

# PROGRAM BRIEF

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

## RUNNING START FUNDING & STATE FTE OVERVIEW

### Funding model

Running Start students do not generate state operating Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) funding like tuition-paying college students. Instead, colleges receive partial reimbursement defined by statute, as these students do not pay tuition or generate full state support.

While K–12 districts continue to receive state funding for Running Start participants, colleges deliver the coursework and services with less funding.

The Legislature provides a reimbursement mechanism to address this funding gap, set below the actual cost of instruction, balancing access to dual-credit programs without double-funding. Without such reimbursement, colleges would have to provide services for Running Start students with no corresponding revenue, straining resources.

### Cost of instruction

The cost of instruction per student for the 2025–26 academic year, as calculated in compliance with [RCW 28B.15.0681](#), is \$15,154. Students pay \$3,866 in tuition, and the state covers the remaining \$11,289.

### Reimbursement rates

Running Start Basic Education Allocation (BEA) rates are \$11,157 (vocational) and \$10,291 (non-vocational) per FTE, with 7% retained by the student's home district.

This results in colleges receiving \$10,375 and \$9,571 per FTE, respectively.

Therefore, community and technical colleges receive \$914 less for a vocational Running Start student and \$1,718 less for a non-vocational Running Start student than a traditional tuition paying student.

### Enabling legislation

[RCW 28A.600.310](#) sections (7), (8), and (9) outline the Running Start allocation and reimbursement process for colleges and school districts participating in the program. This section ensures proper distribution of funds and clarifies legislative intent regarding dual-enrollment costs.



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