

PA State

GEAR UP



...for life!

The Excel-erator

College Prep Issue

SUMMER 2007

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Attention parents/guardians of 9th to 12th graders in the Harrisburg School District! Do you have questions about your son or daughter's college education? Get all the answers this summer when you attend sessions with PA State GEAR UP and Collegiate Counseling Services' La'Tanya George.

A complete list of session topics follows below. If you would like more information, contact La'Tanya at 717-497-9644 or e-mail her at collegeprepforparents@comcast.net.

The following Thursday sessions are scheduled for 6:00—7:00 p.m. John Harris High School Auditorium

July 12	Introduction to College Planning and Preparation
July 19	College Selection and Admissions
July 26	Financial Aid
August 2	SAT and ACT Programs
August 9	NCAA Clearinghouse
August 16	Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
August 23	Scholarships, Grants and Loans
August 30	Tax and Other Incentive Programs



Harrisburg GEAR UP student will attend Youth Leadership Summit in San Francisco

Tracy Hogans, a Harrisburg High School junior, has been selected to attend the Fifth Annual National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) Youth Leadership Summit July 21-25 in San Francisco.

"I am very honored to have received this award, as well as extremely excited," said Hogans. "I am ready to take the next step in my leadership development, and I look forward to being with other young intellectuals from all over the world who have a desire to give back to their community."

Hogans was selected in a competitive application process based on academic achievement, leadership experience, a personal essay and letters of recommendation. A GEAR UP student since 7th grade, Hogans has participated in the Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) for the last two years.



Tracy Hogans (right) with her teacher and mentor Melissa Hogg

Youth Leadership Academy students counsel 8th graders about college and careers

By Rebecca Mercado
University Coordinator

“Before you all came, I thought high school would be just like now, and I could just slide by, but now I see it’s going to be hard, and I’m going to have to work hard if I want to get ahead!”

That was just one of the many comments from 8th graders at Rowland Intermediate School, Harrisburg, after presentations by Youth Leadership Academy (LYA) students on May 30, 2007. Seven Sci-Tech and Harrisburg High School students presented a skit and slide show entitled “How to Make the Most of High School for a Successful Future.”

“The audiences were very interested in what their older peers had to say,” remarked learning-support teacher Eileen Zanderzuk. Teacher Tarina Fields agreed, stating that “it allows students to hear information from students they can relate to.”

The presentations began with a skit portraying the issue of peer pressure and how it can undermine a student’s commitment to preparing for college during high school. Then a slide show highlighted the importance of beginning early to take appropriate courses in high school, keeping up grades and attendance, and getting to know your counselor.

Many postsecondary options were presented, such as two and four-year colleges, trade schools, business schools, and the military. Finally,

YLA members distributed PHEAA materials to help the 8th graders get started thinking about college and careers.

Review questions kept the 8th graders engaged to the very end. The audience had many questions for their presenters. Teachers felt the session was beneficial but should have been longer.

“Students should have had more time to speak and elaborate,” offered one teacher. “My students still had many questions after the students left.”

Presenters emphasized taking responsibility, keeping up with assigned work, and starting to think about their future and how to be successful. YLA presenters were Destini Hodges, Tracy Hogans, Dionna Jenkins, Ellen Ortega, Jerica Thomas, Jazzmyne Walker, and Shanon Watts.



Hogans attends Youth Leadership Summit

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The Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) is a program designed by University GEAR UP Coordinator Rebecca Mercado and Harrisburg GEAR UP Coordinator Sandra Patsolic and administered at Shippensburg University and Harrisburg School District. PHEAA, who sponsors YLA, will provide funds for Hogans and her teacher/mentor Melissa Hogg to attend the Summit.

Hogans’ essay entry in the Youth Leadership Summit competition articulates her view of the importance of education. She asserts that “in order for students to succeed in life, they have to accept that ignorance can get you nowhere and that education can take you anywhere.”

“Tracy’s enthusiasm and love for learning come across very strongly when you talk to her about education and when you read the articles that she writes,” said Patsolic. “She will bring valuable insight to the discussions that she will take part in at the Summit.”

Hogans plans to attend college after graduation and is considering a major in English or sociology.



Paddy's Page

...a message from PA State GEAR UP
Coordinator Patricia Garcia



The time has arrived for the first PA State GEAR UP cohort students to enter their final year in high school. These seniors, who entered seventh grade in 2002, are about to embark upon this very important time in their academic lives. The GEAR UP staff is prepared to guide them through this time with college and career mentoring, assistance with applications, and of course GEAR UP Scholarships. Any student who graduates from a PA State GEAR UP high school, is under 21 years old, is accepted to a PA postsecondary institution, and has financial need, qualifies for a GEAR UP Scholarship. These scholarships contribute toward the cost of attendance for at least four years of a student's college education. Check **Page 6 of this issue** for the application.

The PA State System of Higher Education's fourteen universities are excited for our students to apply to System schools. All have committed Board of Governors' (BOGs) tuition waivers to students who qualify. With Pell Grants, PA State Grants, BOGs, and GEAR UP scholarships, our students graduating from Harrisburg and Philadelphia PA State GEAR UP schools have the opportunity of a lifetime to attend college without financial burden.

This is the school year that we have been anxiously anticipating since 2002. Our university coordinators, early intervention coordinators and direct services coordinators have passionately worked to prepare our students for their futures beyond high school, and we applaud them for creating this college going culture within our schools.

2007-2008 SAT and ACT Schedule

SAT Test Dates	Registration Deadlines
October 6, 2007	September 10, 2007
November 3, 2007	October 2, 2007
December 1, 2007	October 30, 2007
January 26, 2008	December 26, 2007
March 1, 2008*	January 29, 2008
May 3, 2008	April 1, 2008
June 7, 2008	May 6, 2008

ACT Test Dates	Registration Deadlines
September 15, 2007	August 10, 2007
October 27, 2007	September 21, 2007
December 8, 2007	November 2, 2007
February 9, 2008	January 4, 2008
April 12, 2008	March 7, 2008
June 14, 2009	May 9, 2008

* SAT only. All other dates are SAT and Subject Tests

Completing the FAFSA

What is the FAFSA?

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the first step to determining if you qualify for “free money” awards like state and federal grants, scholarships, and work study programs or low-cost student loans .

You should submit the FAFSA as soon as you can after **January 1, 2008**. However, the deadline to be considered for Pennsylvania State Grants and scholarship programs is **May 1, 2008**.

DON'T FORGET: YOU MUST COMPLETE THE FAFSA TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE GEAR UP SCHOLARSHIP

How do I apply?

The fastest way to apply is online. FAFSA on the web at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/> offers built-in assistance as you complete the application. You also get information regarding your eligibility more quickly.

If you are unable to apply online, you can get a paper application from:

- High school counselor's office or your GEAR UP Direct Services Coordinator (DSC)
- Financial Aid Office of any higher education institution
- The U. S. Department of Education by calling 1-800-433-3243

What family information do I need to apply?

Before you and your parents begin completing the FAFSA, collect the necessary documents:

- Your Social Security Number
- Your driver's license number, if you have one
- Your W-2 forms
- Your federal income tax return
- Your current bank statements and records of stocks, bonds and other investments
- Your records of untaxed income received, such as a Social Security, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), welfare or veteran's benefits
- Your business or farm records, if applicable
- Your alien registration number, if you are not a U.S. citizen
- If you are a dependent student, you will also need:
 - ⇒ Your parent(s)' Social Security Number
 - ⇒ Your parent(s)' income and financial records (as listed above)

Use income records for the calendar year prior to the academic year for which you are applying for financial aid. For example, use 2007 income information to complete the 2008-09 FAFSA.

What happens next?

One to three weeks after you apply, the federal government will send you a **Student Aid Report (SAR)** or provide you access to your electronic SAR. The SAR informs you and the schools to which you are applying of your **Expected Family Contribution (EFC)**. **You must provide names of the schools to which you are applying when completing the FAFSA.**

The EFC formula established by law is used to determine the amount of federal grants, loans or work-study awards for which you are eligible.

Information for article excerpted from www.PHEAA.org. Used by permission.

Financial Aid packages



After you have completed the FAFSA and your Student Aid Report (SAR) is determined, your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) will be sent to the Pennsylvania colleges or universities to which you apply. Each institution's Financial Aid Office will create a financial aid package with any scholarships that you are awarded, and loans and grants for which you are eligible.

Below is an **EXAMPLE** of a financial aid package for a freshman student accepted to a Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

COSTS (On Campus) Tuition, fees, room, meals, personal expenses, transportation, books	\$16,814
EFC (Estimated Family Contribution from the FAFSA form)	500
NEED (Cost minus EFC)	16,314
SAMPLE FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE	
FEDERAL PELL GRANT	3,860
FEDERAL SEOG (Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant)	800
ESTIMATED PENNSYLVANIA STATE GRANT	3,800
ESTIMATED CORE PHILLY SCHOLARSHIP * (Philadelphia Only)	3,000
PA STATE GEAR UP SCHOLARSHIP *	3,450
TOTAL FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE	\$14,910

* There is an application process for these scholarships. See the PA State GEAR UP Direct Services Coordinator at your school to learn more. Contact information is on Page 10 of this newsletter.

PA State GEAR UP Scholarship Program

Think you can't afford college? Think again!

If you are planning to go to a Pennsylvania college or university, you are probably eligible for a GEAR UP scholarship. All you need to do is complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA—available January 1, 2008) and see your PA State GEAR UP direct services coordinator (DSC) for information about what you need to do to receive your scholarship.

See page 10 of this newsletter to find out how to contact your school's PA State GEAR UP Direct Services Coordinator (DSC).



**PENNSYLVANIA STATE GEAR UP SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION
and INFORMATION RELEASE FORM**

Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs

As a participant in the PA GEAR UP program, the undersigned student (which includes the student's parent or legal guardian if the student is under 18 years of age) may be eligible for financial grant(s) through PASSHE and/or PHEAA when the student attends a federal Title IV eligible post-secondary school in Pennsylvania. In compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), by completing and signing this form, the student authorizes PASSHE, PHEAA, the student's participating PA State GEAR UP secondary school, the Pennsylvania college(s) or school(s) that the student lists on his/her Free Application for Federal Student Aid or in which the student enrolls, and banking institutions (in order to facilitate the processing of any financial grant(s)), to share personally identifiable information, including the student's Social Security number, academic records, records of PA State GEAR UP participation, and any other information necessary for the administration of the Pennsylvania State GEAR UP scholarship and coordination of financial aid and support services. This authorization includes allowing PASSHE and PHEAA (i) to access and review any application for financial aid made by the student; and (ii) to alert staff at Pennsylvania colleges and universities about the student's participation in AP State GEAR UP so he/she can receive all of the financial aid and support services for which the student is eligible. The student understands that only authorized officials of the above-named entities will be allowed access to the student's personally identifiable/confidential information. The student gives his/her permission to PASSHE and PHEAA to use photographs, slides, moving pictures, or television tapes of the student, as needed for public relations and marketing purposes as related to the PA State GEAR UP program. This may include posting pictures to the PA State GEAR UP, PASSHE and/or PHEAA website(s).

The student understands that the receipt of a PA State GEAR UP scholarship is contingent upon completing all of the requirements of PA State GEAR UP students and is subject to certain income eligibility requirements based on the student's family income at the time of application for the scholarship. The student understands that receipt of a full or partial PA State GEAR UP scholarship is contingent upon the availability of scholarship funds. In the event sufficient funds are not available to provide full scholarships to all eligible PA State GEAR UP students, the funds will be allocated among eligible students based on financial need and other criteria to be established by PHEAA. ***The undersigned certifies (certify) that the information herein is true and correct to the best of his/her knowledge, information and belief.***

ONLY STUDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 NEED PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURES.

Student Name: _____ Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Student Social Security #: _____ Parent/Guardian Address: _____

Student Date of Birth: _____

High School: _____

Year of Graduation: _____

Student E-mail Address: _____ Phone number: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

If student is under 18 years old, Parent/Guardian Signature:

_____ Date: _____



John Harris Students Vie For Their “15 Minutes of Fame”

By Sandra Patsolic
Harrisburg School District GEAR UP Coordinator

Fifteen signature time slots appear on the John Harris High School’s counselor office and library doors; 11th grade students realize that they need to sign up quickly or risk the chance to meet with the PA State GEAR UP staff at Harrisburg School District for “fifteen minutes of fame” that week.

In this case, “fame” means the opportunity for a 15 minute college counseling session with GEAR UP staff....one to one! Direct Services Coordinator Nathan Grimwood who meets with students remarked, “The talks seem to make the students feel comfortable knowing they have someone helping them prepare for the future. They are getting upset when the sign-in sheets are filled before they have had a chance to sign their names to a slot.”

This is wonderful news to me and Shippensburg University Coordinator Becky Mercado, because we have incorporated a new SAT and college prep plan for all interested 11th graders in the Harrisburg School District. Collegiate Counseling Services’ La’Tanya George designed the “Fifteen Minutes of Fame” sessions as well as the SAT prep courses.

John Harris students are not the only students to benefit from the sessions; Direct Services Coordinators Diane Hasan and Nathan Grimwood visit with 11th grade students biweekly at Sci Tech High, CTA and William Penn ACTS. Students are encouraged to sign up for these sessions regularly in order to understand the entire college application process. GEAR UP staff, armed with laptops, teach the students, who in turn instruct their parents in searching for college access information and SAT prep sessions via computer.

Sci Tech Counselor Nate Martin remarks, “Students get ‘face time’ with someone who helps to get the college process going – a process called ‘The 11th grade interview’ at Sci Tech High.” John Harris Counselor Deb Waters agrees with Nate and adds, “This intervention helps counselors tremendously because when students become seniors, they are already aware of what needs to be done, and they have a contact person.”

Ms. George tells the students, “This year and the preparation you do is a ‘dress rehearsal’ for your senior year.” The fame that results from this may not be found on a theater stage, movie screen, or television set, but it will happen when they find themselves on a college campus.



Harrisburg High School 11th grader Tracy Hogans and Direct Services Coordinator Nathan Grimwood review college admissions criteria during her “15 minutes of fame” session.

How should I be preparing for college?



Check off each item on this list as you complete the activity.



Fall Checklist for 11th Grade

- Meet with your counselor to review the courses you've taken, and see what you still need to take.
- Check your class rank. Even if your grades haven't been that good so far, it's never too late to improve. Colleges like to see an upward trend.
- Sign up for and take the PSAT.
- Make sure you have a Social Security Number.
- To male students: you must register for selective service on your eighteenth birthday to be eligible for federal and state financial aid.
- Take a long, hard look at why you want to continue your education after high school so you will be able to choose the best college or university for your needs.
- Make a list of colleges that meet your most important criteria (size, location, distance from home, majors, academic rigor, housing, and cost).
- Continue visiting college fairs. You may be able to narrow your choices or add a college to your list.
- Speak to college representatives who visit your high school
- If you want to participate in Division I or Division II sports in college, start the certification process. Check with your counselor to make sure you are taking a core curriculum that meets NCAA requirements.
- If you are interested in one of the military academies, talk to your counselor about starting the application process now.

Fall Checklist for 12th Grade

- Continue to take a full course load of college-prep courses.
- Complete the GEAR UP scholarship application and give it to your DSC.
- Keep working on your grades. Make sure you have taken the courses necessary to graduate in the spring.
- Continue to participate in extracurricular and volunteer activities.
- Talk to counselors, teachers and parents about your final college choices.
- Make a calendar showing application deadlines for admission, financial aid, and scholarships.
- Check resource books, computer programs, and guidance counselors for scholarship and grant opportunities. Ask colleges about scholarships for which you may qualify.
- Give recommendation forms to the teachers you have chosen. Be sure to fill out your name, address and school name on the top of the form. Talk to your recommendation writers about your goals and ambitions.
- Give School Report forms to your high school's guidance office. Fill in your name, address, and any other required information on top.
- Register for and take the ACT Assessment, SAT I or SAT II Subject Tests, as necessary.
- Mail or send electronically any college applications for early-decision admission by November 1.
- If possible, visit colleges while classes are in session
- If you plan to apply for an ROTC scholarship, remember that your application is due by December 1. Print extra copies or make photocopies of every application you send.

Information for article excerpted from EducationPlanner.org.

GEAR UP staff counsels students during transcript review sessions in Philadelphia

Eleventh graders at Martin Luther King, Strawberry Mansion, Bartram and the Young Women's Leadership School at Rhodes are focusing on college preparation during small group or individual sessions with GEAR UP direct services coordinators (DSCs).

Kenyon Whittington, Calvin Mayo, Veno Leigertwood and Camille Sims meet regularly with students to review transcripts and report cards, discuss academic progress, and counsel them about fulfilling college entrance requirements.

At Mansion High School, Whittington talks with his group about historically black colleges and universities and the PA State GEAR UP scholarship. Students are attentive as they hear about educational options after high school, and learn about financial aid and scholarship opportunities to help them afford college.

Then they review their individual performance records and focus on present grades and future possibilities.



Strawberry Mansion High School 11th graders Jason Taylor, Khalil Merritt and Sibilette Jeffery review their transcripts with DSC Kenyon Whittington.



Jason Taylor and Khalil Merritt listen intently as Mr. Whittington shares college access information with students.

Sessions are lively as students proudly share successful test scores and receive kudos from their mentors when grades improve. They are expected to account for grades that have dropped or are not desirable for college-going students. During this academic review, students set specific goals for improvement.

Similarly, Leigertwood meets with each 11th grader in Bartram High School's Student Success Center. He requires students to reflect on their homework and study habits, their attendance and their behavior to encourage self-reliance and responsible actions. Students and mentor complete a checklist together, an exercise that guides them as they establish goals for their future education and careers.

This mentoring program will continue through the students' senior year as they proceed with the college application process.

2006-07 Additions to the PA State GEAR UP Staff

Robin Bennett is the new university coordinator for GEAR UP services developed with PA State System of Higher Education partners West Chester, East Stroudsburg, Kutztown, and Cheyney. Robin joined PA State GEAR UP in April and has her office at West Chester University.

Camille Sims is a direct services coordinator working with Philadelphia GEAR UP students in all the cohort high schools.

Nathan Grimwood began working as a direct services coordinator (DSC) in Harrisburg GEAR UP schools in September. His office is located in the Harrisburg School District Administration Building.

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PA State GEAR UP Grant Office

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 and Learning
 2986 North Second Street
 Harrisburg, PA 17110
 PH: 717.720.4047

Harrisburg Team

Sandra Patsolic, Early Intervention Coordinator
Diane Hasan, Direct Services Coordinator
Nathan Grimwood, Direct Services Coordinator

Shippensburg University

Rebecca Mercado, Campus Coordinator

Philadelphia Team

Edith Paige, Early Intervention Coordinator
Veno Leigertwood, Direct Services Coordinator
Calvin Mayo, Direct Services Coordinator
Camille Sims, Direct Services Coordinator
Kenyon Whittington, Direct Services Coordinator

West Chester University, Kutztown University, East Stroudsburg University, Cheyney University

Robin Bennett, Campus Coordinator



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PA State GEAR UP High Schools and DSCs serving high school students		
	HIGH SCHOOL (OFFICE LOCATION)	DIRECT SERVICES COORDINATOR (DSC)
Harrisburg School District 2101 North Front Street Harrisburg PA 17110	Sci Tech High School William Penn High School	Mrs. Diane Hasan (717) 703-4057 dhasan@hbgsd.k12.pa.us
	Harrisburg High School	Mr. Nathan Grimwood (717) 703-4129 ngrimwood@hbgsd.k12.pa.us
School District of Philadelphia 440 North Broad Street Philadelphia PA 19130	Martin Luther King High School (STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER)	Mr. Calvin Mayo (215) 276-5253 ext. 2004 camayo@phila.k12.pa.us
	Young Women’s Leadership School at Rhodes High School (MAIN OFFICE)	Mr. Kenyon Whittington (215) 227-4402 (Rhodes)
	Strawberry Mansion High School (MAIN OFFICE)	(215) 684-5089 (Mansion) kswittington@phila.k12.pa.us
	Bartram Main High School (STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER)	Mr. Veno Leigertwood (215) 492-6619 veleigertwood@phila.k12.pa.us