

# Career and College Connections

A monthly newsletter from Career and Technical Education - Washington

April 2009

## Dual credit courses can save high school students thousands of dollars in college tuition

Across Washington state thousands of high school students are saving tens of thousands of dollars in college tuition by enrolling in dual credit classes. That means they're taking classes in high school that earn them free college credit in addition to the high school credit they need for graduation.

"This is an opportunity that more students could seize if they spent time exploring all options," said Dan Newell, state director of secondary education. "It's especially valuable now, during these very trying economic times."

Two major Career and Technical Education (CTE) high school programs provide access to dual credit classes—Tech Prep and Running Start.

[Tech Prep](#) serves students in grades 9-12. All Tech Prep dual credit classes are taken on the high school campus and are identified as CTE classes. CTE classes integrate academics with technical skill development to help prepare students for advanced education and careers related to "professional-technical" occupations. These include anatomy and physiology, nursing, veterinary science, business and finance, digi-tools (word processing, desktop publishing, voice recognition, web-based career exploration and others), web design, graphic arts, video game design, culinary arts, mechanical engineering, construction, composite manufacturing and welding.

[Running Start](#) serves students in grades 11-12, including some Tech Prep students. All Running Start dual credit classes are taken on local community and technical college campuses. Students typically take dual-credit academic classes such as math, history and English that they will need to complete an Associate in Arts (AA) degree or an "AAS-Transfer" which allow them to transfer into a four-year, baccalaureate program if desired. Students can choose from a variety of degree and certificate options.

Linda Cowan, director of the Whatcom County Tech Prep programs, said 24,295 Washington high school students earned 148,160 tuition-free college credits in 2007-2008. These students saved more than more than \$11.5 million in tuition dollars at the then rate of \$78 per credit.

By planning ahead and making sure that college classes taken for free in high school are applicable to earning a two-year college degree, high school graduates can finish their two-year degrees in record time at a lower cost, Cowan said. They can then get jobs or transfer to a four-year university. Some employers will even help pay for advanced training and education.

## In the News

[Murray sponsors legislation to push financial intelligence](#)

[Student-led conferences gaining popularity](#)

[Education: waiting on reform](#)

[Embedding English in Job Training](#)

[Duncan Does the Math On Education Budget](#)

## Partners

[Higher Education Coordinating Board](#)

[Navigation 101](#)

[State Board for Community and Technical Colleges](#)

[Washington Apprenticeship and Training Council](#)

[Washington State Board of Education](#)

[Washington Tech Prep](#)

[Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board](#)

## Mission

*To promote the quality and rigor of Career and Technical Education courses, provide students with options that link middle to high school and to post-secondary opportunities, blend academic and technical studies, and most importantly, connect students to their goals for the future.*

"In today's world of education the pathway to career and college isn't always direct," Cowan said. "There are many ways to get a good education—two year colleges, four-year colleges and apprenticeships—that can result in excellent jobs."

"Both Tech Prep and Running Start help young people jumpstart their career exploration and their college education, while saving them and their families extraordinary amounts of college tuition," Newell said. "It doesn't get any better than that. But make no mistake—these dual credit programs are demanding and expectations are high. Success requires motivation, hard work and perseverance."

The best way to take advantage of dual credit opportunities is to plan ahead, and the best time for students and their parents to start planning is during the 8th grade school year or at the very beginning of the 9th grade.

Organized students can have career interests and future job markets analyzed, a high school through college coursework plan developed, and their academic and CTE classes sketched out by the time they begin their freshman year. (Visit the [Navigation 101](#) and [High School and Beyond](#) web pages, and watch future editions of *Career and College Connections* for stories about these programs.)

Unfortunately, Newell and Cowan said, most school staffs across the state who could help with this planning effort are stretched very thinly. So, they strongly encourage all 8th and 9th grade students and their parents to become very familiar with the counseling and career center services available at their local schools.

"Ask questions often, regularly meet with counselors to update education and career plans, and take advantage of all the free resources and career exploration activities provided by your school and community," Cowan advised.

Some schools don't have many dual credit options because they don't have close relationships with or geographic proximity to two-year colleges, Newell said: "We sure hope to change that over time, but it is a frustrating reality in some parts of our school system."

For more information about dual credit and Tech Prep and Running Start programs in your area, contact your local school guidance counselor, career specialist, principal, a CTE instructor, or your school district's CTE director. Helpful websites include:

[www.careerandcollegeready.com](http://www.careerandcollegeready.com)

[www.techprepwa.org](http://www.techprepwa.org)

[www.k12.wa.us/runningstart](http://www.k12.wa.us/runningstart)

## Architecture and Construction: Building a better future through Career and Technical Education

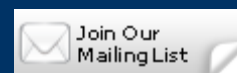
*Readers note: This is the second in a series of articles featuring the 16 career clusters that organize the Career and Technical Education classes in Washington's middle and high schools, and the career-oriented classes in community, technical and four-year colleges.*



On Monday, April 6, Marshall McBride went to work at Western Refinery Services, a maintenance and

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construction service company in Ferndale. The Friday before, Marshall, 18, was in class at Bellingham's Meridian High School, where he is a senior.

Marshall has a 100-hour paid internship thanks to the [Construction Careers Academy](#) (CCA) program, a pilot project of Washington's [Running Start for the Trades](#) program.

He will be readily employable after he graduates this June and finishes his internship. "You can't do any kind of construction without a welder," he said. "Even a simple wood frame house needs welding for its foundation."

Marshall first took a class in welding during his sophomore year, and loved it. Soon thereafter, he selected a career path in architecture and construction.

As a senior, he's got the best of all worlds. He's being paid to learn his chosen trade, earning high school and college credit for the construction classes he's taking, taking academic Advanced Placement classes, and serving as the student representative on his district's school board.

Marshall and many other students across the state have discovered the diverse career training and education options available through Career and Technical Education (CTE). These career pathway classes prepare high school students for the working world, skills certification testing and higher education programs.

High schools in 30 Washington school districts offer CTE classes in architecture and construction. Courses include architectural drafting, carpentry, building maintenance and design, electrical engineering, heating and cooling systems and welding. Eight districts have programs so substantial that participating students build entire homes. Another six district programs build homes in partnership with Habitat for Humanity.

Even if the economy is slow right now, construction is and will increasingly be a high-demand field in Washington and so it is garnering considerable support from the Legislature, the Governor and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Last year OSPI gave 21 high-demand construction grants to school districts and to particular high schools across the state to develop or improve their architecture and construction programs.

"If I was to graduate without this education, I'd be job hunting everywhere, or I might even be flipping burgers," Marshall said.

As a member of a team of five high school students with a variety of construction skills, Marshall participated in February in the regional Construction Challenge competition in Bellevue. His team earned first place and a spot in the national championship finals, to be held in May in Knoxville, TN. Members of the national winning team will each receive a \$1,500 college scholarship.

"What we're doing, it actually means something," said Marshall, who hopes to continue working at Western Refinery after he finishes his internship. "I love what I do in this program. And I'm really proud of the skills I've built."

[Whatcom County students win construction contest](#)