



Our students will shape and lead the future

News release

May 18, 2015

Everett Public Schools receives two College Spark Washington Community Grants

Low-income students face barriers to college access and success, often lacking the guidance and support needed to prepare for college. Everett Public Schools (EPS) will use the \$150,000 College Spark grant to improve access to rigorous course work for low-income students.

"The Advanced Placement (AP) Expansion and Support Project builds on the work that was launched at Cascade and Henry M. Jackson high schools last year," said Becky Ballbach, student support services director. "The College Spark funding will allow us to extend the AP Expansion and Support Project to the remaining two high schools in our district – Everett and Sequoia high schools. The College Spark funding will also enable us to institutionalize these practices and develop additional supports for historically underserved students, and increase the percentage of students earning their first college credit in English or Math, in addition to other AP courses."

EPS has partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Snohomish County, and will use a \$49,556 grant from College Spark to develop curriculum and activities which reduce Early Warning Indicators (EWI) and which will be delivered during the school day in group mentoring sessions at North Middle School. Providing supports that ensure middle school students attend school at least 95 percent of the time and pass every class, makes the difference between students who almost certainly won't graduate from high school and those who will.

"Big Brothers Big Sisters is very much looking forward to working with staff and faculty at North Middle School to help ensure the success of their students," said Pamela Shields, executive director at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Snohomish County. "The work we will be doing through the College Spark grant will help vulnerable students realize greater academic success, greater social/emotional growth, and fewer behavioral issues, resulting in more students staying in school and earning their diplomas."

Additionally, EPS will work to support teachers working with low-income youth in high-rigor. These teachers will learn together through professional learning communities focused on teaching AP strategies and developing growth mindset.

"The goal of the Community Grants Program is to increase degree completion rates for low-income students," said Christine McCabe, executive director at college spark. "These programs represent promising college readiness and college transition programs in Washington state."

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For more information:

[Mary Waggoner](#), Director of Communications, 425-385-4040

[Becky Ballbach](#), Director, Student Support Services, 425-385-4063

[Dr. Jeanne Willard](#), Director, On-Time Graduation, 425-385-4078

[Dr. Molly Ringo](#), Assistant Superintendent, 425-385-4023