



RUNNING START: ACCESS AND FUNDING OVERVIEW

January 2026

Concerning the Governor's Proposed Reduction from 1.4 to 1.2 FTE & HB 2375 Allocation Impacts

Summary

The Governor's proposal to reduce Running Start funding from 1.4 to 1.2 FTE would significantly restrict student access, slow degree completion, and create disproportionate barriers for low-income and technical program students. Since the Legislature expanded Running Start to 1.4 FTE in 2023-24, summer participation has increased by more than 400%, and early outcomes show strong gains in degree completion, retention, and overall student success.

At the same time, HB 2375 introduces a variable district withholding formula that would reduce and destabilize Running Start funding for community and technical colleges. Together, these changes would weaken the strongest performing elements of Running Start and undermine the system's ability to maintain access, staffing, and program capacity.

Cuts to Running Start reimbursement don't just reduce budgets—they dismantle the college ecosystem that makes the program work. Without adequate funding, colleges can't sustain the supports high schools can't provide: flexible course options, professional faculty and advising, internships, mental-health counseling, and the campus activities that build belonging. The result is fewer pathways, weaker supports, and the loss of a true college experience while students earn tuition-free credit.

Student Impacts

Protects Access for Low-Income Students

- Summer quarter has the highest percentage of Low-Income Waiver students of any term.
- Reducing the cap from 1.4 to 1.2 FTE would sharply limit summer credits, restricting access for students who cannot self-pay for unfunded credits.

Supports Timely Degree Completion

- The 1.4 FTE model enables a full-time academic plan across all four quarters.
- Lowering the cap would slow degree progress and reduce early credential attainment.
- Strengthens Student Success Outcomes
- Summer Running Start students complete associate degrees at rates 20-30 percentage points higher than peers who do not enroll in summer.
- Pass rates exceed 89%, and fall retention for new summer entrants is typically above 80%.
- Limiting summer access undermines the strongest-performing part of the program.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Operational Impacts on Colleges

Student Services & Staffing Pressures

Running Start students rely heavily on advising, basic-needs support, tutoring, disability services, and mental health counseling. Reducing funded credits does not reduce workload. It only reduces the resources available to support it.

Faculty & Course Availability

Colleges have built course schedules and faculty staffing around year-round enrollment. Reverting to 1.2 FTE threatens the delivery of required, sequential, and high-demand courses, including essential high school graduation-requirement classes.

Technical & Workforce Programs at Risk

High-credit technical programs become harder to access under a 1.2 FTE cap, disproportionately affecting students pursuing workforce pathways.

HB 2375: Additional Funding Instability

Variable Withholding Reduces and Destabilizes Funding

- HB 2375 replaces the stable 7% district withholding with a variable formula tied to tuition levels.
- Because CTCs have the lowest tuition in the state, they are most likely to experience higher district withholding and reduced Running Start revenue.

Unpredictable Budgets Limit Access

- Colleges would no longer know how much Running Start funding they will receive each year.
- To avoid mid-year shortfalls, colleges would be forced to reduce sections, limit enrollment, scale back high-cost programs, and reduce student supports.
- These impacts fall hardest on low-income and first-generation students.

Data Highlights

- 426% increase in summer Running Start enrollment from 2023 to 2024.
- 17% system-wide increase in annual Running Start FTE after the shift to 1.4 FTE.
- 89%+ pass rates across all terms; summer differs by only 1-2 points.
- 80%+ fall retention for new summer entrants.

Bottom Line

Reducing the FTE cap and adopting HB 2375's allocation model would reverse recent gains in access, equity, and completion. These changes would weaken the strongest performing part of Running Start, destabilize college budgets, and disproportionately harm the students who rely on the community and technical college system the most.