

USU hosts 200 students for middle-to-high school transition camp

By Irma Mora staff writer Jun 27, 2019



Sgt. Dan Whittaker, left, leads a team as they compete in tug of war against students attending a USU Transition Camp on Wednesday.

Eli Lucero/Herald Journal

Utah State University hosted 200 students from nine different schools for the fifth annual USU STARS! GEAR UP Transition Camp.

The camp aims to provide eighth grade students transitioning into high school the opportunity to learn skills they will need to be successful in school as well as an understanding of what they can expect in high school.

"It really was created with the goal of helping eighth graders prepare for high school," USU STARS! GEAR UP Director Kristin Brubaker said. "There's a lot of shifts that happen in their life around that period of time and there's not always someone to guide them along the way."

The camp was hosted by USU STARS! GEAR UP, a federal grant-funded student program, with support from different programs at USU including the ROTC program, the Academic Success Center, the School of Teacher Education and Leadership, the College of Engineering and the College of Science.

GEAR UP partners with participating schools in Central and Northern Utah as well as Nevada to encourage students to graduate high school and continue their education.

"It's also a goal for this camp to help students start to envision themselves on a college campus," Brubaker said. "Demystify it, take away some of what might be scary about going to college."

Since the students came from nine different schools, they were divided into six mixed-school groups so they could learn from one another. Each group was given a color: blue, lime, gold, silver, green or red.

"Sometimes it's nice to be taken out of your situation from your group of friends and meet a whole different group of friends that help you see that 'They're having the same thoughts and same fears as me,'" USU STARS! GEAR UP Marketing Manager Jeannine Huenemann said. "It's more comfortable talking to that person who is new, than it is someone you know."

The students had the opportunity to get to know each other with activities such as a relay race and tug of war organized by the USU ROTC. They also had a chance to use the USU Challenge Course.

"I liked the fact that we got to meet new people and make friends really quickly and learn how to develop teamwork skills," blue team student member Lina Le said.

The camp offered 10 workshops to develop different skills such as study skills, paying for college, career exploration and chair yoga. Blue team student member Erin Runhaar said she enjoyed the workshops and learning about a college campus.

Each group was lead by USU students and recent graduates. By leading by example, the mentors also taught the students how to be successful in college.

"Mentors are amazing," Huenemann said. "These people are really charged up and they kind of show the students, 'Look, I can do it. You can do it.'"

Blue group member Libby Booher said she enjoyed the camp and was really glad she was able to meet new people and make new friends.

"We became a family," Booher said.