



... College is possible for all Montana students

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AVID: Just Another Program?

BY SARA BERG, SCHOOL GRANT MANAGER

As we launch into a new school year, administrators, teachers, and parents are asking what they can do to close student achievement gaps and improve academic achievement for all groups of students at their school. Browning Middle and Browning High Schools have embraced the challenge of improving student achievement by implementing AVID at their schools.

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) has extensive experience in supporting student achievement and has proven to be one of the most effective ways to increase the likelihood that a young person who comes from an underrepresented, low-income family will graduate from high school and go on to enroll in postsecondary education *with no need for remediation*. For example:

- 51 percent of grade 8 AVID students take algebra in eighth grade compared to 22 percent nationwide

- 89 percent of AVID students complete the courses necessary for four-year college acceptance compared to 34 percent for all students.
- 80 percent of AVID students stay continuously enrolled in their college studies compared to 50 percent of public community college students who drop out before completing a degree and about 40 percent of public university students who never complete their degrees.

(Information from AVID Center ARRA Innovation Fund Document-2009)

AVID is a school-wide initiative, not a school within the school. The program addresses many aspects of the education system including the issue of tracking students, providing strong collegial support, redefining teacher and student roles, and accelerating student's academic achievement. AVID methodology is not about changing curriculum. Instead it provides

rigorous, sequential curriculum materials and extensive professional development on proven strategies to better serve the learning needs of all students. The most effective teaching methodologies include **W**riting as a Tool for Learning; an emphasis on **I**nquiry; a **C**ollaborative Approach; and **R**eading to Learn (WICR). In addition, the AVID Tutorial Curriculum is an integral piece to support teachers, tutors, and students in their quest for academic achievement.

If your school is interested in implementing AVID, Montana GEAR UP will support a GEAR UP middle school and its receiving high school with implementing of the program the first year (2010-2011 school year). The application for consideration for AVID will be out in December. If you have any questions, please contact Sara Berg, AVID District Director at saraberg@montana.edu or 406-444-0848. For more information about AVID, visit www.avidonline.org.

GEAR UP Northwest Regional Conference Highlights

BY JESSIE SALISBURY, PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Spokane in the Fall...what a beautiful setting for the GEAR UP Northwest Conference hosted by Washington GEAR UP. Six GEAR UP states were in attendance: Arizona, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Wyoming, and Washington. Sunday evening began with dinner followed by keynote speaker Ranjit Sidhu, Senior VP of Strategic Initiatives at ACT. His keynote focused on education in the United States and what is being done to prepare our students for

higher education in order to compete with other countries in the job market. In the Monday morning plenary session, a panel representing the work of five different ethnic groups: Asian, Pacific Islander, Latino, African American, and Native American, discussed the findings of an achievement gap study on each ethnic group. They presented recommendations for educators about how to more effectively reach out to these families and communities, and

how to better educate and communicate with students of color. Executive summaries of the reports can be found at the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction website: <http://www.k12.wa.us/>. We are so proud that one of our Montana GEAR UP schools presented at the conference. Cindy Brady, GEAR UP Liaison and teacher at Lincoln Public School, along with three students

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Financial Aid: ACT NOW!

BY CORY CHENOWETH, FINANCIAL AID MANAGER

As I have been traveling across the state over the past couple weeks, I have been bombarded with radio and television commercials telling me that this is the best time to purchase a house. Interest rates are at historic lows, there is a first time home buyer credit available, and houses are no longer ridiculously overpriced.

Like purchasing a house, this is also an historic time to invest in a college education. With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, students from low-income families will have more money available to them in the form of Pell Grants. In fact, for the 2009-2010 school year, the maximum Pell Grant award has been increased to \$5,350/year. This is a \$619 increase from the previous year and a \$1,300 increase from two years ago. Additionally, another increase to \$5,500 is scheduled for

July 1, 2010.

Obviously this is tremendous news for those who qualify, but I think it is worth pointing out that these increases are not a common occurrence. In the five-year span from 2002-2007, the maximum Pell Grant increased by a total of only \$50, while tuition costs, like real estate prices, were skyrocketing.

Fortunately for Montana students, while Pell Grant funding has been increasing, Montana institutions of higher education have made a commitment to keep college affordable by minimizing, and in some cases freezing tuition costs. While there have been some minor increases in fees and room and board costs, tuition at Montana's public colleges and universities has remained relatively stable, with the biggest increases (a mere 3 percent this year) taking place at MSU and UM.

With the Pell Grant increases, as well as a strong commitment by the State of Montana to keep tuition affordable to Montana residents who choose to remain in-state to pursue higher education, there are now only two schools (Montana State University and Montana Tech) whose yearly tuition costs are higher than the maximum Pell. Add this to the \$1,500 GEAR UP Achievement Grant (which many of our students will receive), the Montana American Indian Tuition waiver, and perhaps a part-time job, and many of our students will be able to attain a 2-or 4-year degree from a Montana college or university while accruing minimal debt.

We all know that now, more than ever, a postsecondary education has become a necessity, and this truly is an historic time to invest in education. Supplies are going fast... ACT NOW!

GEAR UP School Spotlight: Hardin Middle School

BY PUNKI BULLIS, GEAR UP LIAISON

- "It was so fun and I learned how to read faster."
- "It was the funnest thing I've done in school in my life."
- "It helped me learn and to not be so shy."
- "It was fun and they taught us cool memory skills and improved my reading, too."
- "I would recommend it because you learn to live above the line."
- "Not to let 'fimage' hold me back."

These are just a few of the student comments from the recent two-day Quantum Training with the 8th grade at Hardin Middle School. It was two days filled with activities designed to increase student academic skills and personal awareness. The majority of student evaluations rated the power pegs memory technique and the Quantum Reading a "10".

Many of the students commented that the Quantum Reading not only increased their reading speed, but also their comprehension. The behavioral component to Quantum Training was equally rated very high. Students clearly gained personal awareness through the exercise "Fimage" or Fear of Image. Students were challenged to face their fears related to self-image and to move outside their comfort zones. In a remarkably short time students were given instruction in the 8 Keys of Excellence. The students and the teachers who choose to embrace these 8 Keys and make them a part of daily life are well on the way to "living above the line".

Student and staff evaluations indicate the program was a great success, and that in itself speaks volumes. Staff are talking about making this a yearly activity at Hardin Middle School, and many are



Quantum Team fires up Hardin 8th Graders

incorporating the learning activities into their daily teaching schedules. The behavioral component can help address bullying issues at any school.

If you would like more information on this incredible program, please feel free to contact me (Punki Bullis) at 406-665-6343. I also would be happy to arrange for principals to talk with our principal Scott Brokaw or teachers to talk with one of our teachers.

GEAR UP Spotlight School: Charlo

BY CHARLO 7TH GRADE MONTANA HISTORY STUDENTS

Charlo's 7th grade class recently went on a Montana History field trip to Great Falls. While we were there, we saw the largest buffalo jump in North America called the "First Peoples Jump" near Ulm. Our tour guide explained the whole process to us while we looked over the 30-40 foot edge. We learned that after the warriors found a good place to jump the bison, they sweated in lodges to purify their souls and prepare for the task. Next, they found the bravest of all the young men and gave them jobs. The bravest of all was called the runner. He led the herd of buffalo over the cliff and landed on a ledge while the bison tumbled to their death. The other men dressed in wolf skins and herded the buffalo towards the cliff.

As the buffalo fell, the first hit the rock and died immediately; however, they made a cushion for the next that fell. The buffalo that fell on the cushion usually only broke legs, so the remaining tribe members waited at the

bottom to kill the wounded. The women from the tribe skinned the buffalo and cut up the meat. They also used the blood, green hide, and bones from the bison to boil and made pudding-like energy bars called Pishkin.

After our tour of the buffalo jump, we toured the visitor's center and were able to participate in an archeological dig activity. We dug up all sorts of items found at the site, and we used paintbrushes to brush away the sand like real archeologists do. At the end, we bought arrowheads!

The second place we went to was the Lewis and Clark Interpretative Center. We learned about the Lakota and how they used winter counts. During this activity we got to decipher the pictographs that the Lakota drew on buffalo hides as well as figure out what year the activities happened.

Next, our tour guide Doris took us around the museum and taught us

about the animals, vegetations, and trials that Lewis and Clark encountered. We got to pull their boat, hang out in a Native American mud hut, and sit in on an interpretative council between Lewis and Clark, Sacagawea, French interpreters, and Tribal Chiefs. We summed up our time there by watching a short film about the Lewis and Clark expedition.

The last place we visited was the C.M. Russell Museum. We took a tour and saw hundreds of paintings, most of them about Native Americans, cowboys, and wildlife. Our assignment was to sketch our favorite painting by C.M. Russell. Throughout the tour we saw many other paintings from several different artists, but C.M. Russell was our favorite.

Overall, it was a very long but fun and educational trip. Thank you GEAR UP for sponsoring it. We couldn't have learned and experienced so much without your support.

GEAR UP Spotlight School: Glacier High School

BY ROB BREEDING, GLACIER HIGH SCHOOL LIAISON

The Glacier GEAR UP program is making a push to get its students into Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) more than a year before they graduate from high school through the Running Start program.

To make it easier for GEAR UP students to attend FVCC, all juniors in the program will take the ASSET placement test on the Glacier High School campus. Previously, students had to visit the FVCC campus individually and pay a fee to take the placement exam required of all new students. This process posed a hurdle for some students who did not learn until it was too late that the placement exam was required.

"This will make it much easier for us to recommend FVCC courses for our GEAR UP students," said Sharon

Gassaway, head counselor at Glacier High School. "When we are advising a GEAR UP junior we'll know that student is eligible for Running Start. We can simply find a class at FVCC that meets their academic needs and works with their high school schedule, and get them enrolled."

Students are eligible to participate in Running Start once they achieve junior status in high school. All Glacier GEAR UP juniors who take the exam will be eligible to enroll at FVCC in the spring semester. Sophomores will take the ASSET test in the spring and be eligible for Running Start courses during summer school.

The counselor who works with Glacier High School juniors is ready to take advantage of the program. "I already have plans to get some of my GEAR UP

juniors enrolled in college this spring," said Glacier High School counselor Chris Weaks. "Many of our GEAR UP students are high achievers in the classroom. They are ready for the challenge of college."

GEAR UP is also providing funding for scholarships to pay some of the costs for enrolling in Running Start classes at FVCC. Running Start tuition is already offered at a reduced rate.

Students can take Running Start classes for dual enrollment earning both high school and college credit. The short distance between FVCC and Glacier High School facilitates early college enrollment. The two campuses are just a short drive, or long walk, apart.

GEAR UP School Spotlight: Pryor

BY KENNY JOHNSON, GEAR UP LIAISON

"Don't just talk... do!"

On September 22-25, the Pryor School district students and staff participated in various activities in honor of Native American Week. On Tuesday, Tribal dignitary and former history teacher at Plenty Coups High School, Patrick Stands Over Bull, visited Pryor Schools to speak with students on various tribal aspects, traditions, and attitudes.

"I'm 68 years old," he told high school students in the PCHS library, "and I've been working all my life. Even when I was in a wheelchair, the tribe helped me out by allowing me to go into the classrooms and teach and talk with students. Now I am giving back by talking with young people about the values I always had and you need to succeed in life."

Mr. Stands Over Bull advised the students with the main goal of being a solid contributor to society just like he is and as were his heroes, the late President John Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Junior.

Mr. Stands Over Bull has had several milestones in his life as a member of the Crow Tribal Council, beginning in 1971 when as vice-chairman he recorded the birth of Crow tribal

member #4400; now there are over 12,000 Crow living. "We're getting stronger," he said.

"I'm proud of what I've done," he told the students. "Make sure that when you're 68 you can look back and be proud of what you've done."

The Ice Cave Visit

On Wednesday Pryor Elementary School took a field trip to the Great Ice Cave, and the High School followed suit on Thursday. Students and faculty spent time exploring, communing with nature, and sliding around.

The following photograph of the Ice Cave was taken by ninth grader Lacy Little Light.



10th grader Mariah Gonzalez and 9th grader Whittni White explore the contents of Ice Cave.

The quality kitchen staff and other staff members from Pryor Schools showed their outdoor acumen by building cook fires and cooking hot dogs, hamburgers, and chili to feed the hungry multitude.

After the week-long celebration of Crow culture in the schools and trips to the Ice Cave, the students donned their regalia, assembled their floats, and were driven through the downtown metroplex of Pryor before returning to Plenty Coups State Park to commence the powwow that would put the proverbial icing on Native American Day festivities. The color guard of United States Armed Services war veterans Robert Flat Lip (Vietnam) and Harry Rock Above (Iraq) led the grand march.



11th Chief & Princess: Stevan Little Light & Mariah Gonzalez

College Visit Survey Reminder

In 2008-2009, 2600 students went on a campus visit! Don't forget to have your students fill out the college visit survey for your campus visits this year. You can download a copy of the survey at <http://www.gearup.mus.edu/administration.htm>.

GEAR UP Northwest Regional Conference Highlights (continued)

presented a breakout session on Quantum Learning. Participants took home a handful of best practices to help students optimize their readiness for any classroom challenge. Cindy's energy combined with Quantum learning techniques helped participants to learn how to count to ten in Japanese in three minutes, and her students demonstrated how to memorize a list of twenty items that could be found in a school locker in a timeframe of two minutes!

Another excellent keynote was given by Eric Liu, an

accomplished author, former presidential speechwriter and White House deputy domestic policy advisor, and current professor at the University of Washington Evans School of Public Affairs. Mr. Liu spoke about the people he met while researching for his book *Guiding Lights: How to Mentor – and Find Life's Purpose*, which is the Official Book of National Mentoring Month in January. If you would like to learn more about how you can take part in mentoring a student, visit <http://www.nationalmentoringmonth.org/>.

So Much College Info, So Little Time

BY ANNETTE WALSTAD, PROGRAM MANAGER

For kicks and giggles I decided to Google “college information” just to see what would come up. Well, a lot...about 108,000,000 potential websites in less than 10 seconds. Yes, we live in the information age so FINDING information is not the problem...the problem is sifting through the volume to get to the information we need. Oh, how we wish *that* would take all of about 10 seconds!

So where should one begin to find relevant, accurate, and timely information about how to get to and succeed at college? Just like buying veggies at the farmer’s market, I believe that local is best. There are several organizations that are doing great work in college access right here in Montana. This month, I will profile one of them.

Montana Post Secondary Educational Opportunities Counsel (MPSEOC) is a small organization with a very long name that provides an incredible service to member colleges, students, and school counselors. MPSEOC was started in the mid-1980’s by a few college admissions directors in an attempt to organize college fairs across the state. Well, almost 25 years later, the college fair tour is only one of several successful college access events sponsored by MPSEOC.

According to Amy Leary, MPSEOC Executive Director, the complete focus of this organization is on fostering collaboration between Montana colleges in an effort to better serve students. “It is our goal to keep students, counselors, and parents informed of all the amazing options after high school, while at the same time, sharing updates on what is required to be successful within those options.”

College Fair Tour and College Ca\$h Scholarship: Held in September each year, the college fair tour helps connect high school juniors and seniors and their parents with college representatives. Nineteen fairs are held across Montana and feature between 65-95 colleges, universities, technical schools, military branches, and other agencies from both in-state and out-of-state. College



Helena College Fair at Carroll College

Fairs are a great way to gather information and have face-to-face conversations with a real person connected to the college while also offering up to \$15,000 in scholarships to attendees.

Counselor Updates: Montana has 24 two-year and four-year colleges (six public 4-year colleges; five colleges of technology; three private 4-year colleges; three community colleges, and seven tribal colleges), and it is difficult to stay current on the specifics of each institution. Each November, MPSEOC sponsors a one-day Counselor Update using Met Net technology. The presentations feature campus updates from college representatives, financial aid announcements, and general admissions reminders. This year the update will be held on Tuesday, November 10 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at nine locations...one is bound to be close to you! School counselors and GEAR UP liaisons are encouraged to attend the FREE Counselor Update, and you can register at www.montanacolleges.com/update.



MPSEOC Website: The tag line for the MPSEOC website is “The ‘official’ guide to Montana’s Higher Education.” According to Amy Leary, MPSEOC decided to call it the ‘official’ site because there are so many websites out there that list information about Montana colleges, but they are not always accurate. One great feature of the website is the ability for each Montana college to update their profile several times each year. Some other features on www.montanacolleges.com are:

- Online Interactive Guide Book to Higher Education
- Montana College and University Full Profiles with academic programs, admission and financial aid information, and contacts
- Many Out-of-State Colleges and Universities Profiles
- Resources for students, counselors, parents, and colleges
- And much more!

MPSEOC has many exciting future developments planned, such as, webcasts on the colleges and higher education information, online college fairs, etc...so stop by the website often!

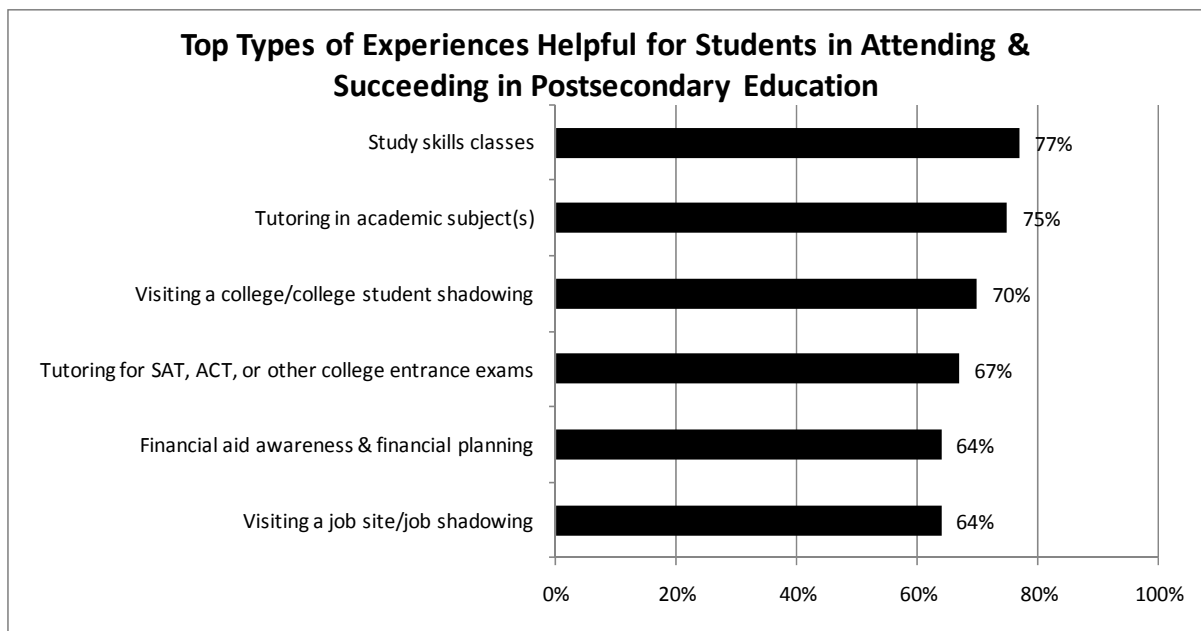
The Guide: For over 15 years, MPSEOC has printed a college guide book for Montana high school seniors. In this technology age, the paper version was replaced with a very hip, interactive online guidebook for students. To supplement this online information, MPSEOC is publishing a hardcopy Counselors Guidebook that has ideas on how to best use the online student guide. Check it out at www.montanacolleges.com/media/pdf/2009_counselor_guide.pdf

So, one college resource down, only 107,999,999 to go! Look for some other helpful ‘going to college’ information in the next GEAR UP newsletter!

Montana GEAR UP Reminders for November & December

- November 6** — Achievement Grant application deadline for students to submit to liaison. Contact Cory Chenoweth, Financial Aid Manager at 406-444-0350 or cchenoweth@montana.edu with questions.
- November 13** — Achievement Grant application deadline for liaisons to submit to Montana GEAR UP.
- November 19** — Spotlight articles for December due.
- November 20** — Student surveys ready online. More information to come from Education Northwest.
- November 24** — Monthly Montana College Access Network (MCAN) Call. The call takes place from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm and information can be found at knowhow2gomontana.ning.com.
- December 11** — Parent survey closes. Mail surveys to Education Northwest using the postage-paid return label supplied by Education Northwest.
- December 11** — Poster contest entries due to Liaisons. Contact Jessie Salisbury, Program Coordinator at 406-444-0056 or jsalisbury@montana.edu with questions.
- December 18** — Poster contest entries due to Montana GEAR UP.

Survey Says...



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Our mission: Montana GEAR UP believes that postsecondary education is possible for all Montana students, regardless of economic background, and strives to empower them to realize that ambition. Montana GEAR UP brings this message to middle and high schools, students, their parents, and the community through early college and career awareness activities, scholarships, financial aid information, and improved academic support to raise the expectations and achievement of all.