

The GEAR UP 4 LA program (GU4LA) began serving two cohorts of students, in sixth and seventh grades at the time, at eight Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) middle schools during the 2011-12 academic year. The students are predominantly of Hispanic/Latino background, and nearly one-third are not yet fluent in English. This report summarizes findings from the first biennial evaluation conducted for GU4LA, presenting data pertaining to long-term English Learners (EL), staff perceptions of services, and financial literacy.

Long-Term English Language Learners

GU4LA staff identified students who had been in the EL program for six or more years, to provide targeted services helping them redesignate into standard English language courses. These students were categorized based on the LAUSD criteria to redesignate that they were lacking, shown in Figure 1. Dates for redesignation were set as goals, based on the timeframes necessary for fulfilling the remaining requirements. Two comparison groups of students were also examined, a retrospective cohort from the same grade level and same schools the previous year, and a matched schools cohort, in the same grade level during the same school year, at other demographically similar LAUSD schools.

Figure 1. EL redesignation project

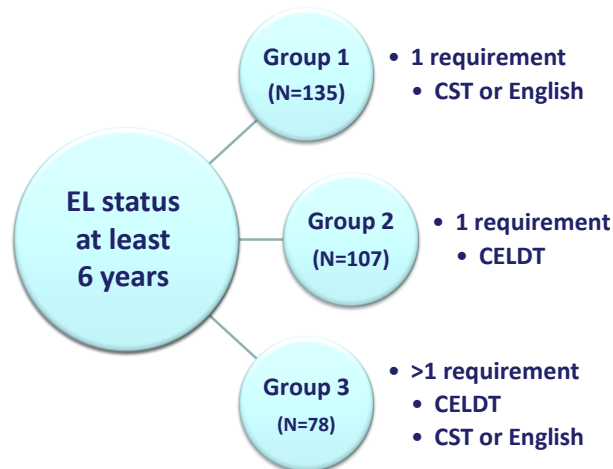
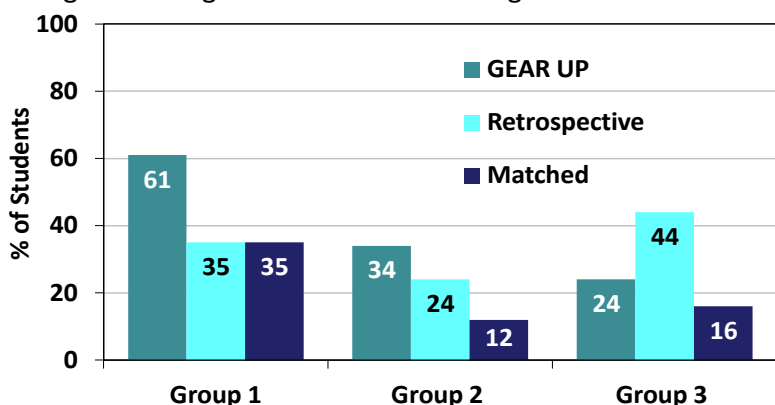


Figure 2 shows that GU4LA students in Groups 1 and 2 redesignated at substantially higher rates than did students in either comparison group. Students in Group 3 showed mixed results. Additional analyses showed that Group 3 students who redesignated were much more likely to have been those who participated in GEAR UP-sponsored CST or CELDT boot camps over the prior summer. Students in Group 1 showed the most notable improvement over the comparison groups, suggesting that the CELDT (which was not a factor for Group 1) is a greater barrier to redesignation than other criteria.

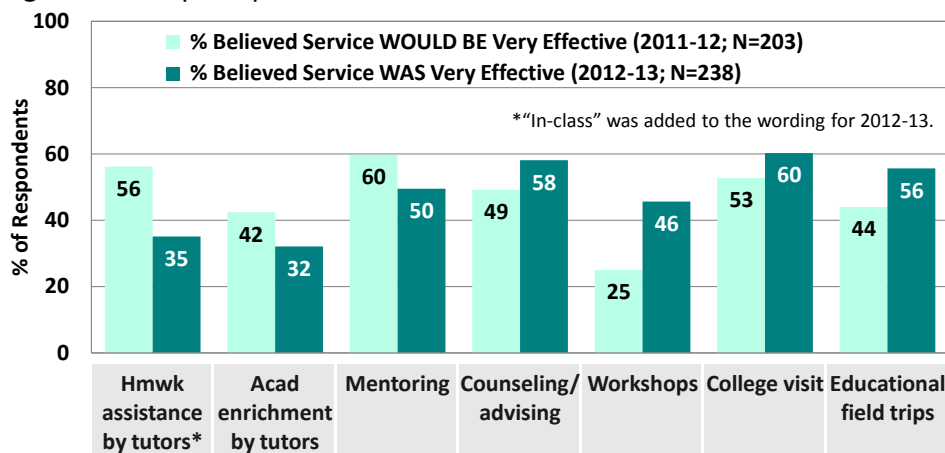
Figure 2. Long-term EL student redesignation rates



Staff Perceptions of Services

Teachers and staff at schools served by GEAR UP rated the perceived effectiveness of various program services before and after implementation. The ratings were based on a four-point scale; Figure 3 presents the highest ratings of *Very Effective*. Workshops, educational field trips, counseling/advising, and college visits earned more ratings of *Very Effective* after program implementation compared with their

Figure 3. Staff perceptions of student service effectiveness

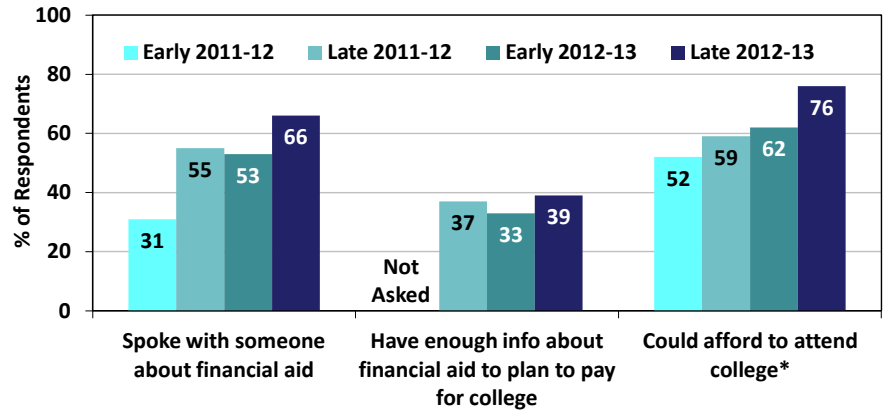


anticipated effectiveness, while some others were perceived as less effective than originally anticipated. Results for individual schools varied, sometimes widely, suggesting an opportunity to modify implementation methods based on successes at other schools.

Financial Literacy

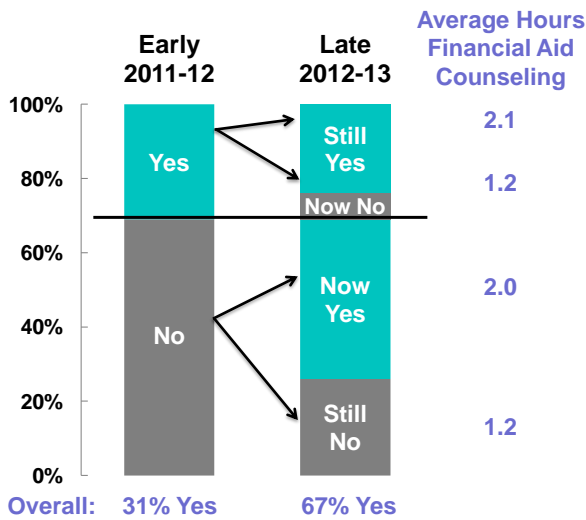
Figure 4 presents students' survey responses for each overall cohort during each of two annual surveys. Reports of having spoken with someone about financial aid options, and perceptions of being able to afford college have grown substantially. Students were less likely to report that they have enough information about financial aid, likely due to their middle school status.

Figure 4. GU4LA cohort knowledge about financial aid and college costs



*Note: Through early 2012-13, responses of *Definitely* or *Probably* on a 5-point scale are included. During the late 2012-13 survey, responses of *Yes* on a Yes/No scale are included.

Figure 5. Students reporting they spoke with someone about financial aid (change)



Change in responses to identical survey questions were examined with respect to financial literacy. As shown in Figure 5, a large majority of students who initially had not spoken with school or GEAR UP staff about financial aid reported that this had changed by the end of the 2012-13 school year. At that time, students who indicated that someone spoke with them had experienced nearly one hour more of financial aid counseling during the two school years.

Parents' knowledge and awareness of college costs and financial aid also increased. Figure 6 shows overall cohort responses from each annual survey to date. Parents were more than twice as likely to report that someone from their child's school or GEAR UP had spoken with them and that they had enough information about financial aid. Belief that their child could afford to attend college also increased, and those who reported that someone had spoken with them about financial aid were substantially more likely to indicate they had enough information about financial aid (not shown). Table 1 shows findings from additional analyses examining change in parents' knowledge across the two years (data were linked by student, so different family members may have completed the survey each year). All measures show a net gain during the second year.

Figure 6. Parents' knowledge of financial aid

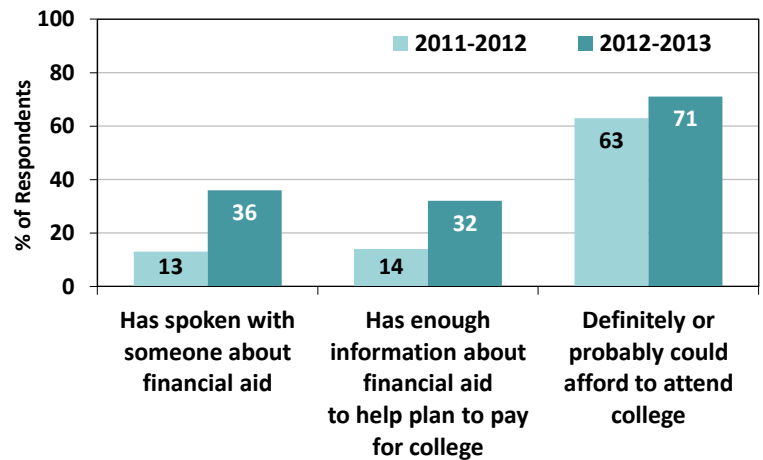


Table 1. Percent change in parent financial aid knowledge

Change, in percent 2011-12 to 2012-13	Still Yes	Now No	Now Yes	Still No
Spoke with someone about financial aid	7	5	34	54
Has enough information about financial aid	6	6	28	59
Definitely or probably could afford college	49	16	24	12