

# BACK TO SCHOOL...BUT DIFFERENTLY

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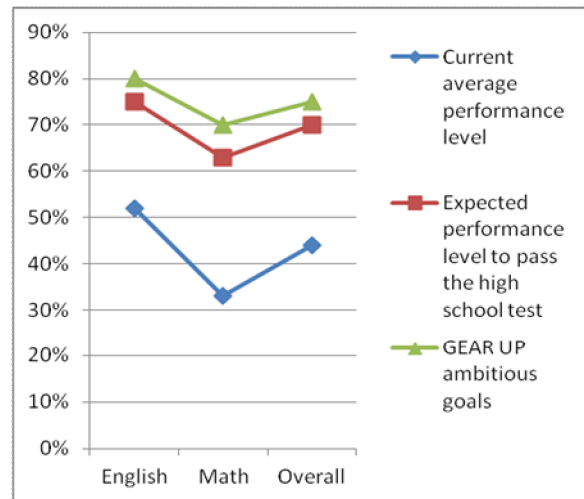
## GEAR UP PROGRAM

### PICS High School Entrance Pre-Test

In order to assist, one needs to know how to assist. This is why GEAR UP 2-hour after school program, which was launched on August 29th, started with the practice of the high school entrance test, PICS practice test. The test was created by teachers at Kolonia Elementary School and modified for the GEAR UP after-school program. The test practice was conducted in order to start preparing students for the test-taking environment and their awaiting high school entrance test in May 2012. The test practice was meant to identify students' strengths, weaknesses, and improvement areas in English and math as well as their sub-components, such as comprehension, writing for English, and algebra, statistics for math. The identification of weaknesses and areas of improvement will help the GEAR UP after-school program to design its curriculum to better address students' needs in math and English. It will also help the program to design Individual Action Plans (IAP) for each student.

The test practice served as an assessment, as to where our students are at the outset of the program and what needs to be achieved by the end of this school year. The results show that a tremendous work needs to be done. Out of 400 tested students from 6 GEAR UP target schools, only 16 students would have passed the test, if it was the real high school entrance test. The graph reveals that, currently, the average English performance level is at 52%, and math at 33%. It is estimated that in order to pass the high school entrance test, the average English performance level should be at 75%, and math at 63%. Therefore, the increase that should be achieved by the end of this school year should be of 23% in English, and 30% in math, which, obviously, poses big challenges and requires very hard work and dedication. In scores, these percentages would mean that the students are ex-

pected to get at least 45 correct answers out of 60 possible in the English part and at least 25 right answers out of 40 possible in the math part. The average scores show that most of students will need to get 14 more right answers in the English part and 12 more right answers in the math part. This would be just sufficient to pass the high school entrance test, while GEAR UP would like to see better than just passing level results. This will require very hard work of GEAR UP staff and teachers.



PICS test practice results and observations

#### Parents support GEAR UP program: Refreshments for after-school program

GEAR UP students have a big workload. They attend the regular classes and participate in the GEAR UP after-school program. It is not easy to keep focus for so many hours. To ensure that students participate in the after-school program and stay focused, one great initiative was supported by parents—the after-school refreshment program. GEAR UP parents provide snacks, such as bananas, soup, and donuts so that their children are not with empty stomachs and can effectively participate in the program. GEAR UP staff wishes to kindly thank parents and schools that support this initiative.



Parent in-kind contributions for GEAR UP after-school program: refreshment initiative



Students organizing their own binders

#### Study Skills—Important!!!

Studies and practice have shown that good study skills greatly improve student academic outcomes. Good study skills include good note-taking techniques, efficient managing of time, organization of studying materials such as notes, handouts, tests and similar skills. This September, GEAR UP students started learning how to study, organize their things, manage their time and homework, and learn basic skills that will prepare them for a successful future.

In this regard, GEAR UP students are participating in the Study Skills club. Collaborative efforts of GEAR UP Parents and GEAR UP staff, allowed providing students with organized binders that include dividers for each subject, sheet protectors, labels, and lined note-paper. Students, now, can organize their notes, according to the subject area, and make sure that important notes and tests are ready for reference. So, no more questions like 'Where is your homework?' - Oh, I don't know. It's somewhere in my bag +

#### Find answers:

- What high school entrance test practice shows?
- Why study skills are important?
- Relationship between studying and empty stomach.