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Prince George's County Board of Education  
Prince George's County Public Schools  
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GEAR UP

PGCPS

## Steps to Excellence by Preparing for Success (STEPS)

Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) has been awarded funding through the United States Department of Education's **GEAR UP** program in the amount of \$5.6 million to develop and implement a college readiness program designed to increase the numbers of students prepared to enter and persist through college. PGCPS is the 18th largest school system in the United States serving 129,000 students in Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade. The student population is largely African American (75.4%) with a growing Latino student population (16%).

Prince George's County Public Schools' GEAR UP grant will be called **Steps to Excellence by Preparing for Success (STEPS)** because we believe that thorough secondary preparation leads to student success in college and beyond. In partnership with Howard University, St. Mary's College, University of Maryland, Explore Colleges, First Priority Trailways, and the Atlanta Bread Company, PGCPS will support academic and college preparatory activities in four middle schools – Benjamin Stoddard, Buck Lodge, Drew Freeman, William Wirt and their corresponding feeder high schools. 1,378 students will be served during school year 2008-2009 and over the six years of the grant project. The **STEPS** project objectives are to:

1. **Increase** the academic performance and preparation for post-secondary education for **GEAR UP** students.
2. **Increase** the rate of high school graduation and participation in post-secondary education for **GEAR UP** students.
3. **Increase** **GEAR UP** students' and their families' knowledge of post-secondary education options, preparation, and financing.

The **STEPS** project consists of three major components 1) Student Academic Preparation, 2) Student Support and Development and 3) Parent Awareness and Engagement. Academic Preparation, which is a centerpiece of the **STEPS** project, will be supported through the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program. AVID is a middle to high school instructional support system designed to prepare students to enroll in four-year colleges through taking rigorous secondary courses. Student support activities (delivered through the Saturday Academy, tutoring, academic counseling, and summer pre-college programs) will include career and college exploration, cultural enrichment, PSAT/SAT preparation, and leadership development. Parent awareness and engagement activities will include parent educational and self-improvement workshops, parent participation on the **STEPS** advisory board, and financial planning and resource training. An external evaluator will regularly assess project progress and student outcomes to ensure that the **STEPS** project maintains high levels of accountability and meets project objectives and outcomes.

The **STEPS** project is aligned with existing PGCPS improvement efforts to transform the culture of low-performing schools to one focused on achievement through rigorous course-taking and college-readiness. PGCPS is fiercely committed to fostering an environment that prepares all students to graduate from high school ready to succeed in college.

For more information, contact **Dr. Natasha Mitchell** at **301-583-1600** or [natasha.mitchell@pgcps.org](mailto:natasha.mitchell@pgcps.org).

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