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UPDATE: Combined FTE Experience of Students Participating in the Running Start Program

2014

Authorizing legislation:

[3ESSB 5034, Sec 502 \(18\)](#), (Chapter 4, 2013 Laws 2nd Special Session PV) –Making
2013–2015 operating appropriations

Secondary Education and Student Support

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Executive Summary

Before the 2011–2012 school year, students were funded by the state to a combined maximum enrollment of 2.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) in both high school and the Running Start program each year. The 2011 Legislature limited funding to a combined maximum enrollment of 1.2 FTE.

As part of the budget language reducing the maximum Running Start-funded FTE, the Legislature directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), working with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), the Higher Education Coordinating Board (WSAC), and the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC), to annually report to the fiscal committees of the Legislature on the combined FTE experience of students participating in the program. The report was to include course-load analyses at both the high schools and higher education institutions. This report answers the question as to the impact the reduction in FTE to 1.2 has had on student course enrollment patterns in the high school and Running Start.

The results are based on the three years of data available since the change. The data for this period shows a large increase in students who are electing to enroll in Running Start full-time while taking few, if any, classes in their high schools. For students enrolling part-time in Running Start, there also continues to be a drop in FTE enrollment levels in their high school schedules.

As first reported in 2011–2012, there continues to be a number of challenges relative to the quality of the data. The report identifies seven issues for which OSPI, SBCTC, and ERDC continue working to find solutions.

The evidence continues to suggest that the reduction in combined high school/Running Start FTE from 2.0 to 1.2 FTE has resulted in increasing numbers of full-time Running Start students electing to enroll in one high school course to maximize combined FTE eligibility. However, reductions in high school course loads are also being seen among students who had been enrolled in two or more high school classes while enrolled in Running Start.

Background

Second Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1087 ([2ESHB 1087](#)), Washington state's 2011–2013 Operating Budget, was signed into law on June 15, 2011. Due to the shortfall in state revenue, funding for many programs was either eliminated or reduced. The Running Start program, which allows high school juniors and seniors to attend institutions of higher education using state K–12 basic education dollars, was reduced by lowering the maximum combined FTE that would be funded by the state.

Prior to the 2011–2013 Operating Budget, Running Start students could be claimed for basic education dollars at a combined high school and college FTE of 2.0, although neither high school nor college enrollment could individually exceed 1.0 FTE.

Beginning with the 2011–2012 school year, students participating in Running Start could only be claimed for a combined high school and college enrollment not exceeding 1.2 FTE. Students exceeding the 1.2 FTE could be charged tuition by the college or university for the additional credits, although the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has continued to maintain a waiver for low-income Running Start students.

In response to this change (combined 1.2 FTE), OSPI working with the SBCTC and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (WSAC), prepared and disseminated updated guidance and new Running Start enrollment documentation to address the changes in the program. In July 2011, and repeated annually since, OSPI has issued a bulletin to the field, explaining the change and providing schools and colleges with supportive documents for use in student guidance, as well as in calculating FTE distributions—[Bulletin 044-14 – Students Participating in Running Start Programs Funded up to a Combined Maximum Enrollment of 1.20 FTE](#).

Within 2ESHB 1087, Sec 502 (18), OSPI is called upon to collaborate with SBCTC, WSAC, and ERDC to annually report to the Legislature on the high school and college enrollment patterns of Running Start students. This is the third annual report.

Update Status

The collection and analysis continues to be based on Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) data, downloaded on October 22, 2014. The analysis of the data continues to include a two-step process to identify the combined FTE experience of Running Start students:

1. The student's "grade history" in CEDARS provides a profile of credits attempted for both Running Start and high school coursework for each identified student.
2. These credits were then converted to FTEs based on standard calculations defined in rules for high school credit and college course conversions.

The results of the comparison of enrollment patterns among Running Start students between school years 2011–2012 and 2013–2014 reveal the following:

1. There was a 25.1 percent increase (7,972 to 9,973) in the number of Running Start students with an enrollment profile of 0.00 to 1.00 credits taken in their high school between 2012 and 2014.
2. Students enrolled full-time in Running Start (8.01 credits [high school converted] or higher) increased by 42.2 percent (1,195) between 2012 and 2014.
3. Overall, students participating in Running Start at any level saw a 14.9 percent increase (2,419) in high school course enrollment between 2012 and 2014.
4. Overall, students with Running Start FTEs of 1.12 or higher, as reported in CEDARS, decreased by 8.8 percent (55) between 2012 and 2014. The CEDARS student information system is not able to distinguish between Running Start students who may pay for additional credits or obtain college tuition waivers.
5. Running Start students enrolled in the high school for .2 FTE or less increased by 25.2 percent (2,005) between 2012 and 2014.
6. Running Start students enrolled in the high school for more than .2 FTE decreased by 1.0 percent (69) between 2012 and 2014.
7. Among students enrolled in Running Start, there has been a 25.2 percent (1,437) increase in the .78 to 1.11 FTE range since 2012.
8. Among students enrolled in Running Start, there has been a 17.6 percent (327) decrease within the .12 to .55 FTE range since 2012.

Tables 1 and 2 provide an illustration of credit distribution for 2011–2012 and 2013–2014. Tables 3 and 4 provide the FTE distributions for the same reporting years.

Conclusion and Next Steps

With three years of data, we now show a strong indication that the numbers of students who are electing to enroll in Running Start full-time while still taking one class in their high schools is increasing. However, this pattern is reversed for students participating in Running Start who have traditionally maintained multiple classes in the high school. There continues to be a significant shift away from high school FTEs for these students.

There also continues to be a number of challenges being encountered relative to the quality of the data. Within this report's Interpretive Guidance, there are seven data-quality related issues identified, for which OSPI, SBCTC, and ERDC are working on finding solutions. These issues are contained in the Table section of this report. This collaboration around data quality will target ways we can clearly define and validate indicators of student enrollment status, both credits and FTEs.

With current reliance on CEDARS student information data as a primary source for student enrollment information, OSPI student information staff continue efforts to improve the completeness and quality of data submitted to CEDARS by local districts.

The posting of both dual credit enrollment ([WAC 392-117-038 – Failure to meet CEDARS submission requirements](#)) as well as performance data ([RCW 28A.300.560 – Data on college credit through dual credit courses – Posting on website](#)) to school report cards are serving to encourage more complete and accurate data submissions to CEDARS by local school districts.

Tables

Table 1: Numbers of Students Who Attempted Non-Running Start and Running Start Credits 2011–2012 School Year⁹

Table 2: Numbers of Students Who Attempted Non-Running Start and Running Start Credits 2013–2014 School Year¹⁰

Table 3: Numbers of Students Who Attempted Non-Running Start and Running Start Credits converted to FTEs 2011–2012 School Year¹¹

Table 4: Numbers of Students Who Attempted Non-Running Start and Running Start Credits converted to FTEs 2013–2014 School Year

Interpretive Guidance:

There are some confounding variables that impact the accuracy of reported data utilized in this report. In order to establish the four data tables which represent the credit and FTE distributions, it was necessary to develop an operational definition of FTEs, and to identify those variables used in calculating FTEs and their relationship to college credits. Those definitions do provide a consistent form of measure, but are not able to fully address data influenced by other credit and FTE variables impacted by certain programs with FTE enhancements, nor actions taken by colleges, that impact a student's credits, but have no impact on reportable FTEs. These data quality factors fall into three major categories:

1. Definition of FTE experience—To reach an FTE course calculation it was necessary to:

- a) Extract CEDARS data with clearly defined rules as to course load values. This was determined to be Course Credits attempted (Tables 1 and 2)
- b) Convert credits attempted to annualize FTE based upon the following rules:
 - a. Non-Running Start high school credit = .2 FTE (based on a state-funded, five-period instructional day of 60-minute classes model). A minority of high schools offer instructional programs ranging from four to seven or more classes daily.
 - b. Running Start college credits converted to high school grade history (based on a three-quarter college schedule) = .11 FTE (Tables 3 and 4)

2. College Vocational and Skill Center Students—Provisions were not changed for Running Start students enrolling in college vocational programs or at a skills center that might exceed the 15 credit (1.0 FTE) enrollment cap. Students enrolled at the high school, at a skills center, and in Running Start can be claimed for up to a combined total of 1.8 FTE. The FTE limitation for students enrolled at both a skills center and high school remains at 1.60 FTE ([WAC 392-121-136\(1\) \(c\)](#)). However, such student combined skills center/high school enrollment that would exceed 1.0 FTE is deemed as 1.0 FTE for the Running Start 1.2 FTE combined calculation.

Likewise, students enrolled in a college vocational program may continue to exceed the 15 credit Running Start college limit, but must be claimed for a 1.0 FTE and will be reimbursed only for 1.0 FTE.

3. Specific Data limitations—When reviewing the tables, a number of limitations and qualifications need to be considered. Efforts to provide a full time equivalent (FTE) analysis are confounded by the challenges in cross-walking credit reporting between SBCTC and OSPI student information systems. Both SBCTC’s Statewide Enrollment and Reporting System (SERS) and CEDARS are not designed to capture FTEs, but are based on course credits. There is no well-defined conversion between the two systems.

OSPI decided that the most consistent and valid approach to determining combined high school and Running Start FTEs would be to rely exclusively on CEDARS data. This decision was based upon our belief that CEDARS student grade history would permit a more valid and reliable comparison of Running Start versus high school experience for each student.

Specific data limitations in this analysis include the following:

- a) It was not possible to fully isolate Running Start/high school FTE, due to high school variable credit award standards as permitted in [WAC 180-51-050 \(1\)\(b\)](#). High schools offering 1.0 FTE instructional programs may range from four to seven or more classes, thereby making apportionment FTE calculations unreliable.
- b) FTE calculations are potentially inflated by non Running Start dual credit or college programs which, when posted to CEDARS grade histories would not be able to reliably isolate the exact high school FTE impacts.
- c) Students enrolled in Skills center programs may also inflate the potential FTE calculation due to the potential of such students to be eligible to earn a potential 1.6 maximum FTE on the combined high school/Running Start FTE.
- d) Likewise, isolating private school and home-based students accessing Running Start through local public high schools may influence participation patterns (credit and FTE). These students were more likely to have few, if any, high school FTEs in their public school grade history.
- e) Low-income Running Start students are provided additional opportunity to take up to eighteen credits (three beyond the 1.0 FTE maximum of 15 credits) through college low-income tuition waiver programs.
- f) The community and technical colleges provide a tenth credit tuition waiver for Running Start students. These are students otherwise eligible for exactly nine tuition-free Running Start credits, but register for exactly ten credits. This move by the

colleges made it more likely that Running Start students would maximize their eligibility by accessing ten credits.

- g) Non-Running Start college course grades and credits are not consistently reported back to the high school by higher education institutions. Therefore, the values over 1.2 combined FTE in Tables 3 and 4 are very likely larger than 1.2 FTE because students/families have elected to pay for extra college courses.

**Table 1: Numbers of Students Who Attempted Non-Running Start and Running Start Credits
2011–2012 School Year**

Non-Running Start Attempted HS Credits	Students participating in RS Courses	Annual Running Start Credits (converted to high school credit standard)										
		.01-1.0	1.01-2.0	2.01-3.0	3.01-4.0	4.01-5.0	5.01-6.0	6.01-7.0	7.01-8.0	8.01-9.0	9.01-10.0	10.01 or more
0.00–1.00 Credits	7972	92	164	242	221	409	820	757	1233	2452	1075	503
1.01–2.00 Credits	2402	21	67	105	200	309	538	386	336	283	97	59
2.01–3.00 Credits	2017	70	111	262	324	373	466	191	111	56	23	29
3.01–4.00 Credits	1509	85	247	392	292	202	161	57	27	19	15	11
4.01–5.00 Credits	1185	293	398	229	115	56	47	20	8	5	1	8
5.01–6.00 Credits	1063	518	243	159	48	23	25	15	12	6	2	4
6.01–7.00 Credits	498	264	105	60	21	15	6	7	6	5	2	2
7.01–8.00 Credits	172	85	37	20	11	8	8	-	-	1	-	-
8.01–9.00 Credits	103	40	24	11	13	4	8	-	2	-	-	1
9.01–10.00 Credits	48	19	13	9	3	1	1	-	-	1	-	1
10.01 or more Credits	111	38	31	12	8	3	5	3	2	4	1	4
TOTAL	17,079	1525	1440	1501	1256	1403	2085	1436	1737	2832	1216	622

Interpretive Guidance: A total of 111 students attempted between 1.01–2.0 annual Running Start Credits and 2.01–3.0 Non-Running Start high school credits for a combined credit total of between 3.02 and 5.0 credits as submitted to CEDARS by local school districts.

**Table 2: Numbers of Students Who Attempted Non-Running Start and Running Start Credits
2013–2014 School Year**

Non-Running Start Attempted HS Credits	Students participating in RS Courses	Annual Running Start Credits (converted to high school credit standard)										
		.01-1.0	1.01-2.0	2.01-3.0	3.01-4.0	4.01-5.0	5.01-6.0	6.01-7.0	7.01-8.0	8.01-9.0	9.01-10.0	10.01 or more
0.00–1.00 Credits	9968	143	201	263	254	444	981	840	1495	3565	1317	465
1.01–2.00 Credits	2619	37	54	134	228	294	553	424	362	360	109	64
2.01–3.00 Credits	1826	56	117	220	267	338	463	183	90	60	18	14
3.01–4.00 Credits	1359	141	261	357	199	170	127	46	18	25	4	11
4.01–5.00 Credits	1252	556	292	190	99	56	30	11	5	5	3	5
5.01–6.00 Credits	1398	885	254	126	57	18	25	9	10	5	0	3
6.01–7.00 Credits	653	424	139	43	16	15	6	4	1	2	1	2
7.01–8.00 Credits	194	103	41	21	12	2	4	2	2	3	1	3
8.01–9.00 Credits	85	31	27	11	1	11	1	0	2	1	0	0
9.01–10.00 Credits	37	17	9	5	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
10.01 or more Credits	86	20	19	23	15	3	2	0	2	1	1	0
TOTAL	19,471	2413	1414	1393	1151	1352	2192	1519	1988	4027	1455	567

Interpretive Guidance: A total of 117 students attempted between 1.01–2.0 annual Running Start Credits and 2.01–3.0 Non-Running Start high school credits for a combined credit total of between 3.02 and 5.0 credits as submitted to CEDARS by local school districts.

**Table 3: Numbers of Students Who Attempted Non-Running Start and Running Start Credits converted to FTEs
2011–2012 School Year**

This table is based on a conversion of course credits attempted, as captured in Table 1, to FTEs, based on the conversion definition provided in this report.

Non-Running Start Attempted FTEs	Students participating in RS Courses	Annual Running Start FTE										
		.01–.11	.12–.22	.23–.33	.3–.44	.45–.55	.56–.66	.67–.77	.78–.88	.89–.99	1.0–1.11	1.12 or more
0.00 – .20 FTE	7968	92	164	242	221	409	820	757	1233	2452	1075	503
.21 – .40 FTE	2401	21	67	105	200	309	538	386	336	283	97	59
.41 – .60 FTE	2016	70	111	262	324	373	466	191	111	56	23	29
.61 – .80 FTE	1508	85	247	392	292	202	161	57	27	19	15	11
.81 – 1.00 FTE	1180	293	398	229	115	56	47	20	8	5	1	8
0.00 – 1.00 FTE (subtotal)	15,073	561	987	1230	1152	1349	2032	1411	1715	2810	1211	610
*1.01–1.20 FTE (locally funded)	1055	518	243	159	48	23	25	15	12	6	2	4
** > 1.20 FTE	925	446	210	112	56	31	28	10	10	11	3	8
TOTAL	17,053	1525	1440	1501	1256	1403	2085	1436	1737	2832	1216	622

Interpretive Guidance: The blue line represents an approximate 1.2 combined high school/Running Start FTE trajectory (maximum allowable 1.0 FTE per type of credit)

The shaded cells reflect the combined FTE ranges that encompass 1.2 FTE.

* – a high school with a six period daily schedule would typically have one period locally funded.

** – FTEs above 1.20 may be related in part to students enrolled in a combination of high school, skills center, and Running Start classes which allows a combined maximum of 1.8 FTE.

**Table 4: Numbers of Students Who Attempted Non-Running Start and Running Start Credits converted to FTEs
2013–2014 School Year**

This table is based on a conversion of course credits attempted, as captured in Table 2, to FTEs, based on the conversion definition provided in this report.

Non-Running Start Attempted FTEs	Students participating in RS Courses	Annual Running Start FTE										
		.01–.11	.12–.22	.23–.33	.3–.44	.45–.55	.56–.66	.67–.77	.78–.88	.89–.99	1.0–1.11	1.12 or more
0.00–.20 FTE	9973	143	201	263	254	444	981	840	1495	3565	1317	465
.21 –.40 FTE	2619	37	54	134	228	294	553	424	362	360	109	64
.41–.60 FTE	1826	56	117	220	267	338	463	183	90	60	18	14
.61–.80 FTE	1364	141	261	357	199	170	127	46	18	25	4	11
.81–1.00 FTE	1254	556	292	190	99	56	30	11	5	5	3	5
0.00 – 1.00 FTE (subtotal)	17,024	933	925	1164	1047	1302	2154	1504	1970	4015	1451	559
* 1.01 –1.20 FTE (locally funded)	1392	885	254	126	57	18	25	9	10	5	0	3
** > 1.20 FTE	1055	595	235	103	47	32	13	6	8	7	4	5
TOTAL	19,471	2413	1414	1393	1151	1352	2192	1519	1988	4027	1455	567

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* – a high school with a six period daily schedule would typically have one period locally funded.

** – FTEs above 1.20 may be related in part to students enrolled in a combination of high school, skills center, and Running Start classes which allows a combined maximum of 1.8 FTE.

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