

**College Spark Washington announces \$1.5 million in Community Grants to help low-income students become college-ready and earn their degrees**

SEATTLE – College Spark announced \$1.5 million in Community Grants with projects ranging from professional development for middle school math teachers to implementing corequisite models, programs that enroll students into college-level courses with mandatory support, at two- and four-year colleges around the state.

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.

“Even though most living-wage jobs require a college degree or credential, far too many Washington students either don’t have the opportunity to go to college or face daunting challenges when they get there,” 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, leveling the playing field for social mobility.”

This year’s twelve 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 rate of students who are required to enroll in remedial, noncredit-bearing courses in college.
- **College Math and English:** Increasing the rate of students who earn their first college-level credits in English or Math.

Research on efforts to expand the demographics of students who experience middle school math success consistently points to the presence of high-quality professional development for teachers as a critical difference between efforts that lead to improvements and those that do not. Bethel and Kennewick School Districts and the Olympic Educational Service District will provide professional development to help teachers transition from instructional practices that primarily build procedural fluency to those that additionally foster improved conceptual understanding of mathematics.

Several projects concentrate on the successful transition to college. For example, Community Colleges of Spokane will work with regional districts to improve and scale new placement instruments with the intention of placing a majority of recent high school graduates based on high school performance rather than by a placement test. Tacoma Community College is partnering with districts, the Washington Student Achievement Council, and Ready to Rise to analyze and improve the college transition process for College Bound Scholars.

The projects focused on increasing first college-level credits in English and math are testing strategies for building successful corequisite models. These models place students into a college-level course with mandatory extra support which may include any of the following strategies: having two instructors in the classroom; providing tutors to run support sessions; contextualizing math content to other courses; or including a growth mindset or a college success curriculum.

Since 2005, College Spark's Community Grants Program has awarded more than 100 Community Grants totaling more than \$19 million.

Visit the 2018 Community Grants webpage for a full list of grantees and project descriptions.

###

- **Bethel School District (Bethel) -- \$150,000**  
Meeting math standards is a significant barrier to college readiness and degree completion for low-income students. With support from College Spark, the Bethel School District will provide professional development for middle school math teachers to help them transition from primarily procedural instruction to more comprehensive, conceptual instruction methods that allow students to better understand how they arrived at a solution.
  
- **Community Colleges of Spokane (Spokane) -- \$149,997**  
In an effort to improve the transition from high school to college, Community Colleges of Spokane will revise its placement strategy at both Spokane and Spokane Falls Community Colleges by collaborating with Spokane Public Schools and regional school districts. The goal of this project is to increase the rate of students who place directly into college-level math by developing transcript-based placement instrument and revising placement practices at both colleges to ensure that the newly development instrument is used at scale.
  
- **Community Colleges of Spokane (Spokane) -- \$103,686**  
Community Colleges of Spokane (CCS) will develop, pilot, and expand an Academic I-BEST version of corequisite math remediation. Academic I-BEST links two contextualized courses using team-teaching and required wrap-around supports. Students can potentially earn either developmental or college-level credit in English or math depending on their progress and performance in the class. CCS will begin scaling small pilots of Academic I-BEST for math students placed one level below college-level and grow the program to serve 300 students in three years.

- **Eastern Washington University (Cheney) -- \$149,573**  
 Over three years, Eastern Washington University plans to develop, pilot, and scale corequisite remediation courses. In corequisite remediation, students are placed directly into college-level courses with required extra support sessions instead of being enrolled in pre-college, non-credit bearing development courses. Corequisite courses will be designed and piloted in the first year, refined based on classroom observation and data analysis and expanded in the second year, and fully scaled in the third year.
- **Kennewick School District (Kennewick) -- \$150,000**  
 A \$150,000 grant will help Kennewick School District provide professional development for middle school math teachers at Park Middle School. Professional development will include teacher training on grade-level math standards in addition to technical assistance writing units of study and tiered academic interventions for middle school math. Once units have been written, Park Middle School plans to implement a continuous improvement cycle of lesson planning, classroom observations, and facilitated reflection to refine their work.
- **Olympic Educational Service District 114 (Bremerton) -- \$146,738**  
 Olympic ESD 114 will provide professional development to a cohort of 20 primarily rural middle school math teachers in its region over three years. Research-based professional learning will focus on equipping teachers to promote student progress in growth mindset and the Common Core State Standards in Mathematical Practices. This project aims to build a middle school teacher cohort through a summer residence program as well as school-year gatherings, and to provide participants with both professional and peer feedback and support. Through classroom implementation of new strategies and continual gathering and analysis of student-produced evidence, Olympic ESD hopes to increase the rate of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students scoring 3 or higher on the math section of the Smarter Balanced Assessment.
- **Peninsula College (Port Angeles) -- \$149,700**  
 Peninsula College will work to contextualize its first college-level math and English courses to each meta-major and create corequisite courses. Contextualized courses are more relevant to students, and can promote retention and completion. By using examples, readings, assignments, and projects that integrate applications from a broad career pathway that a student chooses, students are more likely to complete college when there is a clear understanding of how course work connects to their career aspirations. The corequisite model will include required additional support sessions for students who are placed directly into credit-bearing math and English courses.
- **Pierce College Foundation (Tacoma) -- \$110,171**  
 Corequisite remediation has the potential to dramatically increase both the rate of students earning college-level math credit and overall degree completion rates. Pierce College will use grant funding to create a corequisite math class with a supplemental instruction model for each of its existing introductory college-level math courses. Supplemental instruction is an academic support model that uses collaborative group

study for students in traditionally difficult courses. These weekly hour-long sessions are mandatory and are facilitated by tutors.

– **Renton Technical College (Renton) -- \$49,964**

Many Washington colleges are interested in encouraging more students who begin in Transitional Studies and more workforce students to complete two-year degrees instead of stopping after completing short-term certificates. One of the primary barriers for students who might consider completing a degree is getting through the pre-college math sequence and completing college-level math. Renton Technical College will use grant funding to plan for two new math courses (MATH 175 and 190) that align learning outcomes in Transitional Studies courses and better serve as a bridge to college-level courses. Depending on where a student begins, the proposed math sequence will allow students to complete their math requirements in one to two quarters faster than is currently possible.

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

With a \$150,000 grant, Shadle Park High School will work to reduce Early Warning Indicators in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade so that students complete their early high school years with full credits, are prepared and eligible to take advantage of dual credit opportunities in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and can earn their first college-level English and math credits before leaving high school. Project work will include the development of a Freshman team and Sophomore team of teachers, administrators, counselors, and achievement gap intervention specialists to develop four practices that support early high school success: 1) common instructional practices, 2) behavioral expectations and discipline practices, 3) grading practices, and 4) assessments. Coordinated work to align practices school-wide to create common behavior policies and instructional practices is a strategy for improving quality and equity.

– **Tacoma Community College (Tacoma) -- \$28,600**

In reviewing the college enrollment data from the Washington Student Achievement Council, Tacoma Community College found that a significant percentage of the College Bound Students they expected never actually enrolled. Tacoma Community College will work on a planning project to improve the transition to college for graduates of Tacoma Public Schools with College Bound Scholarships and to decrease the rate of College Bound Scholars who are required to take developmental education courses upon entering college.

– **Tacoma Housing Authority (Tacoma) -- \$135,000**

Tacoma Housing Authority will use grant funding to research the effectiveness of the Children's Savings Account – Scholar Incentive Program. The evaluation will examine, among other variables, whether a savings incentive program that invests in an education fund when students meet academic milestones promotes lower Early Warning Indicator rates in low-income students.

###

[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 nearly \$60 million to college readiness and degree completion programs throughout the state.