



Schools, Jobs, Housing and More: Tackling the Social Determinants

Lyndia Wilson

Name of project or collaborative

Priority Spokane: Educational Attainment

Geography

Spokane County, Washington

Brief description

Spokane Public Schools (SPS) is the 2nd largest district in Washington with nearly 30,000 students and is the largest of the 15 school districts in Spokane County with the most children on free or reduced lunches. SPS struggled to graduate their high school students. In 2005-2006, the SPS on-time graduation rate was only 57.7% with the county rate at 69.2%. Priority Spokane is a unique collaboration of community leaders who serve as a catalyst and convener for data-driven and focused improvements. In 2009 through a community assessment process, educational attainment was voted as the top priority for the community. Through a series of studies, Priority Spokane released information about model practices to improve educational attainment along with student risk factors for dropping out. Priority Spokane is proud to showcase the collective educational strategies being conducted; professional training on childhood trauma, a school Early Warning System weighted by student risk factors and aligned with community services, community truancy and attendance boards, and an extensive Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education network that provides hands-on learning, plus builds the communities workforce in much needed fields. As a county, we are helping more of our children get back into and stay in school, feel safe and accepted, and learn what they need to know to be successful in their future. School superintendents, business leaders, college and university presidents, elected officials, and many others have committed resources to make these initiatives successful.

Relevance of project to this breakout session

In the *Odds Against Tomorrow: Health Inequities in Spokane County* report published by the Spokane Regional Health District, data demonstrates that those with higher education and more income have better health, including longevity. Educational attainment is the key to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and its related health inequities.

Results/outcomes

In the 2012-2013 academic year, the SPS graduation rate had improved to 79.5% almost even with the improved county rate of 80.8%.

Funding

While the school system financed some of the work, local and state foundations provided over \$800,000 of funding during a 5-year period with partners providing extensive support to the projects.

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