300 GEAR UP Scholars to visit Campus.

Capacity Building Workshop—A time to learn

Science Teachers attend USTA Conference.

USU STARS! GEAR UP receives award.

Cohort students conference with students in Japan and Russia.

Big Blue Journey—a transition camp for students entering high school

Transitioning from middle school to high school can be difficult for many students. In an effort to ease this transition, over 300 GEAR UP Scholars will be on campus this June for instructional workshops on developing habits and study skills necessary for high school. This summer camp, known as Big Blue Journey, will provide a great opportunity for our GEAR UP Scholars.

NCCEP Capacity-Building Workshop

Ten site coordinators, two teachers, five administrators, one community partner, and two superintendents joined the Administrative team at the National Council for Community and Educational Partnerships (NCCEP) Capacity-Building Workshop. The annual conference is an opportunity for partners at all levels to meet with GEAR UP professionals from other states. The sessions provide collaboration opportunities and focus on best practices for GEAR UP program implementation. Many of our first time conference attendees registered for the GEAR UP 101 session. Those attending this session found it very beneficial and came away with many ideas to bring back home and use in their programs. The big announcement at this year’s conference was the US department of Education’s decision to release another round of funding for GEAR UP programs. USU STARS! GEAR UP plans on writing a proposal to secure a portion of this new funding to serve an additional cohort of students.
This February, teachers participated in the annual Utah Science Teacher’s Association conference as part of ongoing professional development made available to teachers of GEAR UP students. Teachers were able to choose from a variety of sessions based on what science discipline they teach. There were also sessions on incorporating technology into the science classroom. USU GEAR UP invited NASA-STEM Educator and Professional Development Specialist Tony Leavitt from the NASA Ames Research Center to teach a couple of sessions. The keynote speaker was Internationally known physicist and educator Dr. Derek Muller. His engaging presentation included clips from his popular You Tube channel Veritasium. His work is aimed at debunking popular scientific misconceptions. Dr. Muller also conducted a special session for GEAR UP educators where he thanked teachers for the work they do. Each GEAR UP participant received a signed slinky. If you want to see some great science videos, check out Dr. Mueller’s work on www.Veritasium.com.

USU STARS! GEAR UP

Receives USTA Award

USU STARS! GEAR UP Program Director Eric Packenham accepted an award on behalf of the USU STARS! GEAR UP program at the annual awards banquet held by the Utah Science Teacher’s Association. Duane Merrell, BYU Professor and collaborator with the Utah Space Grant Consortium presented the “Friends of the USTA Award.” He thanked the GEAR UP program for encouraging educators across the state to become better science teachers.
Teachers build drag racers and rockets

Hands on, meaningful, and ready-to-implement professional development is what 18 teachers and site coordinators received at the Utah Space Consortium Science Teacher's Workshop in February. Duane Merrell from the BYU Physics Department and USTA science teachers held a training on science concepts that are taught in the 8th grade core curriculum. Participants were taught how to make paper rockets and paper drag racers. They then practiced launching them in the hallways, adjusting their models as needed to incorporate variables such as length, weight, pressure and distance. At the end of the session teachers were taught how to make their own launchers. Each of our 11 schools were provided with a launcher, lesson plans, and materials to share these concepts with their students. We appreciate great partners who provide amazing opportunities for our GEAR UP schools.
GEAR UP students video conference with students from Japan and Russia

On February 20, 2014, Dual Immersion Academy; North Davis and West Wendover Junior High Schools; and Ephraim, Gunnison Valley, Mount Logan, and North Sanpete Middle Schools planted space-based and land-based radish seeds as part of the Bion international science experiment. This planting date coordinated with schools in Hawaii, Japan, and Russia. In mid-March, two USU STARS! GEAR UP schools were able to add one more component to their Bion experience: international videoconferencing. At North Sanpete Middle School, six students and teacher Wayne Nielson participated in a video conference with schools from Hawaii and Okayama, Japan. The next morning, seven Mount Logan Middle School students and two teachers, Thane Hutchinson and Eric Bingham, participated in a video conference with students from four schools across Russia. Not many middle school students can say that they have participated in an international science experiment and videoconference. This is just one of many opportunities we hope to provide for our scholars. GEAR UP appreciates our partnership with the USU Space Dynamics Lab, and would like to thank Gayle Bowen for facilitating this experience.