

College Spark Washington announces \$1.4 million in Community Grants to help low-income students become college-ready and successfully transition to college

SEATTLE – College Spark announced \$1.4 million in Community Grants with projects ranging from helping Rogers High School of Spokane transition to using Advanced Placement English Language Arts as the default placement for all 11th grade students to helping Whatcom Community College fully scale English 101-Plus, a co-requisite course that provides extra support to students who need it during a college-level course rather than requiring completion of a prerequisite remediation course.

The annual, competitive statewide Community Grants Program focuses on building the effectiveness of grantees working with low-income students in middle school, high school and college by funding new and promising practices that help students become college-ready and transition successfully to college.

“Gaps in college readiness, college access, and college success between low-income students and their more affluent peers persist,” said Christine McCabe, Executive Director at College Spark. “As funders, we are able to take risks and bet on good ideas to advance social and economic change. These programs will be testing innovative solutions that have the potential to improve postsecondary persistence and completion rates for low-income students.”

This year’s ten grantees will measure results using at least one of the following indicators of future college success:

- **Early Warning Indicators:** Decreasing the number of middle school students who trigger two of three early warning indicators: five or more absences per semester, course failure, or suspension or expulsion.
- **Remedial Education:** Decreasing the number of students who require remedial education in college.
- **College Math and English:** Increasing the number of students who earn their first college-level credit in English or Math.

For example, Aki Kurose Middle School in the Seattle School District will develop more intensive supports to lower the rates of Early Warning Indicators for African-American boys. Students in the project will engage in goal setting cycles that will incorporate regular self-reflection with their own EWI and academic data, maintain a goal setting and action portfolio, meet with teachers acting as mentors, participate in facilitated family events, and have opportunities to meet with successful adults.

College Spark is also supporting programs that help students earn their first college-level credit. It is estimated that as many as 30% of students placed in remedial education could have

succeeded in college-level courses, and the time and money wasted in those cases is an obstacle to degree completion. A \$150,000 College Spark grant will help Whatcom Community College fully scale a co-requisite English course called English 101-Plus, a team-taught course that combines English 95 and English 101. This model provides support for students still needing developmental coursework to build skills and self-efficacy while also enrolled in a course that will allow them to earn college credit.

Since 2005, College Spark's Community Grants Program has awarded more than 100 Community Grants totaling more than \$15 million.

Please see below for a full list of descriptions of grantees or visit the 2016 Community Grants webpage.

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- **Community Colleges of Spokane (Spokane) -- \$149,991**
Low-income students are more likely to arrive at college having met the requirements for high school completion but falling short of meaningful college readiness than their higher income peers. Community Colleges of Spokane will partner with five districts within the Eastern Washington Rural Alliance Partnership (Mary Walker, Reardan-Edwall, Riverside, Grand Coulee Dam, and Colville) to improve college and career readiness for high school students by better preparing them to enter dual credit opportunities. College faculty will work with high school teachers and counselors to design student learning modules that address academic gaps in math and English as well as other student success barriers including study skills, mindset, persistence, and time management.
- **Lake Washington Institute of Technology (Kirkland) -- \$150,000**
Research has indicated that placement tests used by community colleges are not reliable predictors of student performance in college. A \$150,000 College Spark Washington grant will help Lake Washington Institute of Technology combine its intake and placement systems into one uniform system and to create systems of directed self-placement for English and math. In directed self-placement, students are allowed to choose from a set of placement options after seeing examples of the concepts, course work, assessment, and student testimonials from different levels of pre-college and college-level math.
- **NEWESD 101 (Spokane) -- \$149,998**
NEWESD 101 will use gamification as a strategy for addressing Early Warning Indicators (EWI) in two Eastern Washington middle schools – Centennial Middle School in the West Valley School District and Riverside Middle School in the Riverside School District. Gamification is the use of game design elements - rules of play, competition, and scoring – in non-game contexts and has been studied for its potential to improve engagement, organizational productivity, learning, and systems. NEWESD will train teachers and counselors in gamification of the classroom and about practices for review of EWI and identification of at-risk students.
- **Renton Technical College (Renton) -- \$49,999**

Renton Technical College will design an Open Doors dual credit reengagement program on its campus for students who left high school before graduating. In collaboration with the Renton School District and community agencies, Renton Technical College will develop a curriculum that contextualizes English and math instruction into career and technical preparatory courses.

- **Republic School District (North Central, South Central, Eastern) -- \$150,000**
There is mounting evidence of the power of Early Warning Indicators to predict high school completion and college readiness. Republic School District and partner districts will develop, share, and sustain systems for long term improvements in discipline policy and practice. Sound Discipline, a community-based organization, will provide support, consultation, and coaching to data teams from 10 rural districts focused on reducing discipline problems and improving outcomes for students. The Rural Alliance for College Success will connect the work of participating districts so that implementation is supported by a network of rural educators.
- **Seattle Public Schools (Seattle) -- \$150,000**
Aki Kurose Middle School will develop more intensive supports to lower the rates of Early Warning Indicators (EWI) for African-American boys. Students in the project will engage in goal setting cycles that will incorporate regular self-reflection with their own EWI and academic data, maintain a goal setting and action portfolio, meet with teachers acting as mentors, participate in facilitated family events, and have opportunities to meet with successful adults. Student support protocols will be designed to allow all African-American boys to matriculate into high school with a strong sense of student agency, with clear long term goals, and be fully prepared for rigorous coursework.
- **Skagit Valley College (Mount Vernon) -- \$149,712**
Skagit Valley College will design, sequence and implement introductory English classes to best promote student learning and success in a Guided Pathways system. Aligning and sequencing English courses to areas of interest that students select has the potential to improve student motivation and learning.
- **Spokane Public Schools (Spokane) -- \$150,000**
A \$150,000 grant will help Spokane Public Schools make Advanced Placement Language and Composition the default English Language Arts course for all 11th grade students at Rogers High School. Project implementation will include professional development for 9th and 10th grade teachers in differentiation of instruction and instructional strategies that foster rigorous learning, training 11th grade ELA teachers to teach AP courses, and development of an ELA learning community focused on improving the rigor of ELA instruction.
- **Whatcom Community College (Bellingham) -- \$150,000**
Whatcom Community College plans to scale a co-requisite English course. In co-requisite courses, students that would have been traditionally placed into a developmental, non-credit bearing course are instead placed directly into the college-level course and are provided additional supports during a longer class period. This model provides the support for students to build skills, self-efficacy, and earn college credit within one academic quarter.
- **Whatcom Community College (Bellingham) -- \$150,000**
A \$150,000 grant will help Whatcom Community College redesign its math placement practices and developmental sequence to increase the rate of students earning college-

level credit within two years. Whatcom Community College will create a directed self-placement tool to help students select a math course for themselves after seeing examples of the concepts, course work, assessments, and student testimonials of courses offered.

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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 \$45 million to college readiness and degree completion programs throughout the state.