

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON - GEAR UP
PARENT ACADEMY
PROFILES OF SUCCESS

Two Valleys One Vision/Sky GEAR UP



University of Washington



DEAR FRIENDS

The challenges and barriers faced by students from low-income and first generation families in going to college can seem daunting. And those faced by children from low-income families who don't speak English as their first language can be especially difficult to overcome.

The University of Washington's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) exists to help families overcome those challenges. Our programs are designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education.

*Key to helping these students succeed is the involvement of their parents. They often express wanting a better life for their children than they have had, a life that provides choices. GEAR UP helps to eliminate the barriers to an education that can provide these choices. Our **Gear Up4 Families** Program, and the **Parent Academy**, focus on how these families can support their child in school and in preparing them for postsecondary education. It assists families in bridging the gap between their hopes for their children and the resources and information required to help them succeed.*

*This publication highlights the **Parent Academy** and four outstanding parent graduates from the **Parent Academy** who have met their own challenges to help their children attain an education. Language, poverty, family obligations, including economic support, and lack of knowledge and awareness can easily derail a parent's heartfelt desire to help their children. The parents in the following pages have overcome these barriers through courage and a determination that their children will prepare for, enter, and succeed in further education. We are honored they shared their stories with us and hope you will learn more about how we help parents, and will find the inspiration from them that we have found.*

We wish to thank all of our community partners and the staff of the fourteen school districts who are part of the University of Washington's GEAR UP Program for helping to achieve these parents' dream for their children—going to college. And I would like to thank the UW GEAR UP Program staff who work with our parents and students each day.

*These stories are quite similar to those of the many other parents who participated in the **Parent Academy** this year. We congratulate all the graduates of the **Parent Academy** workshops in their involvement and continuing efforts to support their children and the GEAR UP Program.*

Best regards,

Loueta Johnson, Director
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THE PARENT ACADEMY

The **Parent Academy** Program serves approximately 549 parents of GEAR UP students each year and is coordinated through the Toppenish Parent Involvement Office in Yakima Valley, and the Skagit Valley College office in Mount Vernon. Open to all parents of GEAR UP participants, 202 parents have graduated from the Parent Academy since 2007. During the first year of the GEAR UP Program, as the **Gear Up4 Families** staff worked closely with parents, they realized that parents needed to become familiar with the many aspects of postsecondary education. By facilitating the creation of a forum and community where parents could learn with one another and share their concerns, they could better assist their children in their educational goals. The first **Parent Academy** was held in the summer of 2007.

The core **Parent Academy** core workshop curriculum covers eight (8) hours of classroom instruction and activity; completion of all segments is required for graduation. The **Parent Academy** now operates four (4) core workshops annually, each of which is over four days. The **Parent Academy** topics are developed with the parent cohort of each **Academy**. The curriculum always includes information on financial aid; high school graduation requirements and coursework; and skill-building on how to work with the schools in supporting a child's education. In addition, there are ongoing monthly meetings and other events throughout the school year. The monthly meetings feature a speaker on a topic of interest to the surveyed parents. Several **Advance Workshop Parent Academy** modules are offered to **Parent Academy** graduates that include accessing College Board student scholarships and signing students up for summer jobs. Other events and activities designed to familiarize parents with college and other postsecondary options are scheduled throughout the year and are open to all parents of GEAR UP students. These include visits to college campuses across the state; presentations by professors and other college staff; and career option seminars.

Many **Parent Academy** graduates continue in the program to provide encouragement and share knowledge with other parents. The following stories illustrate the commitment and courage representative of many of these parents.

GEAR UP

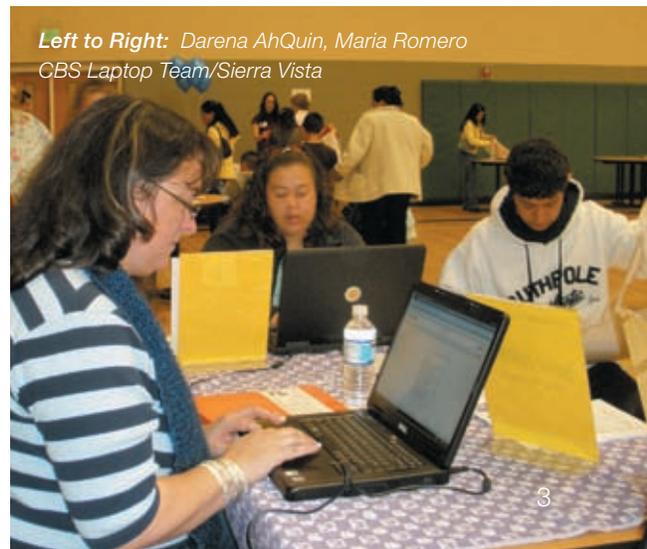
The GEAR UP Two Valleys One Vision Program serves 3,232 students and the SKY's The Limit Program serves 2,530 students in Yakima Valley and Skagit Valley.

- 68% are minority students
- 78% are from families who are at or just above the poverty level
- 50% of the parents of GEAR UP students do not speak fluent English
- Few of our parents have a college degree, many have not completed high school
- Only 10% of the entire population have a college degree

The GEAR UP program hopes to change that statistic for 5,762 students in our community.



Left to Right: Gilbert Correa, Noemi Correa & Jessica Raigoza



Left to Right: Darena AhQuin, Maria Romero
CBS Laptop Team/Sierra Vista



Rodolfo and Marie Delgado

Learning English to Inspire and Support Her Son's Aspirations

Parents of Rodolfo, Jr, 9th Grade

PARENT PROFILES OF SUCCESS

Rodolfo and Marie Delgado both grew up in the same town in Mexico. Soon after they were married, 25 years ago, Rodolfo moved to the United States to secure income for his growing family. Marie joined him a few years later in the Yakima Valley, where they both worked in agriculture and then in production and packing in the food industry. As they were raising their three children, Rodolfo, Jr, (9th grade); Marie Lynn (6th grade), and Tanya (1st grade), Marie remembers her nieces talking about continuing their education, something that had seemed impossible for her own children, given their income, language challenges, and unfamiliarity with the school system.

So when her own son, Rodolfo, Jr., entered middle school, she asked her nieces about the college program. And she told her son, who had always received good grades, that she was proud of him and that he should continue to do his best.

But though she had been in the country for several years, neither she nor her husband could speak to the school counselor or administrators in English. She was telling her son to do his best, but she struggled to understand how to help him. So she learned English. Not only did she learn English, she decided to complete her GED. "I told him (her son), if I can do this, it should be easier for you." They worked together on homework until she gained her GED. And he was accepted into the GEAR UP program.

She saw the flyer for the *Parent Academy* at school, during one of the parent conferences she attended. Her child's teacher asked her if she was interested in knowing how to apply for a financial scholarship for her son to be able to enter college. The *Parent Academy* financial aid workshop was in May. This was February. "I put that flyer on my refrigerator, and put the date of the *Parent Academy* on every calendar in the house so that I wouldn't miss it."

Learning English had made her more aware of the possibilities and resources available in the community. She now volunteers at the Spanish radio station, KDNA, to inform others in her community about prospects for their children's future education.

She and Rodolfo learned about the many agencies that have support services for her son and the places they can apply for scholarships to fund his education. These resources are important. She has also learned that before Rodolfo, Jr., begins

to apply to colleges, he must complete his high school education. She now tracks the courses her son takes in high school, and tracks his progress on project assignments and attaining the necessary credits.

During the *Parent Academy* workshops, she and her son have visited many universities and colleges, touring each campus and speaking with current students, faculty and admissions counselors. Rodolfo, Jr., now knows that he wants to attend the University of Washington. He plans to apply to several others "just in case he doesn't gain acceptance to the UW".

Marie says "I tell him, if you work hard, you can go. There are resources so that you can go, but it's up to you to make sure your grades are good."

Marie is able to better communicate with his teachers now because of the information she accessed through the *Parent Academy*, and the courses that have taught her not only how to effectively advocate for her son's interests, but how to ensure the teachers' recommendations are taken seriously at home.

Rodolfo chimes in, "I think this has motivated us to get more involved. I think my son can see that if we are interested in his education, in what he's doing, then he will put more effort in. If we hadn't known about this program, we wouldn't have been as aware of his schooling in middle school and now high school."

Since becoming involved in GEAR UP, Marie and Rodolfo have noticed that their son has shown more of his enthusiasm to them. Marie says, "He told me, 'I wanted to go to college, but I didn't talk about it because I knew you couldn't afford to send me. Now that you know there are resources, I can talk about going.' We have always told him he can have a career, live a more comfortable life than ours. We work hard, we work hard with our bodies. I tell my son, I want you to work hard too, but with your brain. If you work hard with your brain, you won't have to work as hard as we have with our bodies."

GEAR UP is creating an opportunity for the first American-born generation of this family to go to college, and a program for which the Delgados are extremely thankful.

Dianna Sampson

Learning to Advocate for Her Grandson's Special Needs

Grandmother of Brandon Sampson, Toppenish High School, 9th Grade



ACADEMY

"You cannot separate the student from the parents or the parents from the student's education."

Dianna is well aware of the role a grandmother can take. Her own great grandmother, matriarch of her family, was a role model to her, and passed away just three weeks shy of her 100th birthday. Dianna, aware of the struggles her grandmother faced, has tried to focus on her relative fortunate circumstances. As part of the Yakama Indian Nation, she and her husband have a son and a daughter, both grown. They have developed and manage a fishing business on the Columbia River and are celebrating their 40th anniversary later this year.

As a tribal member, Dianna was imbued with the culture of elders taking care of the children, grandchildren and extended family. She has been raising her grandson, Brandon, since he was 9 months old. Brandon has faced his own challenges. Dianna says that Brandon discovered the GEAR UP program himself. He needed a safe place to go and "found" the women in the GEAR UP office, who saw his academic abilities despite his challenges. As a result, Dianna responded by becoming involved in the school system to be there by his side. But Dianna's own health challenges did not make it easy to volunteer to be a chaperone on field trips, to travel to and from school for meetings, and to be as involved in Brandon's activities as she might have liked.

But when she realized that there was a real chance for Brandon to go to college as a result of the GEAR UP program, those difficulties became mere inconveniences, and Dianna was determined to learn what GEAR UP was all about. She looked up the website, made a list of things she wanted to know and identified the information she needed about college preparation and entrance. She became very proactive within the program. "If you get involved, you get so much more out of a child's education."

Her first involvement with the *Parent Academy* was "most likely" as a chaperone, though she has volunteered for so many things she cannot remember.

She sees the GEAR UP program as providing her grandson another option besides taking on the fishing business. She does not want to make the choice for him; if he wants to be a fisherman,

she and her husband will be happy for him to learn the trade. But she wants him to have a choice. Now, because of her research, and the information she has received through the *Parent Academy*, everything is in place for him to go to college. Brandon is in 9th grade; with the GEAR UP program, he is visiting now college campuses and talking with university students.

Dianna's significant contribution to the *Parent Academy* was recognized in 2008 when she received one of only five national Parent Leadership Awards at the annual conference of the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) in Washington D.C.

What does Dianna feel is the most important aspect of the *Parent Academy*? Listening to parents about what they need to know and responding to their information requests. Financial aid is a main issue for most, if not all, of the parents involved in the GEAR UP program. Not all GEAR UP students will be awarded scholarships. Parents need to know all they can about the financial aid process to make sure their children can remain in college.

The *Parent Academy* has given Dianna the skills to listen to and work with the school personnel so her grandson gets the assistance he needs. Through her interaction with Brandon's teachers and school staff, she is now knowledgeable about how special education is structured in the schools, she can help her grandson understand his responsibilities to the teachers and to his own education.

"I feel I can make a difference. GEAR UP is one of the few programs I have continued to volunteer with because it also makes a difference in my life."

Dianna's dedication to GEAR UP Community Education projects, that encompasses outreach to the Yakama Reservation, has gained her the respect and recognition she justly deserves from the Native American as well as from the ethnically diverse GEAR UP community.



Leo Reza

Financial Limitations And A Son's Ambitious Dreams

Parent of Ezekiel Reza, East Valley Middle School, 8th Grade

PARENT PROFILES OF SUCCESS

Originally from Mexico, Leo Reza has three children, Ezekiel, in 9th grade, and who is in the GEAR UP program; Caleb, in the 6th grade; and Candy, in the 3rd grade. As a farmworker, Leo works in the local fields, helping to bring produce to market in the Yakima Valley. It's easy to imagine him with his children; his personality bursts forth, and his deep affection for his children is evident from his face when he talks about them.

Yet even with this clear dedication, Leo did not know how he was going to help his son, Ezekiel, get to college and become a doctor, something Ezekiel has talked about continually since elementary school. A good student and hard worker, Ezekiel wants to be a surgeon. Leo says, "My wife and I have always told him, we don't know (exactly) how you're going to get there, but you're going to get there. Keep working hard, like you're doing."

Ezekiel comes from a family who values industriousness; Leo and his wife, Alma, work hard to provide for their family. "Sometimes when we are working, we take our children to the fields, and it has helped them see that it is much better to study than to work in the fields," Leo notes. As hard as the Rezas work, it was impossible to see a way to pay for a college education and medical school.

When they attended their first Parent Academy meeting, they recognized that they had discovered the path that would allow their son to realize his dreams. They learned that there were scholarship opportunities for Ezekiel if he continued to work hard, and financial aid available for students from low-income families. Since that meeting, Leo has been involved with each Parent Academy extended workshop (six in all) and attended nearly every parent meeting. He has gathered the information on financial assistance and now knows the necessary steps and deadlines to apply for aid and scholarships.

"When (we) went to the first GEAR UP workshop, there were many different presenters, but they all centered on how we as parents could help our children. They gave us clarity on how we could help our children succeed and how much our children needed our help. They confirmed our belief that our children could go to college.

When I think of my role as a parent, I am reminded of an eagle. An eagle can see very, very far away. Like the eagle, we can see the future for our children, and our role is to keep that vision, that future, in our eyes and in the eyes of our children. That is our job as a parent. If we get distracted, or allow our children to become distracted, from this vision, our children will not get there. We must maintain the focus of going to a university for our children, because they will not simply follow our suggestion. If we don't maintain the focus and the energy and take our responsibility seriously, our children will not take care of their studies, and the preparation, by themselves."

Leo has also discussed with his peers at the Parent Academy the importance of working with their children once in college to finish. He agrees with the Parent Academy presenters who stress that preparing for and entering a university is not the end of the road. "We must be sure that the hopes for our children's future are not cut off—that our vision, and the promise for a different life, a better life, for them, are realized." Ezekiel has many years ahead of study and schooling before he does his first surgical procedure, but he and his family no longer see his ambition as an unattainable dream, achievable only for families with large incomes. The GEAR UP Program has changed the Rezas' hopes and dreams for their oldest son and for all their children.

Leslee Graves

A Working Mother of Six Makes Time

Parent of Sarah Graves, Sunnyside High School, 9th Grade
Tray Graves, Sunnyside High School, 8th Grade



ACADEMY

Leslee and her husband moved with their six children to Washington from Idaho, where her husband was involved in ranching. Originally from Utah, Leslee grew up in a college town with her brother, father and mother. She knew how important college was to one's future and felt strongly she wanted her children to have the opportunity to get a college education. With a nursing degree, Leslee knows how important it is to get an education.

Yet with six children, she was not sure she would be able to realize her dreams for them.

A friend told Leslee about the GEAR UP Program, and invited her to a parent meeting that could help her prepare her children for college, including assistance with the process of financial aid and scholarship assistance. Two of her children, Sarah and Tray, were accepted into the GEAR UP program. As a result, Leslee decided it was critical to continue attending the parent meetings and the Parent Academy workshops to gain the necessary information to prepare her children for college.

She soon realized how much she didn't know about the process for preparing for college. So much had changed since she was in high school! The No Child Left Behind legislation had both provided opportunities and created requirements she knew nothing about. Leslee says "The great thing about the Parent Academy is that you can talk about anything." She could get answers to her questions, and as a result, became more involved in her children's day-to-day schooling. She could now ask them if they had finished their coursework, completed the necessary projects and community volunteer work required for graduation. And if they hadn't, she knew who to contact at school to gauge their progress and get them back on track.

Parent Academy parents not only gain knowledge, they are asked to work on a project to help other parents become informed. She

became involved in the Calendar Group, to develop a timeline for college admission requirements – college testing dates, financial aid deadlines, college application due dates, and the courses necessary to complete high school graduation requirements. Distributed to the other parents in the GEAR UP program, this calendar can make the difference between a child going to college or not. Information is critical. As Leslee says, "Often parents are not aware of what opportunities exist; it has opened up a new avenue for my kids."

And so, Leslee has made the time to dedicate to helping her children succeed, and to providing the information so important to her family and to other parents.

Sarah and Tray are now well on their way to beginning a college education. A key to the program's success has been the personal connection of many of the Parent Academy staff to the parents. They have made Leslee feel comfortable, allowed her to open up and ask questions, and have made sure she gets the information that's important to her and her family. They have empowered her to take a proactive role in her children's education.

Leslee wants the best for her children, as do all parents. She wants them to be the best they can be—Leslee provides the encouragement for that dream. And she wants them to be able to have choices that she may not have had. She says GEAR UP is the program that will allow them to have those choices.

"This is an incredible program; a program I am proud to be associated with," Leslee commented.

WHAT IS GEAR UP?

U.S. Department of Education

This discretionary grant program is designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. GEAR UP provides six-year grants to states and partnerships to provide services at high-poverty middle and high schools. GEAR UP grantees serve an entire cohort of students beginning no later than the seventh grade and follow the cohort through high school. GEAR UP funds are also used to provide college scholarships to low-income students.



1st Row Standing L to R: Marilyn Baluca, Elmy Baluca, Mary Ann Dosono, Dianna Sampson, Loueta Johnson, Maria Romero, Darena AhQuin, Romie Gonzalez, Lorena Silva
2nd Row Standing L to R: Leslee Graves, Cherie Bergevin, Jose Mesa, Karen Manuel, Ador Baluca, Conan Viernes, Andy Pascua



Standing: Darena AhQuin, Carol Lucei with grandson, Maurice

University of Washington

Founded in 1861, the University of Washington located in Seattle is one of the oldest state-supported institutions of higher education on the West Coast and is one of the preeminent research universities in the world. The UW educates a diverse student body of approximately 47,000 students annually offering over 250 degrees within 150 departments programs across 18 colleges and schools.

The University receives more federal research funding than any other public university in the country, and the 2nd most federal research funding of all universities in the country. The University operates and manages two major medical centers: UW Medical Center and Harborview Medical Center. The University has 20 graduate programs ranked in the top 20 (out of 34 ranked programs), and 15 programs in the top 10 (US News and World Report). The UW has a presence at over 50 locations in over 10 countries.

UW Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity

The Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity (OMA/D), located on the main Seattle campus, implements the University of Washington's diversity initiatives. OMA/D's mission is to ensure the access and academic success of a diverse student population. As the grant recipient for the GEAR UP Programs, OMA/D administers the program with its main GEAR UP Management Office in the Yakima Valley. GEAR UP is one of many programs OMA/D operates that advances the UW's mission of increasing access for diverse students going to postsecondary education.

Local UW Administration

The University of Washington OMA/D manages two large GEAR UP grants serving students in Eastern Washington and the Skagit Valley. The GEAR UP Management Office is located in Toppenish, Washington in the Yakima Valley. This GEAR UP Office, consisting of a Director, Assistant Director and support personnel, provides project oversight, program management, budget oversight, monitoring of contracts, collecting cost share and evaluating program performance. GEAR UP staff work closely with an Advisory Committee consisting of representation from all the GEAR UP partners.

School Districts

The two GEAR UP grants, Two Valleys One Vision and Sky's the Limit, consist of 14 school districts each. Each school district employs a GEAR UP Coordinator responsible for developing and implementing all the local GEAR UP services and activities. These school districts are:

- Burlington-Edison
- East Valley
- Goldendale
- Grandview
- Granger
- Mabton
- Mt. Adams
- Mt. Vernon
- Sunnyside
- Toppenish
- Union Gap
- Wapato
- Zillah
- Yakama Nation Tribal School

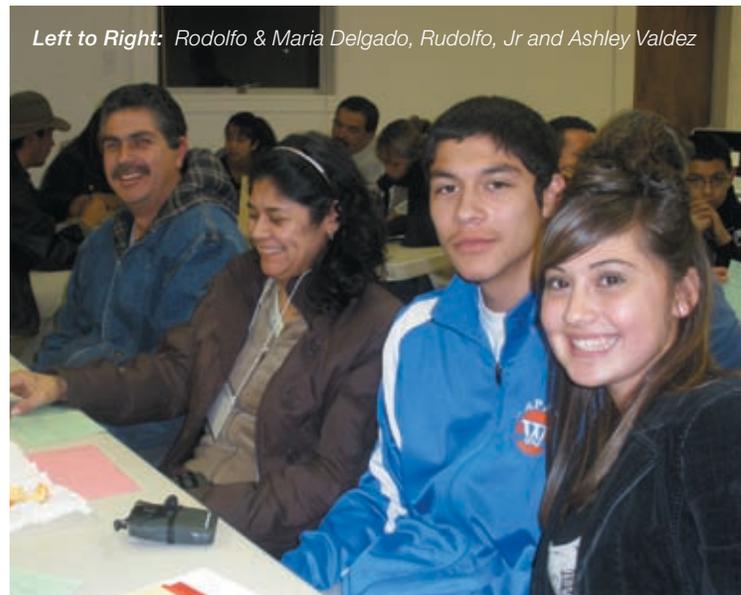
Community Partners

The GEAR UP Program also includes essential community partners that provide valuable services for students and parents. These partners range from nonprofit organizations to private businesses. Their services include workshops on college preparation/financial aid, counseling/advising, college visits and family events. These partners are:

- Digital Learning Commons
- Power of Hope
- Northwest Communities Education Center/KDNA
- Heritage University
- Skagit Valley Community College
- RGI Corporation
- Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce



Left to Right: Sabino Licona (red cap) and student Jose Licona UW School of Medicine, listening for the heartbeat w/stethoscope



Left to Right: Rodolfo & Maria Delgado, Rudolfo, Jr and Ashley Valdez



*UW Botanical/Herb Garden:
Amber Lynne – Skagit Valley Parent (blue shirt)*



*Learning to enjoy a meal using chopsticks:
Left to Right: Maria Martinez, Jessica Camacho and classmate*



Left to Right: Ofelia Ciriano, Wapato Parent, Rocio Arandas



Left to Right: Bereniz Bramhila, Olga Flores of Skagit Valley



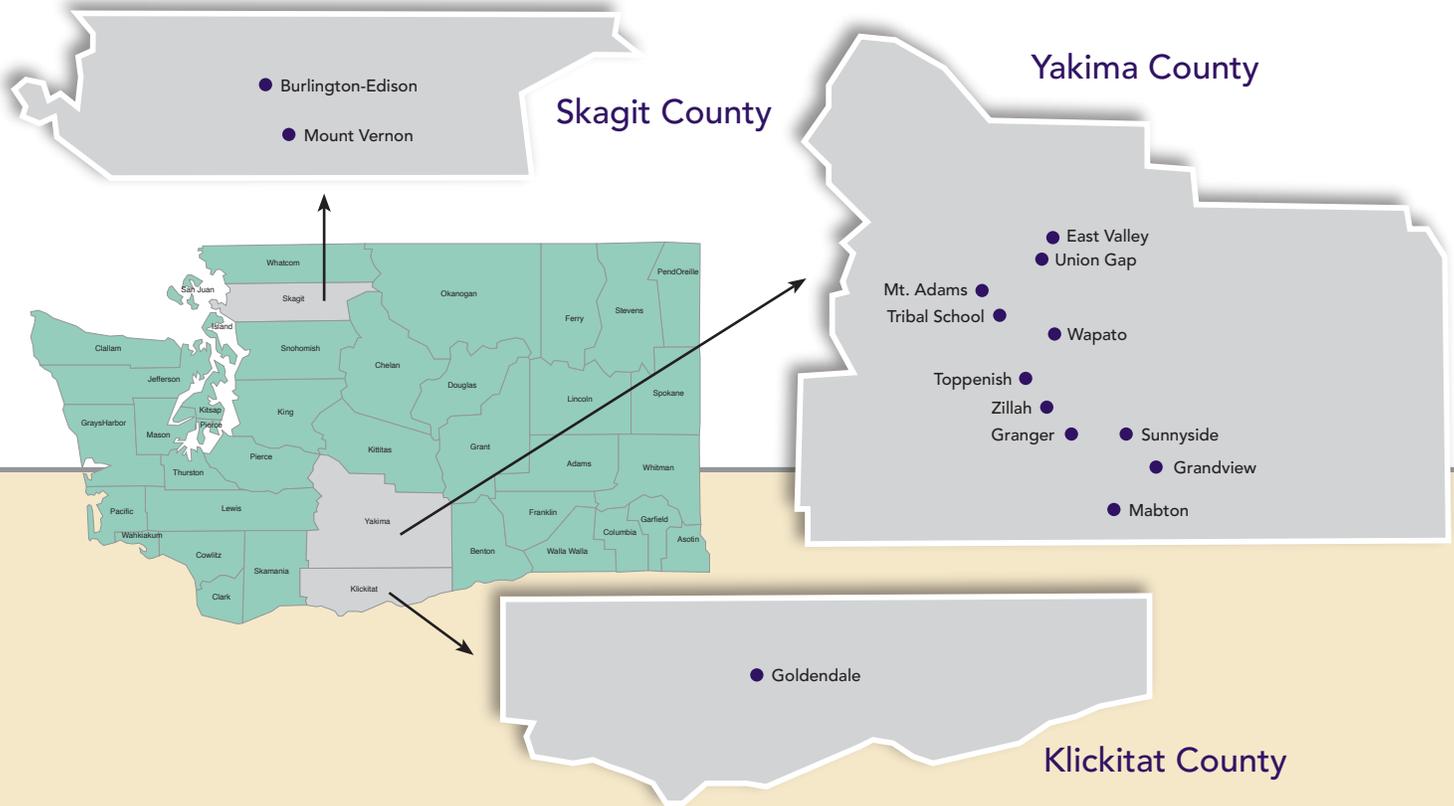
Kneeling L/R: Maria Delgado, Lorena Silva 1st Row L/R: Brandon Sampson, Ashley Peters, Jeanette Jonley, Cruz Jaime, Marion Jim, Dori Peralta Baker 2nd Row L/R: Ora Ann Yallup, Cynthia Jaime, Maria Negrete, Carol Lucei, Dr. Gandara 3rd Row L/R: Rudolfo Delgado, Wapato Student, Rudolfo Delgado, Jr; Maria Martinez, Jessica Camacho, Jennifer Camacho, Isabel Jaime, Kathy George and Glen Umtuch

Dental Student Robert Pinon

Left to Right: Maria Morfin, Flora & Antonio Cervantes, Basilia Duran, Leticia Ponce, Romeo Martinez and other Sunnyside Parents



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON GEAR UP SITES



THE COMMUNITIES FROM WHICH OUR FAMILIES COME



Toppenish

Located in the agricultural Yakima Valley of central Washington and on the Yakama Indian Reservation, the City of Toppenish covers two square miles and serves a community of 9,000 residents. The Toppenish School District serves 3,277 students, 96.6% of them low income and 95.9% from a minority population. The on-time high school graduation rate is 73.7%. With a migrant population of 37%, and 56 of every 100 students speaking a language other than English at home, students here are challenged to meet state academic achievement standards as are the other communities.

Wapato

Wapato, another small city in the fertile Yakima Valley and on the Yakama Indian Reservation, known for its crops, is one of the largest producers of high quality apples, which are shipped worldwide. Covering just one square mile, Wapato has 4,500 residents, 76% of whom are Hispanic. The Wapato School District serves 3,300; 90% of these students are low income and 29% are from migrant farmworker families.

East Valley

East Valley School District is a small rural farming community east of Yakima that includes the city of Moxee, the incorporated area of Terrace Heights and rural Yakima County. East Valley School District is a small community of approximately 5,000 where the town of Moxee acts as a community center of population and activities. The East Valley High School serves 2,700 students, 49% of whom are low income and 35% of whom are from minority populations.

Sunnyside

Sunnyside, a community of 15,000 and home to the Darigold Cheese Factory, was appropriately named. Equal distance from Yakima and the Tri-Cities, it has experienced 10% growth since 2000, somewhat less than its neighbor cities in the Yakima Valley. The Sunnyside School District serves 5,700 students, 80% of whom are low-income. With an 85% Hispanic population, Cinco de Mayo is one of the two major festivals throughout the year.



Left to Right: Jessica Camacho (Daughter), María Martínez (Mother), Jennifer Camacho (Daughter)



For more information
about the Parent Academy:
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Francisco Garcia speaking with a family about GEAR UP/Cinco de Mayo 2008



Izaac Ciriano-Sunnyside Parent - UW College of Built Environments, inspecting metal die cast



Left to Right: Darlene & Roy Gomez, Maria Romero, Sidalia Mendoza, Dori Peralta Baker, Cherie Bergevin, Jennie Honanie, Dianna Sampson, Romie Gonzalez, Floraberta & Antonio Cervantes

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