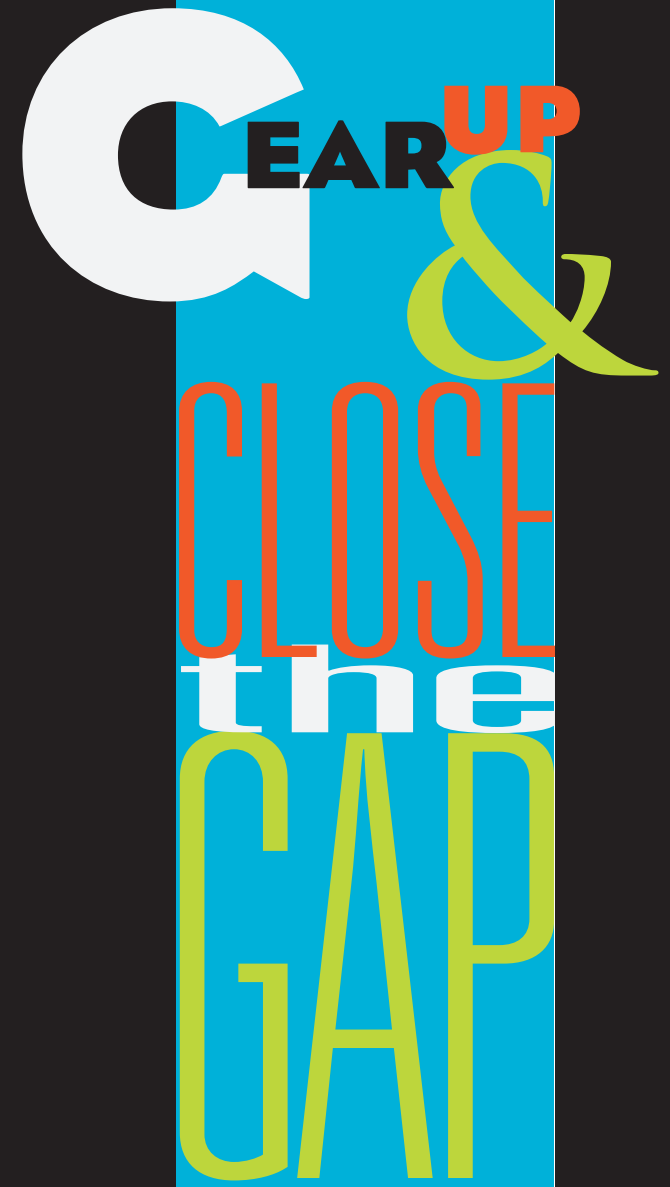


Middle Schooling for Postsecondary Access and Success

Underserved students simply do not enroll in post-secondary programs or complete college at the same rate as their white, middle or upper-income peers. Research suggests that this discrepancy is due in large part to the lack of opportunity for underserved students beginning in middle school. Middle grades educators must become engaged in the discussion of how college access differs for students and involved in making the changes needed to guarantee each child equal postsecondary opportunities and choices.

Closing the gap will require middle schools to use the most effective practices for all students, focus on interventions specific to underserved students, and develop the capacity to do both. A recent poll conducted by Harris Interactive (2001) reports that while 71% of middle school students say they plan to attend a four-year college, 51% of their parents and only 32% of their teachers believe they will actually go. Even more significant is that just 28% of teachers surveyed see going to college as a goal for students in their own classrooms. (Camblin, 2003)



What's the Post Secondary Strand all about?

In response to these findings into the role of middle schooling and students' post-secondary success, the University of Vermont's GEAR UP Program and the Middle Grades Collaborative have teamed up to offer a new strand at the Middle Grades Institute (MGI) from June 28th to July 2nd, 2009. This strand will be built upon three core themes:

- The key role that middle grades education plays in postsecondary access and success
- Student voice in teaching and learning
- Student efficacy as fundamental to success in the middle grades and beyond.

During the Institute week, and throughout the fall follow-up, teachers will examine best middle level practices for postsecondary access and success.

The primary objectives of the strand are framed within the following essential questions:

1. What middle level theories, practices, and approaches will ensure post-secondary access and success for students?
2. What cultural belief systems appear to contribute to the success of post-secondary students?
3. How do young adolescent aspirations, student efficacy and teacher efficacy contribute to post-secondary success?
4. What current research and programs related to middle level education have demonstrated success for at-risk students?
5. What modes of inquiry and practical teacher resources related to these themes will best inform our teaching practice

In addition, the Institute will offer a program for middle level students that models effective middle grades approaches to postsecondary access and success. In particular, the student strand will incorporate problem-based learning, service learning, choice, relevance, efficacy and early awareness of post secondary education activities. To the extent possible, students will be drawn from the classrooms of participating teachers and integration between the two strands will occur on a regular basis throughout the Institute. Students will be selected by a wide variety of factors including socioeconomic status, family postsecondary background, and academic performance.



What are my roles and responsibilities?

We currently anticipate after school meetings of participating teachers and faculty during the spring of 2009. We will do our best to locate these sessions at a convenient time and place for participants. Outside of these meetings, on their own or in teams, participating teachers will engage in a variety of activities. Your role may include the following:

1. Inform students, parents, and fellow faculty about the GEAR-UP Program
2. Identify students who would benefit from the student strand of the Institute and distribute informational flyers and permission forms to parents.
3. Conduct informational meetings with parents.

What are the costs and benefits?

Teachers will receive a \$500.00 stipend for participating in this strand. In addition, MGI room, board, and registration costs will be funded by the GEAR UP Program.

If you have questions or are interested in participating in this exciting opportunity, please respond by April 13th, 2009.

Email Regina Toolin at Rtoolin@UVM.Edu

Camblin, S. J. (2003). *The middle grades: Putting all students on track for college* [Electronic Version]. Pacific Resources for Education and Learning. Retrieved July 20, 2007 from www.pathwaystocollege.net/pdf/MiddleGrades.pdf.

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