

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 2009

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Office of the Attorney General (AGO)
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)
Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB)
State Board of Education (SBE)

SUBJECT: Running Start Program — Questions and Answers

The Running Start Program was initiated by the Legislature as a component of the 1990 parent and student “Choice” Act (Chapter 9, Laws of 1990, 1st Ex. Sess.). It is intended to provide students a program option consisting of attendance at certain institutions of higher education and the simultaneous earning of high school and college/university credit.

Eleventh and twelfth grade students have a right granted by the Legislature to participate in Running Start at public expense. The exercise of that right is subject only to minimal eligibility and procedural requirements, which are spelled out, in state administrative rules.

This document is the 2009 updated version of the “brochure” first printed in April 1997. The answers have been developed in collaboration with a variety of K-12 and higher education representatives and the Office of the Attorney General. The answers reflect how schools, school districts, and higher education institutions need to implement or administer various elements of Running Start in order to be in compliance with state statutes. There are a total of 59 questions distributed among the following categories:

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➤	Homeschool/Private School Students	2 questions	(p. 4)
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The applicable statutes are [RCW 28A.600.300 through 28A.600.400](#), [RCW 28A.150.260](#), [RCW 28A.150.290](#), and [RCW 28B.50.535](#).

The applicable implementing rules are found in Chapter [392-169 WAC](#) (OSPI rules).

RUNNING START PROGRAM

Questions and Answers

September 2009

Office of the Attorney General (AGO)
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Eligibility

- Q-1. May a school district condition a student's eligibility for enrollment of a student in the Running Start Program upon a determination by school district personnel that the student is academically qualified to take college or university course work?**
- A. No. The determination of whether or not a student is competent to profit from college or university course work is within the jurisdiction and authority of the college or university to make. [WAC 392-169-045](#)
- Q-2. May a school district condition a student's eligibility for enrollment in the Running Start Program upon the maintenance of a particular grade point average?**
- A. No. The eligibility requirements for participation in the Running Start Program are set forth in statute and rule to the exclusion of any GPA requirement. Nothing in statute or rule implies any authority for school districts to impose additional requirements or conditions upon a student who meets the minimum requirements imposed by law.
- Q-3. Can a student start the Running Start Program mid-year?**
- A. Students may start at anytime during the academic year (excluding summer). Note, however, that Running Start only pays for student tuition when the student is enrolled in college courses. Consequently, a student will not receive the full benefit of the Running Start program unless he or she enrolls at the beginning of the Fall quarter/semester of the student's junior year. [WAC 392169-055](#)
- Q-4. May a second-year senior enroll in the Running Start Program?**
- A. A second- year senior may enroll in the Running Start Program **if they have been enrolled previously**, but may only **take** those specific courses needed to graduate from high school. A second-year senior is generally understood as being a student who has failed to meet high school graduation requirements by the end of the student's 12th grade academic year.
- From [WAC 392-169-055](#): "Provided, That a student who has failed to meet high school graduation requirements as of the end of the student's twelfth grade regular academic year (September-June) **due to the student's absence, the student's failure of one or more courses, or another similar reason may continue running start program enrollment for the sole and exclusive purpose of completing the particular course or courses required to meet high school graduation requirements.**"
- Q-5. May a high school deny Running Start participation to students under the age of 21?**
- A. No, not if the student meets eligibility requirements.
- Q-6. How is junior/senior standing determined?**
- A. It is the responsibility of the common school district to establish junior/senior standing. Any criteria used to establish grade placement must be applied uniformly to all students.
- Q-7. Can a student have all the credits for a diploma and still attend Running Start if they do not take the step of graduating?**
- A. No. Students who have completed all the credits needed for graduation are no longer eligible to participate in Running Start. **NOTE: Student eligibility is determined at the beginning of each school year and does not change mid-year.** [WAC 392-169-020](#)

- Q-8. Can a Running Start student retake a course to improve their grade?**
- A. Yes, if repeating the course is allowed by both high school and college local policies.
- Q-9. Are Running Start students subject to the compulsory attendance laws?**
- A. Yes, Running Start students are subject to the compulsory attendance laws, as set out in [RCW 28A.225.010](#).
- Q-10. May a student expelled from high school for a serious offense enroll in Running Start?**
- A. Yes, if an institution of higher education is willing to enroll the student. The high school and the higher education institution handle violations of their respective student conduct rules separately. That is to say, a student could be expelled by a high school for a violation of school district rules and continue to participate in college classes. The reverse is also true.
- Q-11. If a currently-enrolled Running Start student moves out of the high school district, can the student continue Running Start through the original district?**
- A. Yes. A student who moves to a new school district after enrolling in Running Start, attends an institution of higher education located in the new school district, and takes no classes at any high school in the new district, shall be deemed to have retained his or her residence in the school district of initial Running Start enrollment for high school graduation, funding, and other purposes under the Running Start Program. [WAC 392-169-020\(2\)](#)
- Q-12. May a district require that a student attend the high school for the purpose of completing the state's culminating project high school graduation requirement?**
- A. Yes, if the project is required for high school graduation and the requirement cannot be met otherwise. See the answers to Q-26 and Q-28 below.
- Q-13. Do Running Start students need to meet all district and state graduation requirements in order to earn a district high school diploma?**
- A. Yes.
- Q-14. May a Running Start student be enrolled full-time at the college or university and also enroll in classes at the high school?**
- A. Yes. A student may be counted up to two FTEs between the high school and the college or university with a maximum of one FTE at each institution. This requires very close counseling and agreement by representatives of both institutions. The student is reported on the high school's enrollment report, as well as on the enrollment report at the college or university.
- Q-15. May Running Start students earning a district high school diploma be excused from the required statewide proficiency tests because the testing conflicts with college classes?**
- A. Generally speaking, no. Arrangements should be made at the college to accommodate the student who is taking the high school test required by the state.
- Q-16. If a Running Start student withdraws from the college, can the high school prohibit the student from returning to the high school?**
- A. No. It is the duty of the high school to provide an education for students residing in the district.

- Q-17. What is the responsibility of the school district to inform potential Running Start students about the Running Start program?**
- A. A school district shall provide general information about the program to all pupils in grades ten, eleven, and twelve and the parents and guardians of those pupils, including information about the opportunity to enroll in the program through online courses available at community and technical colleges and other state institutions of higher education and including the college high school diploma options under [RCW 28B.50.535](#). To assist the district in planning, a pupil shall inform the district of the pupil's intent to enroll in courses at an institution of higher education for credit. Students are responsible for applying for admission to the institution of higher education. [RCW 28A.600.320](#)
- Q-18. Who determines which college or technical school the students will attend?**
- A. The students and their parents. Normally a student will attend the institution closest to their high school district.
- Q-19. Is a school district required to provide transportation to a student with disabilities who wants to take classes through Running Start?**
- A. A school district would be responsible for necessary transportation of a Running Start student to and from college if the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) provides for Running Start enrollment in an institution of higher education.
- Q-20. Can a school district deny a student's application to enroll in Running Start if the student does not want a diploma from the district or the high school?**
- A. No. If the student meets all eligibility requirements, the school district cannot keep a student from participating. However, a student who is not attempting to make progress toward graduation requirements would not be eligible beyond the regular 12th grade school year (second year senior eligibility). See Q-3, above.
- Q-21. Is there any legal authority that allows a community college to limit the proportion of Running Start students in any individual class?**
- A. A policy placing a blanket restriction on Running Start enrollment to a fixed percentage of any class is unlikely to fit within authorized community or technical college enrollment restrictions. The burden would be on the college to establish a sufficient rationale for any policy adopted to limit Running Start enrollment. Any such policy: 1) must be generally applicable; and 2) must be related to: physical facility limitations, operating funds limitations, academically efficient class size, or a student's ability to benefit from a particular class, course or program.
- Q-22. Can a school district impose a registration deadline or otherwise limit registration times for Running Start?**
- A. No. However, the college can impose a registration deadline. It is recommended that high schools and colleges work together to define a mutually agreeable deadline for registration. Schedules must include enough flexibility not to impede students' Running Start participation.
- Q-23. Can colleges ask for students' immigration and/or residency status on Running Start application forms?**
- A. No. Residency and immigration status are not a factor for Running Start students. Students' residency is established by their eligibility to enroll in their home high school. This question should not appear on Running Start application forms.

Q- 24. Can schools that have accepted nonresident students under the “choice” legislation send a student back to their home high school if they want to participate in Running Start?

- A. School districts must have a policy establishing rational, fair, and equitable standards for acceptance and rejection of applications for nonresident attendance. If a student meets the district’s criteria for acceptance, we are unable to see how participation in the Running Start program thereafter renders the student no longer acceptable. If a district were to attempt to revoke an acceptance of a nonresident student mid-year, the student would have the right to appeal to OSPI under [RCW 28A.225.230](#) and [WAC 392-137-230](#). Running Start participation is not among the rejection criteria for nonresident students specified in [RCW 28A.225.225\(3\)](#).

Q- 25. How long is a student with an IEP or section 504 plan eligible for Running Start?

- A. Running Start is intended to provide the equivalent of two academic years of eligibility for dual credit. An IEP or section 504 plan, however, may indicate a student’s need to extend the length of time required to complete his or her secondary education. It is also possible that the academic and calendar year may not coincide under the IEP or section 504 plan. Eligibility for Running Start may continue, if appropriate to the IEP or section 504 plan, while the student continues work toward the diploma so long as the courses being taken continue to earn credit in both the secondary and postsecondary system and the student is otherwise eligible.

<p style="text-align: center;">QUESTIONS & ANSWERS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Homeschool / Private School Students</p>
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Q-26. May home schooled and private schooled students enroll in the Running Start Program?

- A. Yes. If seeking dual credit, the students must enroll through the local public high school and have obtained junior or senior standing. The home school student so enrolled does not have to attend classes in the public high school in order to participate in Running Start. Students receiving home-based instruction under chapter 28A.200 RCW and students attending private schools approved under chapter 28A.195 RCW shall not be required to meet the student learning goals, obtain a certificate of academic achievement or a certificate of individual achievement to graduate from high school, or to master the essential academic learning requirements. [RCW 28A.600.310\(1\)](#)

For state and federal accountability reporting purposes: A student receiving home-based instruction enrolling in a public high school for the sole purpose of participating in courses or programs offered by institutions of higher education shall not be counted by the school district if the student's parents or guardians filed a declaration of intent to provide home-based instruction and the student received home-based instruction during the school year before the school year in which the student intends to participate in courses or programs offered by the institution of higher education.

Q-27. How is junior/senior standing determined for private schools and home schooled students who wish to participate in Running Start?

- A. For students seeking dual credit, it is the responsibility of the common school district to establish grade placement criteria. Some schools consider age appropriateness; others review credits and prior learning. In other cases, a standardized achievement test may be used in the absence of adequate documentation of a student's home-based education. Consistency is key.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Graduation Requirements

- Q-28. Can the district require progress toward the district diploma and require that students not only earn credits, but complete other requirements for graduation, such as the Culminating Project and High School and Beyond Plans?**
- A. Yes. The intent of Running Start statutes ([RCW 28A.600.310-400](#)) is to encourage maximum student access to Running Start. Districts, therefore, should not be adopting policies and procedures that intentionally create barriers to student participation in the program. Requiring daily attendance in a culminating project class would logically hinder participation. Districts that have such requirements are strongly encouraged to offer accommodations to students participating in Running Start who may not be able to attend such a class.
- Q-29. Can a student have all the credits for a diploma and still attend Running Start if they do not take the step of graduating?** (This is the same question as Q-7. It is included under two different topics because it pertains to both.)
- A. No. Students who have completed all the credits needed for graduation are no longer eligible to participate in Running Start. **NOTE: Student eligibility is determined at the beginning of each school year and does not change mid-year.** [WAC 392-169-020](#)
- Q-30. Can a Running Start student who earns an associate degree from a college receive a high school diploma from that college?**
- A. Starting in the 2009-10 school year, community and technical colleges are authorized to issue high school diplomas for Running Start students who enroll in the college and complete an associate degree. Students must provide a written request to the college registrar's office (or designee) to receive a high school diploma from the college. [RCW 28B.50.535](#).
- Q-31. When can Running Start students who have completed their associate degree request the college-based high school diploma?**
- A. If an associate degree is awarded after July 26th, 2009, the student may request the college-based high school diploma anytime in the future. If a student received the associate degree before July 26th, 2009, the student must wait until they are 21 years old to request it.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Transcript Information

- Q-32. When a student in Running Start drops a class at the college, and receives a "W" on their college transcript, should the high school post the grade as an "F" on the high school transcript?**
- A. It must be posted as a "W" on the high school transcript.
- Q-33. If a Running Start student fails to pay his fees to a college, but otherwise completes the coursework satisfactorily, can the college withhold his grades? Can the student be prevented from graduating from high school?**
- A. The answer to the first question lies in the applicable policy of the particular institution. The answer to the second question is no. The failure to pay college fees related to the earning of college credit via Running Start is separate from the issue of whether the student satisfactorily met the course requirements to pass

and apply the earned credits toward high school graduation. The college is limited to withholding the student's grades only pertaining to issuing the student's college transcript. In the situation described above, the high school counselor and the Running Start coordinator at the college must communicate with one another in order for the high school to be apprised of the student's grade. It is possible for a student to receive high school credit, but not college credit, in the situation described.

Q-34. Are all Running Start courses shown on the high school transcript?

- A. Yes. Running Start courses need to be recorded on the transcript. The standardized transcript must contain a designation of "R" for courses completed and credit earned through Running Start. [WAC 392-415-070](#)

Q-35. How does the high school transcribe a grade from a college class through Running Start if the college uses a different grading scale than the high school? (e.g., the college bases a B- on a 2.6 and the high school uses 2.7). Will the student have different grades on the high school and college transcripts?

- A. It is possible that the respective transcripts will show different grades. However, the high school transcript needs to record the grade in compliance with [WAC 392-415-050](#). The high school would transcribe the grade appropriate to the rules for K-12 and the college would transcribe the grade appropriate to its policy.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Student Activities

Q-36. May Running Start students participate in college or university campus activities, such as student government, organizations, and clubs?

- A. Yes. With the exception of intercollegiate sports, Running Start students may participate in any activities on the college/university campus, consistent with the institution's general requirements for participation in extracurricular activities. Running Start students may also participate in any high school activities, consistent with the high school and school district's own eligibility requirements.

Q-37. Can a school district or high school preclude a student from being eligible to be senior class valedictorian or senior class salutatorian if the student enrolls in one or more classes via Running Start?

- A. Such preclusion could violate equal protection principles. A 12th grade Running Start student and a 12th grade regular high school student are each entitled to participate equally in a high school graduation ceremony. A school should have criteria, other than mere status as a Running Start student, for these honors. For example, if the sole criterion for being selected were a high grade point average (GPA), a Running Start student with a high GPA would be just as eligible as a non-Running Start student with a high GPA. On the other hand, if the eligibility threshold is a high GPA, coupled with a certain level of participation in class or school activities (e.g., serving as class officer or other leadership activity), it is possible that a Running Start student would have a more difficult time qualifying.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Credit

- Q-38. May a high school district elect to reduce the rate of credit granted a Running Start student for five-quarter (credit) hours of college work to less than one credit?**
- A. No. [RCW 28A.230.090 and 1997 c 222](#) has established that five-quarter (credit) hours shall equal one high school credit. School districts therefore, are required to grant one full high school credit for every five-quarter credit hours of work successfully completed by a Running Start student.
- Q-39. May high school districts split the credits between required and elective courses?**
- A. Yes, but not on a uniform rate basis, but rather on a case-by-case evaluation of the extent to which a college course is the equivalent of required high school course work. An arbitrary uniform rate is squarely at odds with the course-by-course comparison and judgment required by [WAC 392-169-050](#). It is permissible for the common school district superintendent, on an individual course basis, to split the credit for a course that is not comparable, following consultation with a college representative. The total credit awarded must still equate to the five-quarter credits equals one high school credit basis.
- Q-40. May a high school restrict Running Start students from taking two like subjects in the same academic year? (example: English 101 and 102).**
- A. No.
- Q-41. Are Running Start students allowed to take on-line classes for dual credit?**
- A. Generally, yes. It depends on local School Board policy applicable to all students.
- Q-42. May a Running Start student "challenge" a course and have the high school pay for the credits?**
- A. No.
- Q-43. May a school district or school award a diploma to a private school student who enrolls in the public district, but takes classes only through Running Start?**
- A. Yes.
- Q-44. Which college courses may a Running Start student take?**
- A. The entire college catalog is available to Running Start students, assuming that they have met any pre-requisites that the college requires of all students.
- Q-45. How do credits earned through dual enrollment programs impact a student's financial aid eligibility?**
- A. **Financial aid eligibility of students while in Running Start.** Any student who is still associated with his or her high school is not eligible for federal or state financial aid with one exception. Public colleges and universities are permitted, but not required, to offer institutional financial assistance to needy Running Start students.
- Financial aid eligibility of former Running Start students.** Basic eligibility for federal and state need-based aid is dependent on the student and family's financial strength, not participation in Running Start. Having earned credits as a Running Start student will, however, affect the length of time a student can continue to receive aid, as well as the annual maximum award amounts for federal student loan programs.

Tip: Students with questions about the effect of Running Start on their student aid or scholarship packages should always check directly with the school's admissions, financial aid, and scholarship offices.

Maximum Timeframe

Many types of financial aid have a maximum timeframe for eligibility that limits the length of time to receive aid. The limitation depends on the state, federal, and institutional policy, but is generally either 125 or 150 percent of the program length.

For Example:

If the Student Has 90 Credits From Running Start Accepted By the School			
And the four-year College's Maximum Timeframe policy is:	And the Minimum Needed For a BA Degree is:	The maximum credits that can be earned before losing student aid eligibility is:	And the remaining credits that can be earned without jeopardizing student aid is:
150%	180	270	180
125%	180	225	135

Appeals of the Timeframe

Depending on the school, individual students may be allowed to appeal the limit. Appeals, if accepted, are based on each student's individual circumstances. Appeals often revolve around changes to the student's major, reconsideration of earlier remedial coursework, or unavoidable circumstances that extend the student's course of study.

Effect of Year-in-School on Maximum Annual Federal Student Loan Amounts

The federal student loan programs permit higher awards for second- and third-year students than for first-year students. Running Start students who achieve third-year status at the end of their Running Start program will qualify for the higher loan amounts right out of high school.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

One of the requirements for financial aid eligibility is that students maintain satisfactory academic progress (SAP). Poor academic performance in Running Start can negatively impact student aid eligibility.

SAP is a measurement of academic performance in terms of GPA and completed credits. Specific standards may vary by institution. All prior college coursework, including that taken through Running Start, will be evaluated for SAP.

Scholarships

Private Donor and Institutional Scholarships

Policies surrounding private scholarships rest with the donor. The awarding of institutional scholarships is controlled by each college.

It is up to each private donor or each institution to determine how Running Start credits impact consideration for scholarships that are reserved for freshmen.

Many four-year universities and colleges have adopted advantageous policies that permit Running Start students to apply for scholarships that are otherwise reserved for students with freshman status. All students, however, should check with the scholarship office of the school they are transferring to for an understanding of the school's policy.

State-Sponsored Scholarships

Both the Washington Scholars and Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE) accept applications from Running Start students. For Washington Scholars the application must come through the student's high school. For WAVE, the application may come through either the student's high school or community college.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Fees

Q-46. May a high school seek reimbursement from a Running Start student for failure of a course?

A. No.

Q-47. May colleges charge fees to Running Start students?

A. Yes. Beginning in the 2009-10 school year, Running Start students attending community and technical colleges must pay mandatory fees as established by the community and technical college, prorated based upon credit load. Four-year institutions may charge technology fees only. Institutions of higher education must make available fee waivers for low-income Running Start students. A Running Start student shall be considered low-income, and eligible for a fee waiver, upon proof that the student is currently qualified to receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Q-48. What is the credit maximum for student tuition and when do colleges charge extra tuition for overloads taken by students?

A. Running Start students may enroll tuition-free for up to 18 credits per quarter. When a Running Start student who isn't enrolled in vocational programs seeks even more credits, colleges should charge appropriate per-credit rates for any credits beyond the 18 credit maximum. (Under the law, colleges must charge the tuition for at least two overload credits, even if the student enrolls for just one.) When students enrolled in vocational programs that require enrollment for more than 18 credits per quarter (or five clock hours for technical colleges), the college can waive the credits above 18. Student enrollment in classes beyond program requirements should be charged at regular state rates.

Q-49. Can school districts assess a fine or fee against students for failing Running Start courses, withdrawing from Running Start courses or never showing up for Running Start courses?

A. No.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Parental Rights and Responsibilities

Q-50. Is the parent of a Running Start student entitled to review attendance and grade information held by the college or university?

A. A parent of a Running Start student is likely to be entitled to review this information. However, it depends in each case on whether the parent claims the student as a dependent for income tax purposes. Students attending postsecondary educational institutions hold the confidentiality rights to their education records. They have the right to consent prior to any disclosure of information from education records held by the postsecondary institution. However, an exception to the consent requirement allows the parents of dependent children to review their child's education records without consent of the student.

- Q-51. May Running Start students participate in field trips that are scheduled as a part of the college course?**
- A. Yes, but written parental permission should be obtained for all field trips. If parents do not give permission, alternative options must be arranged by faculty.

<p style="text-align: center;">QUESTIONS & ANSWERS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Foreign Exchange / International Students</p>

- Q-52. Are foreign exchange students eligible to participate in Running Start?**
- A. Yes, Running Start satisfies high school credit and attendance requirements. The exception is that students with an F-1 visa who are paying full tuition to attend high school are not eligible to participate.
- Q-53. Can Running Start students participate in study abroad programs offered by their college?**
- A. Yes, Running Start students have access to all the classes offered in the college catalog. The college can invoice high schools for the standard Running Start reimbursement rate. Students are responsible for any additional costs.

<p style="text-align: center;">QUESTIONS & ANSWERS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Other</p>

- Q-54. If a student has completed graduation requirements, but has not yet graduated, and drops out of any courses being taken through Running Start, is the student considered truant?**
- (See also Eligibility Q-9)
- A. No. Technically, meeting graduation requirements with or without a diploma satisfies the compulsory attendance requirement. [RCW 28A.225.010](#)
- Q-55. Can a student withdraw from a class taken through Running Start without the permission of the high school or school district?**
- A. Technically, yes, but there should be coordination, and perhaps enrollment in high school to avoid being truant.
- Q-56. Can a high school or school district impose a sequence requirement on Running Start students?**
- A. A rational course sequence requirement could be imposed as long as it applied to all high school students.
- Q-57. Can a high school that operates a seven-period schedule convert one period to allow the offering of college courses under Running Start and still claim a full FTE amount of funding under the basic education funding formula? Can the participating college claim a full or partial FTE for students enrolled in a course through Running Start under this scenario?**
- A. The course cannot, for funding purposes, be both a basic education offering and a college course for Running Start.
- Q-58. Who is responsible for covering the costs associated with ADA or section 504 accommodations for Running Start students?**
- A. The college.

Q-59. Who is responsible for covering the costs associated with special education services that are outlined in a student's IEP?

- A.** Generally, high schools are responsible for providing or paying for the services outlined in an IEP. Colleges and high schools should work together to ensure that students' needs are being met.