After-Exit Running Start Grants

Statutory and/or Budget Language

$3,000,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and $3,000,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the office to distribute after-exit running start grants for:

(i) School districts that identify running start students that have exceeded maximum enrollment under running start formulas;

(ii) High school graduates who have 15 or fewer college credits to earn before meeting associate degree requirements for instruction not funded under section 504(18) of this act. High school graduates who meet these requirements are eligible to receive funds from these grants for fees to the community and technical college to earn up to 15 college credits during the summer academic term following their high school graduation; and

(iii) School districts to apply an enhanced factor of 130 percent to the running start rate under RCW 28A.600.310 for students included in July and August enrollment counts in school year 2023-24. Of the amounts provided in this subsection, $347,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 is provided for the office to enhance the running start rate as described in this subsection (2)(i)(iii). The office must apply the enhanced summer running start rate in this subsection for students eligible to take summer running start courses under this subsection and under section 504(18) of this act, and grant school districts seven percent thereof to offset program related costs.

Purpose

Since the inception of Running Start, state funding to support student access to the program has been made available for the three community college quarters or two college semesters in accordance with the standard K–12 school year calendar. Despite the program's track record of success, as demonstrated in the [Council of Presidents' 2021 Dual Credit Summary](#), the summer term was just recently opened for Running Start. Expanding Running Start into the summer via this proviso will assist with high school credit recovery, career exploration, and college and career readiness, resulting in increased high school diploma and degree or credential completion. Available to graduating seniors within 15 college credits of earning an associate degree, these funds provide students with the opportunity to complete their degree by participating in Running Start in the summer quarter following their graduation.

Description of Services Provided

In the summer quarter of 2023, after-exit Running Start funds were made available to graduating seniors within 15 college credits of earning an associate degree at a community and technical college (CTC). To elevate student, family, and high school staff awareness of the

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opportunity, OSPI partnered with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to produce Bulletin 027-23 on summer Running Start, hosted multiple webinars and trainings, and established an eligibility verification and enrollment process. Using the After-Exit Proviso Assurances and After-Exit Declaration of Intent forms, high schools provided the colleges with names and eligibility criteria of students who wished to participate. The colleges submitted a report along with their Assurances form to OSPI after students were registered, identifying the number of college credits each student was enrolled in. OSPI reimbursed the colleges for the credits attempted by eligible students directly through apportionment.

Criteria for Receiving Services and/or Grants

After-exit proviso funding was available to support eligible seniors' participation in the summer quarter at any CTC. To be eligible, a student would have:

- Been eligible to graduate high school with the Class of 2023;
- Reached maximum Running Start FTE limits during the 2022–23 school year
- Completed high school within 15 college credits of earning an associate degree, and
- Enrolled in a community or technical college for up to 15 college credits in courses required for an associate degree.

Beneficiaries in the 2023-24 School Year

Number of School Districts	99
Number of Schools	168
Number of Students	339
Number of Educators	0
Other	28 Colleges

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2024	$3,000,000	$345,279
2023	$3,000,000	$1,213,323

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2024	99 Districts, 168 Schools, 28 Colleges, 339 Students
2023	102 Districts, 114 Schools, 20 Colleges, 792 Students

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

In 2022, OSPI was instructed to adopt rules to allow students to participate in summer quarter Running Start through the introduction of the "after-exit" proviso. This proviso provided $3 million to fund access to summer quarter for seniors graduating within 15 college credits of an associate degree and other students who exceeded Running Start enrollment limits for the school year. In the same year, OSPI contracted with SBCTC to utilize $20 million in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding to increase student access to summer Running Start. In the inaugural year of summer quarter Running Start, enrollment was driven, in large part, by the novelty of the opportunity, the need for credit recovery in the wake of the pandemic, and the ease with which students could enroll outside of the "after-exit" parameters with ESSER funding managed by the CTCs. The addition of ESSER funds allowed students to participate without concern for FTE capacity and with minimal procedural hurdles.

In 2023, "after-exit" eligibility was adjusted and limited only to graduating seniors meeting two conditions:

1. they graduated within 15 college credits of an associate degree, and
2. they had reached or exceeded the maximum 1.20 annual average full-time equivalent (AAFTE) limitation during the standard school year.

This change was based on a belief that the initial interpretation allowing for *non-graduating students* to exceed established FTE limits and still participate in summer quarter was incorrect. The "after-exit" title was interpreted to indicate that graduation was a prerequisite for eligibility, and therefore access was limited to graduating seniors in 2023.

Program Evaluation or Evaluation of Major Findings

When Substitute House Bill (SHB) 1316 passed in 2023 along with the "after-exit" proviso, summer quarter enrollment was permitted, but limited. Only students with FTE capacity under the 2022–23 school year's 1.20 FTE limit and graduating seniors within 15 college credits of an associate degree who had also reached or exceeded their FTE limit were eligible to participate.

In 2022, relatively few *non-graduating students* accessed "after-exit" funding in its inaugural year because of the availability of ESSER funding at the colleges. The ESSER-funded opportunity was less restrictive, could fund more than just tuition (e.g. books and fees), and was more easily accessible because enrollment and payment was managed directly though the colleges.

For the 2023 summer term, "after-exit" funding covered 2,652 summer quarter college credits, which equates to 530 five-credit courses. With 339 students enrolled, this averages out to 7.8 credits per student.

Major Challenges Faced by the Program

Several key issues have resulted in programmatic challenges impacting student access to the 2023 summer term, including the delayed timing of the long legislative session in which SHB 1316 passed and the "after-exit" proviso was the reauthorization, changes in interpretation of the proviso language as described previously, and the reallocation of remaining ESSER funds. Taking the time needed to engage in the cross-sector collaboration required to implement SHB1316, which included enacting emergency rules, writing guidance, and developing the infrastructure (forms, enrollment processes, etc.) to support K–12 and higher education staff to facilitate summer quarter Running Start, meant that resources were not available until mid-May. This left only several weeks for high schools and colleges to market the opportunity, advise students, confirm student eligibility, and submit the required documentation for enrollment.

Launching summer Running Start statewide in 2022 using a combination of proviso and ESSER funding sources highlighted the challenges of bringing a summer program to scale on a short timeline. Some challenges have persisted since the original 2021 pilot, and include:

- **Funding:** Confusion persists about which students should be funded via "standard" FTE-based Running Start or the "after-exit" proviso. High school and college staff have had to determine participating students' eligibility for two different funding sources when some criteria were determined by K–12 (available Running Start FTE, class standing, and graduation status) and some by the colleges (credits required for an associate degree). Also, since the summer quarter includes only two count days, colleges were reimbursed only two-thirds of the amount they received for a traditional Running Start term.
- **Implementation Timeline:** With recent funding changes, there has not been enough time between the end of session and summer to establish new procedures and market new opportunities to students before schools close in early- to mid-June. OSPI and SBCTC had to develop processes and guidance in a few short weeks to advise students, families, schools, and colleges of the opportunity to participate in summer quarter Running Start. Secondary and postsecondary staff had little time to learn the processes and eligibility requirements while simultaneously providing outreach to students. Having so little time to build new programming severely limited cross-sector collaboration and stakeholder engagement.
- **Misalignment of Academic Calendars and Summer Staffing:** District and college academic calendars are not well suited for summer Running Start facilitation since high schools close for summer before CTCs finish spring quarter. This leaves participating students, districts and colleges in need of support, such as course advising, form processing, and enrollment reporting. With high school staff gone for summer break, much of this work was left to district staff who were not always available or aware of program practices, resulting in confusion and communication challenges between students, families, and colleges. As responsibilities shifted to summer, many districts withheld the 7% of Running Start funding that traditionally went back to high schools for program support, upsetting building administrators and school counselors.

- **Enrollment Tracking and Transcription:** Without adequate summer staffing, tracking student enrollment with the Running Start Enrollment Verification Form (RSEVF) and the monthly P223 report were a challenge. Student eligibility needed to be verified with the RSEVF at a time when staff were unavailable, and some enrollment information was held in K–12 while some was at the college. Additionally, due to unique eligibility requirements, OSPI and its postsecondary partners had to create new methods of administering "after-exit" Running Start to differentiate it from "standard" summer Running Start. To access funds, graduating seniors' enrollment and records had to remain open through the summer, which presented challenges in obtaining final transcripts for college admission.

Future Opportunities

With the stability provided by SHB 1316, OSPI, SBCTC, and the Council of Presidents (CoP) had time to prepare and provide more deliberate guidance and professional development in advance of the 2024 summer quarter. In that term, enrollment increased almost fivefold with the introduction of the 1.40 FTE limitation, inclusion of rising juniors' eligibility, and a full year to develop and explain processes, forms, and resources. Given the legislature's commitment to continued investments and resulting participation increases, summer Running Start is becoming an impactful program and has secured broad support across agencies, districts, high schools, and colleges.

However, it is reasonable to ask whether the "after-exit" proviso is necessary considering the significant changes that have occurred since its inception. With the increase to a 1.40 AAFTE limitation and the opportunity for rising juniors to access summer Running Start, students now have the potential to earn up to 136 college credits through Running Start prior to graduation. Far fewer will exceed the 1.40 AAFTE limit (most CTCs will not allow students to take 21 credits per term without approval) and, with 136 college credits attainable, far fewer students should need summer term after graduation to earn an associate degree.

As demonstrated by the 2024 enrollment figures above, many of the 2021–23 concerns have been addressed by OSPI, SBCTC, and CoP having the time and clarity to collaboratively build solutions and provide the appropriate amount of professional development and guidance. Additional future developments and opportunities include:

- **Funding to Eliminate Fees and Support Summer Administration:** OSPI's 2024 decision package includes a proposal to apply a 6% multiplier to the Running Start rate in the prototypical school funding model to cover tuition, fees, and books, ensuring students are not financially impacted for accessing their basic education through college coursework and CTCs have the funding to address their operational needs. A multiplier would also increase efficiency at the state and local levels by eliminating the need to administer fee waiver and subsidy programs. The higher Running Start rate would also benefit districts by increasing the total amount they retain, enabling greater support for program operations into the summer months.

- **Integrated Electronic Tracking and Reporting:** Given staff availability challenges in the summer and other current systemic difficulties not specifically tied to this proviso, the enrollment verification and reimbursement processes need to be redesigned. OSPI, SBCTC, and CoP staff have investigated electronic platforms that can transition to new enrollment verification, tracking, and reimbursement processes via technology and data system development. This system improvement for students, families and staff in both systems may require additional financial support.
- **Running Start Funding Formula:** In response to SBCTC and CoP concerns about the summer funding formula, the Legislature tapped the "after-exit" proviso in 2024 as the funding source to reimburse colleges at 130% and bring the two-count summer rate closer to the same rate as all other terms. This $3 million proviso may prove to be insufficient to fully fund all "after-exit" students and this rate increase. The 130% rate adjustment also only applied to colleges and did not solve the additional costs for districts to administer summer Running Start when schools are traditionally closed. To support local implementation of summer Running Start, raising the summer Running Start rate to 150% ensures that colleges are reimbursed for the summer term at the same rate as the standard school year, and districts will be able to utilize a larger overall sum from the 7% they retain to support summer operations.

With summer Running Start now an established dual credit opportunity, the FTE limitation raised to 1.40, rising juniors eligible for 10 summer credits, and less than 10% of summer 2024 participants eligible for "after-exit" funding, there may be an opportunity for the legislature to reinvest this "after-exit" proviso to better support program operations and continue reducing the cost to families. With these considerable investments in the Running Start program, an associate degree should be attainable to any student well before the summer following their graduation, and "after-exit" funding could be better utilized to support students, schools, districts, and colleges well before that point.

Other Relevant Information
N/A

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance
Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2024 Fiscal Year.

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