

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1977

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to high school students' options.

Brief Description: Allowing arrangements for running start students to attend out-of-state community colleges.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (H) (originally sponsored by Representatives Honeyford, Boldt and Dunn).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/22/98, 2/3/98 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/10/98, 95-1.

Passed Legislature.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; Quall; Smith; Sterk; Sump; Talcott and Veloria.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background: The 1990 Legislature created the Running Start program as part of the "Learning by Choice" law. The law was designed to expand educational options for students in public high schools. Through Running Start, qualified 11th and 12th grade students may take college level courses in any of the state's 32 community and technical colleges. Running Start students earn both high school and college credit for successfully completed college courses.

The 1994 Legislature expanded the program to include Central, Eastern, and Washington State universities. One reason for the expansion - to provide high school students with additional educational opportunities in communities in which no community colleges or technical colleges were located. School districts may choose whether to permit their students to attend the three participating state universities.

Running Start students are not charged tuition. However, they must provide their own transportation, books, and class materials. The school districts in which the students are enrolled must reimburse the colleges and universities for their students' participation in the program. The rate for reimbursement is uniform statewide. In 1996, the reimbursement rate was about \$79 per credit for academic programs and \$95 for vocational programs. School districts retain 7 percent of the funds for counseling and other overhead expenses.

About 5 percent of Washington's public high school students are enrolled in Running Start. During the 1996-97 academic year, 10,250 Running Start students were enrolled in community and technical colleges. Almost 60 percent of the students were female, 14.4 percent were students of color, and about 1.2 percent were students with disabilities. In that year, 70 percent of the students attended college full-time. Forty-one percent of the students worked part-time. During the 1996-97 school year, Running Start saved taxpayers about \$18.3 million dollars.

Summary of Bill: School districts in Washington may enter agreements with community colleges in Oregon and Idaho to let Washington students enroll in the community colleges for concurrent high school and college credit. If a school district enters an agreement, most of the provisions of the Running Start laws will apply.

School districts may pay the community colleges less than the Running Start rate per credit as long as students are not required to pay tuition and fees, but they may not pay more than the Running Start rate per credit. Agreements may require students to pay some tuition and fees, however, the agreements will not allow the colleges to charge students nonresident tuition rates. The agreements will also ensure that participating students enroll in courses that transfer to a public college or university in Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 15, 1998.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The Running Start program provides students in most parts of the state with an opportunity to earn college and high school credit concurrently. However, that opportunity is not readily available to students living in isolated communities. Some communities in border counties such as Klickitat and Skamania counties are isolated from community colleges in Washington, but are within easy commuting distance of community colleges in Oregon. Running Start students in parts of those counties must move away from home and live in Vancouver or endure a hazardous 70-mile commute through the Columbia Gorge to Clark College. Passage of this legislation will create additional educational opportunities for high school students living in border counties. School districts retain control over the decision to participate in the program.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Honeyford, prime sponsor; Betsy Smith, citizen; Tonya Kreps, student; Laura Cheney, citizen; Lori Kreps, citizen; Kathy Black, citizen; and Lacey Smith, citizen.