

College Spark Washington announces nearly \$1.6 million in new grants to help low-income students become college-ready and successfully transition to college

SEATTLE – College Spark Washington announced nearly \$1.6 million in Community Grants today ranging from helping students from the University of Washington’s Dream Project become college-ready and avoid remediation to helping the NorthEast Washington Educational Service District 101 in Spokane develop and implement an Algebra-readiness boot camp for middle school students.

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 be college-ready and transition successfully to college.

“We are supporting organizations across the state working hard and making progress on postsecondary access, persistence and completion rates for low-income students,” said Christine McCabe, Executive Director at College Spark Washington. “These grantees will be tracking their results and sharing what works.”

This year’s 12 grantees will measure results using at least one of the four following indicators of future college success:

- **8th Grade Algebra:** Increasing the number of students who take and pass Algebra by the eighth grade.
- **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, 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 a \$150,000 grant will help the University of Washington’s Dream Project -- a college access and retention program that partners UW students with first-generation and low-income high school students in the Seattle area to help them attend college -- change its curriculum materials and training of mentors and use data and technology to help students avoid remediation.

“This grant will allow us to create and implement new curriculum and programming to support 300 more high school students in earning college-level math and/or English credits each year and 300 more students in placing out of developmental education when they enroll in postsecondary education,” said Jenée Myers Twitchell, Director at the University of Washington Dream Project. “In turn, these changes will dramatically increase the likelihood of those students

earning postsecondary degrees.”

College Spark Washington is also supporting programs that help students align their coursework in high school to what they will need to know to be ready for college-level work. A \$149,985 Community Grant will help Eastern Washington University partner with Community Colleges of Spokane and K-12 school districts in the greater Spokane region to improve curriculum alignment with each other and the Common Core State Standards.

“The College Spark grant will allow high school teachers and college professors to align curriculum around the rigorous expectations of the Common Core State Standards,” said Wendy Watson, Director of the Secondary Curriculum at Spokane Public Schools. “The goal is for students to transition seamlessly from high school to postsecondary coursework without the need for remediation.”

Since 2005 College Spark Washington’s Community Grants Program has awarded more than 100 Community Grants totaling \$14 million.

Please see below to see a full list and descriptions of grantees or visit the [Community Grants Program page](#).

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Western Washington

- **Educational Service District 112 (Vancouver) - \$150,000**
A \$150,000 College Spark Washington grant will help Education Service District 112 give math teachers the skills they need to be more successful teaching low-income students. The project includes providing direct support to 75 students over three years to help them overcome barriers to success in math and change the culture of math fear and avoidance. By providing professional development that is immediately put into use with struggling students, ESD 112 will learn how to support shifts in instruction and share those lessons with their peers at ESDs around the state.
- **Everett Community College (Everett) - \$39,500**
Everett Community College has tried many promising practices to increase success for students placed in remedial education that have been focused on student performance. A \$39,500 College Spark Washington grant will help Everett Community College better understand the relationship between other factors that affect completion of college-level math, such as the relationship between student learning and student success and demographic factors.
- **Green River Community College Foundation (Auburn) - \$77,749**
Struggling students juggling commitments such as work and childcare with school were not taking advantage of optional supports. A \$77,749 grant from College Spark Washington will help Green River Community College develop and test the required use of an out of class writing center for students in remedial English and learn how requiring academic supports that are typically optional can affect the likelihood of transitioning to successful completion of college-level English courses.
- **Peninsula College (Port Angeles) - \$149,989**

Peninsula College has recently experimented with flipped classrooms for remedial education and has been encouraged by the results. “Flipped Classrooms” is a term used to describe delivering lecture content online outside of class time and using the classroom for practicing skills, small group interactions and one-on-one instruction. A \$149,989 College Spark Washington grant will help Peninsula College and others learn more about the potential of flipped classrooms to increase the percentage of low-income students who earn their first college-level credits in English and math, and if the model is equally effective with two disciplines on the same campus.

- **Tacoma Community College (Tacoma) - \$150,000**

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. A \$150,000 College Spark Washington grant will help a collaborative effort between Tacoma Community College and Tacoma Public Schools to improve the alignment between the K-12 and postsecondary project partners. The goal of the project is to reduce learning gaps in the transition from high school to college in math and English and better prepare students for entry to college, resulting in less remediation.

- **University of Washington Foundation (Seattle) - \$150,000**

The University of Washington’s Dream Project has largely focused on college access. A \$150,000 College Spark Washington grant will help The Dream Project enhance its current work by adding components that focus on college readiness and avoiding remediation by changing its curriculum, materials and training of mentors, as well as improvements to its data management system to know more about which students are earning college-level credits in high school and course-taking in college at the top ten technical, community and four-year postsecondary institutions in which its participants enroll. This project will give The Dream Project an opportunity to better support students in avoiding remediation during this time of change.

Eastern Washington

- **Brewster School District (Brewster) - \$145,000**

In the small, rural district in North Central Washington that is 100 percent Free and Reduced Lunch eligible and 87 percent Hispanic, 25 percent of its students pass Algebra by the end of the 8th grade. The \$145,000 grant from College Spark Washington will help the school district implement the Texas Instruments Math Forward program with their 5th- 8th grade students. The program, which includes professional development for teachers and extended time in math class, has been effective in other school districts like the San Antonio Independent School District, which increased its rates of passing Algebra from 17 percent to 54 percent after implementation.

- **Eastern Washington University (Cheney) - \$149,985**

A significant obstacle to college readiness for low-income students is the lack of alignment between what is expected of students to graduate from high school and what they need to know to be ready for college-level work. College Spark Washington’s \$149,985 grant will help Eastern Washington University partner with Community Colleges of Spokane and K-12 school districts in the greater Spokane region to improve curriculum alignment with each other and the Common Core State Standards.

- **Mary Walker School District The Rural Alliance (Springdale) - \$120,000**

The senior year of high school often is an under-utilized time where students focus on

finishing graduation requirements rather than taking advantage of this final opportunity to position themselves for success in college. A \$120,000 grant from College Spark Washington will help The Rural Alliance administer a college placement test for math to all high school juniors at participating schools and provide a remediation course during senior year to low-scoring students. The goal is to reduce the number of students who require remedial math in college.

- **NorthEast Washington Educational Service District 101 (Spokane) - \$149,799**
Policy makers, teachers, researchers, education advocates agree that in order for students to be successful with the Common Core State Standards, teachers will need significant and sustained professional development. A \$149,799 College Spark Washington grant will help NorthEast Washington Educational Service District 101 develop and implement an Algebra-readiness boot camp for students in 5th - 7th grades and professional development for middle school math teachers with the goal of increasing the number of students taking and passing Algebra by the 8th grade.
- **Toppenish Middle School (Toppenish) - \$150,000**
Toppenish Middle School is a 100 percent Free and Reduced Lunch eligible school that recently transitioned from offering Algebra only to the highest-achieving students to Algebra for all. In high-poverty schools where Algebra for all has been a challenge, implementation lacked professional development for teachers making the transition from teaching the highest-performing students to teaching students with diverse math skill sets. A \$150,000 College Spark Washington grant will help Toppenish Middle School provide professional development to teachers to equip them to teach students with diverse math skill levels and provide out-of-school time support for students struggling the most in Algebra.

Statewide

- **Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (Olympia) - \$150,000**
A body of research established that placement tests commonly used by community colleges are not reliable predictors of student performance in college. An estimated 30 percent 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. Transcript-analysis placement methods give users additional measures of college readiness and increase the likelihood that students are placed more accurately in English and math coursework. A \$150,000 College Spark Washington grant will help The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges assist 5-10 colleges with developing and implementing transcript-based placement procedures for English to replace current placement procedures that rely only on placement tests.

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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.