

## **Long Beach Unified School District Awarded \$22.4 Million GEAR UP College Readiness Grant**

### **WHAT IS GEAR UP?**

GEAR UP (**G**aining **E**arly **A**wareness and **R**eadiness for **U**ndergraduate **P**rograms) was enacted as part of the 1998 Higher Education Act to give more low-income students the skills, encouragement, and preparation to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. GEAR UP grants have been awarded to 47 states and three territories. Program services are specifically designed to support the middle school reform effort in each state.

### **Long Beach Unified School District's GEAR UP Grant (9/6/07)**

The Long Beach Unified School District will use a new, \$22.4 million federal grant to boost college readiness during the next six years. Implementation will begin with the entire sixth grade class at 13 schools, assisting the same group of nearly 4,000 students as they progress through the grades to local high schools.

The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Education (GEAR UP) grant will be used to improve teacher training, academic counseling and parent awareness of post-secondary options, preparation and financing.

“This is a wonderful opportunity that complements a growing number of college prep efforts in our schools,” said Christopher J. Steinhauer, superintendent of schools. “The GEAR UP grant will help make the dream of a college education a reality for thousands of youngsters.”

Middle and K-8 schools participating in the grant are Butler, DeMille, Franklin, Hamilton, Hill, Jefferson, Lindbergh, Marshall, Powell, Robinson, Stephens, Lindsey and Washington. Implementation begins fall 2007.

Authorized by Congress in 1998, GEAR UP is designed to increase the college-going rate of lower-income students. More than 75 percent of students at each of the local schools participating in the grant are eligible to receive free lunches.

Students will receive additional help with writing, organization and test-taking strategies by taking AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) classes as an elective. The classes include one-on-one support provided by college aides.

Students will participate in MESA (Mathematics, Engineering and Science Achievement), a statewide program that promotes academic achievement in math-related fields through tutoring, small-group activities, participation in regional events, curriculum training for teachers, field trips to science facilities and other activities that introduce students to math and science professionals. Locally, MESA is administered by the College of Engineering at Cal State Long Beach. Two-week summer camps will be offered at CSULB in math, science, writing and technology.

Beginning in sixth grade, students and their parents will participate in annual conferences with their counselor to discuss academic progress, set achievement goals and plan to meet post-secondary requirements. To ease middle school students' transition to high school, eighth graders will be invited to shadow ninth grade students to become familiar with campus and better understand the high school experience.

Parents will participate in several institutes and meetings to learn more about preparing their children for college.

Teachers will receive additional training in math and literacy, with the help of math and English coaches. Counselors will receive additional training on high school and college requirements, financial aid and college admission information. The counselor training will be coordinated with the Los Angeles County Office of Education and CSULB.