



Learning by Choice

Student Enrollment Options in Washington

Revised July 2014



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www.k12.wa.us

The information in this booklet was updated in June 2014, but is subject to change based on legislative or agency action.
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Learning by Choice

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Introduction

Most students in Washington go to the public schools that are closest to their homes. But parents and guardians have many enrollment options for their kids. Students can attend an approved private school, enroll in an Alternative Learning Experience program (such as an online school), be taught at home, or attend a charter school. In some circumstances, they also can transfer to other schools within or outside the district in which they live.

In 1990, the state Legislature formalized some of the public school options by passing the *Learning by Choice* law. The law consists of three major components:

1. **Family Choice** allows parents to select which public school(s) their children will attend, within certain limitations;
2. **Running Start** permits students in 11th and 12th grade to enroll in courses or programs in a community or technical college, as well as selected public universities and tribal colleges, without paying college tuition; and
3. **Seventh- and Eighth-Grade Choice** gives students in those grades credits for completing high school courses.

In 2001, the U.S. Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which was an update of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) enacted in 1965. NCLB created additional enrollment options for students who are in low-performing schools or whose schools are considered “persistently dangerous.”

This booklet contains answers to the most commonly asked questions about the *Learning by Choice* law, options created by the NCLB Act, descriptions of programs that may be available to students if they meet program eligibility criteria, and other enrollment options available to students in public, private, and home-based instruction.

The table of contents is organized into four broad categories of enrollment-related information:

1. Basic information about public school enrollment options
2. Specialized/dual credit enrollment options
3. Services upon identification at time of enrollment
4. Other enrollment options available to Washington students

The table of contents entries indicate whether they apply to public (*P*), private (*Pr*), and/or home-based (*H*) students.

Enrollment Basics

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

(Public School, Approved Private School, or Home-Based Student Option)

All Washington children between the ages of 8 and 18 must attend school. Parents or guardians may enroll them in the public school of the district in which they live, public charter school, an approved private school, or declare an intent to provide a home-based education.

There are, however, a few approved reasons parents or guardians may choose not to enroll their child in school. Some reasons include if the child is 16 and has already met graduation requirements, is regularly employed, or is receiving qualified home-based instruction. Please refer to [RCW 28A.225.010](#) for a detailed explanation.

GENERAL ENROLLMENT INTO WASHINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

(Public School Student Option)

A parent or legal guardian should accompany students when registering and bring:

- Proof of age (e.g., birth certificate or passport)
- Health history; name, address, and phone number of child's doctor and dentist
- Proof of residency (e.g., utility bill, tax statement)
- Parent's or guardian's telephone numbers (day and evening)
- Student immunization records
- Withdrawal form or report card from the last school attended
- Expulsion statement

Proof of age. A [birth certificate](#) or other official verification of age (such as a passport, visa, or Department of Social and Health Services [DSHS] Medicaid voucher) is required for students who have not previously enrolled in school. Kindergarten students must be five on or before midnight August 31; first graders must be six. [School districts may adopt regulations](#) that provide for individual exceptions to these entry qualifications. If a certified copy of the child's birth record cannot be obtained, the person enrolling the child must submit a sworn statement setting forth the child's age and explaining the inability to present a certified copy of the birth record.

Health history. Health Information: Schools are responsible for the health and safety of students during all school-related activities. According to [RCW 28A.210.320](#) and [WAC 392-380](#), if a student has a life-threatening condition, the family must inform the school and follow through on the requirements listed below. A condition is “life-threatening” if it could put a student in danger of death, unless he or she receives medication or treatment.

Before these students come to school, their parents/guardians must do three things:

1. Provide the school with a written medication and/or treatment order from a licensed health care provider,
2. Provide medication and/or equipment outlined in that order, and
3. Contact the school nurse to help him/her create a nursing plan, known as an Individualized Healthcare Plan.

Your school may have developed their own forms to gather accurate and complete information. Please use those forms if they are available. If you have questions, please contact your school.

Proof of residency. Proof of residency shows you live within the service area for that school and district. Examples include a rental agreement, a utility bill from your current residence, or a driver’s license that shows your current address.

If a child has no regular, fixed residence but lives within the school district in a temporary shelter, institution, or place not ordinarily used as a residence, the school district may accept an alternative form of address that it considers appropriate.

Parent’s or guardian’s telephone numbers. The school must be able to contact parents or guardians in case of emergency or to communicate other important information.

Student immunization records. A Washington [Certificate of Immunization](#) must be completed with the month, day, and year of inoculation on the day of registration. [Vaccines](#) are required for school in Grades K–12. Visit your local [Regional Health District](#) or family physician for more information about immunizations and/or [Certificates of Exemption](#). Specific information about a medical, religious, philosophical, or personal exemption from immunizations is available from school districts.

Withdrawal form or report card from the last school attended. School report cards, progress reports, and transcripts are very helpful in making sure your child is placed in the right classes.

Expulsion statement. When a student is registered, the parent or guardian must provide a sworn statement about whether the child has been expelled. The statement must indicate whether the child has been expelled from attending a private school, another public school in Washington, or a school in another state for an offense involving weapons, alcohol or drugs, or for willful infliction of injury to another person.

Questions & Answers

1. **How do I enroll my child in school for the first time?**

If this is the first time your child will attend school, call the school and ask what you must bring with you to enroll your child. At a minimum, most schools require the following documents: birth certificate, proof of custody/guardianship (documentation that determines where the child resides and who has decision-making authority), proof of residency, and record of immunizations.

2. **How do I transfer my child from one school to another?**

Call the school your child last attended. Ask them to prepare a packet of information for you to take to the new school. It should include items like immunization records and documents that will help your student get into the right educational program and classes. Tell them the last day your child will attend school. Ask if you may pick up the packet, or if it can be mailed to you or the new school, or be brought home to you by your child. The packet will contain all the information you need to enroll your child in the new school. Washington schools do have the ability to transfer some of this information electronically.

Call your child's new school and schedule an appointment. Bring the information packet you received from the previous school. The appointment will ensure that time is set aside to speak with you and to answer your questions. Be sure to find out what items you need to bring with you to enroll your child in the new school.

3. **Why is proof of custody/guardianship required?**

Proof of custody/guardianship is required to identify who is legally responsible for the child and who can be contacted in case of an emergency. This tells the school authorities who can make educational decisions for the child. Each local school system determines which documents will be accepted as proof (e.g., a court order, a separation or divorce decree, parenting plan, or a birth certificate that identifies the parents). Call the school and ask what documents are acceptable.

4. **Why is proof of residency required?**

Where a child lives determines his/her local public school. Each school district decides what they will accept as proof of residency. You should call the school where you plan to enroll your child to find out what is accepted. Generally accepted documents are current rental agreement, current utility bills containing applicant's name and address, or a current property tax bill.

5. **Why do I need to bring proof of age?**

Proof of age is particularly important the first time a child enrolls in school. It helps determine which services and programs are available to the child. The mandatory attendance law applies to children between the ages of 8 and 18.

A birth certificate and other documents as determined by each local school system may be used as proof of age. A copy of your documentation will be made by the school and attached to your child's record. Call the school to see what documents other than the birth certificate will be accepted as proof of age.

6. Why do I need to bring immunization records?

All children need to have an up-to-date copy of immunization records to be enrolled in and attend school. If your child's immunizations need to be updated and you can bring written proof of an appointment within 20 days to obtain the immunizations, you may temporarily enroll your child pending receipt of the required immunizations. Your doctor or health clinic can provide the ([DOH Form 348-013](#)) form for you to take to the school.

7. Should I bring the current Individualized Education Program (IEP) for my child who receives special education services?

While not required, providing a current IEP will help assist the school in providing appropriate special education and related services that are specifically developed for your child. It will also provide the school with the dates for the annual IEP review of your child's program, as well as any re-evaluations that may be required.

8. Do I need to bring the most recent report card and/or withdrawal grades?

This information is very helpful in matching up a continuing program for your child. It tells the school what courses your child was taking and may indicate the instructional level. For elementary children, it may indicate the reading or math series with which your child was being taught. For high school students, it may indicate credit earned and/or graduation requirements which have been met.

IMMIGRANT STUDENTS' RIGHTS TO ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

(Public School Student Option)

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler vs. Doe* (457 U.S. 202 (1982)) that undocumented children and young adults have the same right to attend public primary and secondary schools as do U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Like other children, undocumented students are obliged under state law to attend school until they reach a mandated age. As a result of the *Plyler* ruling, public schools may not:

- Deny admission to a student during initial enrollment or at any other time on the basis of undocumented status.
- Treat a student differently to determine residency.
- Engage in any practices to "chill" the right of access to school.
- Require students or parents to disclose or document their immigration status.

- Make inquiries of students or parents that may expose their undocumented status.
- Require Social Security numbers from all students, as this may expose undocumented status.

Students without Social Security numbers should be assigned a number generated by the school. Adults who apply for the free lunch and/or breakfast program on behalf of a student do not need a Social Security number either.

Changes in the F-1 (Student) visa program do not alter the Plyler obligations to undocumented children. These changes apply only to students who apply for a student visa from outside the U.S.

Finally, school personnel—especially building principals and those involved with student intake activities—should be aware that they have no legal obligation to enforce U.S. immigration laws. (U.S. Supreme Court, 1982)

Resources

- Immigrant Student Rights to Attend Public Schools:
www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/ImmigrantRights.aspx
- Help Ensure That Immigrant Students Have Access to Educational Opportunities:
www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/pubdocs/LegalIssues.doc

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE—TRANSFERS

(Public School Student Option)

The state Legislature created Family Choice in the mid-1990s. This gives families the opportunity for their children to attend schools of choice through inter- or intra-district transfers.

Questions & Answers

9. What is Family Choice?

Family Choice allows parents to select which public school(s) their children will attend, within certain limitations. However, a school district is not required to accept a student requesting a transfer if the district does not have space for additional students or the student does not meet other acceptance standards stated in the district’s policy.

10. How do I transfer my child to another school within the same school district?

Each public school district is required to have a policy governing a student’s transfer to another school within the district. Copies of the policy may be obtained by contacting the school district office.

11. How do I transfer my child to a school in a different school district?

If the student is enrolling in an online school program, the parent/guardian (or student age 18 or older) should fill out a Choice Transfer request form provided by the resident school district.

If the student is enrolling in a non-online school program, the process varies. Contact the nonresident school district program before starting the transfer process. Make sure they are accepting new students and find out how to make the transfer request.

Ultimately, the student must be released from his/her resident district and be accepted by the district in which he/she wants to enroll. The student's home school district must allow the student to attend school in another district if:

- The student's financial, educational, safety, or health conditions would likely be improved, or
- Attendance in the nonresident district is more accessible to the parent's/guardian's place of work or to the location of child care, or
- There is a special hardship or detrimental condition, or
- The purpose of the transfer is for enrollment in an online course or school program offered by an OSPI-approved provider.

12. Why was my transfer request denied?

A resident district may deny a transfer request if it would adversely affect the district's desegregation plan or if none of the four conditions noted above exists. A nonresident district may deny a transfer request based on the acceptance and rejection standards stated in the district's policy. An approved transfer may also be revoked according to conditions listed in the nonresident district's policy.

13. Is there a charge to transfer to another school district?

A nonresident school district may not charge a transfer fee or tuition for nonresident students.

14. May I appeal a transfer denial?

School districts are required to provide written notification of acceptance or rejection of the transfer request. If the request is rejected, the notification must include the reasons for the denial, the steps to appeal the decision within the district, and the right to appeal the decision to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The student may appeal the resident district's denial to release the student if the nonresident district is willing to accept the student. The student may also appeal the nonresident district's refusal to accept the student.

If a district does not respond to a request for admission or a release within 45 days of the request, the request is treated as a denial and the parent or guardian can appeal the refusal to admit or refusal to release a student.

15. How do I appeal the transfer denial?

If a district does not allow your child to transfer, you may appeal to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction at the following address: Administrative Resource Services, Old Capitol Building, P.O. Box 47200, Olympia, WA 98504-7200, or by going online, completing, and submitting the Nonresident Transfer appeals form: www.k12.wa.us/ProfPractices/adminresources/appeals.aspx. Completed appeals applications must be mailed, and are heard by the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), OSPI's designee. A decision by the OAH may be appealed to the state Superior Court.

16. Is a transfer student eligible for extracurricular activities?

It depends. For participation in athletics, contact your school district for local eligibility rules. For state eligibility rules, contact the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (www.wiaa.com or 425-687-8585). The general rule is that the student athlete must be enrolled in the nonresident district for one calendar year without interruption.

Transfer students may participate in nonathletic extracurricular activities just as non-transfer students do.

17. How does a transfer student get to their school of choice?

If existing district transportation routes do not meet the needs of the transferring student, the student and parent or guardian are responsible for arranging for school transportation.

Policy

- [RCW 28A.225.220](#) **Adults, children from other districts, agreements for attending school — Tuition.** When a district, receiving students from another district, may charge tuition/fees.
- [RCW 28A.225.225](#) **Applications from school employees' children, nonresident students, or students receiving home-based instruction to attend district school — Acceptance and rejection standards — Notification.** How a district can accept or reject applications from nonresident students or home-based instruction students to attend the school district and the notification process.
- [RCW 28A.225.230](#) **Appeal from certain decisions to deny student's request to attend nonresident district — Procedure.** Appeal process from certain decisions of the receiving school district for a nonresident student to enroll in the district.
- [RCW 28A.225.270](#) **Intradistrict enrollment options policies.** Process for a student to request a transfer from one school to another within his/her resident school district.
- [RCW 28A.225.280](#) **Transfer students' eligibility for extracurricular activities.** Eligibility of transfer students for extracurricular activities under Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) rules.
- [RCW 28A.225.290](#) **Enrollment options information booklet (as amended by 2009 c 450).** Duty of the superintendent of public instruction to prepare the enrollment options booklet.

- [RCW 28A.225.300](#) **Enrollment options information to parents.** Duty of each school district board of directors to inform parents of the intra-district and inter-district enrollment options available to parents/students.
- [RCW 28A.225.310](#) **Attendance in school district of choice — Impact on existing cooperative arrangements.** Cooperative agreements between the sending and receiving districts when a student wants to attend another district.

Resources

- WIAA Eligibility Information: www.wiaa.com/ConDocs/Con951/Eligibility.pdf
- WIAA Eligibility Documents: www.wiaa.com/subcontent.aspx?SecID=351#Eligibility

Contact Information

- Contact your local school district’s main office for information about how to address intra- or inter-district transfers.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

(Public School Student Option)

Charter schools are public schools that are free and open to all students in Washington.

A charter school is governed by a charter school board and operated by a nonprofit organization according to the terms of a charter contract with an authorizer. Charter schools may be authorized either by the Washington Charter School Commission (for charter schools located anywhere in the state) or by local school districts approved by the State Board of Education (for charter schools located within the district). The charter contract is intended to permit the charter school to operate with greater flexibility; to set curriculum; and make decisions about budget, staffing, and learning opportunities, while holding the school to high standards for performance.

A charter school must meet local, state, and federal health, safety, parents’ rights, civil rights, and nondiscrimination laws to the same extent as a school district, provide a basic education, and meet other state requirements set forth in the charter school law.

A maximum of 40 charter schools may be established during a five-year period, with no more than eight established per year. As of spring 2014, eight charter schools have been authorized in the following districts: Kent, Seattle, Spokane, and Tacoma. All but one is scheduled to open in fall 2015.

Charter schools may not limit admission except on the basis of age group, grade level, or capacity. They are open to any student, no matter where he or she lives. If the school does not have space to enroll all students

who apply, the school must select students through a lottery to ensure fairness (only giving preference to siblings of students who are already enrolled).

Resources

- Washington State Board of Education Charter Schools: www.sbe.wa.gov/charters.php
- Washington State Board of Education Charter Schools FAQ: www.sbe.wa.gov/faq/charters.php
- Washington State Charter Schools Commission:
www.governor.wa.gov/issues/education/commission

Policy

- [RCW 28A.710](#) CHARTER SCHOOLS
- [Initiative Measure No. 1240](#)
- [WAC 180-19](#) CHARTER SCHOOLS
- [WAC Title 108](#) CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

Contact Information

- Charter School Commission: Colin.Pippin-Timco@charterschool.wa.gov or 360-515-0802;
Joshua.Halsey@charterschool.wa.gov or 360-584-9272
- Washington State Board of Education: Jack.Archer@k12.wa.us or 360-725-6025

THE INTERSTATE COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

(Public School Student Option)

[The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](#) (SSB 5248) passed in 2009. The goal was to reduce the educational and emotional issues encountered when the children of military personnel move from one state to another. The law is intended to provide as much consistency as possible with other states, relative to school policies and procedures, while honoring the existing laws that govern public education in our state.

NOTE: The compact applies to public schools only, and pertains to children of active duty members of the uniformed services, National Guard, and Reserve on active duty orders. Members or veterans who are medically discharged or retired for one year are eligible for assistance under the compact.

Questions & Answers

18. What is covered in the compact relative to enrollment?

- **Unofficial or “hand-carried” education records.** If official education records cannot be released to the parents, the custodian of the records in the sending state shall prepare and furnish to the parent a complete set of unofficial educational records containing uniform information as determined by the Interstate Commission. Upon receipt of the unofficial education records by a school in the receiving state, the school shall enroll and appropriately place the student based on the information provided in the unofficial records pending validation by the official records, as quickly as possible.
- **Official education records/transcripts.** Simultaneous with the enrollment and conditional placement of the student, the school in the receiving state shall request the student’s official education record from the school in the sending state. Upon receipt of this request, the school in the sending state will process and furnish the official education records to the school in the receiving state within ten (10) days or within such time as is reasonably determined under the rules promulgated by the Interstate Commission.
- **Immunizations.** Compacting states shall give thirty (30) days from the date of enrollment or within such time as is reasonably determined under the rules promulgated by the Interstate Commission, for students to obtain any immunization(s) required by the receiving state. For a series of immunizations, initial vaccinations must be obtained within thirty (30) days or within such time as is reasonably determined under the rules promulgated by the Interstate Commission.
- **Grade Placement.** Students shall be allowed to continue their enrollment at grade level in the receiving state commensurate with their grade level (including kindergarten) from a local education agency in the sending state at the time of transition, regardless of age. A student that has satisfactorily completed the prerequisite grade level in the local education agency in the sending state shall be eligible for enrollment in the next highest grade level in the receiving state, regardless of age. A student transferring after the start of the school year in the receiving state shall enter the school in the receiving state on their validated level from an accredited school in the sending state.

19. How are placements and attendance covered by the Military Compact?

- **Course placement.** When the student transfers before or during the school year, the receiving state school shall initially honor placement of the student in educational courses based on the student’s enrollment in the sending state school and/or educational assessments conducted at the school in the sending state if the courses are offered. Course placement includes, but is not limited to: Honors, International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, vocational, technical, and career pathways courses. Continuing the student’s academic program from the previous school and promoting placement in academically and career challenging courses should be paramount

when considering placement. This does not preclude the school in the receiving state from performing subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement and continued enrollment of the student in the course(s).

- **Educational program placement.** The receiving state school shall initially honor placement of the student in educational programs based on current educational assessments conducted at the school in the sending state or participation/placement in like programs in the sending state. Such programs include, but are not limited to, (1) gifted and talented programs; and (2) English as a second language (ESL). This does not preclude the school in the receiving state from performing subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement of the student.
- **Eligibility for enrollment.** A local education agency shall be prohibited from charging local tuition to a military child placed in the care of a non-custodial parent or other person standing in loco parentis who lives in a jurisdiction other than that of the custodial parent—i.e., a military child, placed in the care of a non-custodial parent or other person standing in loco parentis who lives in a jurisdiction other than that of the custodial parent, may continue to attend the school in which he/she was enrolled while residing with the custodial parent.
- **Eligibility for extracurricular participation.** State and local education agencies shall facilitate the opportunity for military children’s inclusion in extracurricular activities, regardless of application deadlines, to the extent they are otherwise qualified.

20. **What are the options for meeting graduation requirements relative to the Interstate Compact?**

- The receiving state shall waive courses required for graduation if similar course work has been completed in another state LEA.
- Flexibility shall be used in accepting the sending state’s exit or end of course exams, national achievement tests, or alternative testing in lieu of testing requirements for graduation in the receiving state.
- As an alternative to graduating from the state, a student shall be allowed to receive a diploma from the sending school to accommodations for exit exams and graduation requirements that the student doesn’t have time to meet.
- Should a waiver not be granted to a student who would qualify to graduate from the sending school, the LEA shall provide an alternative means for acquiring course work so graduation may occur on time.

Policy

- [RCW 28A.705](#) INTERSTATE COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

Resources

- OSPI Military Kids—Resources and Links: www.k12.wa.us/MilitaryKids/Resources.aspx
- Interstate Compact for Military Children: www.k12.wa.us/MilitaryKids/InterstateTransfers.aspx
- Military Students on the Move: A Toolkit for Military Parents:
http://hanscomservices.com/graphics/School%20Liaison/PDFs/A-Toolkit-for-Military-Parents_2012.pdf

Contact Information

- OSPI Military Kids Resource: 360-725-4968

ESEA & PERSISTENTLY DANGEROUS SCHOOLS

(Public School Student Option)

When the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and signed into law in 2002, it required states to test students in reading and math in Grades 3–8 and once in high school.

The major focus of ESEA is to close student achievement gaps by providing all children with a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. The U.S. Department of Education emphasizes four pillars within the bill:

- **Accountability:** Ensures those students who are disadvantaged achieve academic proficiency.
- **Flexibility:** Allows school districts flexibility in how they use federal education funds to improve student achievement.
- **Research-based education:** Emphasizes educational programs and practices that have been proven effective through scientific research.
- **Parent options:** Increases the choices available to the parents of students attending Title I schools.

ESEA provides an enrollment option for parents concerned about the safety of their student.

Question & Answer

21. What ESEA enrollment option is available to parents/guardians?

If a student attends a persistently dangerous school or is a victim of a violent criminal offense while on school grounds, the student must be allowed to attend a safe school within the same school district.

Policy

- [PL 107-110 No Child Left Behind Act](#). This legislation was first introduced in the U.S. Congress in January of 2001, and was ultimately signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002.

Resource

- OSPI NCLB: www.k12.wa.us/esea/NCLB.aspx

Contact Information

- OSPI School Safety Center: 360-725-6044

HIGH SCHOOL COURSEWORK BEFORE 9TH GRADE

(Public School or Approved Private School Student Option)

Under this program, a student may receive credits for completing high school courses before entering 9th grade. Credits may be applied to fulfilling high school graduation requirements if:

- The course is taken with high school students, the academic level of the course exceeds the requirements for 7th- and 8th-grade classes, and the student successfully completes and passes the same course requirements and examinations as the high school students enrolled in the class; or
- The academic level of the course exceeds the requirements for 7th- and 8th-grade classes and the course qualifies for high school credit because the course is similar or equivalent to a course offered at a high school in the district. The teacher must also be qualified to teach at the high school level.

Students who have taken and successfully completed high school courses are not required to take an additional competency examination or perform any other additional assignment to receive credit.

Questions & Answers

22. **What conditions must be met for a student taking a high school course before entering high school to earn credit for that class?**

There are three conditions that must be addressed upon completion of a high school course taken before attending high school to receive high school credit:

- The student and his or her family should make the request that the course be counted for high school purposes, and included on the high school transcript.

- If the academic level of the course exceeds the requirements for 7th- and 8th-grade classes, the course must be taken with high school students. The student must complete the same coursework and pass the same tests as the high school students enrolled in the class.
- If the academic level of the course exceeds the requirements for 7th- and 8th-grade classes, the course would qualify for high school credit, because the course is similar or equivalent to a course offered at a high school in the district as determined by the school district board of directors, and the teacher is qualified to teach at the high school level.

23. Can a high school course taken using this opportunity later be removed from the high school transcript, should the student see the grade as a liability?

Once a high school-level course is on a student’s transcript, it cannot be removed. The transcript must include the student’s academic history for all high school-level courses attempted, including courses taken before high school when the student or family requests the course to be added.

24. Are algebra and geometry courses taken prior to high school required and automatically included on the transcript because they are graduation requirements?

Courses taken before 9th grade are not automatically included on the high school transcript, even if they are state graduation requirements. The student or family must request that high school–level courses taken before high school be included on the transcript. High school students may meet math graduation requirements without receiving credit for courses taken prior to 9th grade in a variety of ways.

Policy

- [RCW 28A.230.090](#) High school graduation requirements or equivalencies — Reevaluation of graduation requirements — Review and authorization of proposed changes — Credit for courses taken before attending high school — Postsecondary credit equivalencies.

Contact Information

- Contact your school’s principal or counselor/advisor for information about how to enroll in these courses and to request that the class and grade be posted to the high school transcript.

Specialized/Dual Credit Enrollment Options

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

(Public School or Home-Based Student Option)

An Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) is primarily defined by learning activities that occur in whole or in part outside of a regular classroom setting. ALEs are intended to give public schools the flexibility to serve a diverse student population. The specific requirements and expectations of these alternative learning activities are detailed in a written student learning plan (WSLP) developed and supervised by a certificated public school teacher. Check with your school or district to see if an ALE program is offered or how you may access an ALE program from another school. Information on how to enroll in an online school program can be found on the OSPI [Digital Learning Department](#) (DLD) website.

OSPI provides general support, consultation, and technical assistance regarding alternative education with a primary focus on implementing ALE under WAC [392-121-182](#).

Questions & Answers

25. What is ALE?

ALE is a course or, for Grades K–8, grade-level coursework for public school students that is primarily characterized by learning activities that occur away from the regular public school classroom setting. OSPI’s DLD maintains a website that addresses specific requirements and expectations of these learning activities. To receive state basic education funding for ALE, a school district must comply with the ALE funding requirements detailed in [WAC 392-121-182](#).

26. How is ALE different from home-based instruction?

Although ALE may be similar to home-based instruction because it occurs away from school, it is not home-based instruction. ALE is a public school learning experience that is planned, developed, and supervised by a certificated public school teacher. Home-based instruction is subject to specific state laws ([RCW 28A.200](#) and [RCW 28A.225.010](#))—with planning and supervision falling under the authority of the parent who is encouraged to work with a certificated teacher in their resident district for planning and progress checks. Home-based students may enroll part-time in public school classes and programs, including ALE.

27. What are the different types of ALE?

Because of the flexible and innovative nature of ALE, it is difficult to categorize these learning options or programs into specific types. An ALE program may offer different types of ALE courses or coursework. Check with your local district to see what options are offered.

The following is a brief, generalized overview of types of ALE courses:

- **Online:** Online courses are courses where more than half of the content is online, more than half the instruction is delivered remotely, and a certificated teacher has the primary responsibility for the student’s instructional interaction. Computer-based learning that occurs solely in a classroom setting under the direct supervision of a teacher is not ALE.
- **Remote:** An ALE course is remote when it is not an online course, and the student has less than 20 percent instructional contact time with the teacher during the total weekly time for the course.
- **Site-based:** An ALE course is site-based when it is not an online course, and the student has at least 20 percent instructional contact time with the teacher during the total weekly time in the course.

Policy

- [WAC 392-121-182](#) Alternative learning experience requirements.

Resource

- OSPI Digital Learning Department’s frequently asked questions about ALE: digitallearning.k12.wa.us/ale/support/faq.php

Contact Information

- OSPI Digital Learning Department: DLInfo@k12.wa.us or 206-616-9940

ONLINE LEARNING

(Public School Student Option)

Students can either enroll in a full-time or part-time online school program, or take individual online courses coordinated with their local school district. Information about online learning options is provided in the “Parent Guide” on the [OSPI Digital Learning Department \(DLD\) website](#).

Every district in the state has a board policy and a set of procedures regarding online learning. These policies and procedures lay out the options each district is making available to their students. Check with your local district to see what online options they’ve made available for your child.

Questions & Answers

28. How does my child participate in a full-time or part-time online school program?

Your local district may offer an online school program. If not, you may need to transfer your student to another district that does offer a program. You can start your search by examining the [online school programs](#) that have been approved by OSPI.

29. Will a full-time, online school program cost me extra?

All students in Washington are entitled to a free basic education. All OSPI-approved online school programs are Washington public schools and will serve students at no charge. Note, however, that students are subject to the serving school district's regular student fee schedule (for fines, materials, fees, etc.). Also, many online school programs require the student to provide their own computer and access to the Internet.

30. How does my child participate in individual online courses?

Contact the school to learn of your options and the enrollment procedures. Your student's school may be using the Digital Learning Department (DLD) online course offerings or may offer access to its own individual online courses (either developed by the district or purchased from an online provider). Information about DLD online courses can be found on the [DLD website](#). Courses offered to students for which the district claims state education funding or that are included as part of the regular school day will be paid for by the school district.

31. Who decides how my student's online credit will be reflected on his/her transcripts?

If the course is from an OSPI-approved online provider, the district must award credit for online courses that meet graduation requirements. The school/district in which your student is enrolled has final say on how that credit is reflected on your student's transcript.

Policy

- [RCW 28A.250](#) ONLINE LEARNING

Resource

- OSPI Digital Learning Department: www.digitallearning.k12.wa.us

Contact Information

- OSPI Digital Learning Department: DLInfo@k12.wa.us or 206-616-9940

PART-TIME & ANCILLARY SERVICES

(Approved Private School or Home-Based Student Option)

State law allows home-based and private school students to enroll in their resident public school to take a course or receive an ancillary service not available in the private school or home-based setting. By definition, these students would then become part-time students in the public school.

An ancillary service is any co-curricular service or activity, any healthcare service or activity, and any other services or activities. This could include, but is not limited to, counseling, psychological services, testing, remedial instruction, speech and hearing therapy, healthcare services, and tutorial services such as home or hospital instruction for students who are expected to be unable to attend school for four weeks or longer due to illness, and sports activities ([WAC 392-134-005](#)). To qualify to participate in interscholastic activities, a student must meet eligibility criteria. Such criteria are determined by the [Washington Interscholastic Activities Association \(WIAA\)](#).

Policy

- [RCW 28A.150.350](#) Part time students — Defined — Enrollment authorized — Reimbursement for costs — Funding authority recognition — Rules, regulations.

Contact Information

- Contact your local public high school or school district for information about part- time enrollment.
- OSPI Program Coordinator for Private Education: PrivateSchools@k12.wa.us or 360-725-6433 (menu option 1)

ADVANCED PLACEMENT

(Public School, Approved Private School, or Home-Based Student Option)

The Advanced Placement (AP) program allows students to take rigorous courses while still in high school. Students may earn college credit and/or advanced placement into upper-level college courses by taking AP exams. Many colleges and universities recognize AP courses when making admissions decisions.

Resources

- OSPI Advanced Placement Office: www.k12.wa.us/AdvancedPlacement

Contact Information

- Contact your local high school or school district for information about AP opportunities.
- OSPI Advanced Placement Supervisor: Barbara.Dittrich@k12.wa.us or 360-725-6097

COLLEGE IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

(Public School, Approved Private School, or Home-Based Student Option)

College in the High School (CHS) is a program governed by a local contract between a high school and a college or university. It is an opportunity for 11th- and 12th-grade students to be enrolled in high school and college at the same time and to earn high school and college credit in the same course. The course and instruction must be fully equivalent to the course and instruction that occurs on the college or university campus. Together the high school and college or university define any additional criteria for student eligibility.

Some colleges and universities contract with local school districts to provide college courses on their high school campuses. Such interlocal agreements may be written outside of the formal CHS model. However, they must be compliant with all state laws and administrative rules. These agreements may allow students to participate before they reach 11th grade.

Policy

- [RCW 28A.600.290](#) College in the high school program — Rules.
- [RCW 28A.320.015](#) School boards of directors — Powers — Notice of adoption of policy.
- [RCW 28B.50.140](#) Boards of trustees — Powers and duties.
- [RCW 28B.20.130](#) Powers and duties of regents — General. (University of Washington)
- [RCW 28B.30.150](#) Regents — General powers and duties. (Washington State University)
- [RCW 28B.35.120](#) Trustees — General powers and duties of board. (Regional universities)
- [RCW 28B.40.120](#) Trustees — General powers and duties of board. (The Evergreen State College)

Resource

- State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) College in the High School: www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e-collegeinhighschool.aspx

Contact Information

- Contact your local public high school or school district for information about CHS or other college-level opportunities with the high school.

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

(Public School or Approved Private School Option)

The International Baccalaureate (IB) program is designed as an academically challenging and balanced program of education with final examinations that prepares students, normally aged 16 to 19, for success at university and life beyond. The program is normally taught for two years and has gained recognition and respect from the world's leading universities.

Students may take individual IB courses and take exams to earn college credit. Students may study up to six courses and take exams at higher level or standard level in an effort to earn an IB diploma.

In addition, the program has three core requirements that are included to broaden the educational experience and challenge students to apply their knowledge and understanding: the extended essay, a "Theory of Knowledge" course, and a service requirement.

Resource

- International Baccalaureate: www.ibo.org

Contact Information

- Contact your high school or school district IB coordinator for information about IB opportunities.
- OSPI Advanced Placement Program Supervisor: Barbara.Dittrich@k12.wa.us or 360-725-6097

RUNNING START

(Public School, Approved Private School, or Home-Based Student Option)

Running Start is a program designed for 11th- and 12th-grade students. It allows eligible students to enroll in college-level (100 or higher) academic or vocational courses or programs in a community college, technical college, and select four-year universities (currently Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Washington State University, Northwest Indian College, and Spokane Tribal College).

Both high school and university/technical college credits may be obtained for successfully completed courses. Evidence of successful completion of each course will be included in the student's public high school records and transcripts.

- The combined number of classes/credits that a Running Start student can take for which the state would reimburse the school district and the college/university may not exceed 1.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment status. For example, a student taking 15 credits at a college would be considered a 1.0 FTE. Likewise, in many high schools, a student enrolled in five classes would also be

considered a 1.0 FTE. This maximum allowable FTEs will require students and parents to work closely with their school and college counselors/advisors to make sure that they do not exceed the allowable maximum and thereby be required to pay tuition for any such excess credits.

- If the secondary school student is accepted for college enrollment, the college must send written notice to the student, the student's school district, and OSPI within 10 days of acceptance. The notice must indicate the course(s) and hours of enrollment for that student.

State funds will be transferred from the school district to the college, not to exceed 1.2 FTE as noted in a previous question.

Questions & Answers

32. **How can students enrolled in a private school or home schooling participate in Running Start?**

Eligible students enrolled in a private school or home schooling may also participate in Running Start by making arrangements with the public school district in which they are eligible to enroll, and with the college/university of their choice.

33. **Who determines whether a student may enroll in Running Start?**

Both the public high school and the college must decide. The school district must first determine that:

- The student is eligible to be in the 11th or 12th grade, and
- The college courses selected by the student qualify for high school credit.
- The student may be required to take a placement test administered by the college.

The college determines if the student qualifies for admission.

34. **Are there any costs or fees to participate in Running Start that are the responsibility of students/parents?**

- College tuition that occurs as a result of combined enrollment status that exceeds 1.2 FTE is the responsibility of the student/parent(s).
- Colleges/universities have the authority to charge Running Start students all other mandatory fees and/or up to 10 percent of tuition and fees (waivers may be issued to low-income students). The presidents of the community and technical colleges have not sought a tuition charge for Running Start as of this publication date.
- Cost of transportation to and from the community or technical college and cost of college books and other student-owned or consumable supplies are the responsibility of the student.

35. Are Running Start students eligible for financial assistance?

- 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.
- Basic eligibility for federal and state need-based aid is dependent on the student's 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.
- Students with questions about the effect of Running Start on their student aid or scholarship packages should always check directly with the college/university's admissions, financial aid, and scholarship offices.

36. When can an eligible student begin to participate in Running Start and for how long?

- A student must inform the public school district of his/her intent to apply for admission to a university or community or technical college course for Running Start credit. Prospective Running Start students are urged to notify the high school of their intent to apply to a college as early as possible. It is wise to notify the high school early so the high school can evaluate and establish the eligibility of the student and proposed college coursework for high school credit purposes. A student in Grade 11 may not receive high school and community college or technical college credits for more than the equivalent of the coursework for two academic years.
- Each year of eligibility (Grades 11 & 12) runs from September to June. Students are encouraged to begin their Running Start coursework during fall term to ensure maximum opportunity for participation.

Policy

- [RCW 28A.600.300](#) **Running start program — Definition.** This law provides for the definition of the Running Start program.
- [RCW 28A.600.310](#) **Running start program — Enrollment in institutions of higher education — Student fees — Fee waivers — Transmittal of funds — Report on program financial support.** (Changed by E2SHB 1795 in 2011.) This law provides for the transfer of funds between school districts and higher education institutions and places a cap on the amount of funding available (2.0 FTE to 1.2 FTE).
- [RCW 28A.600.320](#) **Running start program — Information on enrollment.** This law requires districts to provide enrollment information about the program to students in Grades 10–12.
- [RCW 28A.600.330](#) **Running start program — Maximum terms of enrollment for high school credit.** This law describes the maximum number of academic years a student may be enrolled in Running Start.

- [RCW 28A.600.340](#) **Running start program — Enrolled students not displaced.** This law states that a Running Start student must not displace another student.
- [RCW 28A.600.350](#) **Running start program — Enrollment for secondary and postsecondary credit.** This law allows the student to receive both high school and postsecondary school credits.
- [RCW 28A.600.360](#) **Running start program — Enrollment in postsecondary institution — Determination of high school credits — Application toward graduation requirements.** This law deals with awarding of high school credit for postsecondary coursework, including if a similar course is not available within the school district.
- [RCW 28A.600.370](#) **Running start program — Postsecondary credit.** The law allows the institution of higher education to award postsecondary credit to students who complete college level courses while in high school; no fee shall be charged for the award.
- [RCW 28A.600.380](#) **Running start program — School district not responsible for transportation.** This law states that transportation to the higher education institution is not the responsibility of the school district.
- [RCW 28A.600.385](#) **Running start program — Cooperative agreements with community colleges in Oregon and Idaho.** This law allows border school districts to enter into cooperative agreements with community colleges in Oregon and Idaho, using the same funding formula available in Washington, so students can earn college credit while in high school.

Resources

- OSPI Running Start Office:
www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/CareerCollegeReadiness/RunningStart.aspx
- State Board of Community and Technical Colleges Running Start:
www.sbctc.edu/college/s_runningstart.aspx

Contact Information

- Contact your local public high school's counseling office for information about Running Start program eligibility, application, and guidance.
- OSPI Guidance and Counseling Director: RunningStart@k12.wa.us or 360-725-0415

ASSOCIATE DEGREES AND THE ISSUANCE OF HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS

(Public School, Approved Private School, or Home-Based Student Option)

[RCW 28B.50.535](#) allows students earning an associate degree from a community or technical college to receive a high school diploma from the college, upon written request, even if they have not otherwise met the high school graduation requirements. The program is open to 11th- and 12th-grade students who have participated in the Running Start program. Upon completion of their associate degree, students may submit a written request to receive their high school diploma from the college. Check with your high school administration or counseling office for more details.

Questions & Answers

37. **When can Running Start students, who have completed an associate degree, request the college-based high school diploma?**

A Running Start student may request the college-based high school diploma when they apply for graduation with their associate degree or anytime thereafter.

38. **Should your school continue to track your graduation status if you have indicated intent to pursue your high school diploma through a college under the provisions of [RCW 28B.50.535](#) (SHB 1758) and Running Start?**

All Running Start students are considered public high school students. They should be served and treated like other high school students. Providing all enrolled students with guidance for graduation requirements and status is consistent with the guidance role of the high school, regardless of possible alternative graduation options. For purposes of graduation rates (and related ESEA implications), students who are successful in earning their high school diploma under [RCW 28B.50.535](#) will count as graduates of the home high school, and students who are unsuccessful in completing graduation requirements, either through school district or under the provisions of [RCW 28B.50.535](#) (SHB 1758), will be considered non-graduates.

Policy

- **[RCW 28B.50.535](#) Community or technical college — Issuance of high school diploma or certificate.** This law provides for issuance of a high school diploma from a community college by meeting the requirements for high school completion, enrolling in Running Start and earning an associate degree, or a student 21 or older, who earns an associate degree, may request a high school diploma from the college.

Resource

- OSPI Associate Degrees and the Issuance of High School Diplomas:
www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/CareerCollegeReadiness/pubdocs/DegreesDiplomas.pdf

Contact Information

- OSPI Guidance and Counseling Director: RunningStart@k12.wa.us or 360-725-0415

TECH PREP

(Public School, Approved Private School, or Home-Based Student Option)

Students enrolled in Tech Prep can earn college credit in high school courses that are formally aligned—or articulated—with college courses. Teachers from high schools and colleges work together to ensure the high school classes match the course competencies of the college-level course.

Most of the Tech Prep high school classes articulated are part of a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program and they connect with a college certificate or degree. There are CTE programs across Washington's community and technical colleges, all representing high-demand, high-level professions, from construction to healthcare to information technology.

Tech Prep students gain advantages by preparing for their post-secondary education while in high school. They pursue the credential that is right for them—it may be an associate or bachelor's degree, or a postsecondary industry certification.

Tech Prep is a dual-credit program, which means you earn high school and college credit for completing the same course.

Typically, a student begins his or her Tech Prep program of study in 9th grade and can link two or more years of high school with at least two years of college. Some students begin exploratory Tech Prep courses in 9th and 10th grades.

Resources

- OSPI Career and Technical Education (CTE) Tech Prep Office:
www.k12.wa.us/careerteched/TechPrep.aspx
- State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) Tech Prep:
www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/_e-wkforcetechprep.aspx

Contact Information

- Contact your local public high school or school district for information about Tech Prep opportunities.

SKILL CENTERS

(Public School, Approved Private School, or Home-Based Student Option)

Skill centers are an integral part of an overall expansion of Career and Technical Education programming in Washington. Skill centers are regional secondary schools that serve high school students from multiple school districts. They provide instruction in preparatory programs that are either too expensive or too specialized for school districts to operate individually. Currently, there are 18 skill centers and branch campuses in Washington.

The primary purpose of skill centers is to give students the academic and work skills to successfully enter the job market or advanced education/training. Skill centers provide cost-effective, quality job training programs that would be too expensive to offer at every high school.

Instructors use competency-based, individualized instruction to help each student learn occupational, academic, and technical skills at a high level. Instructors challenge, motivate, and provide opportunities for students to achieve in basic skills, critical thinking, leadership, and work skills through hands-on education, applied academics, and technology training.

Questions & Answers

39. Who is eligible to attend a skill center?

Juniors and seniors from member public school districts are eligible, as is anyone age 16 to 20 who has not received a high school diploma, including students who have earned GEDs.

40. What is the cost to attend a skill center?

There is no cost for students of member districts. However, some programs have a lab fee or require specialized clothing. Other programs, such as cosmetology, may have additional fees to cover program costs and tools for the program.

41. How do students get to the skill center?

Bus transportation is provided by each of the school districts at no cost to the students. Students wishing to drive may be required to have the permission of their parents and sending school principal.

42. Do students earn credits?

Area high schools issue credits that count toward high school graduation. Some classes may count for partial credit in required subjects such as math, science, and English language arts.

43. Can students earn college credit?

Many programs allow students the opportunity to get Tech Prep college credit for what they do in the program when they receive an “A” or “B” grade.

Policy

- [RCW 28A.245](#) SKILL CENTERS

Resources

- OSPI Skill Centers: www.k12.wa.us/CareerTechEd/SkillsCenters.aspx
- Washington Skill Centers: www.washingtonskillscenters.org

Contact Information

- Contact your local public high school or school district to obtain information on skill center program eligibility, application, and guidance.
- Skill centers: www.washingtonskillscenters.org

Services Upon Identification

ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

(Public School, Approved Private School, or Home-Based Student Option)

School districts must ensure that students with limited English proficiency are able to participate meaningfully in school and are not denied access to equal educational opportunities. Since knowing and using English well is necessary for success in school, it is important that students who need additional help learning English get it.

Even if students appear to be fluent, they may still need support in developing the language skills they need to be successful in school. Research has demonstrated that achievement of “academic” English, the level needed to participate in instruction in English without help, takes four to seven years to develop.

The Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program is funded by the state of Washington. The Title III program is funded by the federal government. The goal of both is for students to develop English language proficiency while developing academics at grade level.

Questions & Answers

44. **How do students qualify for a district's English language development program?**

When students enroll in school, parents are asked, "What language did your child first learn to speak?" and "What language does your child use the most at home?" If the answer to either question is a language other than English, the student takes the Washington English Language Proficiency Assessment (WELPA). Students who score at levels 1 (beginning), 2 (intermediate), or 3 (advanced) on the Placement Test qualify for additional help to improve their English. Students continue in the program as long as they need help learning English. Students successfully transition from the program when they meet the exit criteria on the WELPA. The school district must provide additional academic support to students who need it for two years after scoring at a Level 4 on the WELPA and exiting from the program.

45. **Do parents have the right to decline services?**

Yes, parents can choose to remove their children from the English language development program. However, parents should first discuss this decision with an administrator who can explain the benefits of participation in the program. Parents should also ask about the programs and methods of instruction available at the district. Parents have the right to choose another program or method of instruction, if available.

46. **How can parents be involved in a district's English language development program?**

Districts are required to inform parents how they can be active participants in assisting their children to learn English, to achieve high levels in core academic subjects, and to meet the same academic standards that all students are expected to meet.

Districts must ask for parent input into the program or method of instruction used in the English language development program and into the district's Title III plan. Parents can attend district meetings and provide suggestions/ideas on how to improve services for their children and families.

47. **How can a parent who does not speak English be involved?**

Parents can ask the district to provide an interpreter at school meetings and to provide important written documents in a language other than English. School districts have the responsibility to communicate with parents who have limited English skills.

Resources

- OSPI Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program and Title III Office:
www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/Parents.aspx

Contact Information

- OSPI Migrant and Bilingual Education Office: BilingualEducation@k12.wa.us or 360-725-6147

GIFTED/HIGHLY CAPABLE

(Public School Student Option)

Our state defines highly capable students ([WAC 392-170-035; 036](#)) as those who perform or show potential for performing at significantly advanced academic levels when compared with others of their age, experiences, or environments. Outstanding abilities are seen within students' general intellectual aptitudes, specific academic abilities, and/or creative productivities within a specific area. These students are present not only in the general populace, but are present within all protected classes as defined by RCWs [28A.640](#) and [28A.642](#).

Highly capable students may possess, but are not limited to, these learning characteristics:

- Capacity to learn with unusual depth of understanding, to retain what has been learned, and to transfer learning to new situations;
- Capacity and willingness to deal with increasing levels of abstraction and complexity earlier than other kids their age;
- Creative ability to make unusual connections among ideas and concepts;
- Ability to learn very quickly in their area(s) of intellectual strength;
- Capacity for intense concentration and/or focus.

Districts have the local authority to develop identification procedures, for Grades K–12, that comply with WAC 392-170 for the purpose of determining which students are the most highly capable and selecting students to receive highly capable program services.

Districts determine the variety and continuum of services made available to students, Grades K–12, who have been identified to receive highly capable program services.

Policy

- [WAC 392.170](#) SPECIAL SERVICE PROGRAM—HIGHLY CAPABLE STUDENTS

Resource

- OSPI Highly Capable Office: www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable

Contact Information

- Contact the local school district for identification procedures and program options and services available to the identified highly capable students.
- Highly Capable Program Supervisor: Kristina.Johnstone@k12.wa.us or 360-725-4991

SPECIAL EDUCATION

(Public School, Approved Private School, or Home-Based Student Option)

Special education and related services are provided annually to about 132,000 eligible students across the state. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that eligible children with disabilities have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Eligible students receive services to address their individual needs, based on their disabilities, and to progress in the general educational curriculum.

Resource

- OSPI Special Education family guidance: www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Families

Contact Information

- To find out information about eligibility for special education services, contact your school district directly.
- OSPI Special Education: SpecEd@k12.wa.us or 360-725-6075

SECTION 504

(Public School Student Option)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal civil rights law. Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance, including public schools. A student is protected under Section 504 if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning,

working, eating, sleeping, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and major bodily functions (such as the functions of the digestive, immune, respiratory, circulatory, and endocrine systems).

Section 504 evaluation and placement decisions are made by a team of people, including someone knowledgeable about the student, someone knowledgeable about the evaluation data, and someone knowledgeable about placement options. Once a student is evaluated and determined eligible for Section 504, the school district must provide the student any accommodations, aids, or services that the Section 504 team determines the student needs to access and benefit from his or her education to the same extent as his or her non-disabled peers. These accommodations, aids, or services are typically detailed in a Section 504 plan.

Resources

- OSPI Equity and Civil Rights Office: www.k12.wa.us/Equity
- Frequently Asked Questions About Section 504 and the Education of Children with Disabilities (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights): www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html

Contact Information

- Contact your local public school or school district Section 504 Coordinator (www.k12.wa.us/Equity/ContactList.aspx) for information about Section 504 and the school's referral processes.
- OSPI Equity and Civil Rights Office: Equity@k12.wa.us or 360-725-6162
- U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR), Seattle Office: Seattle@ed.gov or 206-607-1600

HOMELESS STUDENTS AND THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT

(Public School Student Option)

The federal McKinney-Vento Act provides specific protections for children and youth (including unaccompanied youth) who are experiencing homelessness by ensuring immediate school enrollment, equal access, and school stability. Children and youth who are homeless, as defined by the federal McKinney-Vento Act, have a right to remain in their school of origin whenever possible and according to their best interest. Homeless students who lack records, including records normally required for enrollment such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, birth certificates, or other documents, are to be immediately enrolled and served. Because homeless students will not necessarily follow the same processes as housed students when enrolling in schools or transferring between districts, it is important that families contact their local school district's homeless liaison for more information about the rights of homeless students, school enrollment options, and the provision of student services as outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act.

Resources

- Washington school district homeless liaisons: www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/ContactList.aspx
- National Center for Homeless Education: <http://center.serve.org/nche>

Contact Information

- Homeless Education Supervisor: Melinda.Dyer@k12.wa.us or 360-725-6050

Other Enrollment Options

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

(Public School Student Option)

Alternative education includes a number of approaches to teaching and learning other than mainstream or traditional education approaches. These programs often emphasize the value of a small class size, close relationships between students and teachers, and a sense of community. More than 300 public alternative schools and programs in school districts exist across the state. Contact your local school district for more information.

Policy

- [RCW 28A.150.305](#) Alternative educational service providers — Student eligibility.

Contact Information

- Contact your local public high school or school district to learn about alternative school options.

APPROVED PRIVATE SCHOOLS

(Approved Private School Student Option)

Approved private schools are schools that have met the requirements established by the Washington State Board of Education for approval. The schools must follow certain laws and rules to maintain their annual approval.

Resource

- OSPI Private Education Office: www.k12.wa.us/PrivateEd/PrivateSchools

Policy

- [RCW 28A.195](#) Private Schools
- [WAC 180-90](#) Private Schools

Contact Information

- OSPI Program Coordinator for Private Education: PrivateSchools@k12.wa.us or 360-725-6433 (menu option 1)

ATTENDING SCHOOLS CONTIGUOUS TO WASHINGTON

(Public School Student Option)

Students in Washington may attend neighboring school districts in Idaho or Oregon if an agreement exists between the school districts involved and the laws of the other states permit.

Policy

- [RCW 28A.225.260](#) Reciprocity exchanges with other states

Contact Information

- Contact your local public high school or school district.

DROPOUT REENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

(Public School, Approved Private School, or Home-Based Student Option)

Youth between the ages of 16 and 21 who have dropped out of school or are not expected to graduate from high school by the age of 21 may be able to participate in a dropout reengagement program for education and services.

Dropout reengagement programs must offer:

- Academic instruction, academic skills, and college- and work-readiness preparation that generates high school credit for a diploma and has the goal of academic and work readiness, including high school equivalency certificates preparation;
- Instruction by certificated teachers or college instructors whose credentials are established by the college;

- Case management, counseling, and resource and referral services; and
- Opportunity for qualified students to enroll in college courses tuition-free, if the program provider is a college.

Policy

- [RCW 28A.175](#) DROPOUT PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM
- [WAC 392.700](#) DROPOUT REENGAGEMENT

Contact Information

- This is a new program option for communities. Contact your local school district for more information.

HOME-BASED INSTRUCTION

(Home-Based Student Option)

Policy

- [RCW 28A.200](#) Home-based instruction — Certain decisions responsibility of parent unless otherwise specified.

Resources

- OSPI Home-Based Education Office: www.k12.wa.us/PrivateEd/HomeBasedEd
- Washington Home School Organization (WHO): www.washhomeschool.org
- Christian Heritage Home Educators of Washington: www.christianheritageonline.org

Contact

- OSPI Program Coordinator for Private Education: HomeBased@k12.wa.us or 360-725-6433 (menu option 1)

NON-HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT OPTION

(Public School Student Option)

A student living in a school district that does not offer the grade in which the student is eligible to enroll may attend another school in any other school district in the state that offers that grade.

Policy

- [RCW 28A.545.040](#) "Student residing in a nonhigh school district" defined.

Contact Information

- Contact your local public high school or school district.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON EARLY ENTRANCE PROGRAM

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction funds the University of Washington (UW) for the education of academically gifted students through a two-step early entrance program:

- The Transition School is one of the most prestigious early university entrance programs in the nation. It is a one-year college preparatory program for students who intend to enter the Early Entrance Program at the University of Washington. To enroll, students leave the K–12 school system, usually after finishing 8th grade. They accept 16 students into the program each year.
- The UW Academy is the premier early university admission program for students in Washington finishing their 10th-grade year. It admits up to 35 academically advanced and highly motivated students each year.

Resource

- Early Entrance Program: www.depts.washington.edu/cscy/programs/early-entrance-program

Contact Information

- Halbert and Nancy Robinson Center for Young Scholars: 206-543-4160
- OSPI Special and Federal Accountability: 360-725-6100

For More Information

For information concerning *Learning by Choice* or other enrollment options, contact your local school district. If you have questions not answered in this booklet, please call OSPI at 360-725-6000.

To order more copies of this document, please call 888-59-LEARN (888-595-3276)
or visit www.k12.wa.us/publications

Please refer to the document number below for quicker service:

14-0029

This document is available online: www.k12.wa.us/GeneralInfo/EnrollmentOptions.aspx

This material is available in alternative format upon request.
Contact the Resource Center at 888-595-3276, TTY 360-664-3631.