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College Spark Washington awards \$241,000 in grants to support rural school districts with remote learning during COVID-19

SEATTLE - College Spark Washington awarded \$241,000 to seven rural school districts in Washington state to support remote learning amid school closures due to COVID-19. The funding will provide laptops and internet hotspots for students who don't have access.

School officials have voiced concerns about learning inequities in the state, which are magnified by a lack of computer or internet access in some communities. "As a funder, we try to be responsive to our community. During this time of public health concern and school closures, directing funding towards equitable technology access is a critical way to meet student needs," said Warren Brown, Executive Director at College Spark.

The coronavirus has exposed a digital divide in many communities. For rural students, remote learning along with coronavirus is a tough challenge. "Students are struggling in areas without internet and computer access," said Rachel Clements, who manages the Small Districts Fund at College Spark. "Students may have access to the internet through a cell phone, which is very different from a computer, or they may have spotty internet coverage – both make learning very difficult."

The funding will provide electronic devices and internet access so students can stay connected to their teachers and peers. As classes move online, it is more important than ever that students have the resources they need so they don't fall behind.

Seven school districts, including Brewster, Lake Chelan, Lind-Ritzville, Mabton, Manson, Oroville and South Bend School Districts, received funding to address challenges to remote learning.

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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 nearly \$70 million to college readiness and degree completion programs throughout the state.