



From GEAR UP Wyoming | Winter 2026 | Vol. 5.3



GEAR UP Wyoming is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education totaling \$4,019,424 annually, with an additional \$4,019,424 annually provided by in-kind & scholarship contributors

The Path from GEAR UP Wyoming

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GEAR UP Wyoming has plenty to share this winter. Read our newsletter to meet our featured student, pick up some ACT tips, and learn how we're strengthening support for Wyoming students. Stay through the end for a letter straight from our program director.

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**GEAR UP
WYOMING**

What is our mission?

GEAR UP Wyoming strives to increase the number of low-income students who graduate high school and enter a post-secondary educational institution to improve their access to career and life opportunities. [Visit our page!](#)

Here are our winter updates:

Student Spotlight: Mazi Gonzales

This quarter, we're delighted to feature Mazi Gonzales, a high school freshman from the LCCC service area! While Mazi may be a new GEAR UP Wyoming student, she is already making an unforgettable impression. Since joining the program, Mazi has stepped confidently into high school with enthusiasm, curiosity, and a genuine desire to engage.

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According to her advisor, Mazi has quickly become one of the most eager participants in the program. From day one, Mazi has shown a remarkable willingness to jump in. She is always excited for upcoming events and readily volunteers during lessons. Whether answering questions, taking notes, or supporting group activities, Mazi brings an energy that encourages those around her. Mazi's genuine desire to participate and engage is illustrated by her advisor who recently heard her sharing about GEAR UP to a student at the school library!



Mazi poses with the EWC sign on a campus tour

Beyond her active participation, Mazi stands out for her kindness. She consistently goes out of her way to make other students feel welcome, helping them understand the program and ensuring meetings feel like a positive space for everyone. She is known to others as “a bright student with a kind heart”. Her growth is also deeply felt at home. Her mother, Kat, expressed her pride, stating that Mazi “has made massive strides to be where she is today. She is a smart girl.”

With her enthusiasm for learning, her willingness to help others, and her commitment to growing as a student and leader, Mazi is clearly on The Path to excellence. GEAR UP Wyoming is excited to cheer her on as she continues shaping her high school experience and discovering the opportunities that await her!

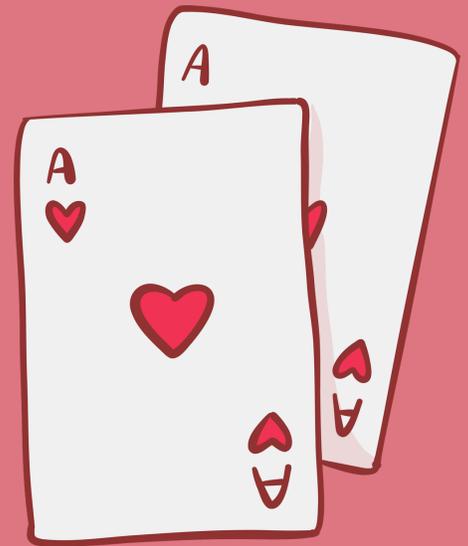
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ACE the ACT by London Vetos

We here at GEAR UP Wyoming know that the ACT is a big milestone, and preparing for it takes real dedication. You're putting in the work, learning new strategies, and building skills that will serve you well beyond test day. While we can't wave a wand and make the test disappear, we can absolutely help you walk in composed and ready to show what you know! Here are a few tips for before and during the test to help you feel prepared, stay focused, and earn a score that reflects all your hard work!

Starting well before your testing date, try out some of the ACT's older tests or free ACT practice quizzes, which allow you to practice tests to simulate the test-day timing, as well as give you an idea of what to expect in terms of difficulty and questions. These practice tests will help you become familiar with the time limits, identify your strengths, and pinpoint the areas where you may need additional review and improvement.



On the day before the test, as counterproductive as it seems, spend the day relaxing to allow yourself to be in 100% tip top shape come testing day. This doesn't mean you shouldn't study. Many people tend to cram a large amount of material at the last minute assuming that studying closer to the test will help them retain more information. While this isn't necessarily wrong, it's not quite true either.

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Ace the ACT (cont'd)

Studying last-minute can be a good idea, but rather than tackling new concepts, try to focus on what you've already studied to keep your memory as fresh as possible. Additionally, the night before, gather the materials you will need for your test the next day! This includes, but is not limited to, an approved calculator, your photo id, your ticket to get into the test, and lastly either pencils if you're taking the test on paper or a fully charged computer if taking it online.

It's test day! Plan to get a good night's sleep the night before and make the morning count! Try to wake up with plenty of time before your test, so you can enjoy a nice and healthy breakfast to give yourself plenty of fuel for the day. Additionally, give yourself plenty of time to get to the testing site, ideally allowing yourself 15 - 30 minutes once you get there to have time to get registered and find your place.

Lastly, it's finally time to take the test. The most important thing is to believe that you will do the best you can. Don't waste time worrying about how things might go, and instead focus on the fact that you are putting your best effort into this that you can. Some common test-taking tips are to:

Use the Now, Later, Never method: focus on questions that you can answer immediately, then focus on the questions that might give you some trouble, and then finally come back to the questions that are tripping you up fully.

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Ace the ACT (cont'd)

2. Time your questions! With this being a timed test, many students can get caught up in the weeds trying to answer everything perfectly, and it can leave them behind when it comes to getting through the whole test in the allotted time. Give yourself a time limit, such as 30 seconds per question, before moving on if you don't know the answer, so that you can make sure you get to every question in the book.
3. Don't be afraid to guess if you are running out of time. The ACT does not have a penalty for a wrong answer, which means that you should try to have every question filled out by the end of the test. Remember, a blank answer is always going to be wrong, but an educated guess at least gives you a chance of earning the point. Additionally, while guessing, try to stick to a strategic guessing style, such as keeping every guessed answer to the same letter, such as "e."

You've taken the test and now all you can do is wait! Don't stress out, and take things as they come. With all of these tips, you are sure to get a fantastic score on the ACT!



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Strengthening Support for Wyoming Students

In just a few days, GEAR UP Wyoming will proudly sponsor nationally recognized speaker Chris “Shoof” Scheufele at the Wyoming School Counselors Association Conference, held at the Ramkota in Casper on February 18-19. Scheufele’s keynote, *“What Makes People Ticked,”* explores student resilience and equips educators with practical, research-informed strategies for helping young people navigate stress. While we cannot predict or prevent every challenge our students may face, we can prepare them with skills that strengthen resilience and empower them to bounce back from setbacks.



At the same conference, Christian Cabral, Professional Development Coordinator for GEAR UP Wyoming, will present on the individual lens from Ruby Payne’s *Bridges Out of Poverty*. This perspective focuses on developing a common language around poverty, strengthens professional dialogue and deepens understanding of the mental models that individuals carry with them into their professional roles. Interested in learning all four lenses offered in the Bridges framework? Christian will be hosting a PTSB-accredited book club from March 4th to April 8th. All participants will receive a free copy of the book. Space is limited so register now to save your spot!

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Letter from the Project Director:

While I have only been involved with GEAR UP Wyoming (GUWY) for a little over six months, I have learned a great deal about the program, its purpose, and the difference it makes for our students, families, site staff, and our entire state.

GUWY is fulfilling an obligation and promise to students, families, schools, and communities across the state that opportunity should not be limited by geography, income, or circumstance. Every time our site staff has a conversation with a student, every family night, every advising session, and every professional development event represents a step toward opening doors that may once have felt out of reach to both the student and their family. The collective work happening at each site is building pathways to postsecondary education that are stronger, clearer, and more attainable for Wyoming students.

I have discovered that what makes GUWY especially powerful is that it is not a single program or office, but a statewide network of people committed to student success. From middle school through postsecondary transition, GUWY recognizes that college access and persistence are not one-time events, but ongoing processes that require guidance, encouragement, and trust. Each site, partner, and staff member brings strengths and knowledge of their communities to students, and this connection to the sites and students allows GUWY to create both consistency and continuity for students as they move through their years in secondary school and tackling critical educational milestones.

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Letter from the Project Director (cont'd)

As we continue this work, it is worth acknowledging the impact of what is being done every day. The time spent answering questions, reviewing forms, mentoring students, planning events, coordinating services, and many other activities matter. These efforts shape and grow the confidence for our students and families, expand possibilities, and help students see themselves as capable of achieving their goals. GUYW succeeds because of the dedication, creativity, and commitment of those involved.

Ultimately, GUYW staff across the state believe that every student deserves the chance to build a future defined by their goals and aspirations. GUYW is an opportunity for our students and families to thrive, supported by the non-stop commitment to the program and its goals by the GUYW staff.

Tom Meyer, PhD

GEAR UP Wyoming Project Director

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