



Spring 2009

GEAR UP MISSISSIPPI NEWS

GEAR UP Schools

Batesville Junior High School
Betty Mae Jack Middle School
Blackburn Middle School
Brinkley Middle School
Blue Mountain High School
Carthage Junior High School
Carver Middle School
Chastain Middle School
Coldwater Elementary School
D. M. Smith School
D'Iberville Middle School
Gautier Middle School
George County Middle School
Greenwood Middle School
Grenada Middle School
Hardy Middle School
Independence Middle School
Inverness Elementary School
Lake Middle School
Magnolia Middle School, Moss Point
Magnolia Junior High School, Meridian
Magee Middle School
Margaret Green School
Mendenhall Middle School
Merritt Middle School
Michel Seventh Grade School
Moorhead Middle School
Morrison Academic Advancement Center
North Gulfport Middle School
North Woolmarket School
Northwest Middle School
Peeples Middle School
Pine Grove High School
Powell Middle School
Ripley Middle School
Rowan Middle School
Ruleville Middle School
Scott Central Middle School
Sebastopol Middle School
Simpson County Central Middle School
Siwell Middle School
South Leake Middle School
Strayhorn Elementary School
Thomastown Middle School
Trent Lott Middle School
Tupelo Middle School
West Wortham School
Whitten Middle School
William Colmer Middle School
Yazoo County Junior High School

GEAR UP Mississippi operates as part of the Institutions of Higher Learning Office of Academic and Student Affairs in collaboration with the Mississippi Department of Education, State Board of Community and Junior Colleges, and community partners.



From the Director

Nira Coleman-Johnson
State Director, GEAR UP Mississippi

This year has been extremely successful for GEAR UP Mississippi. We have begun a new grant with seventh grade students and will follow them until high school graduation and into college. We have successfully begun implementing our plan for helping these students achieve their goals in the next six years.

You will continue to see new programs and initiatives as we move forward. We have Summer Academies for students this summer and an article in this newsletter gives you more information. Our new website will be up in the next month and may be up and running as you read this article. We will use the web site and the newsletter to keep you informed. Of course, our College Coaches in conjunction with your child's teachers will let you know of special events and programs for your children during the year.

Perhaps you have noticed one thing in the first year of your child moving from elementary school into middle school, testing receives a much higher emphasis and is a critical part of your child's academics.

The No Child Left Behind Act has made schools more accountable than ever for standardized test results of their students on basic skills in certain subject areas. Each school district needs their students to do well and pass these tests or face serious consequences—namely loss of funding and other severe consequences. Not only are these standardized tests important for the schools, they are important for students and parents. Not only must students pass the tests for the schools, they must pass them for their own advancement. Often overlooked in the rush to test and pass is the impact testing can have on the ability of a student to enter college.

A good ACT or SAT score no longer

ensures easy access to a college much less the one your child may want to attend. Those are still important, but the colleges and universities look at other aspects of a student's achievements in high school. Testing is one of those things. The better your child does on the required tests, the better the chance to enter college or obtain a scholarship.

No one is completely satisfied with the testing, but it is now part of the school landscape. One problem that has cropped up is motivating students to do well on the tests or even show up to take them. One motivation for students is self-worth. Doing well on the tests can have a positive impact on the way a student can view his or her status.

Another motivation can be the impact the tests results can have on scholarships or college entrance. The better a student performs on the tests, the better their chances for scholarships and admission to the college of their choice.

GEAR UP Mississippi has developed and implemented programs to help students not only do well overall in school but also to do well on the standardized tests. We have tutoring to help students to perform better. Our College Coaches also work with students and teachers on other areas to improve performance.

No one ever looks forward to a test. Today, it is more critical than ever for students to do well. As a parent you can help by encouraging your child to do well; giving the support they need by providing an environment in which they can study effectively; and contacting school officials if you or your child has questions about the test results. We all need to support our students in this critical area. GEAR UP MS will be there for your child.

Six GEAR UP Summer Academies

Focus on Academics, Careers

GEAR UP Mississippi will fund six academic and career focused summer academies during the summer of 2009. Academies will provide instruction in math, medicine, music, law enforcement, character development, science, cultural exploration, and theatre. The summer academies will provide stimulating and rigorous learning opportunities, develop and promote specific career and educational

opportunities, and help students develop early awareness of what is needed to plan for college both academically and financially. Each academy is open to only GEAR UP MS students who will be entering the eighth grade in Fall 2009. All academies are free. Academies will provide fun-filled and engaging activities. You will find below a list of all the academy sites with specific information on each.

Location of Academy and Contact Information	Type of Academy	Date(s)
University of MS (Ole MS), Oxford Contact: Jason Wilkins 662-915-1535	GEAR UP MS Summer College Exploration and Math Academy This academy has two primary goals. The first goal will be to give GEAR UP students entering the eighth grade a taste of college life. The second goal of the program will be to improve basic math and algebra skills. Students will be enrolled in Compensatory Mathematics, which will cover some of the same objectives as Algebra I courses offered throughout Mississippi schools. This academy is residential.	June 14 – July 3
Jackson State University- Jackson Contact: Reginald Castilla 601-979-2464	Law Enforcement and Character Development Academy This academy will provide participants with an opportunity to gain a wealth of knowledge, enhance their social skills, and gain an appreciation and understanding of the field of Criminal Justice through college tours. Participants will be exposed to career options in Law Enforcement, team building skills and character development opportunities. This academy is non-residential.	Two sessions will be offered. Session I: June 14-19 Session II: June 21-26
University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg Contact: Aimee T. Lee 601-266-6374	Survivor: Biology Adventure Academy This academy will provide the students an opportunity to gain leadership skills, take part in friendly competition and get a head start on preparing for college. Students who have an interest in pursuing a degree in biology are encouraged to attend. This academy is residential.	June 21-26
Delta State University-Center for Culture and Learning, Cleveland Contact: LaKendra Jones 662-846-4497	Mississippi Delta Arts and Heritage Summer Experience Academy This academy will provide GEAR UP students entering eighth grade with a fun-filled cultural exploration program. This academy is residential. These three sessions (The Mississippi River and the Delta Landscape, The Blues, The Civil Rights Movement) will explore the heritage and culture of the Mississippi Delta within an arts, history and geography framework.	Session 1: May 31-June 5 Session 2: June 21-June 26 Session 3: June 28-July 3
Meridian Community College, Meridian Contact: Dr. Kathy Baxter 601-483-8242	Step on Stage Academy This academy will focus on singing techniques, dance instruction, and stage technical preparation. Students will be oriented to the field of performing arts. The goal of the academy is for students to be able to express themselves and make their points of view known in creative ways. This academy is residential.	May 31 – June 5
Meridian Community College, Meridian Contact: Dr. Kathy Baxter 601-483-8242	Health Care Occupations Academy This academy will provide students with an exposure to the occupations of dental assisting, dental hygiene, medical laboratory technology, health information technology, radiologic technology, surgical technology, physical therapy assistance, respiratory care practitioner through classroom and clinical experiences. Students will have the opportunity to participate in college level classes and develop skills to improve study methods of test-taking. This academy is residential.	May 31 – June 5

College Goal Sunday Draws Students, Parents

The Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning was awarded a grant to host College Goal Sunday in Mississippi for 2009- 2011. The Mississippi College Goal Sunday event was held on Saturday, February 28, 2009 from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at various locations around the state.

College Goal Sunday is a free program that helps college-bound students and their families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). College Goal Sunday provides on-site help from financial aid experts to assist students and families in completing the FAFSA. The FAFSA form is required to apply for financial assistance for higher education. Most colleges, universities and vocational/technical schools in the nation require the FAFSA for students seeking federal financial aid, including grants and loans.

Students and families across Mississippi attended College Goal Sunday at 22 different locations. This year

more than 250 volunteers helped at the various locations serving in different capacities including providing assistance with financial aid, registration and surveys. More importantly, nearly 400 families attended the event and were provided help in completing the FAFSA.

In addition, twenty-two (one per site) \$500 scholarships were awarded at the College Goal Sunday event. The scholarships were given by USA Funds, who partnered with GEAR UP MS to present this event. The winners received a certificate that must be presented to the Office of Student Financial Aid at the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning upon high school graduation or upon completion of a GED. The \$500 will be applied to the student's account at the Mississippi institution of higher learning which he or she will attend.

The next College Goal Sunday event will be held on Saturday, February 27, 2010. For more information, please visit www.mscollegetgoalsunday.org



College Goal Sunday was hosted February 28 at 22 locations around the state. The photo above is from the Simpson County Central Middle School site. The other photos are from the Scott County School District site.



Several Schools Attend Dance Theatre of Harlem Field Trip at Riley Center

On February 19, several GEAR UP schools went to the Riley Center in Meridian for the Dance Theatre of Harlem performance. Blackburn Middle School students from the Jackson Public Schools submitted comments about the performance.

"We went on a field trip to the Dance Theatre of Harlem at the Riley Center in Meridian. This trip was very educational and also entertaining. I learned some parts of the ballerina's shoe; the top of the shoe is called a box. I learned that the tip of the shoe is called a passé. I really enjoyed this trip."
(Angela C.)

"This field trip to see the Dance Theatre of Harlem was just amazing. The ballet dancers were just so divine and lovely. To me, the performance was just breathtaking. Of all the performances that I have seen, I have never seen of the moves that I saw today. It was such a great experience to be in such a big beautiful and marvelous theatre and watching such a spectacular performance. It was very entertaining and not a single second did I want to go to sleep."
(Azaria E.)

"I had lots of fun on this trip. The ballet was exciting to see. I have never seen such a performance in my life. I wish that I could do ballet. However, the best part about the performance was when the man tossed the women in the air. The trip was totally awesome."
(Brittany G.)

"I liked the Dance Theatre of Harlem performance because he told us the meaning of every word of dance. My trip was fantastic."
(Jonathan G.)

"During our trip to Meridian, I was exposed to new sights like the Dance Theatre of Harlem and new styles of ballet. Throughout the field trip, I noticed amazing dances by the dancers. It also taught me that we use ballet methods in dances as well as sports."
(Lori A.)

"This GEAR UP trip was very interesting. I enjoyed learning about classical dance moves such as the passé. The ballet dancers were doing some of the same moves that we do except they do them more powerful. Ballet is very unique, cheerful and challenging. This GEAR UP field trip was an excellent opportunity to experience something new."
(Beady S.)



Students from Scott Central Attendance Center in Forest also attended the Dance Theatre of Harlem performance.

"I am writing to tell you how much I liked the Dance Theatre of Harlem. I liked the part of the performance when they taught the students how to move. I also want to thank you for paying to us to go on the field trip. You are so kind for what you have done for Blackburn Middle school."
(Willie G.)

"This field trip was so amazing. Although it was a bit long, it was fun."
(Kendra N.)

"The field trip to the Dance Theater of Harlem was fascinating. We learned a variety of things about ballet. I think that the field trip was a great experience for our education."
(Zyewandra D.)

"Because I use to take ballet, I could relate too much of the performance. Every since I started ballet, I couldn't wait to stick my foot in a point shoe. When I was younger, I thought the box of the shoe was made of a block of wood. However, today, I learned that it was made out of a specific amount of material layered with glue and when it dries it forms the box. Also, I thought that the dancers were awfully graceful. This was definitely one of the best experiences of my life."
(Mikayla S.)

"We went on a field trip to Meridian. We went to see dancers at the Riley Center. They had on special shoes. The shoes had a block at the tip to hold them in place. It was a very extraordinary event. I really had an excellent time."
(Kimberly R.)

"My trip to the Dance Theatre of Harlem was fun because we got to see a very interesting performance "
(Carla V.)

"We went to see the Dance Theatre of Harlem. The performance was beautiful. I hope that we go on more field trips like this one."
(Myrancia H.)



Simpson Central Students Attend L.E.A.D. Conference in Jackson

Simpson Central seventh graders attended the L.E.A.D. conference in Jackson at the Trade Mart Building. L.E.A.D. stands for Leadership, Engagement and Activism Development.

L.E.A.D. 2009 focused on equipping middle school and high school students with the tools needed to continue the creation of sustainable change in their communities.

The keynote speaker, Justin Boudreau, a former student, teacher, musician, coach, author, and professional volleyball player delivered a unique perspective on life in his mission to empower students to be their best.

The Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi (Generation FREE) and The American Lung Association of Mississippi (Teens Against Tobacco Use) worked together to provide Mississippi youth with an opportunity to enhance their leadership and activism skills at one of the three mini-conferences.

Middle school students then attended a character building workshop and leadership skills workshop. They worked in small groups on a community action plan of their choice. Next they received instruction on making presentations and leading effective discussions. Students received a free t-shirt and lunch for participating in this great event.

Tips for Studying for a Test Can Help You on Test Day



- Start early! An "all-nighter" is the least effective way to study for a test. Schedule several study sessions before a test. Repetition is the key to remembering.
- Attend class, especially before a big test. Ask questions about the test. Find out as much as possible: What will it cover? What type will it be...essay, multiple choice, or true or false? How much time will you have to complete the test?
- Learn the important information. Here are some activities to help.
- Using your class notes and your textbook, make flash cards with facts, definitions, people, dates, events, lists, etc. The act of writing the information on the cards will help you remember it. Each time you go through the stack of cards, you are transferring the information from your short-term memory into your

long-term memory.

- If you learn better by listening, study with a friend or family member who can ask you the questions or give the answers aloud to yourself.
- Don't forget charts, diagrams and captions to pictures in your textbook. They can contain lots of valuable information.
- Use memory devices for learning lists or parts of something. For items that do not have to be remembered in any particular order, take their first letters and see if you can arrange them into a word or an easily remembered order. For example, the first letters of the Great Lakes spell HOMES.
- Study with a friend - compare notes, ask each other questions, do flash cards together and discuss themes that would make good essay questions.
- Play the role of your teacher. Make up the most difficult test you can and test yourself until you know the answers.
- Use visuals to help you learn - invent charts, diagrams, trees and drawings to help you remember.
- Study past quizzes.

Meet the Coaches

Four College Coaches Keep GEAR UP Students On Track with Plans

GEAR UP college coaches are integral part of making the program a success according to Nira Coleman-Johnson, state director. "The coaches have played an important role in the success we have experienced this school year. They have done a fantastic job," she said.

This article continues profiles of the coaches working in the schools with the students for GEAR UP MS. In the next issue of the newsletter, the rest of the coaches will be profiled.



Cedell Pulley is a retired superintendent of Leflore County Schools and had more than 42 years in education when he retired. He is the college coach for the Indianola School District, the Grenada School District and the Sunflower County School District.

"I wanted to do something after retirement and I wanted to do something helping children since I had been in education for over 40 years. GEAR UP gave me an opportunity to still

help children. I have learned that it is better than I thought it would be when I started," is the way Pulley explained why he became a coach.

Pulley began his long career as a teacher and has served in several administrative positions during his career. He has degrees from Mississippi Valley State University, Mississippi State University and Delta State University.

He thinks GEAR UP is a great program but he says everyone needs to be involved so it can continue to be a success. "Parents need to first make sure their children go to school on a regular basis and then get them to understand they need to go to college as an end result. I can remember when parents tried to dissuade children from getting an education and going to college. I decided I wanted to be different," he said.

"I wanted to do something to help educators, parents and students to know that they can get an education. If I could do it over 40 years ago, students today can surely graduate and go to college," Pulley explained. His goal as a college coach is to get at least 98 percent of the students he works with to go to college.



Rebecca Marble is in her second year as a college coach. "I worked as a coach last year and feel truly blessed to be a college coach this year for seventh graders in Simpson and Scott counties," she commented.

She began her career in education after graduating from college and has 32 years as an educator in the public school setting. For the last five years of her career, she served as principal of a K-12 attendance center. "I felt like a proud parent my last year as principal when all but one of my seniors enrolled in college," She said. Marble has degrees from Delta State University and Mississippi College.

She wanted to be a college coach again because, "My experience last year was great and I wanted to do it again. I like helping the students and I believe starting with them in seventh grade is going to make a big difference. I think GEAR UP is needed in our state to encourage parents and students to realize there is more out there for them and everyone should be the best they can be."

"Students love GEAR UP and the coaches because we are fair. My goals are to reach out to the community to get it involved as well as the parents. Everyone needs to work to get our kids to go on to higher education," Marble



James Chambers' experience as an educator ranges from chemistry teacher to principal of K-12 grade level schools with 37 years of cumulative experience. He graduated from Mississippi Industrial college and has degrees from Mississippi State University.

"Although economic challenges were stumbling blocks, education was the vehicle that elevated beyond those hurdles and into a world of limitless possibilities," Chambers said as he explained his love for educating others. For most of his education career Chambers served as an administrator at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

Chambers works with the GEAR UP schools in the South Tiptah District. He wanted to become a college coach because "During the last six years my school, where I was principal had the GEAR UP program and I liked what it did for my students. I wanted to continue to be involved with students and I thought GEAR UP was a good way to remain involved."

"I think GEAR UP is an excellent program because it gets kids involved early in thinking about staying in school and going to college. GEAR UP shows students the advantages of staying in school. There are many programs such as college visits, mentoring, summer academies and others that give students an early exposure to the advantages of college," Chambers said. "I want to change the mind set of my students so they will want to go to college and excel in school."



Nadine Wilson is the college coach for the Moss Point School District and the George County School district. She has a Bachelors degree from the University of Southern Mississippi. Her career includes serving as the Drug and Alcohol Prevention Coordinator and the Character Education Instructor for Singing River Services and Guidance Counselor at Moss Point Alternative School.

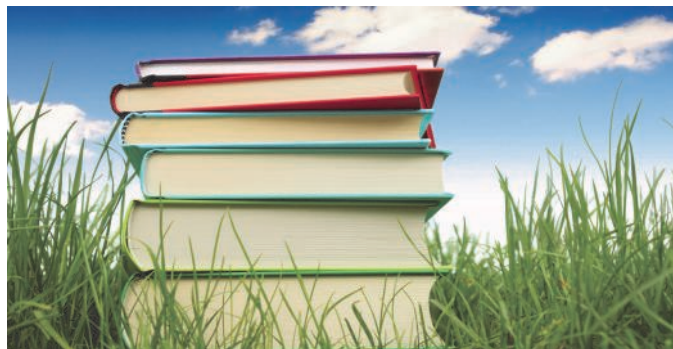
"I decided I needed to do something different so I can make a greater impact on the lives of students. I looked around for something to become involved with and GEAR UP was the best thing," she said.

She loves GEAR UP, "I am so excited about GEAR UP. I think it is an excellent program because it catches the students where other programs have failed by catching them as they come into the seventh grade. Starting early will make a difference."

Her goal as a college coach is to work to bring the dropout rate down in the districts where she works. She also wants to inform the educators, parents and students of the things GEAR UP has to offer them. "I just want to be effective as a college coach," she said.



The I-Pod winner for the "Knowledge to Get to College Day" poster contest at Magnolia Junior High School in Moss Point was Lachol H., third from left. With her are, from left, Mr. Likely, principal, Scholars club leader, Lachol and Nadine Wilson, college coach.



Summer Tips to Stay Ahead For New School Year

Whew! School is ending for the summer. But, before you know it, you'll be back at school, facing new challenges and new heights. You can take several routes this summer to make sure you have given yourself the best chance for success, in school and in life. Here is a suggestion on how to spend your summer wisely.

READ, READ, READ!

And NOT just TV listings or cereal boxes. Challenge yourself with more advanced books so you'll be ready next year.

But how do you decide what to read? Ask your current teachers what books they would recommend you have under your belt by summer's end. Or ask the local librarian for help in finding books which will challenge you and help you prepare for higher level work in school. Try reading several of these classic books!

The Great Gilly Hopkins by Katherine Paterson

Hoops by Walter Dean Myers

Tears of a Tiger by Sharon Draper

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor

Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt

Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls

Black Beauty by Anna Sewell

Gifted Hands by Ben Carson

Jacob Have I Loved by Katherine Paterson

Let the Circle be Unbroken by Mildred Taylor

The Westing Game by Ellen Raskin

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle



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GEAR UP Partners With NCCEP for Staff Training Sessions



In an effort to get parents and families more engaged in the school community, GEAR UP MS has partnered with the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) to conduct trainings with the GEAR UP staff.

The first training was held in Biloxi, MS on March 12 & 13. In addition to the GEAR UP staff, the GEAR UP partnership team from Coahoma Community College also attended the training.

The discussion included: Building Relationships with GEAR UP Families, Communicating with GEAR UP Families, Engaging Parents As Partners, and Engaging Parents as Decision Makers and Leaders.

The mission of the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) is to develop and strengthen broad based partnerships throughout the education continuum, from early childhood through postsecondary education.