

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1986

As Reported by House Committee On:
Higher Education

Title: An act relating to the running start program.

Brief Description: Prohibiting high school students in the Running Start program from taking precollege courses at institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Gombosky, Cox, Kenney, Chase, Jarrett and McIntire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/4/03, 3/5/03 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a minimum grade point average of 2.5 for participation in the Running Start program.
- Excludes precollege courses from the types of courses in which a Running Start student may enroll under the program.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Priest, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Boldt, Buck, Chase, Clements, Condotta, Gombosky, Jarrett, Lantz, McCoy and Morrell.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

The Running Start program was enacted by the Legislature in 1990 to allow high school students in the 11th and 12th grades to enroll in college-level courses while earning high school credit. Students may enroll simultaneously in high school and college classes or solely in college courses. Once enrolled students are subject to the colleges' academic progress policies for the courses taken. Students who successfully complete classes under the program receive both high school and college credit.

Tuition is paid to the colleges from state high school funding on a full time equivalent basis. Each month colleges send to the appropriate high schools a list of the courses completed by the school's Running Start students. The college and the high school coordinate billing and payment for college-level courses only.

Summary of Bill:

A high school student must have earned a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 to be eligible to enroll and participate in the Running Start program. Precollege courses are excluded from the types of courses in which a Running Start student may enroll under the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect August 1, 2003.

Testimony For: Success of the Running Start program is well known. It is a terrific opportunity for students, but there are some concerns that some students should not be enrolled in a college setting. The bill intends to link high school performance with Running Start eligibility. A 2.5 GPA is not a high hurdle.

Testimony Against: The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) supports the concept of limiting Running Start courses to college-level courses, but believes rules already exist in statute and in the administrative code to address this. Regarding a minimum GPA, each institution has its own academic progress policies and this bill could create a higher bar for Running Start students than for the college's other students. One of the attractions of Running Start is that high school students are treated like college students, but holding high school students to a different GPA standard makes them different. There is no data connecting high school GPA with success in the Running Start program. The OSPI believes the 10th grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is a better predictor of success in college level courses.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges believes the bill is not necessary. The question about precollege courses already is addressed in statute and the administrative rules. College and high school staffs both communicate about the enrollment records of Running Start students to ensure that no precollege courses are paid for under the program. Colleges are interested in assuring Running Start students are prepared for college level courses and currently use the same placement test for all students, including Running Start students. The colleges also apply existing academic progress standards to assess Running Start students. The colleges communicate with the

high schools to identify and counsel students who encounter academic challenges.

Testified: (In support) Representative Gombosky, prime sponsor.

(With concerns) Brian Jeffries, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

(Opposed) Sally Zeiger Hanson, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.