

Chapter 28A.245 RCW
SKILL CENTERS

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RCW 28A.245.005 Findings. The legislature finds that student access to programs offered at skill centers can help prepare them for careers, apprenticeships, and postsecondary education. The legislature further finds that current limits on how school districts and skill centers report full-time equivalent students and the time students are served provide a disincentive for school districts to send their students to skill centers. The legislature further finds that there are barriers to providing access to students in rural and remote areas but that there are opportunities to do so with satellite and branch campus programs, distance and online learning programs, and collaboration with higher education, business, and labor. The legislature further finds that skill centers provide opportunities for dropout prevention and retrieval programs by offering programs that accommodate students' work schedules and provide credit retrieval opportunities. The legislature further finds that implementing the recommendations from the study by the workforce training and education coordinating board will enhance skill center programs and student access to those programs. [2007 c 463 § 1.]

RCW 28A.245.010 Skill centers—Purpose—Operation. A skill center is a regional career and technical education partnership established to provide access to comprehensive industry-defined career and technical programs of study that prepare students for careers, employment, apprenticeships, and postsecondary education. A skill center is operated by a host school district and governed by an administrative council in accordance with a cooperative agreement. [2007 c 463 § 2.]

RCW 28A.245.020 Funding—Equivalency and apportionment. (1)

Beginning in the 2007-08 school year and thereafter, students attending skill centers shall be funded for all classes at the skill center and the sending districts, up to one and six-tenths full-time equivalents or as determined in the omnibus appropriations act. The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall develop procedures to ensure that the school district and the skill center report no student for more than one and six-tenths full-time equivalent students combining both their high school enrollment and skill center enrollment. Additionally, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall develop procedures for determining the appropriate share of the full-time equivalent enrollment count between the resident high school and skill center.

(2) (a) A rural satellite skill center must report direct enrollment and receive direct funding if it meets the following criteria:

(i) The center is located at least thirty miles from a core campus or other satellite program and enrolls students from a minimum of two school districts;

(ii) The center is solely responsible for hiring staff and covering all staffing costs;

(iii) The center is solely responsible for providing facilities, equipment, materials, supplies, and training;

(iv) The center has demonstrated the ability to build successful community and local business partnerships;

(v) The center has been operational and has secured agreements for at least one year with two or more rural districts in the area to accept and enroll students in the center, has completed the required feasibility study, and has secured commitments from local businesses or industries;

(vi) The career and technical education advisory committee and the local school district board of directors recommend and support the direct funding; and

(vii) The center shares liability of all reviews for the purposes of auditing and the consolidated program review including state and federal monitoring of the career and technical education programs.

(b) A core campus skill center may receive, for administrative purposes, up to seven percent of the funding provided to a partnered rural satellite skill center under (a) of this subsection.

(c) A core campus skill center may charge the annually required per-pupil facility fee consistent with RCW 28A.245.100 related to minor repair and maintenance capital accounts as negotiated in the interdistrict cooperative agreement.

(3) For the purposes of this section, "rural," consistent with the definition in the small, rural school achievement program and the rural education achievement program eligibility criteria, means:

(a) A local education agency that serves only schools that have a national center for education statistics school locale code of forty-one, forty-two, or forty-three; or

(b) A local education agency that is located entirely within counties with a population density less than one hundred persons per square mile or counties smaller than two hundred twenty-five square miles as determined and published by the office of financial management each year for the period of July 1st to June 30th. [2019 c 197 § 1; 2007 c 463 § 3.]

RCW 28A.245.030 Revised guidelines for skill centers—Satellite and branch campus programs—Capital plan—Studies—Master plan—Rules.

(1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall review and revise the guidelines for skill centers to encourage skill center programs. The superintendent, in cooperation with the workforce training and education coordinating board, skill center directors, and the Washington association for career and technical education, shall review and revise the existing skill centers' policy guidelines and create and adopt rules governing skill centers as follows:

(a) The threshold enrollment at a skill center shall be revised so that a skill center program need not have a minimum of seventy percent of its students enrolled on the skill center core campus in order to facilitate serving rural students through expansion of skill center programs by means of satellite programs or branch campuses;

(b) The developmental planning for branch campuses shall be encouraged. Underserved rural areas or high-density areas may partner with an existing skill center to create satellite programs or a branch campus. Once a branch campus reaches sufficient enrollment to become self-sustaining, it may become a separate skill center or remain an extension of the founding skill center; and

(c) Satellite and branch campus programs shall be encouraged to address high-demand fields.

(2) Rules adopted under this section shall allow for innovative models of satellite and branch campus programs, and such programs shall not be limited to those housed in physical buildings.

(3) The superintendent of public instruction shall develop and deliver a ten-year capital plan for legislative review before implementation. The superintendent of public instruction shall adopt rules that set as a goal a ten percent minimum local project contribution threshold for major skill center projects, unless there is a compelling rationale not to do so, including but not limited to local economic conditions, as determined by the superintendent of public instruction. This applies to the acquisition or major capital costs of skill center projects as outlined in the ten-year capital plan.

(4) Subject to available funding, the superintendent shall:

(a) Conduct approved feasibility studies for serving noncooperative rural and high-density area students in their geographic areas; and

(b) Develop a statewide master plan that identifies standards and resources needed to create a technology infrastructure for connecting all skill centers to the K-20 network. [2008 c 179 § 302; 2007 c 463 § 4.]

Effective date—2008 c 179: See RCW 28A.527.902.

RCW 28A.245.040 Expanded access—Targeted populations—Evaluation. Subject to available funding, skill centers shall provide access to late afternoon and evening sessions and summer school programs, to rural and high-density area students aligned with regionally identified high-demand occupations. When possible, the programs shall be specifically targeted for credit retrieval, dropout prevention and intervention for at-risk students, and retrieval of dropouts. Skill centers that receive funding for these activities must participate in an evaluation that is designed to quantify results and

identify best practices, collaborate with local community partners in providing a comprehensive program, and provide matching funds. [2007 c 463 § 5.]

RCW 28A.245.050 Skill centers of excellence—Running start for career and technical education grant program—Career and technical programs of study. (1) The superintendent of public instruction shall establish and support skill centers of excellence in key economic sectors of regional significance. The superintendent shall broker the development of skill centers of excellence and identify their roles in developing curriculum and methodologies for reporting skill center course equivalencies for purposes of high school graduation.

(2) Once the skill centers of excellence are established, the superintendent of public instruction shall develop and seek funding for a running start for career and technical education grant program to develop and implement career and technical programs of study targeted to regionally determined high-demand occupations. Grant recipients should be partnerships of skill centers of excellence, community college centers of excellence, tech-prep programs, industry advisory committees, area workforce development councils, and skill panels in the related industry. Grant recipients should be expected to develop and assist in the replication of model career and technical education programs of study. The career and technical education programs of study developed should be consistent with the expectations in the applicable federal law. [2007 c 463 § 6.]

RCW 28A.245.060 Director of skill centers. To the extent funds are available, the superintendent of public instruction shall assign at least one full-time equivalent staff position within the office of the superintendent of public instruction to serve as the director of skill centers. [2009 c 578 § 7; 2007 c 463 § 7.]

RCW 28A.245.070 High school diplomas—Agreements with cooperating school districts—High school completion programs. Skill centers may enter into agreements with one or more cooperating school districts to grant a high school diploma on behalf of the district so that students who are juniors and seniors have an opportunity to attend the skill center on a full-time basis without coenrollment at a district high school. To avoid competition with other high schools in the cooperating district, high school completion programs operated by skill centers shall be designed as dropout prevention and retrieval programs for at-risk and credit-deficient students or for fifth-year seniors. A skill center may use grant awards from the building bridges program under RCW 28A.175.025 to develop high school completion programs as provided in this section. [2008 c 170 § 203.]

Findings—Intent—2008 c 170: See RCW 28A.700.005.

RCW 28A.245.080 Contracts with community or technical colleges—Courses leading to industry certificates or credentials for high school graduates. (1) Subject to the provisions of this section and RCW 28B.50.532, a skill center may enter into an agreement with the

community or technical college in which district the skill center is located to provide career and technical education courses necessary to complete an industry certificate or credential for students who have received a high school diploma.

(2) To qualify for enrollment under this section, a student must have been enrolled in the skill center before receiving the high school diploma and must remain continuously enrolled in the skill center. A student may enroll only in those courses necessary to complete the industry certificate or credential associated with the student's career and technical program.

(3) Students enrolled in a skill center under this section shall be considered community and technical college students for purposes of enrollment reporting, tuition, and financial aid. The skill center shall maintain enrollment data for students enrolled under this section separately from data on secondary school enrollment. [2008 c 170 § 304.]

Findings—Intent—2008 c 170: See RCW 28A.700.005.

RCW 28A.245.090 Contracts with community colleges—Enrollment lid—Fees. The community colleges are encouraged to contract with skill centers to use the skill center facilities. The community colleges shall not be required to count the enrollments under these agreements toward the community college enrollment lid. Skill centers may charge fees to adult students under RCW 28A.225.220. [1993 c 380 § 3. Formerly RCW 28C.22.020.]

RCW 28A.245.100 Minor repair and maintenance capital accounts. A host district of a cooperative skill center must maintain a separate minor repair and maintenance capital account for facilities constructed or renovated with state funding. Participating school districts must make annual deposits into the account to pay for future minor repair and maintenance costs of those facilities. The host district has authority to collect those deposits by charging participating districts an annual per-pupil facility fee. [2017 c 187 § 1.]

RCW 28A.245.110 Equivalency courses recognition, distribution, and access. (1) An interdistrict cooperative agreement between all participating school districts in a skill center under RCW 28A.245.010 must stipulate that any approved state and local equivalency courses offered by the host school district must be honored as equivalency courses by all school districts participating in the skill center.

(2) The list of approved local and state equivalency courses of the host school district must be provided by the host district to participating districts on an annual basis by September 1st.

(3) Students served at any core, branch, or satellite skill center campus must have access to academic credit for any approved local or state equivalency courses offered at those sites and in accordance with transcription requirements in RCW 28A.230.097. [2023 c 407 § 1.]