

College Spark Washington announces \$1.3 million in Community Grants to help low-income students become college-ready and successfully transition to college

SEATTLE – College Spark announced \$1.3 million in Community Grants with projects ranging from efforts to support the Highline Public Schools as it strengthens its current Advanced Placement (AP) program to better support low-income students, to work at two-year colleges around the state who are redesigning their systems of remedial coursework to empower students to enter and succeed in a program of study quickly.

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.

“Education is not only about equal access, it is about equity,” said Christine McCabe, Executive Director at College Spark. “These programs were selected because they have the potential to improve persistence and completion rates for low-income students, addressing barriers that poor, first-generation, and minority students face in school.”

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

- **Middle School Math:** Improve math achievement in middle school, one measure of which is the rate of students earning a 3 or higher on the Smarter Balanced Assessment.
- **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 percentage of students who are required to enroll in remedial, noncredit-bearing courses in college.
- **College Math and English:** Increasing the percentage of students who earn their first college-level credits in English or Math.

For example, Glover Middle School in Spokane will work to reduce early warning indicator rates by developing systems for analyzing student data, reforming school policy to limit the use of suspension practices, and teaching emotional-regulation strategies or dispute resolution skills for students. Yakima School District will design and implement professional development for all middle school math teachers to improve math outcomes for students, particularly for English Language Learners (ELL). Training will focus on improved conceptual understanding of mathematics and integrating ELL supports and growth mindset practices into their daily routines.

The projects focused on increasing first college-level credits in English and math are making campus-wide changes to the structure of their developmental education sequences and gatekeeper courses. Bellingham Technical College plans to convert all of its developmental math classes to flipped classrooms, which deliver lecture content online outside of class time and use the classroom for practicing skills. Both Clark College and Everett Community College will condense their pre-college math sequences in addition to contextualizing remedial math courses to specific programs of study in order to better connect required math content to student academic and career goals.

Since 2005, College Spark's Community Grants Program has awarded more than 100 Community Grants totaling more than \$17 million.

Please see below for a full list of descriptions of grantees or visit the 2017 Community Grants webpage.

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- **Bellingham Technical College (Bellingham) -- \$150,000**
With support from College Spark, Bellingham Technical College will redesign the structure of its development math courses so more students can make it through a college-level math course within two years. Bellingham Technical College plans to convert all of its developmental math classes to flipped classrooms, which deliver lecture content online outside of class time and use the classroom for practicing skills, small group work focused on interaction, problem-solving, and one-on-one instruction.
- **City Year Seattle/King County (Seattle) -- \$47,000**
City Year Seattle will refine its existing work by using an assessment of social and emotional skills to inform a more targeted approach to providing social emotional learning supports. By using this assessment with students at Denny and Aki Kurose Middle Schools, City Year will support students identified through Early Warning Indicator data with improved interventions to directly address specific deficits rather than working with students on more broad social and emotional goals.
- **Clark College (Vancouver) -- \$150,000**
Clark College aims to reduce the time it takes the 75% of students placed into pre-college math to progress to college-level math. This plan for pre-college math reform includes three primary elements: (1) condensing the current four-course sequence of pre-college courses to two courses; (2) contextualizing these pre-college math courses to each of the four broad degree categories (called meta-majors) that students will enter, which will include Liberal Arts, Social Science and Education, Business, and Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM); (3) students in the Business and STEM meta-majors, which will require more algebraic concepts than the other meta-majors, will receive co-requisite support in the form of supplemental instruction during their first college-level math course rather than requiring a third pre-college course.
- **Everett Community College (Everett) -- \$122,858**

Everett Community College will work to increase the percentage of students completing their first college-level math course within one year by: (1) replacing its current six-course pre-college sequence with a new 3-course sequence designed to support the Guided Pathways model; (2) improving the alignment of pre-college math learning outcomes to those in each first college-level math course; (3) increasing use of contextualization in pre-college math that focuses on real-world applications and conceptual understanding; and (4) aligning first college-level math courses to career pathways for both STEM and non-STEM meta-majors.

– **Highline Public Schools (Highline) -- \$50,000**

Highline Public Schools will develop a plan to improve outcomes for non-traditional Advanced Placement (AP) students. Over the past five years, Highline has made a concerted effort to ensure that students have more equitable access to AP and other dual credit opportunities. A \$50,000 grant will help Highline refine its current AP program to help students who are new to AP courses be successful, pass their AP tests, and earn their first college credits in English and/or Mathematics.

– **Mathematics Education Collaborative (statewide) -- \$300,000**

A \$300,000 grant will help Mathematics Education Collaborative (MEC) design leadership materials and prepare teachers statewide to lead ongoing professional development that will help mathematics teachers guide students as they make mathematical arguments, critique ineffective strategies, and build on the ideas of their peers.

– **Renton Technical College (Renton) -- \$49,994**

Renton Technical College (RTC) will use grant funds for planning the process of creating contextualized English courses for the seven new meta-majors that will be offered at RTC as it transitions to a Guided Pathways model. Contextualized courses teach foundational academic skills in a way that is relevant and meaningful to students in each disciplinary area. By exploring how to best structure contextualized English courses that fulfill degree expectations, rather than only certificate requirements, RTC aims to move more technical students through college-level English courses and on a path to degree completion.

– **Spokane Public Schools (Spokane) -- \$150,000**

A \$150,000 grant will help Glover Middle School improve its early warning indicator reduction efforts to reduce its suspension rate through a combination of three key strands of work. The plan includes (1) professional development on school-based strategies for working with students in trauma for all teachers and staff, (2) training for students on trauma, resiliency, and strategies for self-regulating emotions, and (3) redesigning the Glover discipline plan to include restorative justice strategies.

– **Tacoma Public Schools (Tacoma) -- \$141,000**

Tacoma Public Schools will work to design and implement a restorative justice model of school discipline at Jason Lee Middle School in order to reduce early warning indicators and support the social emotional learning of students. The in-school suspension

program will be redesigned for restorative justice activities, which might include service learning or mediation between parties in conflict to guide students to understand and repair the damage caused by their behavior.

– **Yakima School District (Yakima) -- \$150,000**

Yakima School District serves 35% English Language Learners (ELL) and 14% migrant students, which is higher than the statewide average for those groups. A \$150,000 grant will help Yakima School District design and implement professional development for all middle school math teachers to improve math outcomes for English Language Learners. Teachers will be trained in techniques and tools to help them integrate ELL supports and growth mindset practices into their daily routines.

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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 \$50 million to college readiness and degree completion programs throughout the state.