

College Bound Scholarship showing great promise in helping low-income students pursue higher education

College Bound Scholarship's success enhanced by guidance and counseling program

SEATTLE – New research shows great early results for Washington's College Bound Scholarship program, in which low-income middle school students pledge to do well academically and stay out of trouble in return for college tuition at public institution rates and up to \$500 a year for books. In a state that ranks 46th in the nation in terms of the likelihood that a student will enroll in college by age 19, the scholarship appears to have game-changing potential. The scholarship virtually closes academic gaps between low-income participants and more affluent students, according to a new report.

The report, [*College Bound Scholarship Program*](#), conducted by The BERC Group for College Spark Washington and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, examines the impact of the College Bound Scholarship. Read a summary of key findings from the report [here](#).

"The College Bound Scholarship changed the person I was," said a student from Lincoln High School in Tacoma that recently completed their first year of college. "I planned to quit in middle school, was suspended and had major attendance issues. This scholarship gave me hope to shoot for something."

The report focused on 55 high schools from a mix of urban, rural and suburban communities and showed that College Bound students are doing better than other low-income students not signed up for the program and almost as well, and in some cases better than students that come from higher income backgrounds in most measures of college readiness and success including:

- 56 percent of College Bound students graduated with the classes required to apply to a public four-year college in Washington, compared to 30 percent of low-income students who didn't take the pledge, and 61 percent of higher-income students.
- 72 percent of College Bound students enrolled directly in college, compared to 40 percent of low-income students who did not sign up for the program, and 66 percent of more affluent students.

The College Bound Scholarship has been a major priority of the Road Map Project, a community-wide effort aimed at dramatically improving student achievement from cradle to college and career in South King County and South Seattle.

"A recent poll in the South King County region found the vast majority of parents believe it's important for their children to get a college education, but they are concerned about affordability. The College Bound Scholarship responds to this concern and early results are tremendously positive," said Mary Jean Ryan, Executive Director of the Community Center for Education Results, the organization supporting the Road Map Project.

The report also showed that when combined with Navigation 101, a guidance and counselling program for middle and high school students that helps students make choices for their future, students' odds of enrolling and persisting in college increased.

"The College Bound Scholarship works, and combined with a counseling and guidance program like Navigation 101, the results are even better," said Christine McCabe, Executive Director of College Spark Washington. "We should continue to invest in programs like these two so low-income students can have the supports both financially and in the classroom to get to and succeed in college."

Other key findings in the report include:

- Half of College Bound scholars said the scholarship motivated them to take rigorous course work that increased their odds of enrolling and persisting in college. Many students enrolled in Running Start (21 percent) or Advanced Placement classes (63 percent).
- 85 percent of full-year college attendees who received the College Bound Scholarship reported it was critical to attending college.
- 63 percent of College Bound students said the scholarship motivated them to graduate high school and 83 percent said it motivated them to earn a higher GPA.

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College Spark Washington funds programs across Washington state that help low-income students become college-ready and earn their degrees. Grantees include community-based organizations, K-12 schools and districts, community and technical colleges, four-year colleges and universities, educational nonprofits, and public agencies. College Spark began supporting access to higher education in 1978 and, since 2005, has awarded more than \$38 million to college readiness and degree completion programs throughout the state.