

State of Washington
State Board for Community and
Technical Colleges

Running Start

2005-06
Annual Progress Report



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RUNNING START

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2005-06

This report provides an overview of the Running Start program; data about student participation rates and academic performance; updates on savings to families, taxpayers and the state; and new information about national trends in dual-credit programs.

Running Start is a program that allows 11th and 12th grade students to take college courses at Washington's 34 community and technical colleges, and at Washington State, Eastern Washington and Central Washington Universities, The Evergreen State College and Northwest Indian College. Students earn both high school and college credits for these courses. Running Start students and their families do not pay tuition, but they do buy their own books and provide their own transportation. Students receive both high school and college credit for these classes, thus accelerating their progress through the education system.

- Running Start reduces the amount of time students spend in school, and can reduce overall college costs for students and their families.
- Running Start continues to serve about 10 percent of the state's high school juniors and seniors.
- Running Start students perform well while they are in the program and upon transferring to universities. In 2005-06 Running Start students earned an average grade point of 3.12 after transferring to the University of Washington.
- Running Start students complete more of the credits they attempt, with better grades, than other recent high school graduates who are attending college.

Running Start History

The 1990 Legislature created Running Start as a part of the "Learning by Choice" law, which was designed to expand educational options for students. To initiate the program in 1990, the Legislature authorized a two-year pilot program. Five community colleges were selected to participate during 1990-92 (Everett, Pierce, Skagit Valley, South Puget Sound and Walla Walla community colleges). The pilot program involved 358 students from 37 high schools. The program began statewide in 1992-93, when approximately 3,350 students enrolled at the community and technical colleges. The 1994 Legislature expanded the program to include three state universities (Washington State, Central and Eastern) to provide Running Start access to communities where no two-year colleges are available. In 2003, The Evergreen State College was added to the list of universities eligible to offer Running Start and in 2005, Northwest Indian College was added.

Running Start Creates Options for Students

Running Start creates an alternative way for students to transition to college. Running Start and other dual-credit programs provide postsecondary schooling for many students, including those whose options may otherwise be limited. For high school students, Running Start is one of the most readily available college-level learning opportunities in the state.

Some high schools consider the college classes available to their students through Running Start to be part of the high school curriculum. “Dual enrollment is a mechanism for aligning high school and postsecondary education, not just a way to move bored or advanced students out of high school.” (Hoffman, 2005). Running Start and other dual-enrollment programs have made progress on integrating the two systems. This integration allows students to more easily navigate the education system and meet their goals.

How Running Start Works

The “Learning by Choice” legislation clearly puts students and parents in the driver’s seat when it comes to deciding if a student will participate in Running Start. There is no state-mandated performance requirement in high school that prevents a junior or senior from participating. Families who decide that Running Start is a good option for their students can go directly to their local community or technical college to see if they qualify for participation. Each college determines if a student has the skills and knowledge needed to take college-level classes. Colleges use the regular admissions procedures that are used for all students. Typically, this means that colleges use a commercially developed, nationally normed placement test to determine if a student is prepared for college-level course work.

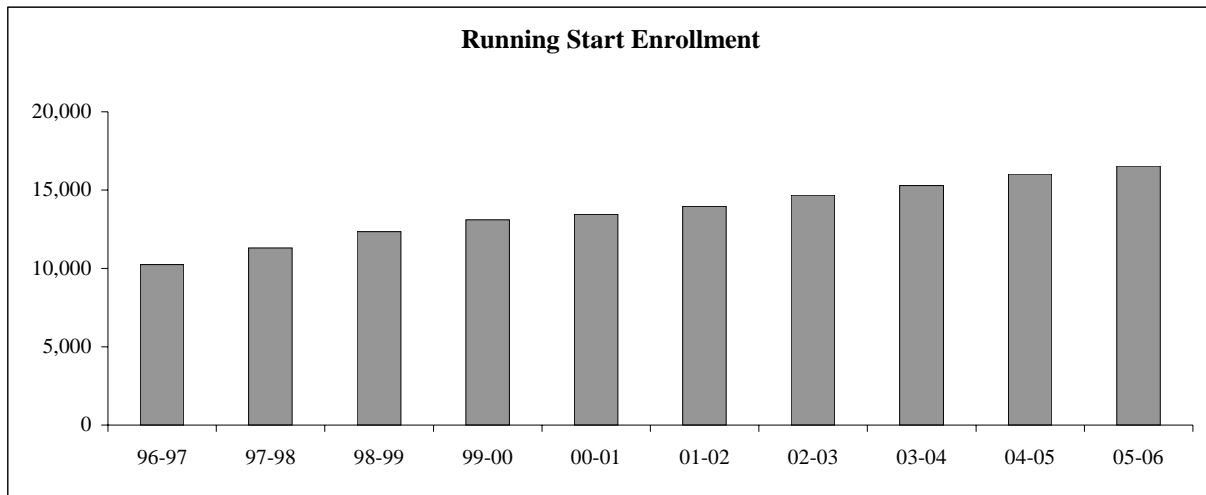
Running Start does not fund any pre-college course work. If students are not ready for college-level work, they are encouraged to return to their high school for further preparation.

Once it has been determined that students are prepared for college-level course work, students enroll for college courses that they attend in a class with other adult learners. Some Running Start students choose to take just one class at the college and do the rest of their work at the high school. Others elect to attend college full-time. Most students do some combination of these two options.

While in college, Running Start students earn both college and high school credits. The entire catalog of college courses is available to Running Start students, including electives, vocational, online and advanced course work.

Running Start Continues to Grow

In 2005-06, Running Start completed its 15th year as a successful and popular program for eligible high school juniors and seniors. Enrollment totaled 16,540 individual students (equal to 10,284 full-time students), an increase of about 3 percent over the previous year when 16,022 students (9,794 FTE) participated. The program continues to serve about 10 percent of the state’s juniors and seniors.



Four-year universities in the state also have students participating in Running Start. In the 2005-06 school year, about 47 students participated in Running Start at Central Washington University each quarter. The 270 students who participated on campus at Eastern and the 825 who participated in Running Start classes at their home high school offered by Eastern Washington University earned an average grade point of 3.15. At the end of the 2005-06 academic year, WSU had 44 running start high school students enrolled. They averaged a cumulative WSU GPA of 3.66 with an average of 15 total credit hours each. Northwest Indian College reported one student in 2005-06 and The Evergreen State College does not yet have any Running Start students.

Benefits for Students, Families and State Budgets are Evident

Students and Their Families

Running Start presents an academically challenging option for qualified students who may perform better in a college setting than in a traditional high school. Students report that taking classes with traditional college-age students and adults adds 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 their first two years of college at the same time they complete their junior and senior years of high school. This saves money for the state, students and their parents.

Flexibility in class scheduling allows Running Start students to meet other commitments for education, jobs or family responsibilities. In 2006, 29 percent of the students worked part-time and 1 percent worked full-time.

Budget

Colleges are reimbursed by the K-12 districts whose students participate in Running Start. For the 2005-06 academic year, colleges received a statewide standard rate of \$98 per credit for academic programs, and \$116 per credit for vocational programs. K-12 districts retain 7 percent of the state funds for counseling and overhead.

When students earn credit for high school and college simultaneously, the state and students pay to support this education only once.

- With 10,284 full-time students in 2005-06, Running Start saved Washington taxpayers \$43.8 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 \$27.5 million in tuition.
- The total amount saved by taxpayers, parents and students in 2005-06 is estimated at more than \$71.3 million.

Increasing Access to College

Running Start students do not take seats from other students. The state pays colleges to serve a specific number of students. The colleges serve those students and enroll Running Start students in addition to the state-supported students. Since Running Start enrollment has been increasing at a predictable rate, colleges are able to forecast their enrollment and plan for the appropriate number of class sections to be offered. In many cases, the funding that Running Start brings to a college (less than 4 percent of a college budget) is used to open additional class sections that are needed, and results in more seats being available for the entire community. In addition, accelerating students' progress toward degrees through programs like Running Start frees up space on college campuses to help meet the projected demand of new students coming to college.

Characteristics and Performance of Running Start Students – 2005-06

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 of traditional college age. In 2005-06, after transferring to the University of Washington, students continued with solid performance, averaging a GPA of 3.12.

Running Start students complete more of the credits they attempt, with better grades, than other recent high school graduates who are attending college. In 2005-06, Running Start students enrolled for 418,143 credits and completed 94 percent (393,663) of those credits. The comparison group attempted 460,287 credits and completed 87 percent (401,076) of those credits. Among the Running Start students, 90 percent of the students earned a C or better grade in their courses compared with 87 percent of the comparison cohort. The Running Start data about grades, completion rates, and degree attainment continues to show that Running Start students perform at a level that is comparable, and in some cases, exceeds that of similarly aged college students who are not in Running Start.

The demographics of Running Start students in fall 2005, as a group, were very similar to those of previous years:

- 59 percent of the students were female.
- 18 percent were students of color.
- The average credit load taken by the students was 11.9 credits per quarter; 75 percent took 10 or more credits during 2005-06. Many students took one five-credit course per quarter at college, with the balance of classes taken in high school.
- 2 percent was students with disabilities.
- 29 percent of the students worked part-time; 1 percent worked full-time.

- 95 percent of the courses taken were in academic transfer (primarily courses in social science, English, speech and humanities), 5 percent of the courses were vocational (although 7 percent of the students attended with the goal of improving workforce skills).

Research Findings

Jump Start on College

A common misconception is that the purpose of Running Start is degree completion. In fact, in 2005-06, only 862 students earned a complete Associate of Arts degree at the same time they completed high school. It has been consistent over time that about 5 percent of Running Start students complete both high school and community college at the same time. It is much more common for students to take the credits earned through Running Start and continue at the two-year college or transfer to a university. In 2005-06, 11,437 students who previously participated in Running Start were continuing their studies at the two-year colleges. (Data about students who transfer to universities is not available at this time.)

Running Start gives students a taste of college, an experience that can help them develop the independence and study skills needed to succeed in college. Students also benefit from having some college credits earned when they transition into full-time college. In an update of the 1999 Toolbox study, the US Department of Education concluded that students who earn at least 9 semester college credits (20 quarter credits) while in high school had an increased likelihood of continuing on to finish a four-year degree within 8 years (Adelman, 2006).

Workforce Students

During 2005-06, about 7 percent of Running Start students were attending college with the goal of increasing skills needed in the workforce. The largest portion of these workforce-oriented students completed nursing courses (some 23 percent). Other programs with significant numbers included auto/diesel mechanics, and welding.

The most recent employment outcomes information is for students who left the community and technical college system in 2005. Former workforce Running Start students had an estimated placement rate of 90 percent, which is higher than the total population of workforce students exiting the colleges.

Updates

Efficiency to Degree

In addition to being viewed as an optional way for students to complete their high school requirements, Running Start is being evaluated more and more in terms of efficiency and cost savings for students earning college degrees. Data compiled in November 2004 indicate that Running Start students complete their bachelor's degree in Washington following a pattern similar to other transfer students. The Running Start experience reduces the net tuition costs for students as well as the cost to the state per bachelor's degree. Students who have earned Running Start credits while in high school complete their bachelor's degree with 33 fewer state supported credits than those who do not participate in Running Start and enter universities as freshmen.

Running Start students study online

Following a national trend in higher education, Running Start students are utilizing more online instruction. In the last five years, the amount of online enrollment by Running Start students has grown by more than 200 percent. Most of the online courses are in social science, English composition and humanities. Washington’s community and technical colleges offer two-year degrees online. Making the virtual campus available to Running Start students makes the program more accessible to students in remote areas and allows students to access college courses from their high school campus. (Some high schools have designated one free period a day so students can get into the computer labs to participate in a variety of online learning experiences.)

Online Running Start	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
FTE	64	115	173	270	343	460	595	711
Headcount	427	814	1,152	1,652	2,008	2,665	3,287	3,805

National Dual-enrollment Trend Continues

Running Start is part of a national and statewide movement to offer more options for college-level learning to students while they are still in high school. States are increasingly implementing policies that encourage postsecondary institutions to offer dual/concurrent enrollment courses to high school students. This is due, in part, to the desire to provide advanced academic opportunities to high school students and also to smooth the transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

Dual enrollment has sparked national interest because it is seen to provide:

- Greater access to a wider variety of rigorous academic and technical courses;
- Savings in time and money on a college degree;
- Pathways for students to move “seamlessly” between the K-12 and postsecondary systems;
- Greater collaboration between high school and college faculty and programs; and
- Greater support for students’ college aspirations.

Research indicates that in 2006, 40 states have dual enrollment programs governed by state policy and all 50 states are involved in offering dual-enrollment options whether or not state policy is in place. (Lerner, 2006).

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices has proposed five steps that states can take to improve education outcomes, especially for students who have been traditionally underserved by higher education. Included in the five steps is a call for providing more options for students to have college-level learning opportunities while still in high school (Kazis, Varga, Hoffman 2004).

At the federal level, the [Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998](#) provides funds to states for the expansion and improvement of [Tech Prep](#) programs, including the development of articulation agreements between high schools and colleges that link their course offerings, and credit for programs in high-growth technical occupations.

In Washington State in 2005-06, 17,140 students earned 111,174 college credits through Tech Prep courses offered at high schools, for an average of 6.5 credits per student. Students in high school also earn credit through College in the High School, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs.

Funding No Longer Adequate

Both high schools and colleges in Washington state have indicated that the state funding for Running Start is not enough to fund the actual cost of serving these students. Investing to help more students efficiently gain college-level experience and credit while in high school means aligning state support for Running Start growth enrollments with the cost of instruction and eliminating student-financed costs for College in the High School. This will create incentives for both colleges and students to increase participation in dual credit programs.

Summary

Serving 16,540 students in 2005-06, Running Start continues to be an excellent option for qualified juniors and seniors. Students and their parents strongly support the program because it expands their educational choices while reducing the time and expense of completing their education. Running Start students perform well while they are in the program and experience academic success when they transfer on to universities. The Running Start program has established itself as a significant success to date, and ongoing partnerships between high schools and colleges will ensure that Running Start continues to help students achieve high academic standards at a lower overall cost to their families and the state.

**Running Start Enrollments
Academic Year 2005-06**

College	FTEs	Headcount
Bates	11	68
Bellevue	742	1144
Bellingham	72	109
Big Bend	101	132
Cascadia	204	333
Centralia	230	296
Clark	573	1,045
Clover Park	103	125
Columbia Basin	350	457
Edmonds	360	635
Everett	318	496
Grays Harbor	92	145
Green River	870	1,281
Highline	685	970
Lake Washington	7	18
Lower Columbia	209	327
North Seattle	175	367
Olympic	490	722
Peninsula	270	446
Pierce/Puyallup	394	650
Pierce/Steilacoom	294	531
Renton	68	73
Seattle Central	287	581
Shoreline	152	314
Skagit Valley	395	695
South Puget sound	453	726
South Seattle	195	449
Spokane	241	345
Spokane Falls	423	620
Tacoma	406	695
Walla Walla	119	228
Wenatchee Valley	244	357
Whatcom	442	796
Yakima Valley	246	364
Bates	75	68
COLLEGE TOTAL	10,284	16,540
SYSTEM TOTAL		16,166

Source: SBCTC data warehouse.
A few Running Start students took courses at more than one college.

**University of Washington
Running Start Students' Transfer Performance
Data for Students Entering Fall 2005**

	# of Students	% of Total
Total Number of Students	811	
Gender		
Male	346	42.7%
Female	465	57.3%
Entering College Class		
Freshman	607	74.8%
Sophomore	90	11.1%
Junior	113	13.9%
Senior	1	0.1%
Ethnic Distribution		
African-American	20	2.5%
Asian-American	274	33.8%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	5	0.6%
Hispanic	37	4.6%
Native American	12	1.5%
White	411	50.7%
Other/Not Indicated	52	6.4%
	Mean	Range
High School GPA	3.74	2.09 – 4.0
SAT Verbal	584	300-800
SAT Math	610	220-800
SAT Total	1,194	630-1,600
ACT Score	25.2	11 - 35
Entering Transfer Credits	44.4	1-90

Entering Credits Reported	# of Students	# of Credits
	87	0
	135	1 - 14
	155	15 - 29
	123	30 - 44
	65	45 - 59
	48	60 - 74
	198	75+

Largest Feeder High Schools

1. Roosevelt	28
2. Garfield	21
3. Franklin	19
4. Bellevue (tie)	15
Kentridge (tie)	15

Largest Feeder Community Colleges

1. Bellevue	93
2. Green River	79
3. Seattle Central	53
4. Highline	43
5. Clark (tie)	39
Edmonds (tie)	39

UW Performance

	Autumn 2004	Winter 2005	Spring 2005
GPA			
Running Start	3.17	3.10	3.10
Freshman	3.21	3.14	3.16
Community College	3.18	3.22	3.21
Credits Earned			
Running Start	13.6	13.5	13.7
Freshman	14.5	14.2	14.1
Community College	12.2	12.5	12.5
Continuation Rate			
Running Start	90.4%		

Source: Compiled by Jim Rawlins, University of Washington.

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For more information see the
SBCTC Web site at <http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu>
or contact:
Sally Zeiger Hanson
State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
P O Box 42495
1300 Quince Street SE
Olympia, WA 98504-2495
360-704-4334
shanson@sbctc.ctc.edu
via TDD 800-833-6388