

News release



Everett Public Schools

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District staff attend national FAFSA Completion Pilot Project in Indianapolis *National cadre focused on EACH student's preparation for work or learning after high school*

In early October, District Improvement and On-time Graduation Director Jeanne Willard, Assistant Principal Becky Ballbach and Humanities Specialist Allison Larsen attended a conference in Indianapolis sponsored by [Lumina Foundation](#), [Kresge Foundation](#), and the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#).

The conference brought together representatives of 87 U.S. school districts – all focused on an effort ensuring that each student has access to information and resources for training, trades and education after high school. Supported also by the U.S. Department of Education, the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Pilot Project* is being tested in Everett's schools and 86 other districts.

Filling out a FAFSA form gives students and families access to all types of federal financial aid, including Pell Grants and federal student loans. The FAFSA is also an application for state and institutional aid in many cases. The *FAFSA Completion Pilot Project* enables these 87 districts to track which students fill out the form and which do not, thus targeting work to help all students take that step.

Willard, Ballbach and Larsen will be key in the district's efforts to ensure that more students have information about and access to financial aid. This will lead to more students going on to succeed in college and other educational pathways after high school.

"Our goal is to help students arrive at school each fall less worried about how they will pay for college and more focused on how they will complete college," said Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "What we have learned so far from districts involved in the project has been very promising, as they have attained significant increases in the number of students completing FAFSA forms."

Superintendent Gary Cohn echoed support for the FAFSA project. "This work is critically important because 90 percent of students who complete the FAFSA do enroll in postsecondary education within 12 months of their high school graduation. This project helps our counselors support students to get the financial support they need to pursue their dreams. Having information about the possibility of financial support changes the course of students' lives."

"The opportunities and advantages provided by going to, and succeeding in, college have never been greater," said Lumina Foundation Program Officer Thomas Major Jr. "Education is the only route to economic prosperity for individuals and the cities and towns where they reside. We applaud the districts participating in the FAFSA Completion Pilot Project for their dedication to making an impact on the lives of their students."

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