

Kickstarting College and Career Readiness by Eliminating Financial Barriers to Dual Credit

Background

Dual credit programs provide high school students with the opportunity to earn college credit or credit toward an industry recognized credential at the same time as they earn credits toward their high school diploma. These programs aim to provide students with advanced learning opportunities aligned to their post-secondary goals while making it more affordable to earn college credit or industry recognized credentials. However, out-of-pocket costs for students associated with achievement of college credit via dual credit programs and with credential attainment have been a barrier to access and participation for many years. In the 2020–21 school year, there was a 14.5% gap in dual credit participation between students from low-income families and their peers from middle- and higher-income families.

Budget Proposal

[OSPI's budget request](#) aims to eliminate out-of-pocket fees for dual credit programs and opportunities to earn industry recognized credentials. OSPI's proposal would take the following approaches for each program:

- **College in the High School:** Eliminate all student fees and lower the per-credit maximum cost from \$69.95 to \$35 per credit. Cost: \$15.75 million per year.
- **Workforce Development:**
 - Elevate and formalize CTE Dual Credit with dedicated funding to support administration, ensuring curricular and program alignment, transcription fees, and instructor certification. Cost: \$4 million per year.
 - Fund the cost for students to earn industry recognized credentials that are on OSPI's approved list. Cost: \$8.96 million per year.
- **Running Start:** Eliminate all student fees by subsidizing the associated costs to the college (e.g., building, operating, and services). Cost: \$8.24 million per year.
- **Exam-Based Dual Credit:** Cover all student exam fees for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge International. Cost: \$8.24 million per year.

Future Considerations

Eliminating financial barriers for students is a crucial step to expand access to these programs to **all** of Washington's learners. Should the Legislature invest in this proposal, to best serve our students and get the most out of the state's investment, there are some remaining considerations that policymakers and institutions of higher education will likely need to address, including transferability of credit, a guaranteed acceleration of degree attainment (no additional credit requirements added), and ensuring students and families won't be charged new fees.

