

# GEAR UP American Samoa Biennial Report

This report covers SY 2008-2009 and SY 2009-2010.

## Overview of GEAR UP in American Samoa

Gaining Early Access and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is a United States Department of Education grant that provides opportunities and services to students so that they are prepared to succeed in post-secondary education. GEAR UP American Samoa (GUAS) provides services to a cohort of approximately 850 students from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade to their high school graduation. GUAS was funded in 2006, and began in 13 private and public junior high schools in 2006. Currently, in Year Five, GUAS is active in eight private and public high schools, has 19 active community partners. The project serves 861 cohort students and offers services to all 11<sup>th</sup> grade students, an additional 300 students. The majority of students identify as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 98% are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.



GEAR UP Students from different High Schools joining the GUAS Technology Sessions at ASCC campus.

## What does GEAR UP American Samoa do?



GEAR UP Students in Math Trek Session

GUAS provides unique services that target the conditions and skills that assist students in succeeding in post-secondary education. It also aims to increase the expectations of students, that is, through their participation in GEAR UP students will aspire to enroll in post-secondary education. These services include tutoring and mentoring to students, technology supplies, teacher training and support, and information about different topics for families. All these services may contribute to whether or not a student decides to enter college, is adequately prepared both academically and financially, and has sufficient family support. GUAS

works with schools and other partners to provide coordinated services to students, families, and teachers. As students' progress in high school GUAS has targeted its services to focus on College readiness, including offering pre-SAT classes, Autodesk classes, and College Night events for school staff, parents and students.

### How does GEAR UP American Samoa work?

All the services GUAS provides have the same goal: increasing students' opportunities to enter in and succeed in post-secondary education. The services provided by GUAS throughout while the students are in school aim to increase academic skills and provide other necessary information about college. Approximately 50% of students attend before/after school sessions on a regular basis and receive on average 31 to 62 hours of tutoring. In terms of Wrap-Around Service sessions, in Year 4 GUAS reached 371 student participants and 151 parent participants, while in Year 3 they served 697 students and 202 parents. GEAR UP continued to hold its annual summer camp. In Year 4 GEAR UP changed the format of the camp to focus on academics, 112 students participated and received classes in Autodesk, robotics, and algebra.



### Why is GEAR UP American Samoa important?



GUAS is important because it targets many of the factors that affect student success. GUAS provides academic services to students, including tutoring and technology instruction, and it also provides information to parents and students regarding financing, exposure to community partners and resources, and knowledge regarding health topics. Especially in a situation where if students want to attend a four-year college they have to leave their homes and incur significant expense, financial preparation, and knowledge are essential to success. GEAR UP is also a significant school and community partners. This past year GUAS participated actively in tsunami relief efforts in the community. GUAS worked with local schools to identify students and families in need and were able to provide 200 supply kits to students. In addition GUAS coordinated \$40,000 of donations from project partners and GUAS staff donated their time to government relief efforts at the Emergency Operations Center.

### How does GEAR UP American Samoa help students?

GUAS helps students by assisting them with their academics, and providing other services for students and families designed to support college enrollment. Approximately 50% of students attend before/after school sessions on a regular basis and receive on average 31 to 62 hours of tutoring.

Standardized test data obtained in Year 3, comparing 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 8<sup>th</sup> grade SAT 10 scores, indicate that overall cohort students progressing as normal in reading and language, although their scores remain below average. In terms of math, students show statistically significant improvement from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The number of students score below average in math decreased from 45.0% to 28.0%, and the percentage of students performing at average and above average increased.



Grade data comparing Year 3 and Year 4 final grades in math and English demonstrate improvement. GUAS cohort students showed a 4.26% improvement in their English grade and a 2.71% improvement in their math grade. Both these improvements were statistically significant.

### What changes is GEAR UP American Samoa creating in peoples lives?

Teachers surveyed and interviewed about GUAS described that they had observed a positive improvement in student academics and increased interest from their students. Not only did teachers see



GUAS students improving, they felt this improvement helped to raise the standards at their school. Teachers said they had improved their teaching skills and abilities by participating in trainings offered, and were more capable to empathize and connect with their students. An important example from the most recent school year was that of the 128 students selected for the National Honor Society, 93 were active GUAS students.

### How is GEAR UP American Samoa helping the territory?

GUAS has many potential effects within the territory of American Samoa. Implementing GUAS has assisted schools in building their capacity for monitoring student performance (including increased monitoring of grades and absences). Specifically, one private high school, Faasao Marist has implemented MarkBook technology school-wide to track student progress. MarkBook was first introduced through GUAS. School leadership credit MarkBook with assisting them in their accreditation



process. GUAS has the potential to affect the territory as the students make their decisions about entering into college. If more students than normal obtain college degrees, and return to the territory this could have broad positive implications for workforce development and socio-economic status. Additionally, students who graduate from high school successfully and enter into college tend to have protective factors which may affect health and social outcomes in their lives.

### **How is GEAR UP building sustainability and capacity?**

The goal of GUAS extends beyond assisting just the existing cohort of students. The training they provide to teachers provides skills that can be used with all students. In Year 4 each teacher who participated received approximately 17 hours of training and professional development. GUAS offered training on a wide variety of other topics that will help teachers assist students. Teachers were also given the opportunity to enroll in professional development courses, and be reimbursed for their class fees upon completion. When GUAS provides technology supplies to a school, those supplies stay with the school and can be used with future students. These improvements are essentially equipping both students and teachers with technology related skills and also improving the technology resources in schools. GUAS has helped to center the education dialogue in American Samoa to focus on college as a viable option for students and families.

### **Who are the GEAR UP partners?**

GUAS partners represent a variety of governmental and private institutions. Some of the private businesses involved include Blue Sky Communications and the KHJ Radio Broadcasting. Some of the governmental partners include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Department of Human and Social Services. Partners assist in GUAS activities for example, during the summer camp 50 students per week participated in a field trip to the NOAA weather station, the Dept. of Wildlife Resources, several privately owned vegetable farms as well as having all the Summer Camps and Academies students tour key areas of ASCC to include the Library, the Book Store, the Institute of Trades and Technology, Financial Aid Office, Land Grant and the ASCC Lecture Hall.



GEAR UP Partners in a meeting with the GUAS Director and GUAS staff.

### **Academic Achievement**

GUAS program staff, with the assistance of GUAS site managers, coordinators and teachers, created a Math and English pre/post-assessment based on ASDOE academic standards. This assessment was

administered to continuing GUAS students (students who were part of the cohort in Year 1, 2, and 3) and non-GUAS students, with over 900 students participating. Similar to the results from the pre-assessment in Year 3, GUAS cohort students performed slightly better (2%) on the post-assessment in

Math Grades				
Math	Percentage Grade			
	Year 3		Year 4	
	Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 1	Semester 2
All Students	69.1%	68.4%	76.0%	74.3%
GEAR UP Cohort	71.2%	70.7%	76.5%	74.3%
Non-Cohort <sup>1</sup>	63.9%	64.2%	74.2%	74.3%

English Grades				
English	Percentage Grade			
	Year 3		Year 4	
	Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 1	Semester 2
All Students	66.3%	69.7%	74.0%	75.0%
GEAR UP Cohort	68.3%	70.7%	74.7%	75.7%
Non-Cohort <sup>1</sup>	61.7%	66.4%	70.9%	72.7%

three of the four sections than non-cohort students. In addition, all students who participated in the English pre/post-assessment showed on average a 10% improvement in their scores. In addition, site managers and coordinators reported an increase this year in the number of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students who were selected as 3 members of the National Honor Society. At the eight cohort high schools, 128 students were selected and 93 of these students are active GUAS students.

**Student Participation in After-School Services at the High Schools**

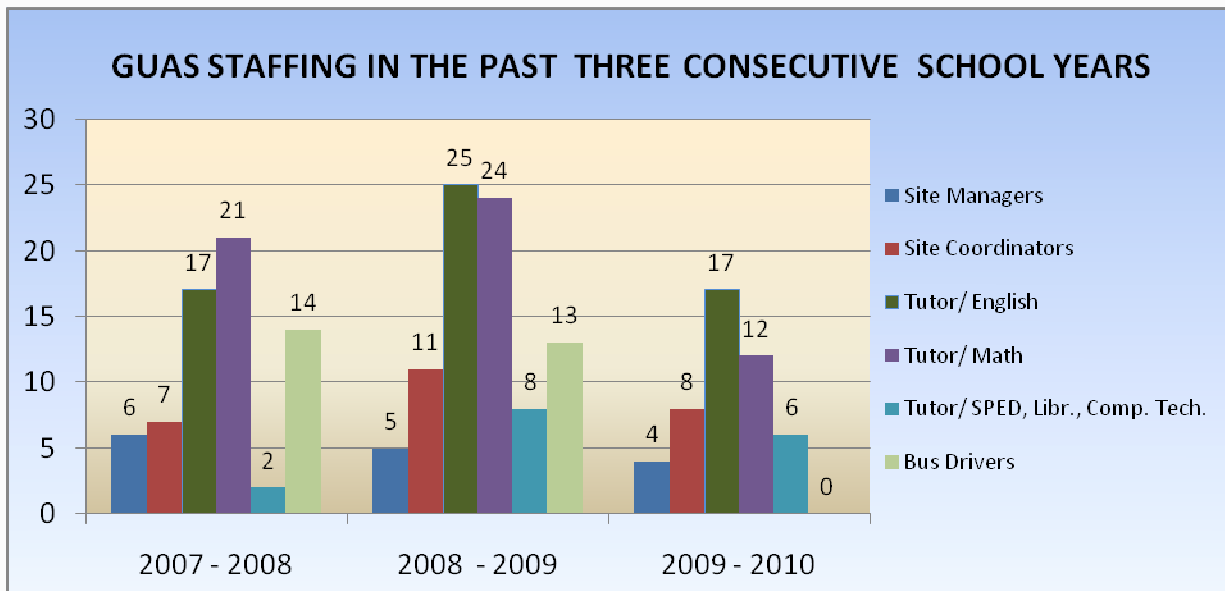
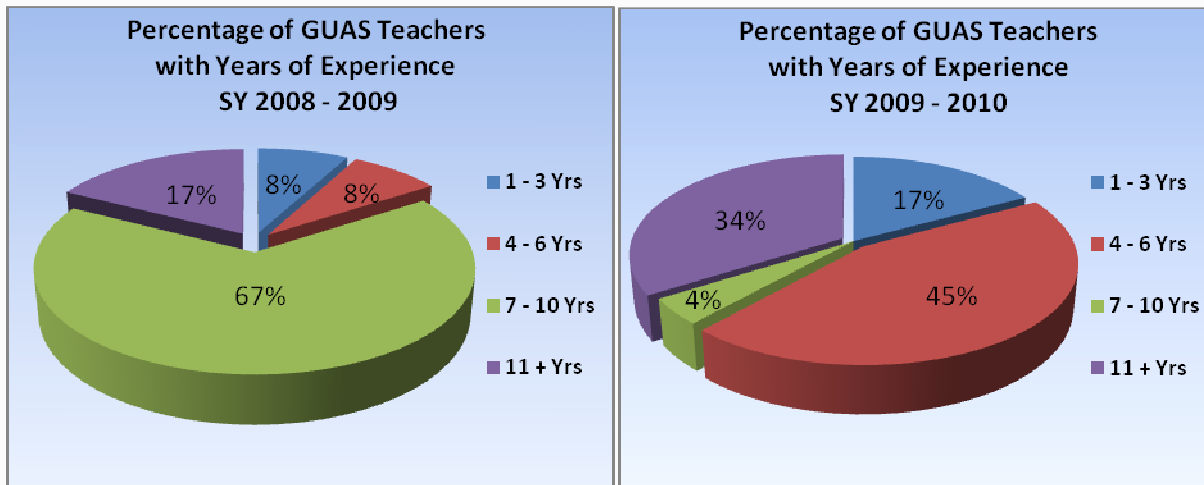
At the elementary schools, approximately 70% of the cohort attended after-school sessions on a regular basis. This year, approximately 50% of the cohort students attended at least one after school session in the first semester. While these levels are similar to the levels of participation in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, GUAS staff and coordinators continue to work with high schools to motivate students who need extra-assistance to attend after/before-school sessions. As in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, extracurricular activities and other demands on students’ time affected participation. In the second semester GUAS along with schools has offered incentives to students who attend at least 80% of after/before-school sessions.

Cohort Students - Tutoring hours						
	Average Tutoring hours					
	Year 3			Year 4		
	Semester 1	Semester 2	% Attendance	Semester 1	Semester 2	% Attendance
After-School	44 hrs	31 hrs	43% of cohort	31 hrs	62 hrs	54% of cohort
Before-School	34 hrs	21 hrs	22% of cohort	29 hrs	54 hrs	9% of cohort

<sup>1</sup>These students did not receive GEAR UP services in elementary school, but have been able to access services in high school

**School staff attrition**

Similar to the situation in the elementary schools, school staff attrition requires continued attention from GUAS. New teachers and coordinators involved with GUAS need immediate and increased training in order to effectively implement GUAS services. Particularly during the second semester there were a number of teachers and administrators that were promoted and asked to take new positions as a result of staff retirement and moving off-island. Additionally, the high school teachers possess a higher level of training than the elementary teachers, and many are part of an educational cohort in universities off-island which requires enrolling in classes during the Spring and Summer, or attend night classes at ASCC in preparation for their programs.



### Effects of the tsunami

The effects of the tsunami had a wide-ranging impact on students, families, schools, and communities in American Samoa. Schools dealt with affected infrastructure and low student attendance in the weeks



following. GUAS focused its efforts during this time on recovery and assisting schools in several ways. GUAS was able to begin to refocus its project activities during November. Again partners from abroad such as PPP and local partners were able to donate over \$23,000 towards GUAS tsunami relief efforts.

*Picture left: Wreckage at the village meeting house in Leone village after Tsunami hit.*

Objectives: List the approved objectives from your grant application or work plan. Where applicable, provide baseline data.	Activities: List the activities that have been conducted to meet the objective.	Results: Has the objective been met? If not, what progress have you made in reaching the objective?	Actions required: Are you planning to make changes to the grant in response to the results?
<p>1. <i>Increased academic performance and preparation for post-secondary education.</i></p>	<p>Every GU school provides before and after school tutoring</p> <p>Teachers receive regular training and professional development</p> <p>Transportation is provided for GU students for after-school sessions</p> <p>New technology has been implemented (laptops and learning software)</p> <p>GU students are offered after school technology training sessions at ASCC, programs such as Algebra (Math Trek) and Autodesk (Vocational Engineering learning software)</p> <p>GU students are also invited to attend the Pre-SAT training sessions held at</p>	<p><b>Tutoring</b></p> <p>Students in GUAS received on average 31 hours of tutoring assistance in Year 3 and 62 hours in Year 4.</p> <p><b>Teacher training</b></p> <p>Teachers received 21.5 hours in Year 3 and 17 hours in Year 4 on average of training and professional development.</p> <p><b>SAT 10*</b></p> <p><b>Language</b></p> <p>SAT 10 scores in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade indicate students perform below average but are “progressing as normal.”</p> <p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>SAT 10 scores in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade indicate students perform below average but are “progressing as normal.”</p> <p><b>Math</b></p> <p>SAT 10 scores indicate students math scores show statistically significant improvement. Fewer students are performing below average and a larger percentage is performing at average or above average.</p>	<p>Continue to provide existing tutoring, after/before-school services, and teacher training</p> <p>Track student grades and identify subject areas that need improvement</p> <p>Target schools with a lower percentage of after school participation and provide assistance with recruitment and retention</p> <p>Provide PD sessions to the cohort English and Math classroom teachers and provide teaching resources that will increase classroom learning</p>

	<p>ASCC</p> <p>Spring semester GUAS held a Portfolio Exhibit highlighting the top three student portfolio's out of 80 student portfolio's</p>	<p><b>Student Grades</b></p> <p>Between Year 3 and Year 4 student grades show statistically significant improvements in math and English.</p>	
<p>2. <i>Increased high school graduation and enrollment in post-secondary education.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every GU school provides before and, or after school tutoring</li> <li>• Teachers receive regular training and professional development</li> <li>• Provide College Tours and College Night programs for parents and students</li> <li>• Transportation is provided for GU students</li> <li>• New technology has been implemented (learning software)</li> <li>• Parents are provided information during WAS sessions provided by partners on financing and preparation</li> </ul> <p>Conduct Summer Academic programs (GU Summer Academy) emphasizing</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Sustain GU activities in the high school, including after/before school sessions, WAS, and teacher training &amp; professional development</p> <p>Develop partnerships with the cohort high school Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)</p> <p>Extend GUAS training services to other educational affiliated program upon request, e.i. PTA organizations, non-cohort schools, Boy &amp; Girls Club of American Samoa which helps to create a sustainable GUAS relationship with the island community</p>

	<p>on Algebra, Pre-SAT, Writing, Autodesk and Robotics</p> <p>WAS, College Nights and College Tours provide information on financing and preparation for post-secondary education and mentoring to families interested in preparing for college. College site visits are also conducted</p>	<p><b>WAS Sessions</b></p> <p><b>Will continue to work with cohort high schools in scheduling the WAS sessions with our cohort clients (students, parents, teachers)</b></p> <p><b>College Visit</b></p> <p>In Year 4 200 parents and students participated in College Night events.</p> <p><b>Parent College Knowledge</b></p> <p>The Year 4 survey indicates that 76% of parents had spoken to the school or someone from GU about college entrance requirements – this is increased from Year 3 (56%).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>68% had spoken to someone about financial aid – also increased from Year 3 (55%).</li> </ul> <p><b>Student College Knowledge</b></p> <p>The survey indicates that 66.9% of students had spoken with someone about college entrance requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60.2% had spoken to someone about financial aid.</li> </ul> <p><b>Attendance</b></p> <p>Year 3 and 4 data indicate that seven of the cohort schools have before/after-school attendance rates of approximately 50%.</p> <p><b>Continuing Students</b></p> <p>861 of 863 students continued with the GUAS cohort from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade.</p>	<p>Continue to provide WAS services; College Tours and College Nights</p> <p>Continue education and direct work with school staff on contact and providing other relevant college information to GU students</p>
<p>3. <i>Increased knowledge of post-secondary options, preparation and financing.</i></p>	<p>Daily attendance is monitored by teachers and tracked in a student report submitted to GU twice a month</p> <p>Attendance at the before/after-school sessions are tracked in the same manner</p>	<p>Continued attendance tracking and monitoring of on-time promotion. Early intervention with students where attendance is decreasing or there is a potential they will not pass.</p>	
<p>4. <i>Maintained daily attendance and increased on time promotion to grade level.</i></p>			