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**COMMUNITY AND
TECHNICAL COLLEGES**
Washington State Board

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Running Start Summer School Pilot Program

2022

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.630.600](#)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction.....	4
Program Overview	5
Community College Participant Selection	5
Implementation	5
Results	6
Feedback from High School and College Participants	7
2022 Summer Running Start Challenges and Considerations	8
Recommendations.....	10
Conclusion	11
Legal Notice	12

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Running Start Summer School Pilot program was established in 2020 by House Bill 2864 and enacted as Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.630.600. To determine whether the summer term should be funded under the Running Start Program, a summer pilot was created to evaluate interest in and barriers to expanding the Running Start program to include the summer term. The pilot program was implemented at Skagit Valley College, South Puget Sound Community College, and Yakima Valley College in the summer of 2021, but was not funded for a second year.

In the summer of 2022, Summer Running Start was made available at all community and technical colleges through a combination of state proviso and federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding. While some recommendations draw from the experience of scaling Summer Running Start in 2022, the outcomes and data presented in this report are reflective of the 2021 pilot only. As required by the statute, the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) have collaborated on this report to document pilot highlights and provide recommendations for future consideration.

Based on the promising results of the 2021 pilot, both OSPI and SBCTC support the expansion of Running Start into the summer term, despite challenges in timing, communication, recruitment, and process implementation described in subsequent sections. The participating colleges reported an average completion rate of 90% and an 87% summer-to-fall Running Start retention rate. These rates are especially noteworthy, as almost 25% of pilot participants were first-time Running Start students. Also compelling was the 41% enrollment of students of color and 27% enrollment of low-income students. With the necessary adjustments reflected in the recommendations below, there is evidence that Summer Running Start has the potential to be instrumental in orienting new students to the program and shortening the time to degree or certificate attainment for those who persist as Running Start students.

INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of Running Start, state funding to support student access to the program has only been available for the three quarters coinciding with the standard K–12 school year calendar. This program has been highly successful with respect to high school graduation and degree and/or credential attainment, as demonstrated in the [Council of Presidents' 2021 Dual Credit Summary](#), which notes, "Of the high school graduates in the 2017 cohort who participated in Running Start, 56% enrolled directly in postsecondary education after graduating from high school compared to 39% of those who did not participate in Running Start."

Despite the program's track record of success, students have been unable to access Running Start funding during their summer term. The expansion of Running Start into the summer term has the potential to assist in high school credit recovery, career exploration, and college and career readiness, resulting in increased high school diploma and degree or credential completion. This is especially important as the state emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, which in 2021–22 contributed to the first decline in Running Start enrollment since the 2011–12 school year.

The Running Start Summer School Pilot Program was established by House Bill 2864 during the 2020 Legislative Session and enacted as RCW 28A.630.600. The pilot program began in 2021 and provided the opportunity for students to participate in summer term Running Start at Skagit Valley College (SVC), South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC), and Yakima Valley College (YVC) for a maximum of five college credits. In addition to collaborating on program implementation, SBCTC and OSPI jointly prepared this report to present their findings and recommendations. The data and inferences are based on college and school district reports and pilot implementation and evaluation meetings. Recommendations also draw from both agencies' experiences in expanding summer quarter Running Start to all community and technical colleges in 2022 through state and federal emergency relief funding. However, the 2022 expansion was not a function of the pilot program, as the same funding was not allocated for a second year.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Community College Participant Selection

OSPI partnered with SBCTC to identify three community and technical colleges to pilot a Summer Running Start program through a Letter of Interest/Application process. The selection committee was comprised of agency representatives from OSPI, SBCTC, the Council of Presidents (CoP), and Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). Listed below are the selection criteria the committee utilized to select the pilot colleges:

- Location diversity: One community college must be located east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains, and another must be located in a county with a population between 115,000 – 150,000. County population was verified by using the [MRSC Washington County Profiles webpage](#).
- Demonstration of strong and established Running Start partnerships with interested local high schools
- Commitment to increasing access and participation in the Running Start program among students who have been historically underrepresented and qualify as low-income
- Evaluation of current Running Start enrollment, including the percentage of Running Start students that qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL)
- Description of Student Services staffing for the summer term that could be used to support Summer Running Start students

Implementation

The pilot colleges selected were Skagit Valley College (SVC), Yakima Valley College (YVC), and South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC). These colleges partnered with 19 school districts across Washington to enroll students during the summer of 2021. Individual Memoranda of Agreements were established to ensure both high schools and colleges agreed upon data sharing expectations, reporting, advising, and student supports. Both high schools and colleges identified and enrolled eligible students with a focus on credit recovery needs, underrepresented students of color, and students qualifying for a low-income waiver. Students were held to a five-credit maximum for enrollment with this pilot.

Implementation challenges were associated with remote operations and instruction during the pandemic, lack of summer staffing at the high schools, the timing and consistency of communication between school districts and colleges, student recruitment during the pandemic, and confusion about the application and reimbursement processes. While participation was lower than anticipated due to some of these factors, the results were encouraging.

RESULTS

At the end of the 2021 summer term, colleges and school districts reported an average student completion rate of 90% and an average college retention rate of 87% across all three colleges. In addition to promising completion and retention rates, participants reported that 41% of those enrolled were students of color and over one-quarter of students qualified as low income. The data reflected in Figure 1a and 1b are self-reported from pilot colleges and have been reviewed by SBCTC and OSPI.

Figure 1a. Summer Running Start Pilot Participation by College

Reporting Criteria	SVC Head- count	SVC Percentage	SPSCC Head- count	SPSCC Percentage	YVC Head- count	YVC Percentage
All Participants	137	100%	142	100%	72	100%
Received Credits from Enrolled Courses (D or Better)	117	85%	134	94%	65	90%
Elected to Enroll for More than Five Credits	22	16%	39	27%	10	14%
Elected to Enroll for Five or Fewer Credits	115	84%	103	73%	2	3%
Enrolled for Transfer/ Academic Courses	134	98%	138	97%	65	90%
Enrolled for Professional/ Technical (CTE) Courses	3	2%	4	3%	7	10%
Enrolled for the First Time in Summer 2021	45	33%	26	18%	17	24%
Continued in Summer Courses from Prior Year	92	67%	116	82%	55	76%
Remain Enrolled in Fall Quarter 2021 (Grad Years 2022 & 23)	120	88%	134	94%	51	71%
Qualified for Low-Income Fee Waiver	40	29%	32	23%	23	32%
Self-Identified as Male	55	40%	49	35%	18	25%
Self-Identified as Female	82	60%	80	56%	54	75%
Self-Reported Hispanic	23	17%	12	8%	54	75%
Self-Reported White	93	68%	100	70%	15	21%
Self-Reported Other Race/Ethnicity	14	10%	44	31%	3	4%

Figure 1b. Aggregate Summer Running Start Participation

Reporting Criteria	Combined Headcount	Combined Percentage
All Participants	351	100%
Received Credits from Enrolled Courses (D or Better)	316	90%
Elected to Enroll for More than Five Credits	71	20%
Elected to Enroll for Five or Fewer Credits	220	63%
Enrolled for Transfer/Academic Courses	337	96%
Enrolled for Professional/Technical (CTE) Courses	14	4%
Enrolled for the First Time in Summer 2021	88	25%
Continued in Summer Courses from Prior Year	263	75%
Remain Enrolled in Fall Quarter 2021 (Grad Years 22 & 23)	305	87%
Qualified for Low-Income Fee Waiver	95	27%
Self-Identified as Male	122	35%
Self-Identified as Female	216	62%
Self-Reported Hispanic	89	25%
Self-Reported White	208	59%
Self-Reported Other Race/Ethnicity	61	17%

With the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) reporting in their September 2022 legislative report, [Update on Dual Credit Programs](#), that 86.9% of traditional Running Start students earn postsecondary credit during the school year, the 90% completion rate reflected in the summer pilot is compelling. As the same report again demonstrates significant discrepancies in Running Start participation among students of color, the 41% participation rate of non-white students is also a positive sign. With respect to participation among students from low-income families, the 27% rate appears to be consistent with the colleges' overall Running Start low-income rates (30.5% at YVC, 18.6% at SPSCC, and 28.4% at SVC), but these, too, are indicative of a significant participation gap highlighted in the ERDC's legislative report. Figure 1 demonstrates that while 26% of all middle- and high-income students in the four-year cohort of reported high school students participated in Running Start, only 15% of those from families qualifying as low-income did. In a state in which 47.6% of all students are qualified as low-income ([WA State Report Card](#)), the fact that only 27% of Summer Running Start participants fell into that category suggests that known barriers to participation extend into the summer months. These barriers include additional fees, textbook costs, transportation, and meal availability.

Feedback from High School and College Participants

While there were challenges with implementation and barriers to access, participating schools provided generally favorable reports on the Summer Running Start opportunity. The following is a sampling of feedback offered by participants:

Anacortes High School:

"This is a great opportunity for our students to be able to continue their learning throughout the entire year. We have a number of students, due to the pandemic who could benefit from the option of taking additional credits during the summer to still reach their goals of attaining on time graduation or even attaining their AA. I think that next year we will have an even greater number of students who will want to take classes through the summer program as we only had about a month or two to promote this opportunity this last year."

Eisenhower High School:

"I feel that students have a better chance of finishing their AA degrees and have a clean start at a university bringing all their credits for their AA degrees."

Concrete High School:

"Our students need every available opportunity to make up credits due to the impacts from COVID. This is a great opportunity for that credit recovery."

Skagit Valley College:

"We saw a large increase in student participation and a clear need for summer accessibility and funding. Students not only achieved high pass rates, but high matriculation rates as well."

2022 Summer Running Start Challenges and Considerations

Although the legislation called for a two-year pilot program, funding was not specifically allocated for a second year of the pilot. Instead, a state budget proviso called for Summer Running Start to be offered to all students for the summer 2022 term. In addition, OSPI and SBCTC allocated one-time federal ESSER funding to implement the Summer Running Start program for 2022.

While administering a relatively small, three-college pilot program limited to five credits per student proved manageable, the 2022 Summer Running Start program, launched through a combination of new proviso and ESSER funding, highlighted the challenges of bringing a summer program to a broader scale. The challenges mirror those identified in the original pilot and include:

- **Funding:** Uncertainty about the availability and source of future funding presents challenges in establishing a process for sustaining and marketing Summer Running Start in the long term. Reimbursement processes depend on the funding source and amount available, as do the number and type of students who can participate. Students and schools that have taken part in Summer Running Start will likely expect to do so again, but without a guarantee of future funding, the opportunities cannot be communicated in advance to inform class scheduling or school planning.
- **Eligibility:** Both the 2021 Summer Running Start pilot program and the additional 2022 budget proviso prioritized access for certain students and established credit limitations. This level of specificity is difficult to manage, requires secondary and postsecondary institutions to continually compare enrollment information on each participant, and puts program

administrators in the unenviable position of having to determine who can and cannot participate considering the amount of funding available.

- **Grade Level Eligibility:** Unlike traditional Running Start, the summer term also includes a lack of clarity pertaining to the eligibility of rising juniors, graduating and fifth- or sixth-year seniors, and students in various alternative learning environment (ALE) programs that would need to be addressed in statute or in rule if this opportunity were to continue.
- **Enrollment Limits:** With the existing 1.20 Average Annual Full-Time Equivalent (AAFTE) credit limit, summer students are at risk of prematurely exceeding their Running Start enrollment limits. Adjusting the AAFTE or establishing sustainable funding through a perpetual budget proviso would allow those students to access summer term classes.
- **Enrollment Tracking and Transcription:** Currently, high school staff are not available in the summer to perform the traditional methods of tracking student enrollment with the Running Start Enrollment Verification Form (RSEVF) and monthly enrollment report (P-223). OSPI and its postsecondary partners must create new methods of administering Summer Running Start, which requires additional coordination and communication to participating high schools and colleges. Given the additional challenge that some students decide to enroll directly through the colleges after high schools adjourn, it is difficult for schools to track enrollment, grades, and credits earned without traditional reporting mechanisms.
- **Initial Implementation Timeline:** The timeline necessary to initially implement Summer Running Start programs was substantial due to the need to establish new procedures and market opportunities to students before schools close for summer in June. Beginning the process at the conclusion of the 2022 legislative session limited collaboration and stakeholder engagement.
- **Misalignment of Academic Calendars for Summer Term:** School district and college academic calendars are not well suited for summer program collaboration. Opportunities for planning are limited as high schools are adjourning while colleges are still finishing spring quarter. As high schools are unstaffed during the summer months, participating students are unable to access supports from their high school that are available during the regular school year. Likewise, colleges are unable to coordinate enrollment with high school staff during the summer months.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Both OSPI and SBCTC support expanding the Running Start program to extend into the summer term. It is clear from the pilot data that Summer Running Start is in demand and leads to positive outcomes for the students who participate. For Summer Running Start to be administered efficiently, sustainably, and to provide maximum benefit to students and families, the agencies jointly recommend the following:

- **Full and Consistent Tuition Funding:** For districts and colleges to establish standardized procedures and effectively market Summer Running Start opportunities, they need assurance that funding is available to all eligible students on an annual basis. The prospect of raising the existing 1.20 AAFTE limit to its previous level of 2.0 AAFTE to simplify Running Start enrollment tracking while accounting for the summer term is one method of accomplishing this. This appears to have widespread support.
- **Funding to Support Summer LEA Staffing:** Running Start cannot be extended into the summer term without the availability of high school staff required to process RSEVF forms and manage monthly P223 enrollment reporting. Some staff must also be available to manage communication between high schools and colleges with respect to student eligibility, enrollment, support services, grade, and credit transcription, and so on. Dedicated funding for summer staffing is necessary to effectively implement Summer Running Start. Without it, students will be left to navigate the registration process alone while lapses in communication between high schools and colleges will undoubtedly impede enrollment, recordkeeping, and credit transcription.
- **Eligibility:** Student eligibility for Summer Running Start needs to be clearly defined, to include rising juniors, fifth- and sixth-year seniors, and graduating seniors within 15 quarter credits of a certificate or associate degree.
- **Integrated Electronic Tracking and Reporting:** With the potential for a transition into the summer months when in-person high school staff availability is limited, the enrollment verification and reimbursement processes will need to be revisited and possibly redesigned. OSPI and SBCTC should evaluate and, if possible, adopt one of several electronic verification practices currently being piloted. The transition to new enrollment verification, tracking, and reimbursement processes via new technology and data system development may require additional financial support.

CONCLUSION

The Running Start Summer Pilot proved to be successful for the vast majority of students who took advantage of this opportunity. OSPI and SBCTC are encouraged by the data and the positive feedback received from colleges and high schools. Course completion and retention rates were especially promising, as were participation rates among students of color who are historically underrepresented in Running Start. Staff members at participating high schools and colleges noted that the students who enrolled were very committed and intentional in their pursuit of postsecondary credit. For the 25% of students who were first-time participants, the Running Start Summer Pilot provided an opportunity to get some experience with college-level rigor without additional demands on their time, and staff members indicated that the summer opportunity encouraged many first-time Running Start students to continue the program through the fall.

There was widespread agreement that Summer Running Start proved to be a timely opportunity for students to recover credits they were short on due to the pandemic while earning college credits at the same time. On September 30, 2021, the committee members assembled to evaluate the Running Start Summer School Pilot Program were unanimous in their support of continuing to provide state funding for Running Start in the summer term.

OSPI and SBCTC acknowledge that they had hoped to have more students participate in the pilot, but the pandemic posed challenges with student recruitment. Since colleges were fully remote at the time the pilot program was implemented, it was difficult to convince students to enroll in the summer quarter online. Students were already feeling overwhelmed and underprepared, and participating schools reported that many were anxious about taking any summer course virtually, much less a college level one.

In addition, staff members acknowledged challenges with the lack of high school staffing available after the end of the school year to support students prior to the start of summer quarter, marketing the opportunity on a short timeline, communication gaps between high schools and colleges, navigating the iGrant system as the funding mechanism for the pilot, and streamlining the college enrollment and reimbursement processes. Between the pandemic and short implementation timeline, colleges and school districts were stretched thin. New procedures need to be adopted to fund, enroll, track, and transcribe participating students.

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