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Higher Education Component of GEAR UP Abstract**

The Higher Education component of GEAR UP at UNLV consists of two distinct components: (1) School improvement and system building; and (2) the evaluation of the entire project. The major emphasis of the State GEAR UP proposal is to address some of the root causes of low academic achievement through systemic change. To achieve this goal, data will continued to be amassed, analyzed, and fed back to GEAR UP middle schools, coordinated by academic faculty of the Departments of Educational Leadership at UNLV and UNR. The faculty members will be available to each school's principal and school improvement teams.

The second higher education responsibility is the evaluation and research. Two approaches, quantitative and qualitative, are being used to provide richness. The "Academic Optimism" Survey continues to be the primary data collection tool in 7 of 9 CCSD middle schools designated as GEAR UP sites in 2006. Once surveys are administered, each school receives a full data set that can be used as part of the school improvement process. Additionally, a blinded composite report is prepared for CCSD's central administrators connected to the GEAR UP program. In addition to the annual quantitative data collected for each GEAR UP middle school, ongoing case studies continue at two CCSD middle schools; in addition to the Academic Optimism survey, data are collected through interviews, observations, document analysis, in order to assess the ways in which the GEAR UP principles have permeated the climate of each of the schools and led to systemic changes.

A UNLV professor and a graduate assistant are responsible for all data collection, analysis and reporting connected to the research process. Additionally, the professor and graduate assistant participate in the state's GEAR UP Evaluation Team and provide support for CCSD's APR data collection efforts.