

The external evaluation is a longitudinal design that spans seven years and follows a cohort model. There are five key cohort groups in the study:

- The **class of 2024 GEAR UP cohort** includes students at the six GEAR UP districts to whom services were provided.
- The **matched comparison cohort** consists of a statistically matched sample of students who are attending similar districts that did not participate in GEAR UP. These students are

related to Algebra I completion in Grade 8. However, students who participated only in Grade 8 may have differed from their counterparts in important ways. For example, students who moved between Grade 7 and Grade 8 may have had family members with job changes or other disruptions that may have affected their ability to succeed in school. In addition, enrolling in Algebra I often occurs at the end of Grade 7. If students were not in a GEAR UP campus in Grade 7, they may not have received encouragement to enroll in the course.

- **This report focuses on short-term outcomes that are very specific and measurable.** Predictors used in the analyses were also measurable (e.g., gender, economic status). Other variables that may also have an impact on outcomes may not be measurable, such as student motivation and family structure. Some of the GEAR UP activities that occurred in Grades 7 and 8 may not be associated with outcomes to date but may eventually be associated with the longer-term goals of the program including enrolling in and attending a postsecondary educational institution.

Recommendations

- **Ensure an adequate number of Grade 9 students are enrolled in Algebra I and provide academic supports as needed to meet the Grade 9 Algebra I completion goal.** Improving Algebra I completion is a goal for GEAR UP through Grade 9. Project Objective 1.1 sets a target of 85% Algebra I completion by the end of Grade 9. Because the majority of districts did not meet the Grade 8 target of 30%, many districts will have some extra catching up to do to meet the goal. Districts should consider ensuring that an adequate number of students are enrolled in the course and should consider providing academic supports, such as tutoring and offering extra resources, to ensure that, once enrolled, students successfully complete Algebra I by the end of Grade 9.
- **Sustain increases in Algebra I completion in Grade 8.** Despite missing the target of 30% Algebra I completion by the end of Grade 8, there was a significant increase in completion of Algebra I in GEAR UP districts once the program began. Sustaining the practices that caused the increase could lead to lasting improvements in Algebra I completion that can be observed in future reports by analyzing the results of the follow-on cohorts.
- **Consider Algebra I completion as a factor when selecting comparison districts in future studies.** There was a large amount of variation in Algebra I completion by district for students at both the GEAR UP campuses and in the matched comparison group. Some of these differences in Algebra I completion may have been due to differences in