

PRESS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

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Fayette County receives GEAR UP TN grant to promote college access and success
Services prepare students for postsecondary education

Somerville, Tennessee (April 18, 2018)- The Tennessee Higher Education Commission announced today that Fayette County is the recipient of a \$807,075.00 GEAR UP grant over the next six years. The grant funds will provide services to students and families with the aim of increasing enrollment and success in postsecondary education.

The funding is part of the U.S. Department of Education's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant, which aims to increase the number of low-income students in Tennessee who are accessing and succeeding in higher education. Fayette County is one of 15 communities selected to receive funds. The communities were selected through a competitive application process by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the administrator of the state's GEAR UP TN grant.

"Fayette-Ware Comprehensive High School is elated to be a recipient of the GEAR UP TN grant. One of our major goals here at the school is to increase the number of students that are prepared to enter and successfully complete postsecondary education," stated Dr. Diane Watkins, Chancellor at Fayette-Ware Comprehensive High School. "GEAR UP will support our efforts as we create a college going culture for our students here at Fayette-Ware and Fayette County Public Schools. The opportunity will not only empower our students to succeed beyond high school, it will empower our Fayette County community as well."

As part of the project, Fayette County will form a local, community-based GEAR UP TN Collaborative to provide college access and success-focused services to students at East Junior High School, West Junior High School, and Fayette-Ware Comprehensive High School. Students in the Class of 2023, who are currently in the seventh grade, will receive services as a cohort through middle school, high school, and their first year of postsecondary education.

Seniors at participating high schools will also receive direct services that will help them prepare for college and apply to postsecondary programs. Services will include one-on-one mentoring, tutoring, college visits, and financial aid counseling. GEAR UP TN will also provide students across the state of Tennessee with college and financial aid resources, including a college access and success website, CollegeforTN.org.

Each GEAR UP TN Collaborative includes formal partnerships with at least one middle school, one high school, a higher education institution, a local board of education and at least two community-based organizations. Partners will help implement grant activities and ensure that the momentum of college access work continues beyond the six-year grant. Fayette County's GEAR UP TN Collaborative will partner with the following agencies:

- University of Tennessee-Martin (Somerville Campus)
- Tennessee College of Applied Technology- Memphis
- Dyersburg State Community college
- Regional Economic Development Initiative College Access Program
- University of Tennessee Extension Agency
- Workforce Investment Network
- Greater Memphis Alliance for a Competitive Workforce

Fayette County will continue to establish new community partnerships throughout the duration of the GEAR UP grant.

This is Tennessee's third GEAR UP grant. Tennessee's first GEAR UP TN project, which began in 2005, resulted in a 22.8 percent increase in college-going rates in the nine rural school districts. Communities served by Tennessee's second GEAR UP TN grant, which began in 2012, have shown impressive results, including over 9 percentage points of growth in college-going rates since 2012. Tennessee was one of ten states awarded a GEAR UP grant as part of the 2017 competition.

For more information, please contact Dr. Towanda Maclin-Brown, Director of Grants Management and Compliance, at 901-465-5260 or email towanda.maclin-brown@fcsk12.net.

