

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5360

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education, February 18, 2005

Title: An act relating to eligibility for the running start program.

Brief Description: Studying performance and funding of running start students.

Sponsors: Senators Brandland, Sheldon, Fairley, Berkey, Delvin, Benson and Rockefeller.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 1/27/05, 2/18/05 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5360 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Weinstein, Vice Chair; Schmidt, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Carrell, Delvin, Eide, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Rasmussen, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Shin.

Staff: Brian Jeffries (786-7422)

Background: The Running Start program was established by the Legislature in 1990 as part of the Learning By Choice Act (Chapter 9, Laws of 1990, First Executive Session) to provide students a program option consisting of attendance at institutions of higher education and the earning of dual high school and college/university credit. Under current law, students in the eleventh and twelfth grades who have not yet received their high school diplomas and who meet entrance criteria established by participating colleges and universities may participate in the Running Start program. Students who first enroll in the program in eleventh grade may participate in the program for the coursework equivalent to two academic years. Students who first enroll in the program in grade twelve may participate for the coursework equivalent to one academic year.

Under current law, beginning with the graduating class of 2008, acquisition of a Certificate of Academic Achievement will be required for graduation. The certificate is evidence that students have met state academic standards in reading, writing and math. Science will be added as a content requirement beginning with the graduating class of 2010.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, in consultation with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and the Higher Education Coordinating Board, must conduct a study of student performance on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and the subsequent performance participating in college-level courses under the Running Start program, including:

- correlations between student scores on the WASL and placement tests used at two-year and four-year colleges and universities;

- correlations between student scores on the WASL, placement tests, and performance in courses taken under Running Start;
- completion rates of courses taken by Running Start students who met the proficiency standard on the WASL;
- causes for students not completing Running Start courses; and
- the current Running Start funding formulas and any recommendations for changes to the distribution of funds between school districts and institutions of higher education.

The study must be completed by January 15, 2006, and the results reported to the Governor, the State Board of Education, and the fiscal and education committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The requirement that students earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement prior to participating in the Running Start program is eliminated. The study of performance and funding of Running Start students is created.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: The WASL is at the center of our education reform. Students are expected to meet state standards and earn, beginning in 2008, a Certificate of Academic Achievement in order to graduate. Yet, a student who wants to attend a college or university to participate in Running Start does not have to demonstrate such proficiency. This sends mixed signals to student, families and educators about the importance of our standards and our education reform. There are a number of students who participate attend institutions of higher education under Running Start who are unsuccessful and disappear. Requiring students to meet state standards prior to participating in Running Start would better ensure that students have shown the academic proficiency to be prepare for college-level work. Home-school parents are supportive of the bill if their children who receive home-school instruction who wish to participate in Running Start are exempted from taking the WASL and earning a Certificate of Academic Achievement.

Testimony Against: Requiring that students earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement prior to participating in Running Start would limit students' access to a college education. Currently, there is insufficient data to confirm that the WASL predicts student readiness for college-level work. There are a number of students for whom the high school environment is not the optimal learning environment and who may not perform adequately on the WASL but have the academic skills to succeed in a higher education environment better suited to their learning styles. This bill would eliminate a positive option for these students. If this mandate is passed, it should also apply to other dual enrollment options, such as Tech Prep, College in the High School, and Advanced Placement, and not just to Running Start.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Dale Brandland, prime sponsor; Barbara Mertens, WASA; Dan Steele, WSSDA; Robert Butts, OSPI; Rainer Houser, AWSP; DiAnna Brannan, Christian Homeschool Network.

CON: Sally Zeiger Hanson, SBCTC; Bruce Botka, HECB.

Signed in, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony: Jean Hernandez, Cascadia Community College.