

Spark at a Glance

The challenge



Starting in 7th & 8th grade, **about 50% of students in the US become chronically disengaged**



In Spark's partner schools **40% of students drop out of high school**

2/3

of those drop outs either did not complete 9th grade or repeated 9th grade only to drop out later

At a glance:

Spark aims to stimulate the interest of students in underserved middle schools in education and potential careers pathways. Spark pairs each student with a mentor who helps them envision possible future careers and explore their interest through hands-on projects. The program centers on a curriculum of mentoring, project-based learning, skills building and career exploration aimed at re-engaging students and preparing them for success in high school and beyond. Spark Program operates in neighborhoods where up to 35% of students drop out of high school.

Key programs:

Spark Class

Spark Class takes place during the school day using Spark's research-based curriculum to help students develop important non-cognitive social-emotional skills, growth mindsets and positive behaviors. Students receive badges for their accomplishments in the course.

High School Readiness & Transition Initiative

This initiative aims to prepare Spark students to succeed in high school. The program consists of counseling workshops to help students examine their high school options. The program further supports students in navigating the social and emotional aspects of transitioning into high school. The program then monitors students once they enter high school and connects them with Spark alumni.

Mentoring

Spark's program pairs students in seventh and eighth grade with a mentor who guides them through a workplace apprenticeship. The pair works together to complete a project tailored to the interests of the mentee.

These project-based apprenticeships give students the opportunity to engage with mentors in a real work environment and to pursue their passions. The goal is to help students connect their interests to their education, gain self-confidence and self-awareness, and learn how to access local resources. In order to ensure the quality of the mentorship, each mentor receives customized guidance and training through extensive orientations, weekly check-ins, and activity plans.

Key facts:



Age Range
10-14

Beneficiaries
4,192

Sector
Education

Staff
38

Budget
\$4,775,177

Year est.
2004

(2017 data estimates)