



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Running Start Data 2025

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.600.402](#)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As demonstrated by the Education Research and Data Center's (ERDC) [Annual Report on Dual Credit](#), the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges' (SBCTC) [Enrollment Data Dashboard](#), and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) [Washington State Report Card](#), Running Start enrollment slowed during and immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic, but has rebounded to exceed pre-pandemic levels. The 34,570 Running Start students reported in the fall 2024 school year reflects a 12% increase from the fall 2023 school year and is 8% higher than the previous peak enrollment of 31,991 in 2020–21.

The summer quarter of 2024 was the first in which summer Running Start was fully implemented, leading to a fivefold increase in enrollment. In 2025, the headcount increased 40% from 6,204 to 8,633. As the "after-exit" proviso was not reauthorized, all students enrolled using available full-time equivalent (FTE) capacity made possible by the shift to a 1.40 FTE. The 8,633 students enrolled accounted for an FTE of 4,150, equating to 62,250 college credits (an increase of over 24% from 2024).

The Legislature's investment in Running Start has provided many students with an invaluable opportunity to get a head start on their postsecondary pursuits, and they are taking advantage of it by enrolling in higher numbers and for more credits. The added flexibility afforded by the increase to a 1.40 FTE limit and the opening of summer quarter Running Start has resulted in a noteworthy increase in enrollment and the number of credits attempted (based on FTE). To achieve this, multiple agencies collaborated closely to quickly implement summer quarter Running Start, redesign policies and practices to respond to a new FTE limitation and provide extensive guidance and professional development. The cross-sector partnership demonstrated throughout the process is indicative of a strong, shared commitment between K–12, higher education, and non-governmental organizations, to increase equitable access to quality dual credit programs for ready and interested students.

INTRODUCTION

This annual report examines statewide Running Start enrollment for school year (SY) 2024–25, as required by [Substitute House Bill \(SHB\) 1316 \(1\)\(4\)](#) and codified in [Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) 28A.600.402\(4\)](#) (Running start program—Funding levels—Report).

Disaggregated data for the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years is presented in the [accompanying data tables](#), and longitudinal data from a variety of other sources was utilized to provide additional context. The sources utilized in this report include OSPI’s [Comprehensive Education and Data Research System](#) (CEDARS), OSPI apportionment data, SBCTC’s Enrollment Data Dashboard, and four-year baccalaureate institutions’ [Public Centralized Higher Education Enrollment System](#) (PCHEES) data compiled by ERDC. Much of the data provided is also available through the Dual Credit dashboard of OSPI’s Washington State Report Card.

Important Note: The data provided in the report and data tables reflect a one-time snapshot of enrollment and credit earning based on district and college reporting to date. Some localized discrepancies have been noted and are to be expected due to the timing of this report. The data tables will be updated and reposted on OSPI’s [Course-Based Dual Credit webpage](#) when additional information is available.

BACKGROUND

In 2021–22, the Running Start program experienced its first enrollment decline in over a decade. This was due, in large part, to pandemic-related school and college closures and the impact of these interruptions on students' advanced course-taking. Additionally, some students whose early high school years were disrupted chose to stay in high school to experience a more traditional junior and senior year instead of accessing Running Start. At community and technical colleges, according to SBCTC's Enrollment Data Dashboard, enrollment declined 14% from 2020 to 2021 before rebounding modestly in 2022, nearly returning to pre-pandemic levels in 2023, and exceeding them in 2024.

Amid that recovery, the Legislature passed SHB 1316 (2023), raising the combined maximum enrollment in Running Start to 1.40 FTE and opening the summer college term to Running Start students. In 2024, eligibility for summer quarter Running Start was formally extended to students completing the 10th grade ("rising juniors") through [Substitute Senate Bill \(SSB\) 5670](#). Including the "after-exit" proviso (first introduced in 2022 but not reauthorized in 2025) which also funded summer Running Start for graduating seniors and those who exceeded the 1.40 FTE limit, the Legislature's investment in Running Start was generous and well-timed.

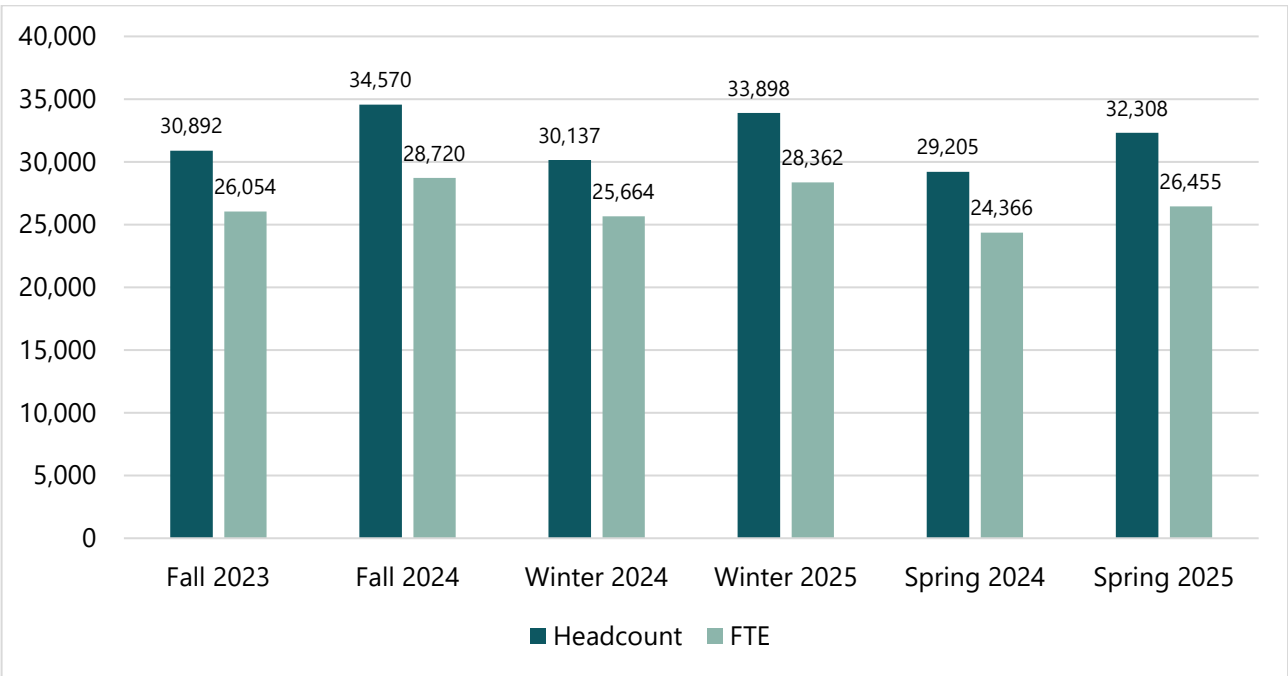
Included in SHB 1316 was a requirement that OSPI would collaborate with higher education partners, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), and the ERDC on annual tracking of the combined FTE experience of students participating in Running Start programs, including course load analyses and disaggregation by high schools and institutions of higher education eligible to offer Running Start. These institutions, whether public four-year colleges and universities or community and technical colleges, will be referred to as "colleges" throughout the report. This report aims to satisfy this requirement and provide recommendations for additional policy and funding options that can further support the Legislature's intention to ensure equitable access to dual credit opportunities.

STATEWIDE UPDATE

Running Start Participation During the School Year (September to June)

2023–25 Headcounts, FTE, and Attempted Credits

Figure 1: K–12 Running Start Average Monthly Headcount and FTE



Source: Form P-223, OSPI School Apportionment/Financial Services Division, October 13, 2025.

The 34,570 students enrolled in Running Start in the fall of 2024 reflected in Figure 1 was the highest total ever – 8% higher than the previous peak enrollment of 31,991 in 2021 (OSPI Report Card). Running Start enrollment traditionally declines from fall to spring each year, but as demonstrated in SBCTC’s Enrollment Data Dashboard, each term’s respective enrollment has increased annually since 2021–22 at community and technical colleges and, in 2024–25, the headcount was up 15% and FTE up 14% from the previous year. Although the OSPI Report Card displays Running Start participants as a proportion of all high school students in grades 9–12, between 15% and 17% of all eligible 11th and 12th grade students participate in Running Start annually. This has been consistent since the 2016–17 school year.

In alignment with the community college quarter system, headcounts and FTE are disaggregated by high school (565) and college (36) in the accompanying data tables. At the time of publication, some four-year colleges’ spring and summer 2025 enrollment had not been reported in PCHEES. Minor inconsistencies between K–12 and college counts are typically due to differences in the timing of the data extraction and the fact that K–12 enrollment data is reflected in monthly averages.

Figure 2: Running Start Credits Attempted, by College

Organization Name	Credits Attempted for Fall 2024	Credits Attempted for Winter 2025	Credits Attempted for Spring 2025
Bates	140	84	49
Bellevue	41,752	41,872	40,450
Bellingham	1,338	1,294	1,193
Big Bend	8,074	8,171	7,708
Cascadia	12,949	12,836	12,301
Centralia	6,980	7,212	6,642
Clark	25,427	24,438	23,020
Clover Park	2,951	2,768	2,557
Columbia Basin	23,369	23,159	21,028
Edmonds	15,829	15,867	14,489
Everett	18,019	17,234	15,779
Grays Harbor	6,203	6,139	5,952
Green River	32,433	32,701	31,614
Highline	20,412	20,466	19,122
Lake Washington	2,878	2,691	2,376
Lower Columbia	6,519	6,238	5,715
Olympic	18,072	18,651	17,525
Peninsula	4,942	4,782	4,541
Pierce	32,056	27,861	25,992
Renton	1,851	1,753	1,581
Seattle Central/SVI	8,908	8,448	7,235

Organization Name	Credits Attempted for Fall 2024	Credits Attempted for Winter 2025	Credits Attempted for Spring 2025
Seattle North	5,931	5,758	4,639
Seattle South	6,643	6,622	6,174
Shoreline	4,250	4,143	3,498
Skagit Valley	9,190	9,010	8,437
South Puget Sound	19,880	19,745	18,092
Spokane	11,685	11,197	10,509
Spokane Falls	12,347	12,034	11,041
Tacoma	16,859	16,416	15,233
Walla Walla	4,305	4,314	4,072
Wenatchee Valley	13,273	13,215	6,942
Whatcom	11,751	11,401	10,291
Yakima Valley	12,464	12,287	11,625
Central Washington University	6,346	5,567	9,109
Eastern Washington University	7,441	6,967	Not Available
Washington State University	1,881	Not Applicable*	1,698
Total	435,349	423,341	388,230

Source: For community and technical colleges, SBCTC Enrollment Data Dashboard, October 2025. For four-year baccalaureate colleges and universities, PCHEES, as obtained through data sharing with ERDC, October 2025.

In 2024–25, Running Start students averaged 415,640 attempted college credits each term, which is equivalent to 83,128 five-credit courses, respectively. When divided by the average quarterly headcount (33,592), it appears that students average about 2.5 Running Start classes per term, equating to roughly 12 college credits or 2.4 high school credits per quarter. While the average headcount and attempted credits increased 12% and 10%, respectively, from 2023–24 to 2024–25,

* As a semesterly institution, Washington State University does not report winter enrollment data.

students’ average courseload remained the same. A deeper dive into the data indicates that Running Start students attempt approximately 80% of all credits through college courses and 20% through high school courses. This figure appears to be relatively consistent from year to year.

Due to limitations in how Running Start course-taking is reported and stored in CEDARS, attempted credits cannot be attributed to individual schools; however, they are disaggregated by district (275) in the accompanying data tables.

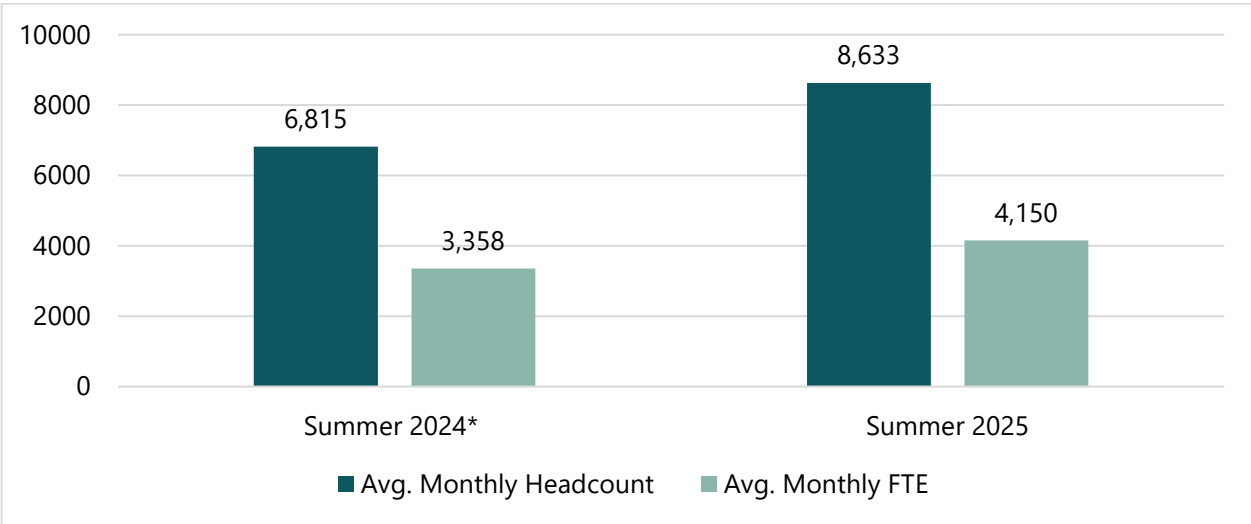
Summer Running Start Participation

In 2024, summer quarter enrollment increased almost fivefold with the introduction of the 1.40 FTE limitation, inclusion of rising juniors, and participation of public four-year institutions which were not included in the “after-exit” proviso. Annual programmatic changes detailed in the [2025 After-Exit Running Start Grants proviso report](#) provide context for significant fluctuations in summer Running Start enrollment. The 2024 increase can also be attributed to having a full year to provide agency guidance; fine-tune processes, forms, and resources; deliver professional development; promote summer quarter Running Start; and advise students about eligibility and course-taking.

Although the “after-exit” proviso was not reauthorized in 2025, “standard” (FTE-based) summer Running Start was well established and seniors were permitted to delay their high school graduation to participate if they have not met the FTE limitation, leading to a 27% increase in headcount.

Summer 2024 and 2025 Headcounts, FTE, and Attempted Credits

Figure 3: Summer 2024 and 2025 Headcounts and FTE



Source: Form P-223 (December 2024 and October 2025) and After-Exit Funding Report (December 2024), OSPI School Apportionment/Financial Services Division.

* Summer 2024 includes “after-exit” enrollment/FTE not included in accompanying data tables.

The 4,150 FTE in 2025 was a 24% increase and equates to 62,250 college credits, averaging out to approximately 12,450 five-credit summer courses. Based on the headcount of 8,633, students took an average of 7.2 college credits in the summer term, equivalent to 1.4 courses per student. With a maximum of 10 college credits available, there appears to be a healthy balance between those who are taking full advantage of the opportunity and those who opt to take a lighter courseload due to other summer commitments and/or the compressed timeline of the summer term.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

Running Start enrollment has increased since the pandemic and reached a high-water mark in 2024–25, largely due to legislative support that expanded student participation and added flexibility to course scheduling. Over the past four years, enrollment and the number of credits attempted have risen in nearly every college and term. Overall enrollment growth is attributed to the increase in the FTE limit from 1.20 to 1.40, allowing students to exceed 1.0 FTE at their colleges, the expansion of summer quarter Running Start, and inclusion of rising juniors and seniors delaying graduation.

The split of FTE among Running Start students' combined course load declined modestly in 2024–25, with Running Start students utilizing 76% of their FTE in the colleges and 24% in the high schools. Historically, the split has been closer to 80% of their FTE in colleges and 20% in high schools. However, the proportion of all eligible 11th and 12th grade students enrolling in Running Start rose from 17% to 21%. This may ease concerns among K–12 school counselors and administrators that the increased access to Running Start would adversely affect high school enrollment. In 2024–25, Running Start students earned 93% of the college credits they attempted, highlighting the impressive success rate of students in the program. According to the ERDC's Dual Credit Dashboard, between 95% and 97% of Running Start students have earned college credit in each cohort year dating back to 2015.

With respect to summer quarter Running Start, 8,633 students enrolled for over 62,000 credits (4,150 FTE). With the elimination of the "after-exit" proviso, all students had FTE capacity at the end of the standard school year. In total, this represented a 27% increase in summer headcount and 24% increase in FTE after a fivefold increase in 2024. Summer gains of this magnitude are not likely to be repeated, as they reflect the first two years of full implementation under the 1.40 FTE limit with the inclusion of rising juniors and seniors who delayed official high school graduation to participate. However, the enrollment levels do establish a reasonable benchmark for future projections.

While all the 2024–25 data points are promising, the program is not without limitations. The rapid growth associated with the 1.40 FTE limit, the opening of summer quarter, and the inclusion of rising juniors and seniors delaying graduation has put a strain on high schools, districts, and colleges and exacerbated existing challenges. High school counselors and staff are managing an increasingly large population of Running Start students (including unfamiliar private and homeschool students) through outdated enrollment and apportionment processes while retaining only 7% of their basic education allocation (BEA). In addition, the college registration period conflicts with the busiest time of the school year and students participate during a summer term in which high schools are not staffed, leading to challenges in communication, paperwork completion and routing, summer FTE reporting, and reimbursement.

Next Steps

OSPI recommends the following policy and funding solutions to ensure that schools, districts, and colleges are adequately supported in managing the expansion of the Running Start program, that

students and families are provided with equitable and transparent opportunities to participate in it, and that it remains mutually beneficial and sustainable.

Apply a Multiplier to Raise the Running Start Rate: Participation gaps persist among students from historically marginalized groups and low-income families. One of the most significant barriers to participation is the out-of-pocket costs to students. Applying a 6% multiplier to the Running Start rate in the prototypical school funding model to cover tuition, fees, and books would ensure that students are not financially impacted for accessing their basic education through college coursework while ensuring participating colleges have the funding to address their operational needs. Even though students are not charged tuition, they are responsible for course fees, books, and other costs that can amount to \$400–800 per quarter based on several colleges’ estimates and posted fees. A multiplier would also increase efficiency at the state and local levels by eliminating the need to administer fee waiver and subsidy programs. Finally, an increase in the Running Start rate would benefit school districts by increasing the amount they retain to administer Running Start programs and support the recent expansion of Running Start operations into the summer months.

Fund the Two-Count Summer Quarter at 150%: To support college and district implementation of summer Running Start, an enrollment-driven increase to the prototypical school funding model is recommended to raise the summer term Running Start rate to 150% of the standard year rate. This ensures that colleges will receive reimbursement equal to that of the standard school year and districts will be able to utilize a larger sum from the 7% they retain to support summer operations.

Colleges receive only two-thirds of what they are reimbursed during the standard school year because there are only two summer count days instead of the standard three counts in other terms. According to our higher education partners, their costs are the same in the summer term as they are during the standard school year. For K–12, additional funding has not yet been provided to account for the additional workload incurred by opening summer quarter and expanding access to new categories of students (e.g. rising juniors and seniors delaying graduation).

In 2024, the “after-exit” proviso funded a 30% enhancement to the Running Start rate in the summer months to account for the summer funding gap and nearly two-thirds of the fully expended proviso supported the rate enhancement, leaving little room for enrollment growth. The “after-exit” proviso was not reauthorized in 2025, so that enhancement was not applied. In addition, the 130% rate adjustment applied only to colleges and did not provide additional funding to schools and districts that have also incurred additional costs for administering summer Running Start at a time of year when schools are traditionally closed. For these reasons, it is critical that an enrollment-driven rate adjustment be made, rather than a finite allocation to just one sector.

Reauthorization of Dual Credit Proviso Funding: Local education agencies (LEA) need funding to onboard, maintain, expand, and promote dual credit programs. Unlike colleges which receive funding from districts or the state to support and grow dual credit programs, LEAs retain only 7% of BEA for Running Start and currently receive no other state funding to support other dual credit programs. Historically, OSPI has administered over \$4 million in grants and subsidies in direct support of students and/or LEAs through the \$4.89 million dual credit proviso. In 2025, OSPI lost its dual credit funding in addition to the “after-exit” proviso, leaving districts with no dedicated funding to support activities reflected in the [Dual Credit Programs/Subsidized Fees proviso report](#). In 2024–25, 12% of the \$2.93 million Consolidated Equity and Sustainability Grant was used on Running Start to subsidize out-of-pocket costs to students and cover summer administrative costs to districts associated with the opening of the summer term.

Integrated Electronic Tracking and Reporting: Funding must be allocated to establish the technological infrastructure to effectively administer Running Start and reduce student and family barriers to guidance and enrollment. Due to OSPI’s antiquated apportionment and enrollment reporting systems, Running Start enrollment and reimbursement processes rely on the submission of hardcopy paperwork and transmission of Excel spreadsheets between high schools and colleges, at times requiring students, school counselors, administrators, and college staff to personally track down people and paperwork to complete the enrollment verification process. These practices are administratively burdensome, inefficient, unsecure, and subject to human error. Given the implementation of summer quarter Running Start, which occurs when high schools are closed and districts are minimally staffed, OSPI and its partners are exploring options for developing or licensing an electronic platform accessible by students, families, K–12 staff, and higher education administrators to digitize, automate, and report on Running Start enrollment and reimbursement. This would increase efficiency and reduce errors across the enrollment and reimbursement systems.

Increase Emphasis and Supports for “Vocational” (Career and Technical Education) Running Start: SBCTC and OSPI collaborated on a barrier reduction proposal included in OSPI’s 2024 decision package to eliminate out-of-pocket costs to students in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Annually, only 7–10% of Running Start FTE is in “vocational” (professional technical or workforce) coursework. Despite their proximity to large student populations and prospective business and industry partners, the state’s five technical colleges enroll the fewest Running Start students in the community and technical college system. The cost to students is a significant barrier to access, as vocational Running Start courses often require additional fees and specialized equipment and supplies. OSPI and SBCTC have made an effort to promote Running Start in professional technical fields by leveraging Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding, delivering professional development to CTE and Career Connected Learning associations, updating guidance on CTE graduation pathways, prioritizing Consolidated Equity and Sustainability Grant funding for CTE, and developing a [crosswalk of college Classification of Instructional Programs \(CIP\) codes](#) that may be used to satisfy CTE and graduation pathway requirements. However, additional funding to cover the costs of industry-recognized credentials and CTE-specific needs and costs to students is warranted.

Leverage Cross-Sector Collaboration and Initiatives to Drive Program Improvement: OSPI, SBCTC, ERDC, and the Council of Presidents (COP) are currently engaged in a seven-state “Next Phase of Dual Enrollment Policy” cohort led by the College in the High School Alliance (CHSA) and National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). An advisory group of over 25 cross-sector representatives was established to contribute to the development of a statewide vision for dual credit and identify aligned priorities. Informed by a comprehensive survey of over 300 dual credit administrators and instructors, this work will result in additional engagement with students, families, and practitioners and recommendations pertaining to Running Start centered on the top themes of equitable access, credit transferability, advising and student support, and college readiness. CHSA cohort and advisory group activities will also seek to align with other initiatives such as the CTE Dual Credit pilot in Educational Service District (ESD) 189, High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) implementation, and Jobs for the Future (JFF) Big Blur research and grant program.

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