



school. TEA also partnered with TNTP, a non-profit organization, to implement various PD components of the grant.³

Evaluation of Texas GEAR UP



find test preparation resources compared to priority cohort Grade 10 and Grade 12 parents.

- **Advising services.** As students progressed through high school, topics discussed in one-on-one advising sessions expanded to include more postsecondary-education-related topics such as college applications and college plans or interests. Students reported being *Satisfied* with their advising sessions. As in past years, among students and parents who did not participate in one-on-one advising, the most common reason for not participating was a lack of awareness that the meetings were offered.
- **College and career readiness activities.** College visits, college and career fairs, summer programming, and work-based learning activities continued to be offered in Year 5. Overall, student and parent survey respondents and site visit participants were generally *Satisfied* with each of the activities in which they participated. Participants noted that challenges with staffing the non-profit advisor position within the district, transportation for off-site activities, and a lack of availability of college tours at trade schools affected the district's abilities to implement programming in Year 5. Across the college and career exploration initiatives, students and parents reported the most common reason they did not participate was that they were unaware the activity was being offered.
- **Parent activities.** Parent events mainly focused on Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion, different types of college options, and the availability of college and career advising, as reported by site visit participants and/or survey respondents. As with other college and career exploration initiatives, parent survey respondents cited a lack of awareness about family events being offered as the primary reason for not participating.
- **PD and vertical teaming initiatives.** TNTP provided individualized support to districts, with a specific focus on academic rigor. In Year 5, TNTP's strategy shifted to a systems-based approach. Overall, personnel survey respondents had positive perceptions of the PD and coaching/mentoring they received. Respondents *Agreed* the PD provided strategies that increased rigor and were easy to implement. Respondents also *Agreed* the coaching/mentoring helped them to increase the rigor in their courses. Alternatively, while participants generally *Agreed* that the vertical teaming they participated in helped to align curriculum and reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level, 13% of respondents disagreed with this notion.
- **Sustainability initiatives.** Participating districts reported efforts to sustain GEAR UP initiatives for the follow-on cohort in middle schools, specifically focusing on continuing to offer Algebra I in Grade 8 and providing individual advising. Although site visit participants reported offering these initiatives, some initiatives were adapted to support sustainability, such as broadening the scope of individual advising or using a different college and career course curriculum.
- **Statewide financial aid initiatives.** The Texas law that went into effect in the 2020-21 school year required Grade 12 students to complete a FAFSA, a Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA), or an opt-out form in order to graduate from high school. The most widely used resources to support completion of this requirement, as reported



by district respondents to a statewide survey administered by ICF, were the Federal Student Aid website and the ApplyTexas Counselor Suite. Respondents were generally satisfied with the financial aid resources they used in the 2022–23 school year. Participants noted the need for additional resources for families in other languages,



that students may not be prepared for ² or understand ² the benefits of such courses. Emphasizing the expectations of students in dual credit courses along with the benefits of enrollment may support increased success among participating students.



