

RUNNING START ADVISING GUIDELINES 2011-2012

When high school students are considering the Running Start program, high school and college counselors need to take particular care in advising students fully about their educational program options. Running Start is only one of a number of dual-credit options (College in the High School, AP, BI, etc.) available to students in Washington State. The array of options available to students should be discussed as part of advising on Running Start.

Running Start college courses are dual-credited with the high school which enables students to work toward meeting specific high school graduation credit requirements while receiving college credit. To receive high school credit for a specific graduation requirement, students should seek prior approval of the equivalency credit from the high school counselor prior to the beginning of each college quarter.

Students and their families are well-advised to give careful consideration to the appropriateness of the program before enrolling. High school counselors need to discuss the suggested strengths and limitations below with students and their families before students enroll and participate in the Running Start program:

Strengths

- Students have the opportunity to take courses that may not be offered at their local high schools.
- Academically prepared students have an opportunity to take college level courses.
- Students have an opportunity to experience post-secondary education while in high school. This experience may be helpful in making the transition from home to college, self-assessing college readiness skills, and in informing future education plans.
- Students can currently earn up to two years of tuition-free college credit, saving many dollars in college education.
- It is not uncommon for students who have strong college readiness skills, yet have difficulty fitting-in the traditional high school setting, to flourish in a different educational setting such as college.
- In college, high school students have the opportunity to gain academic and career maturity and knowledge from participating within the challenge of a college setting and with other college students.

- Running Start students are eligible to take part in all college activities with the exception of intercollegiate athletics. These activities include student government, interest groups, special events, student newspaper, and the college radio station.
- Students can get a “Running Start” on completing a college degree including general education requirements and prerequisites to a college major or technical/professional program.
- Students may still participate in any high school extracurricular activity, if time permits and consistent with Washington Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) rules of eligibility.
- Students who have transferred between high schools and have incurred credit difficulties may find that Running Start can help them meet graduation requirements on time.
- Financially, this is the best scholarship a student can earn. Consider the worth of each college class completed.

Limitations

- Some students who are academically qualified may not be ready socially or emotionally for the college environment. They may find the independence and the speed of college classes overwhelming. Maturity is one of the key ingredients needed for success in Running Start.
- High schools provide a social network and social development experiences for teenagers. This network is not as readily available at the college level as it is in the high schools. However, Running Start students may participate in all student activities, such as college clubs and student government.
- Students are not guaranteed space in preferred college classes, and college schedules may conflict with high school classes or extracurricular activities (sports, drama, music, etc.)
- Most colleges operate on a quarter system which is often different from the high school academic calendar. Holidays and vacation periods are frequently different. Students are expected to attend classes at the college even though their high schools may not be in session. Careful planning must occur in order to avoid conflicts in family and school activities.
- The high school is the final authority on high school graduation requirements. It is important to work closely with a high school counselor to insure graduation requirements will be met. Some schools may not allow students to participate in graduation ceremonies if their college classes are not completed by the date of graduation. Check with the high school for their policies.

- Recent changes in the total amount of funding to support Running Start now requires students and their families to be responsible for tuition costs above 1.2 combined high school and college FTE. For a student taking a full load at the college (15 credits), he/she might be eligible to be in only one class in their high school. It is the student and family responsibility to understand these new limits and carefully plan his/her educational program.
- College classes are designed for adult learners. Contemporary issues of our society will be actively discussed in our classrooms. The content of classes will not be censored for younger students.
- The high school determines students' eligibility to be involved in high school activities. Being away from the high school might mean that students are out of the loop for some things, such as activity requirements or scholarship application deadlines.
- Students currently pay all costs, except tuition up to 1.2 combined high school and college FTE. Students must pay for mandatory college fees, books, computer fees, campus parking, gas, supplies, and other related costs.
- Students start a college transcript when they take their first college class. It will stay with them throughout their college careers. If students perform poorly, it may jeopardize future college plans. These grades will transfer back to the high school transcript as well.
- Typically there is much less contact between colleges and parents than the high schools and parents.
- College offers a much less structured environment with more independent study required. The speed at which college classes are taught is much faster than classes in high school. College classes typically demand approximately 2 hours of homework for each hour of class, with no classroom time for homework.
- Communication concerning grades and attendance is more frequent in high schools.