

# COLLEGE SPARK

WASHINGTON



**SUPPORTING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR OVER 40 YEARS WITH MORE THAN \$60 MILLION INVESTED IN COLLEGE READINESS AND DEGREE COMPLETION PROGRAMS**

**WHAT WE DO:** Using local and national research, College Spark funds implementation of evidence-based programs and supports on-going program evaluation to improve education practices and student outcomes. We prioritize building the capacity of grantees to deliver effective programs and generating knowledge about effective practices for other organizations.

- We identify, encourage adoption of, and share evidence of **effective practices**
- We build **strong relationships** with key partners, especially state agencies, to develop and spread effective interventions
- We help education institutions **collaborate across the pipeline** to better serve students
- We support **professional development** for educators to increase their ability to support students
- We demonstrate a commitment to learning by funding **data collection and use** by grantees and by the foundation

## CURRENT COLLEGE SPARK PROGRAMS

GUIDED PATHWAYS: \$8.5 MILLION OVER EIGHT YEARS

Committed more than \$7 million to help ten Washington community and technical colleges develop clear pathways and new advising strategies so more students can successfully navigate college and connect their goals to completed degrees and credentials.

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM: NEARLY \$20 MILLION TO DATE

An annual, competitive program open to schools and organizations around the state that supports strategies to improve middle school math skills and postsecondary transitions so that low-income middle school students get on track to be college-ready at graduation and high school graduates successfully transition to college courses.

READY TO RISE: \$3.4 MILLION OVER FIVE YEARS

Working with Degrees of Change in Tacoma, Yakima, and Vancouver to enable 1,000 low-income students, with peer-support, to stay on track and graduate from college.

COLLEGE-READY MATH INITIATIVE: \$12 MILLION OVER SEVEN YEARS

Supporting efforts in middle and high schools to help low-income students graduate with strong math skills and avoid remediation in college. The evidence-based strategies include Intensified Algebra and Academic Youth Development in middle schools, and Bridge to College classes in high schools, as well as increasing access to programs that allow high school students to earn college credit.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM COMPLETED GRANTS

### COLLEGE READINESS INITIATIVE: \$9 MILLION OVER SEVEN YEARS

College Spark made a long-term investment to expand and evaluate two promising programs Navigation 101 and AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), at 38 schools in 19 districts around the state, aimed at encouraging students to explore their postsecondary options and take rigorous college preparation courses. We saw **positive impacts on several indicators of college readiness**, including course-taking patterns (the percentage of student who took the courses needed to get into a public four-year college and enrollment in advanced placement classes), high school graduation, and remediation rates. **Gaps for students of color closed in many areas**, and initiative schools had **higher rates of college enrollment and persistence** than comparison schools with similar demographics. More than 85% of schools are continuing to sustain the programs after the grants ended, and both programs saw **wide expansion** in the state beyond College Spark-funded schools (five-fold increase for AVID schools and ten-fold for Navigation 101).

### ACHIEVING THE DREAM: COMMUNITY COLLEGE COUNT: \$11 MILLION OVER EIGHT YEARS

With College Spark grants, sixteen Washington community and technical colleges increased their focus on students success and **using data to inform the colleges' strategic decision-making**. Most participating colleges outperformed peers as **more students achieved key momentum points**, such as completing gatekeeper courses, persistence, and program completion. Lessons from Achieving the Dream interventions influenced the development and participation of colleges in Guided Pathways.



### COMMUNITY GRANTS: MORE THAN \$19 MILLION AND 120 GRANTS TO DATE

Examples include:

- Projects whose leaders have shifted how students are assessed for placement into college-level courses, resulting in **more students being placed into credit-bearing classes**, where they have performed as well or better than students placed under the old methods. These project leaders are now influencing their peers around the state.
- Middle schools seeking to **reduce absenteeism and suspensions**, with model programs significantly reducing both indicators and becoming **active advocates to their peers**.
- Early grants to **expand and evaluate** the UW Dream Project, a student-initiated college access and retention program that pairs UW students as college-planning mentors to first-generation and low-income students, now serving fifteen King County high schools.
- Funding for the Act Six program to expand around the state while **developing affordable program models** to make its **successful peer-support strategies** available to more students.