

RUNNING START- SYNOPSIS

Running Start is a program that allows eleventh and twelfth grade students to take college courses for free at Washington's 34 community and technical colleges and Washington State, Eastern Washington, and Western Washington universities. The 1990 Legislature created Running Start as a part of the "Learning by Choice" law, which was designed to expand educational options for high school students.

Benefits for Students, Families and State Budgets

Running Start presents a challenging option for qualified students who may perform better in a college setting than in a traditional high school. Students continue to report that taking classes with regular college students and adults offers a new and demanding dimension to learning. By allowing students to obtain high school and college credit simultaneously, Running Start reduces the amount of time students spend in school and reduces college costs for students and their families. In some cases, the dual-credit nature of the program allows students to complete four years of education while only attending two years. This saves money for the state and the students or their parents.

For the 1999-2000 academic year, colleges were reimbursed at statewide uniform rates by the K-12 districts whose students participated in Running Start. Colleges received a statewide standard rate of approximately \$83 per credit for academic programs, and \$99 per credit for vocational programs. K-12 districts retain seven percent of the state funds for counseling and overhead. When students earn credit for high school and college simultaneously, the state pays to support this education only once.

- With 8,189 FTE students in 2000-01, Running Start saved Washington taxpayers \$28.8 million.
- Students and their parents also save because Running Start classes are offered tuition-free. In the last academic year, this resulted in a savings of about \$14.6 million in tuition.
- The total amount saved by taxpayers, parents and students in 2000-01 is estimated at \$43.4 million.

Management

Any junior or senior high school student may apply to enter Running Start and is permitted to participate after obtaining a passing grade on the college's entrance examination. Students may enroll in any courses at the college, for which they receive high school and college credit. Students do not pay tuition, but they must provide their own transportation, books, and supplies.

Results

Running Start students continue to perform well in two-year colleges and after transferring to universities. The grade point average for all Running Start students in two-year institutions is comparable to similar two-year college students. In 1999-2000, after transfer to the University of Washington, Running Start students continued with solid performance, averaging a GPA of 3.09.