



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

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

December 2017

Authorizing legislation: ESSB 5883, Section 502 (18)
(2017-19 Operating Budget)
(<http://lawfilesexext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2017-18/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5883-S.SL.pdf>)

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Executive Summary

Before the 2011–12 school year, eligible high school juniors and seniors were funded by the state for a combined maximum of 2.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) in both high school and the Running Start program each year. The 2011 Legislature established a limit to this funding for a combined maximum enrollment of 1.2 FTE over one school year.

Consequently, 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 (now the Washington Student Achievement Council (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 aims to reflect what, if any, impact the reduction in FTE to 1.2 has had on student course enrollment patterns in the high school and Running Start.

Efforts to provide a full-time equivalent (FTE) analysis are confounded by the challenges in cross-walking credit reporting between the SBCTC and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) student information systems. Consequently, this report relies on the collection and analysis of data reported in the K–12 Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS).

Data reported in this update show for the past three years the number of 11th and 12th grade students completing at least one Running Start course during the school year. Despite the 1.2 FTE limitation, the total number of students completing a Running Start course has increased 52.3 percent since 2011. After a nominal increase in the year following the implementation of the 1.2 FTE limit, overall Running Start participation has seen a steady increase from 16,995 to 25,824 total students completing at least one course.

The graduating Class of 2017 also contained the highest number of seniors – 1,397 – who earned an Associate’s Degree (AA) along with their high school diploma. This number was a significant 23 percent increase from the previous record set by the Class of 2016 at 1,134 students graduating with an AA. Students who choose to complete the maximum of 90 quarter credits allowable through the Running Start program during their junior and senior years can graduate with an AA designed to transfer to a 4-year university or an AA that can lead to a career opportunity.

Background

Washington state's 2011–13 Operating Budget (HB 1087), was signed into law on June 15, 2011. Due to the shortfall in state revenue, funding for the Running Start program was reduced by lowering the maximum combined FTE that would be funded by the state. The Running Start program allows academically ready juniors and seniors to take courses at or through institutions of higher education using state K–12 basic education dollars to cover the cost of tuition.

Prior to the 2011–13 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 the high school nor the institution of higher education enrollment could individually exceed 1.0 FTE. Beginning with the 2011–12 school year, students participating in Running Start could only be claimed for a combined high school and college enrollment of 1.2 FTE. Students exceeding 1.2 FTE could be charged tuition by the college for the additional credits, although the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has continued to maintain a fee waiver program for low-income Running Start students.

In response to the change in FTE limits, OSPI collaborated with the SBCTC and Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) to create enrollment verification forms that address this change in the program. OSPI annually issues a bulletin to the field, explaining the 1.2 FTE limitation and providing schools and colleges with supportive documents for use in student and family guidance, and for calculating FTE distributions ([Bulletin 055-17](#)).

Update Status

The analysis of possible impacts of the 1.2 FTE limitation continues to be based on data from the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). Neither the SBCTC's Statewide Enrollment and Reporting System (SERS) nor the CEDARS system are designed to capture FTEs, but are based instead on course credits. There is no well-defined conversion between the systems.

Utilizing CEDARS data, Table 1 illustrates the total growth in the number of 11th and 12th grade students who have completed at least one Running Start course in each school year from 2011 to 2017 relative to the total growth of all 9th–12th grade students. Despite the 1.2 FTE limitation, there has been significant growth of 52.3 percent in the number of students completing at least one Running Start course each year. Additionally, for the Class of 2017, a record 1,397 seniors graduated with an Associate's Degree. This was a 23 percent increase from the previous record set by the Class of 2016 at 1,134 students graduating with an AA. This statistic infers that these students maximized their access to the Running Start program during both the junior and senior years.

Table 1: Comparison in growth of total population vs. total number of 11th and 12th grade students completing at least one Running Start course, by school year.

School Year	Grade 9-12 Total Students	# Students Taking at Least One Course
2011	339,756	16,952
2012	337,854	16,995
2013	337,059	17,067
2014	335,914	19,026
2015	342,524	22,451
2016	345,109	23,557
2017	346,586	25,824
Total Growth	6,830	8,872
2010-2017	2.0%	52.3%

Conclusion and Next Steps

With seven years of data, there is a strong indication that the 1.2 FTE limitation is not negatively impacting overall student participation in the Running Start program. With the inclusion of dual credit as a School Quality and Student Success Measure for Washington’s new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, overall system improvement and equity of access will be a major focus across Washington. OSPI staff will be specifically analyzing data for overall increased enrollment, as well as equitable access for all academically prepared and interested students.

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