

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- BCS Teacher PD Day**  
(No school for students)  
October 9
- GEAR UP Birmingham College Week**  
October 23-27
- Magic City College Experience Presentation Competition**  
October 24
- BCS Teacher Workday**  
(No school for students)  
October 27
- Happy Veteran's Day!**  
(No school)  
November 10
- Happy Thanksgiving Break!**  
(No school)  
November 20-24
- Happy Christmas Break!**  
(No school)  
December 20-January 7

# GEAR UP

## BIRMINGHAM BULLETIN

### A NOTE FROM DR. SIMMONS

Voilà, and just like that, it's October - happy fall y'all! The first full month of school is already behind us, and we're full force ahead as we prepare to tackle the month of October. Thank you to all who helped make September a huge success; a special thanks to all of our BCS high school faculty members, GUB partners and GUB parent and student ambassadors who were instrumental in helping make National GEAR UP Week one to definitely remember! It was great to see everyone rally together and take time out of their busy schedules to pass out school supply kits to our freshman students!



**Dr. Kisha T. Simmons, NBCT**  
GEAR UP Project Director  
Twitter: @KTSimmons4AU  
Email: ksimmons@bhm.k12.al.us

GEAR UP Birmingham has yet another eventful month ahead of us, as we prepare for the *Magic City College Experience* and *GEAR UP Birmingham College Week*. Both of these events share a common goal; highlighting the importance of a college education. Specifically, the *Magic City College Experience* aims at shining a positive light on our nation's historically black colleges and universities, while focusing on the impact that these institutions of higher education have on preparing the future leaders of tomorrow.

In the spirit of all the upcoming festivities this month, I am excited to have the opportunity to highlight my undergraduate alma mater. I am a graduate of [Auburn University](#), where I received my Bachelor of Science in Education, with a specialization in Early Childhood Education. Auburn is a public research university located in Auburn, Alabama; it has been consistently placed in the top rankings for public universities across the country. In fact, just recently, Auburn University was [ranked the best college in Alabama by Money Magazine](#); needless to say, I am proud to be an Auburn graduate! To learn more about other notable Auburn alumni, check out the university's recent commercial entitled, "*Where an Auburn Education Can Take You.*" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Ce2ugduqEI> #WarEagle!

### HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

This month, GEAR UP Birmingham celebrates the establishment and longstanding history of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) across the country. This coincides with a time in which Birmingham is preparing for one of the largest economic drivers, the Magic City Classic, a weekend full of activities surrounded by the historic football match-up between two state HBCU teams: [Alabama A&M University](#) and [Alabama State University](#).

HBCUs were first established to serve the education needs of African Americans during a time when they were being denied access to universities/colleges across the country, eventually becoming the popular source of postsecondary education for African American people. Even with the success of integration in America's postsecondary schools, HBCUs still remain a vital ingredient to the nation's education system. Recent research suggests that graduates of HBCUs have a higher rank of well-being compared to their peers at other institutions. They are also more likely to connect with a professor as a mentor while at school, and they leave school with a strong alumni support network (*Inside Higher Ed, 2015*). There are over 100 Historically Black Colleges and Universities across the country, and Alabama is proud to be the home to 15 of those schools, making it one of the top states with the most historically black colleges and universities. GEAR UP Birmingham is proud to partner with two of Alabama's HBCUs – Alabama State University and Lawson State Community College.

## GEAR UP PARENT AND STUDENT AMBASSADORS

Parent engagement is a key component to ensuring college readiness for our students. To help determine the specific needs and desires of our community, GEAR UP Birmingham developed a student and parent ambassador program. These ambassadors not only help to facilitate and strengthen the relationship between the GUB staff and families, but also aid in volunteering at events and activities throughout the year.

If you are interested in joining or learning more about the ambassador program, please email [mfunderburg@bhm.k12.al.us](mailto:mfunderburg@bhm.k12.al.us).

## CONT.

GEAR UP Birmingham will host the Magic City College Experience Presentation Competition on October 24 at [Lawson State Community College](#). Tenth grade students will participate in a school based competition in which students are afforded the opportunity to conduct research, write an argumentative essay and present findings on **The Relevance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in 21st Century, Presumed Post-Racial Society**. Top 10th grade school-based winning teams from each Birmingham City High School will advance to the district level, where they will have an opportunity to compete for the district competition winner title. The goal of this event is to educate our students on the impact of HBCUs in past and current history.

## 3,300 9TH AND 10TH GRADERS CELEBRATE NATIONAL GEAR UP WEEK

Birmingham City Schools' 9th and 10th grade students celebrated National GEAR UP Week on September 17-23. National GEAR UP Week is a time where all GEAR UP communities across the country raise awareness and celebrate the positive impact of the GEAR UP initiative. During this week, GEAR UP Birmingham focused on building both excitement and knowledge around college awareness and readiness. Students participated in the following activities:

- **Freshman Supply Kit Giveaway:** As a surprise gesture and gift to welcome students to high school, GEAR UP Birmingham provided every 9th grade student with a high school back-to-school supply kit at no charge to them. A big thanks to Office Depot for assembling and delivering the school supply kits to all of our BCS high schools!
- **GEAR UP Dream Wall:** GEAR UP Birmingham students were encouraged to share their "after high school dreams."
- **School Pep Rallies:** To celebrate the kickoff of GEAR UP week, schools hosted pep rallies with performances from their step teams and cheerleaders.
- **Balloon Release:** Students' dreams were "sky high" as they set their future goals free to reach new heights.
- **Wear Your Favorite College Apparel:** Educators wore their favorite college apparel to show their school spirit.



We want to thank GEAR UP Birmingham's partners for helping us to execute another successful National GEAR UP Week. To see photos of all that took place during #NationalGEARUPWeek, visit GEAR UP Birmingham's social media pages on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



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