get local scholarships?
- ○ Nothing
- ○ A Little
- ○ Some
- ○ A Lot

Q8 Overall, how much do you know about the steps that you have to go through to go to college?
- ○ Nothing
- ○ A Little
- ○ Some
- ○ A Lot

Q9 How much do you know about the FAFSA process?
- ○ Nothing
- ○ A Little
- ○ Some
- ○ A Lot

Q10 How much do you know about the UW system application process?
- ○ Nothing
- ○ A Little
- ○ Some
- ○ A Lot

Appendix C: Post-Program Survey

Intro: We want to know what you learned in the Gearing Up For a Great Senior Year Program. This is NOT a test. There are NO wrong answers. Your answers are confidential. No one will be told what you answered. Your answers will be combined with those of other students in the program, to describe what students think, do, and experience. These connections allow us to understand more about the Gearing Up For a Great Senior Year Program. This survey is voluntary. You do NOT have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer, but we hope you will answer as many questions as you can. Thank you for your help!

Q1 What school did you attend the Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year Program?
- ○ Audubon
- ○ Bay View
- ○ Bradley Tech
- ○ Hamilton
- ○ Madison (JMAC)
- ○ Milwaukee High School of the Arts
- ○ Morse Marshall
- ○ Vincent

Q2 How many days did you attend the program?
- ○ One day
- ○ Two days
- ○ Three days

Q3 How prepared do you feel for your senior year of high school?
- ○ Not Very Prepared
- ○ Somewhat Prepared
- ○ Prepared
- ○ Very Prepared

Q4 How confident are you that you are going to do well your senior year?
- ○ Not Very Confident
- ○ Somewhat Confident
- ○ Confident
- ○ Very Confident

Q5 How confident are you that you can successfully transition from high school into college?
- ○ Not Very Confident
- ○ Somewhat Confident
- ○ Confident
- ○ Very Confident

Q6 Do you have a résumé that you've created?

○ Yes
○ No
○ Not Sure

Q7 How confident are you that you can create a good résumé?

○ Not Very Confident
○ Somewhat Confident
○ Confident
○ Very Confident

Q8 How much do you know about how to get local scholarships?

○ Nothing
○ A Little
○ Some
○ A Lot

Q9 Overall, how much do you know about the steps that you have to go through to go to college?

○ Nothing
○ A Little
○ Some
○ A Lot

Q10 How much do you know about the FAFSA process?

○ Nothing
○ A Little
○ Some
○ A Lot

Q11 How much do you know about the UW system application process?

○ Nothing
○ A Little
○ Some
○ A Lot

Q12 How would you rate your overall experience attending the "Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year" program?

○ Very Poor
○ Poor
○ Fair
○ Good
○ Very Good

Q13 How much did "Gearing Up for a Great Senior Year" help prepare you for your senior year?

○ Not At All
○ A Little
○ Some
○ A Lot

Q14 What else would help you prepare for your senior year?

Q15 What feedback do you have to improve the program for next year's students?