



Vermont GEAR UP

Fall 2025
News for GEAR UP Families

GEAR UP Outreach Counselors

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Find your student's OC profile and assigned schools by going here:
www.vsac.org/about/our-outreach-programs/gear-up

Reach us toll free
877-961-4369
Burlington Area
802-654-3793

GEAR UP is a federally funded program supported in part through grants from the U.S. Department of Education.

It's time again for our newsletter! When we send this newsletter out to families, we're including every adult who takes the time to be a part of the lives and growth of students. We're grateful for all the adults who care for and about youth. Contact us anytime with questions or concerns. Thank you for being a youth champion!

GEAR UP Updates

We have heard from the Department of Education and **VSAC GEAR UP Vermont has been funded for another seven years!** We are thrilled to be able to continue this work in Vermont for Vermont students, families, schools, and educational agencies. We will continue to serve over 2000 students, 33 schools, students in our GEAR UP After HS program, and 7 statewide partners. Most of all, **we couldn't do this work without our amazing students and families!**

This spring **Springfield, Green Mountain, and Oxbow high schools** welcomed **VTSU President David Bergh** to meet with students and listen to their ideas, hopes, and interests in their future plans for education and careers. It was a great day of touring our schools and for students to have candid conversations with a college president. Thanks to our host schools, students, and President Bergh for a great exchange of ideas and a better understanding of what is important to students in terms of their interests and concerns about their futures.

We are proud to welcome **Amanda Frattaroli** into the GEAR UP family! She has joined the Northeast Kingdom team of Outreach Counselors. Amanda comes to us from Vermont Adult Learning and we are thrilled to have her on board! Amanda will be serving students and families at **North Country High School classes of 2027 and 2028, Craftsbury Academy, and Troy middle schoolers.**

Every year your **students are invited to participate** in a number of engaging learning opportunities that include innovation and exploration. Through **GEAR UP special events** students are invited by their Outreach Counselor, school, the VSAC website www.vsac.org or by announcements through local media. The best way to stay updated is with your OC!

Financial Aid, the FAFSA, and other Financing Opportunities

- **VSAC and Vermont State University have teamed up to offer Vermonters with a family income of \$65,000 or less the opportunity to attend VTSU tuition free.** Funded by the Vermont Legislature, the **Freedom and Unity Grant** is open to new or returning students of any age who do not already have a bachelor's degree and are enrolled in degree seeking programs at VTSU. Go to <https://www.vsac.org/freedom-unity-free-tuition-vermont-state-university> for more information!
- The **U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA)** has launched the **2026-27 FAFSA!** The application is **live at www.fafsa.gov**. You can apply anytime for financial aid for the 2026-2027 academic year. There is no advantage to applying early - you have time to gather your information before applying. Don't forget to apply for the Vermont State Grant as well through **MyVSAC**. Please watch for our helpful workshops or filing assistance appointments at www.vsac.org



Find more resources online at vsac.org Email info@vsac.org
Facebook: [@VermontStudentAssistanceCorporation](https://www.facebook.com/VermontStudentAssistanceCorporation) Instagram: [@gearupguide.vt](https://www.instagram.com/gearupguide.vt)

Vermont GEAR UP Families

Middle School Parent Tips

- **Exploration** and “**big picture ideas**” are the foundation of the OC-student relationship in middle school. Stay on top of **opportunities** for your middle schooler - **encourage participation** in field trips, career and college exposure, and social and academic enrichment programs.
- GEAR UP students **get the most** from our program when they regularly **meet with their Outreach Counselor**. Encourage connection.
- **Ask your student** “what would you try if you weren’t afraid to make mistakes?” **Keep conversations going** about **what they like**, **what motivates them**, and **what supporting them could look like**. Ask your OC for a conversation starter deck from GEAR UP!
- Remember middle school is full of **social and academic challenges** that are **much more intense** than they are later in life.

9th/10th Grade Parent Tips

- These are great years for **testing out interests** and **making a 4 year high school plan**. Look at options with your student on what could enhance learning and exploring opportunities!
- There’s never a bad time to **make a good first impression!** Talk with your student about staying organized (or getting organized), making and keeping supportive relationships, and putting in the work!
- **Ask your student** “how do you prioritize your spending?” Keep conversations going about **what jobs are available to them in their community**, and what supporting them could look like. **Ask your OC for a conversation starter deck!**
- **Work-based learning opportunities** could be possible through school programs - check out what is offered! These provide **great practice and exposure** to a variety of careers!

11th Grade Parent Tips

- Some say this is the hardest year academically for students. The pressure is on but so is growing independence. **Talk with your student, stay the course**, how can you be supportive and what do they need from you? **What steps need to be taken now for readiness later?** **Your OC can help** and they **love to connect with families!**
- To **connect with your student’s Outreach Counselor (OC)** ask your student, contact your school, or use the information above (page one left side) where the names of the OCs can be found. Ask about **college courses while in high school!!!**
- **Ask your student** “what traits make a good supervisor or boss?” **Keep conversations going** about **what skills they have**, **what jobs are they curious about**, and **what supporting them could look like**. Ask your OC for a conversation starter deck from GEAR UP!

Senior Parent Tips

- Is your student looking at **options for plans after high school?** Stay in contact with your child’s outreach counselor as they explore what’s next!
- Have a quick **FAFSA question?** Call **833-802-8722** with your questions **Monday-Friday between 8:00am – 4:30pm**. Our experts are available to help families! **Find our schedule of FAFSA Events at our website www.vsac.org/events**
- Want to **stay connected** with us and receive valuable information and resources? **Sign up** to receive text messages from GEAR UP OCs that inform and support you and your senior. **Send a text with your name and your student’s name to 802-441-6040** and you’re ready to go! You can opt out anytime, but we don’t think you will!



Family Summit at North Country Junior HS



Follow this QR code for comprehensive information on GEAR UP After High School including book and materials financial support, decoding financial aid, online tutoring, Instagram link, and more!

>>> GEAR UP Fall special events for students through school sign-up:

Vermont Career Connect – Wed, Nov 19, 10-11:15am,
Virtual through school sign-ups.