



GEAR UP Conference

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GEAR UP Staff: Morehna, Bollie, Amber and Nora

Good Learning Experience

2011 GEAR UP Annual Conference in San Francisco this past July gathered over a thousand people working on GEAR UP Programs across the United States and other countries. The underlying theme of the conference was “Unlocking Potential: Bridge to the Future”, which is what GEAR UP is about—unlocking potential of GEAR UP students that may not be unleashed otherwise. The majority of GEAR UP students have difficulties navigating their education and planning for their future. They may not have the skills necessary to become a determined and successful young man or woman who will pursue life goals and “go the distance”. GEAR UP is here for these students. It gives them insight, knowledge and the determination. More importantly, it supports students through all their ups and

downs, otherwise known as the teen years.

The Annual Conference participants included all GEAR UP staff and two GEAR UP site coordinators – Primo Loyola from Nett Elementary School and Loriano Martin from Sekere Elementary School. All participants had an opportunity to identify and learn new strategies for work related to GEAR UP Program. The participants had a great chance to share their individual experiences with colleagues from other programs and to learn from each other. The directors of the program had an opportunity to learn how to assess GEAR UP program’s performance, how to secure the “match”, which is a requirement for GEAR UP pro-

gram—to secure in-kind and cash contributions from local resources that will 100% match the federal funding.

The program coordinators learned to refine educational strategies by creating informal afterschool learning environments that foster student-teacher collaboration.

The student service specialists learned about student support systems.

Overall, the conference was a great inspirational experience. It encouraged and motivated the participants to remain committed to the moral of education even in the times of radical budgetary cuts. People shouted that “ignorance will cost more”.

INSIDE:

- **Securing the “match”**
- **Educational strategies for the best student outcomes**
- **Parental involvement—critical for student academic outcomes**
- **“Bullying”**

Application of Lessons Learned

Nora: “Securing the “match” is one of the biggest challenges for GEAR UP Pohnpei Program. Therefore, I tried to discuss about it with as many participants as I could to learn from their extensive experience. I picked the idea of the Development Board—a body that is in charge of fundraising and securing the “match” for GEAR UP. The establishment of this Board will be one of my follow-up actions.”

Amber: “Designing a program that students want to attend, staff can support, and one that creates positive academic, emotional, and physi-

cal outcomes is my number one priority.”

Morehna: “I gained valuable information on student support systems. I learned that parental and community involvement is critical for students to stay on track and to succeed in their educational goals. Therefore, I will work to increase such involvement within GEAR UP counseling component. I will work on improving students attendance through fostering positive relationship and connecting students to school life.”

Primo: “I learned a lot about the phenomenon of “bullying” - when one student teases, frightens other students who are not able to defend themselves and start skipping classes. This phenomenon is very common across the schools in Pohnpei. I learned how to prevent “bullying” and I will try to apply the lessons at Nett Elementary School”

Loriano: “I learned that parental involvement is a key factor in child’s education success. At Sekere Elementary School, I will work on increasing parental involvement.”