



OUTCOMES BRIEF: 2025 COMMUNITY COLLABORATION CHALLENGE

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LEON LOWENSTEIN FOUNDATION



PARTNERSHIP FOR
Student Success

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With support from the Leon Lowenstein Foundation, in 2025 the Partnership for Student Success (PSS) invested \$163,000 in Community Collaboration Challenge awards to 21 communities nationwide. Now in its third year, the program empowers local leaders to spark change through microgrants—funding small pilot programs and community-driven events that bring together schools, districts, nonprofits, higher education institutions, out-of-school time providers, student groups, families, local agencies, and/or others invested in student success in their communities. Funding local connector events and small pilot programs allows the CCC to catalyze action and builds momentum for sustainable, locally driven student support solutions that can be replicated across a range of educational settings.

These collaborations gave communities the chance to identify shared challenges, leverage local assets, set collective goals, and, in some cases, pilot brand new programs to expand people-powered, evidence-based student supports. From school districts to national nonprofits, awardees represent a wide range of organizations committed to improving student outcomes. This impactful work is happening via community collaboration in all kinds of places, including rural and Tribal communities, smaller community organizations, smaller districts, and regional colleges, as well as urban and suburban communities.

The response for the 2025 competition was unprecedented: more than 250 applications from 46 states and D.C., surpassing the combined totals of the past two years. Over half of this year's projects focused on aligning resources to tackle chronic absence and boost student engagement—two of the most pressing challenges facing schools today. Finalists hail from all corners of the country in 22 states. Organizations range in type from local districts, higher education institutions, and non-profit organizations.

This report highlights the work of each 2025 awardee, sharing project summaries and insights that reflect the power of community collaboration in action, and a variety of shareable resources ranging from best practices to sample workshop descriptions for convenings, even a peer mentoring handbook! We're excited to share this amazing work with you.

For information on 2023 and 2024 Community Collaboration Challenge Awardees, past outcomes, and impact reports [click here](#).

ORGANIZATION: AFRICAN HERITAGE, INC.



- **Location:** Appleton, WI
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Student Success Coaches



African Heritage, Inc.—a nonprofit organization focused on advancing the wellbeing of people in Northeast Wisconsin—united K-12 school districts, higher education institutions, local businesses, and community-based organizations to deliver evidence-based student success coaching. The CCC award allowed African Heritage to expand its College and Career Readiness Fellowship programming from general guidance sessions to three distinct, tailored pathways that address students' diverse postsecondary goals. By piloting a more tailored approach, the award expanded the organization's ability to serve students, transforming how they deliver career and college readiness support.

Awardee Brightspot:

“We assembled a dynamic coalition of partners from various sectors, united in our mission to promote college and career readiness for scholars in Northeast Wisconsin. This collaborative initiative provided a wealth of diverse expertise, resources, and insights, empowering our scholars with the critical knowledge, skills, and attitudes they needed to enhance their academic engagement and excel in their career preparations. Together, we transformed the future for our scholars and contributed to a more prosperous community for all.”

ORGANIZATION:
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS
SERVICES, INC.



- **Location:** Richmond, VA
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Mentors



Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) partnered with Communities In Schools Richmond and Junior Achievement of Central Virginia to launch an innovative mentoring program in two Richmond Public High Schools. This initiative focused on equipping high school juniors with the tools and support they needed for academic success, career readiness, and meaningful employment after graduation. Volunteer mentors with flexible mid-day availability and a range of life experiences were critical to this program, which offered a streamlined time commitment and removed the need for volunteers to drive. BBBS also leveraged its alumni network to recruit new mentors and increase community visibility. The CCC award allowed BBBS to expand its offerings to reach more mentees and mentors by implementing a new program model. Support from PSS has allowed them to build partnerships sustainably and strategically and, in doing so, be prepared to serve a new population of youth that were not previously eligible for BBBS mentoring (due to age restrictions in traditional programs) for the 2025-26 academic year.

- **Access the Resource:** [BBBS Group Mentoring Best Practices](#)

Awardee Advice:

“Stay flexible with the timeline and be willing to adjust along the way. We have learned that partnerships come with extra variables that can be hard to predict. BBBS is proud to have stayed the course to find the right fit for this project to ensure that it can be sustainable for future cohorts of students!”

ORGANIZATION: BOYZ OF C.O.R.E., INC



- **Location:** Atlanta, GA
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Mentors

Boyz of C.O.R.E., Inc. envisions building a dynamic, community-driven network to support at-risk male students in the Atlanta metro area by uniting educators, community organizations, families, mental health professionals, and local employers. With the CCC award, Boyz of C.O.R.E., Inc. created a multi-day career exploration and life skills program. The program kicked off with an organized field day with local business leaders, mentors, and students. The students were able to hear from mentors and business owners on career exploration opportunities and had an opportunity to network and ask questions, exposing them to career pathways they may not have been previously exposed to. A series of follow up opportunities led by a business owner/mentor on a variety of topics (including resume building, interview skills, and life skills) were executed over a number of weeks following the field day.



- Access the Resource: [Video of Events](#) and [Invite Flyer](#)

Awardee Brightspot:

“We are most looking forward to continuing to expand our influence in the community and spread positive healthy habits like regular exercise and healthy eating, followed by continuing the mentorship programs with new exciting things to teach the Boyz.”

ORGANIZATION: COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER DUBUQUE



- **Location:** Dubuque, IA
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Mentors

The Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, in collaboration with the Attendance Matters Local College Access Network, spearheaded a community-wide initiative to reduce absenteeism by 4% and improve college and career readiness for students. Guided by the collective impact model, the coalition brought together diverse stakeholders, including K-12 schools, higher education institutions, community organizations, and advocacy groups, to address absenteeism and related barriers to student success. Key activities for the CCC award included engaging directly with students and families to gather insights that informed culturally relevant and community-driven strategies. Activities included assemblies with students and faculty, parent sessions, and virtual meetings, all building stakeholder buy in and providing evidence-based training for stakeholders, focusing on recruiting and training mentors from minority communities, implementing effective home visit strategies for chronically absent students, and equipping families to participate in FAFSA completion and career-readiness efforts.



- Access the Resource: [Building Connections to Support School Attendance](#)

Awardee Highlight:

We used this funding opportunity to help four different school districts engage/convene groups of teachers, students, and families around school engagement and student attendance. Schools were amazed at what students and families shared with them in their conversations. These conversations were powerful motivators for the schools to either develop or enhance existing engagement frameworks that will continue to impact their schools.

ORGANIZATION:
COMPASS, A DIVISION
OF THE BLACK HILLS SPECIAL
SERVICES COOPERATIVE



- **Location:** Sturgis, SD
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Tutors



Compass, a division of Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, built a high-impact tutoring initiative through a partnership with the Rapid City School District and other community partners. Through the CCC award, Compass was able to provide a second round of tutoring for a pilot that began in fall 2024 featuring a 3-on-5 tutoring structure and utilizing the Future Forward Reading program. Fifty-eight additional students identified by the school district received small group tutoring instruction, three times a week for 30-minute sessions for 15 weeks. Tutors provided small group instruction and 1-on-1 tutoring rotations. In addition to providing consistent intervention services, this program provided the platform for establishing personal relationships with high needs students as tutors became an integral part of their school day, as well as a liaison between school and family. Tutors also supported family engagement nights.

Awardee Brightspot:

“We saw improved attendance because students did not want to miss their tutoring days. The tutoring program lessened the burden for classroom teachers. Teachers felt confident in the ability of the tutors to provide the necessary instructional strategies individual students required.”

ORGANIZATION: ELEVATE NAVAJO



- **Location:** Fort Defiance, AZ
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Mentors

Elevate Navajo piloted a comprehensive family engagement program using their CCC award. Dedicated staff coordinated activities such as family events, workshops, and classes, and saw a 30% rise in parent attendance at classes following the first session, noting that families began attending consistently and asked for additional sessions. Additional sessions were added for “Supporting Youth Dreams” and “Parents as Partners in Postsecondary Planning.” Families were able to work alongside teacher-mentors to learn how to support college applications, scholarships, and long-term planning. Elevate Navajo was able to hold numerous family events, workshops, and classes with funding allocated for materials, venues, childcare, and meals to encourage participation from families new to the program. By building a network of engaged families and fostering collaboration across the community, Elevate Navajo continues to create an impactful program that empowers youth and their families to thrive.

- **Access the Resource:** [Facilitator's Guide](#)

Awardee Advice:

“Start with trust and walk beside [families]. The most powerful change happens when families get solid communication about events. Do not stress over meeting agendas, some of the best family engagement classes happen when conversation and storytelling leads the parent class. Finally, don't wait for perfection-just begin. When problems arise (such as our childcare and transportation issues), we were able to solve them with the help of community collaboration.”

ORGANIZATION: ESTES PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT



- **Location:** Estes Park, CO
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Tutors, Mentors

The Estes Park School District, in partnership with The Learning Place of Estes Park, launched a collaborative initiative to establish a sustainable, evidence-based tutoring program focused on improving educational equity, academic engagement, and student success.



This initiative specifically targeted high school students struggling in math, writing, or facing chronic absenteeism, and it combined support from school staff, peer mentors, and community partners. The CCC award supported expansion of a district partnership with The Learning Place to provide classroom-based tutoring to 20 students through five trained tutors. Additionally, secondary schools dedicated one hour each Wednesday for students to work with trained peer mentors. A Peer Mentor Handbook was developed and shared out along with a training session, designed to equip mentors with strategies for academic support, confidentiality, and student engagement.

- **Access the Resource:** [Estes Park School District Peer Mentoring Handbook](#)

Awardee Achievement:

A key highlight of the program has been the positive feedback from students and staff. Their reflections speak to the confidence, academic improvement, and sense of belonging fostered by this initiative, including:

- "Students are improving a lot, and many of our students who had multiple failing grades first semester are now passing all their classes."
- Stephanie, High School Counselor
- "I feel less stressed in math because I get extra practice with [my tutor]."
- Ashton, High School Student
- "I am a lot more confident to ask for help and speak in English now."
- Ivanna, High School Student

ORGANIZATION: GIRLS INC. OF CHICAGO



- **Location:** Chicago, IL
- **Award Amount:** \$5,000
- **Primary Support:** Mentors

Girls Inc. of Chicago launched the Mind + Body Health Initiative (the “Initiative”), a comprehensive program designed to address the mental health and social-emotional needs of girls in less-resourced communities in Chicago. The project focused on reducing barriers to mental health services and equipping stakeholders with the tools to foster healthy relationships and emotional well-being for girls. The CCC supported components of the Initiative, including a peer mentoring effort to support the 8th to 9th grade transition and InnovateHer, a student-led festival for girls in 6th-12th grade designed to encourage young women to take an interest, carry out research, and become peer leaders in health and wellness. Together, these efforts aimed to destigmatize mental health challenges, improve access to resources, and create a supportive community for girls to thrive.



- **Access the Resources:** [Invite Flyer](#) and [Workshop Descriptions](#). Girls Inc. of Chicago was featured in an episode of Designing Education, a podcast hosted by Robert Balfanz, director of the Johns Hopkins Everyone Graduates Center. Access “Harnessing Youth Power: The Girls Inc. Story” [here](#).

Awardee Brightspot:

“One bright spot we're especially proud of is the success of our InnovateHer Festival, which empowered girls to explore and address health-related inequities in their communities. Not only did participants gain a deeper understanding of critical health issues, but they also developed valuable skills in research, leadership, and communication. Because the girls took the lead in organizing the festival and facilitating workshops, they gained real-world experience in event planning and public speaking-further reinforcing their confidence and agency. This initiative was a powerful example of youth-led learning and community impact.”

ORGANIZATION: GREATER JOHNSTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT



- **Location:** Johnstown, NY
- **Award Amount:** \$5,000
- **Primary Support:** Mentors



The Greater Johnstown School District (Johnstown) launched an extension of their existing mentorship and attendance initiative—through which school staff in a range of roles mentor students to improve attendance—focused on supporting students in grades 5-12 with varying attendance challenges. The award expanded the district’s ability to support students who are at risk of being chronically absent or who are already chronically absent. With the additional resources, Johnstown developed new partnerships, including a key collaboration with Fulton-Montgomery Community College. As a result, targeted engagement initiatives were created including a kickoff event held on the college campus. These events provided students with exposure to postsecondary opportunities and meaningful mentor interactions in a new and inspiring setting.

- Access the Resource: [Fulton-Montgomery Community College/Mentor Community Circle Questions](#)

Awardee Brightspot:

“One bright spot we’re especially proud of is the impact of our kickoff event at the local community college. Several students who attended—many of whom were at risk of chronic absenteeism—walked away with a renewed sense of possibility for their futures. One student, who had not previously seen herself attending college, now feels hopeful and motivated to pursue enrollment at the local community college. Another asked, with genuine excitement, when the earliest opportunity would be to begin taking college coursework. The event also connected students with college mentors who shared relatable stories and experiences. These mentors were able to build authentic relationships and connect on a different level than our existing success mentors, offering students a vision of what their future could look like. Seeing students engage, ask questions, and begin to imagine themselves in college was a powerful and affirming moment for our team—and a reminder of the importance of creating access and exposure to these kinds of opportunities.”

ORGANIZATION: JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY TRIO PROGRAM



- **Location:** Harrisonburg, VA
- **Award Amount:** \$5,000
- **Primary Support:** Mentors

The James Madison University TRIO Program (JMU TRIO) utilized the award to expand their successful high school family night to include a middle school family night on March 8, 2025. The event featured separate college access and postsecondary planning workshops for parents and 6th-12th grade students. JMU TRIO Educational Talent Search partnered with the College of Education to provide a workshop for parents, focusing on ways to curb chronic absenteeism, and graduate students conducted a STEM workshop for middle school students. We increased our numbers attending the Family Night by 44% from last year.



- **Access the Resource:** [Family Appreciation Night Agenda](#)

Awardee Advice:

“As TRIO programs, our mission is to empower first-generation and low-income students to succeed in postsecondary education. I would do three things:

- **Start with family voices, especially the students, to determine what they need and how you can partner with the families to provide the necessary services. Please don't assume you have the correct answers. Listening to the students helped us plan the events.**
- **Leveraging existing relationships helped with providing the guest speakers for the workshops, providing the retreat center, and materials. Working with community resources, such as community colleges and the United Way, can also provide students with resources to help them reach their goals.**
- **Make whatever you are doing personable and purposeful. Family Night included dinner for the families, allowing them to interact with one another. The Senior Retreat offered interactive workshops to ensure students would not be bored or overwhelmed.**

Piloting is not just a one-and-done situation. Use what you learned to have long-term sustainability.”

ORGANIZATION:

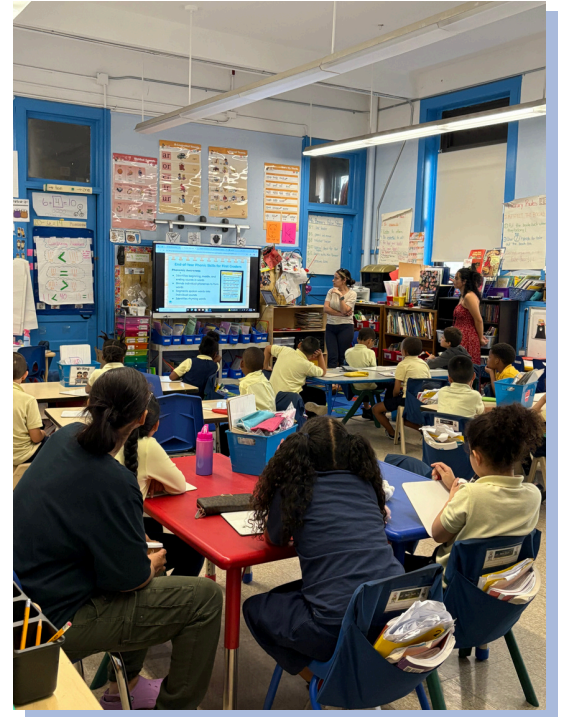
JOSEPH C. CORNWALL CENTER FOR METROPOLITAN STUDIES AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEWARK



- **Location:** Newark, NJ
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Wrap-around/
Integrated Supports

The Joseph C. Cornwall Center (The Cornwall Center) for Metropolitan Studies at Rutgers University-Newark utilized CCC funds to support the School-Community-University Partnerships Initiative, expanding the impact of its Parent Mentor Academy by hosting two family events at two elementary schools. The Families and Schools Together (F.A.S.T.) K-2 Literacy Event workshop and Preventing the Summer Slide parent workshop were hosted by parent mentors in partnership with school

leaders to provide tips and strategies to working with children at home as well as easy to use materials for fun and engaging academic activities. Parents walked away with knowledge, resources, and materials. By assembling and training 10 parent mentors of the Parent Mentor Academy to co-facilitate family literacy workshops, the initiative utilized a train-the-trainer model and built the capacity of parents to instruct best practices for student support.



Awardee Brightspot:

“We are proud that two parents who are residents of the West Ward of Newark shared their positive experiences working with teachers and staff at one of the school sites. The schools welcomed parents, collaborated with parents, and invested in the parents in an attempt to accelerate learning for students. The Cornwall Center looks forward to improving skills for parents and caregivers to support children and bringing together community stakeholders to establish a culture that values and supports lifelong literacy.”

ORGANIZATION: LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT



- **Location:** Little Rock, AR
- **Award Amount:** \$5,000
- **Primary Support:** Mentors



The Little Rock School District was able to expand its successful mentorship program at Washington Elementary and establish a similar initiative at Southwest High School, connecting students with dedicated mentors by leveraging community partnerships with nonprofits, corporations, and higher education institutions. Partnership goals were to foster meaningful mentor-mentee relationships, improve student attendance, and address academic and wellness needs through mentorship activities and events. Students who worked consistently with a mentor either in a one-on-one or small group setting saw increased attendance rates and a drop in tardies and chronic absenteeism.

- **Access the Resource:** [Little Rock School District Mentoring Best Practices](#)

Awardee Advice:

“Little Rock Southwest High School conducted a Champs Walk where staff and mentors made home visits to nearly 300 houses to discuss the importance of attending school leading up to testing season and saw a record percentage of attendance on test days.”

ORGANIZATION:

SIENA UNIVERSITY (PREVIOUSLY THE SIENA COLLEGE CENTER FOR ACADEMIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT)



- **Location:** Loudonville, NY
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Student Success Coaches

The Siena University (previously the Siena College Center for Academic Community Engagement) spearheaded a collaborative initiative to strengthen partnerships between community schools in the Troy, Albany, and Schenectady City School Districts and their nonprofit partners. The project sought to create a sustainable network supporting wraparound programming while providing experiential learning opportunities for university students. By fostering collaboration through a collective impact model, the initiative aimed to address critical needs in these districts and enhance the support systems available to students and families. The work included support with tutoring, mentoring, and break programming for the local community school partners. Additionally, one of the partners in the coalition was able to endow fellowships for two students to be bridge builders between the school district and the college, a benefit that will be fruitful for years to come.

- **Access the Resource:** [Siena's University Assisted Community Schools Presentation](#)

Awardee Brightspot:

“Our bright spot is the vacation programming at Roots Academy. Students who attended the Spring break camp at Roots Academy overwhelmingly said they would do a program like that again and 91% of students said they made new friends at the program. What was an even better outcome was that three out of the 21 students that attended the program were chronically absent students. After the Spring break camp, those three students have not been absent (almost six weeks!) That is a great feat.”

ORGANIZATION: STEELE CANYON HIGH SCHOOL



- **Location:** Spring Valley, CA
- **Award Amount:** \$5,000
- **Primary Support:** Student Success Coaches

The Cougar XL (CXL) Community Hub, based at Steele Canyon High School, sought to support students who are multilingual learners through small-group and one-on-one coaching to enhance engagement, confidence, and academic outcomes. The CCC award funded a pilot program that took place outside the school day at a local restaurant which offered discounted breakfast and focused on reducing absenteeism and tardiness while promoting intrinsic motivation and a sense of belonging among participants. Students came in early during their late-start day to receive academic support from Cougar XL staff and peer mentors.



- **Access the Resource:** [Steele Canyon CXL Community Hub](#)

Awardee Highlight:

“We are proud to see that the pilot program produced the same positive outcomes as the main Cougar XL program. This reinforces the strength of our model and its potential to be successfully implemented beyond the campus-while maintaining our core focus on supporting students emotionally, socially, and academically through the development of healthy, meaningful relationships. In fact, five out of ten participants improved their core class grades in Quarter 4.”

ORGANIZATION: UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA



- **Location:** Saint Cloud, MN
- **Award Amount:** \$5,000
- **Primary Support:** Student Success Coaches



United Way of Central Minnesota focused its award on addressing high rates of absenteeism in their region by engaging youth from three school districts in a collaborative effort to identify root causes and implement solutions. This initiative focused on leveraging the lived experiences of young people, particularly those who have faced challenges with absenteeism, to inform systems-level changes. Students aged 14-18 were convened to share insights, identify preventable reasons for absenteeism, and propose actionable strategies. School and district leadership then met with the youth to listen and develop implementation plans, ensuring the solutions are both practical and effective.

The project's goals were to uncover the underlying causes of absenteeism, garner support and input for recommendations, and share those with the districts that participated. Future efforts include implementing at least two youth-driven strategies in each district and tracking data to measure effectiveness. Students shared that the forces most responsible for both attendance and absenteeism exist within their schools. For example, quotes such as "I never miss her class" or "That class is one that I get out of as much as possible" were common. Additionally, students shared that school involvement, both during the day and extracurriculars, were an important incentive for consistent attendance.

- **Access the Resource:** [CCC Grant Report Brief](#)

Awardee Brightspot:

"One bright spot was connecting with kids who feel marginalized and helping them to feel heard and seen. Working with local school districts, we are hoping to affect policy and support changes to make it so that staff will have more time to directly support students and students will have more access to flexible classes that meet them where they are at."

ORGANIZATION: UNITED WAY OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA



- **Location:** Jacksonville, FL
- **Award Amount:** \$5,000
- **Primary Support:** Student Success Coaches



United Way of Northeast Florida piloted an initiative to combat chronic absenteeism in greater Jacksonville middle schools by leveraging evidence-based strategies and student-led interventions. The project targeted high-need 6th- to 8th-grade students, empowering student success coaches and student ambassadors to lead attendance-focused initiatives. The CCC award supported this initiative, aimed at strengthening partnerships and providing students with a sense of ownership and voice to improve attendance. Through professional development, outreach, and targeted interventions, the program continued to develop adaptive strategies for reducing absenteeism, enhanced collaboration among stakeholders, and established a sustainable framework for improving student engagement and success.

- **Access the Resource:** [United Way of Northeast Florida's Pilot Recommendations page \(plus student ambassadors program overview\)](#)

Awardee Advice:

“The pilot has helped us see opportunities to lead attendance change work more closely through our program and spread them to greater school. It helped strengthen our staff's ability to think of interventions, see their role, and analyze attendance data. I am proud of how excited the students were to be a part of the pilot and the openness our staff had in allowing the students to guide them.”

ORGANIZATION: UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SYSTEM



- **Location:** Knoxville, TN
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Postsecondary Transition Coaches



The University of Tennessee System assembled a group of 27 faculty and staff leaders from across four UT institutions to complete the first in a series of steps toward creating community-based, degreed apprenticeship opportunities that re-engage disengaged high school students and provide clear pathways to postsecondary education and careers. The group met on five occasions during the project cycle and a final meeting was planned for a later date. The group provided valuable feedback on a design brief and completed a SWOT analysis together, related to the transition from high school to college or career for learners who are more attracted to the workforce than to traditional college experiences.

This award allowed campus leaders to identify similarities in the challenges experienced across campuses and the ways that national organizations and the system office can support growth toward more access and affordability for working learners, adult learners, transfer students, and the importance of stronger relationships with employers.

- **Access the Resource:** [University of Tennessee System's Developing Apprenticeship Degree Pathways from High School CTE Programs](#)

Awardee Brightspot:

“As a result of this funding, our campuses now have access to Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) resources for the next year. The system office will facilitate ongoing conversations with campus leaders, using the CAEL resources to help them strengthen their knowledge and skill around creative ways to meet the unique needs of working and adult learners of all ages.”

ORGANIZATION: VICTORIA COLLEGE FOUNDATION



- **Location:** Victoria, TX
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Tutors



Victoria College (VC) and Victoria Independent School District (Victoria ISD) collaborated to pilot a dual credit student support program, aimed at improving academic outcomes and reducing disparities among dual-enrolled students. A six leaders from both institutions met regularly to ensure smooth implementation, document best practices, and assess outcomes. The pilot included placing VC tutors and success coaches on high school campuses to provide support and training for dual-enrolled students as Peer Study Facilitators to assist their peers during study periods. The award strengthened VC's commitment to dual credit student success by launching an innovative, collaborative support model in partnership with Victoria ISD. This funding enabled the college to embed tutors and success coaches on two high school campuses, making targeted academic and coaching support more accessible to students. As a result, students reported feeling more connected to VC, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and academic confidence. This partnership deepened collaboration between VC and Victoria ISD, aligning shared goals around student achievement and college readiness. Early results indicate some academic benefits, with improved engagement and performance among participating students, especially those who met with success coaches. VC and Victoria ISD plan to scale the initiative in the fall, continuing with the two current high schools and expanding to a third high school.

Awardee Achievement:

VC tutors will now be present in dual credit labs during the school day, when students are already engaged in coursework. They will support students two days a week, providing targeted help when and where it's most needed. This adjustment reflects a core principle of effective support: meet students in their own space, on their schedule. By embedding supports into the regular school day and spaces where students are already present, we reduce barriers to access.

ORGANIZATION: WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY



- **Location:** Ogden, UT
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Tutors



This project focused on implementing a school-wide peer tutoring intervention at Ogden High School, aiming to enhance academic support for the district's diverse student population. The intervention was a collaborative effort between faculty from Weber State University, Utah State University, and stakeholders from the Ogden City School District, including district administrators, school leadership, and educators. The CCC award was utilized to create a framework as well as facilitator and student training materials for future sessions in preparation of a launch for the 2025-26 school year.

- **Access the Resource:** [Weber State University's Academic Coach Facilitator Training](#)

Awardee Advice:

"I would encourage others looking to bring people-powered supports to students in their communities to reach out directly to school site leadership and ask them what needs do the school and students have that could be better supported. I would also encourage others interested in making a difference in schools to consider utilizing the students themselves. I strongly feel that the use of peer mediated supports is one of, if not the most, underutilized resources in our schools today.

Students serving as peer tutors often have the required content knowledge, social skills, and motivation to provide a variety of supports (language, academic, social/behavioral) to their peers with diverse learning needs."

ORGANIZATION: WIDENER UNIVERSITY



- **Location:** Chester, PA
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Tutors



CCC funding supported a Project Coordinator who built the core infrastructure for Widener University's high-impact tutoring initiative with the Chester Upland School District (CUSD) and community partners. The coordinator led tutor recruitment, vetting, onboarding, and scheduling across school-day math (grades 4–5), after-school reading/math, and Saturday tutoring with the Boys & Girls Club of Chester, aligning operations with Federal Work-Study and district procedures. More than 30 tutors—with priority for Pell-eligible undergraduates and students pursuing education/public service—were trained on site-aligned routines, materials, and reporting to deliver consistent, standards-based instruction.

- **Access the Resource:** [Federal Work Study Presentation](#)

Awardee Achievement:

- **Coordinated pipeline & compliance:** Established repeatable processes for tutor recruitment, background checks, FWS alignment, and school-site scheduling to reduce startup friction and ensure term-over-term readiness.
- **Standardized training & supports:** Delivered common onboarding with classroom routines, lesson structures, and behavior supports; instituted supervisor check-ins and on-site point-of-contact coordination.
- **Multi-modal delivery across sites:** Organized tutoring during the school day, after school, and Saturdays to increase instructional minutes and reduce access barriers across CUSD and the Boys & Girls Club.
- **Lightweight data practices:** Implemented attendance logging, teacher feedback loops, and simple skill-check templates to monitor participation and guide lesson adjustments.
- **Documented cost savings:** The project generated more than \$42,000 in cost savings for the school district by supplying trained tutors without district wage/benefit outlay, and delivered approximately \$1,500 in avoided tutoring costs per participating family relative to prevailing private-tutoring rates.

ORGANIZATION: WOMEN'S REFUGEE CARE



- **Location:** Providence, RI
- **Award Amount:** \$8,000
- **Primary Support:** Mentors



Women's Refugee Care successfully piloted the Refugee Youth Attendance Support Program, which ran from January to June 2025, and paired refugee students with supportive mentors.

During the initial launch months, the program prioritized rapport-building over formal interventions. Plans were shaped collaboratively through open dialogue with youth and families, emphasizing social-emotional support, language access, and cultural context. By May, additional activities were introduced to help improve student morale and deepen the connection between students and their mentors. These interactions provided critical emotional and social support, helping to address underlying causes of absenteeism.

Awardee Advice:

“Center relationships first. For refugee and immigrant youth especially, consistent, culturally attuned support from trusted adults makes a real difference, but that trust must be earned. Take time to build rapport, listen deeply, and show up in ways that reflect care, not just coordination.

Recruit mentors who reflect the community you serve and equip them with trauma-informed, culturally responsive tools. Even simple gestures like checking in, celebrating small wins, or planning joyful activities can help students feel seen and supported.

Finally, don't underestimate the impact of informal spaces. Moments of connection outside the classroom-whether during a field trip or a conversation after school-can be just as important as formal interventions in helping students feel like they belong.”

ORGANIZATION: PSS & GRAD PARTNERSHIP



SUPPORTING EVENT AT WESTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY

- **Location:** Silver City, NM

The Partnership for Student Success and the GRAD Partnership, in collaboration with Western New Mexico University and the New Mexico Public Education Department's Attendance Improvement Program, hosted the Southwest Regional Convening on Student Success to align supports across schools, districts, higher education, and regional partners. This place-based gathering focused on reducing chronic absence and strengthening student connectedness by sharing local promising practices and building capacity for ongoing collaboration.



Nearly thirty participants attended in person or virtually; the virtual option expanded access to include more communities situated in a very rural part of southwestern New Mexico. Convening goals included elevating existing student-success efforts, identifying opportunities to strengthen relationships with families and students, applying effective local strategies to boost attendance and engagement, and deepening understanding of the root causes of chronic absenteeism in rural communities.

The convening provided a launch pad for future family listening sessions, student engagement campaigns, and local partnerships.

- **Access the Resource:** [Southwest Regional Convening on Student Success Digital Backpack](#)

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