
Education Committee

HB 1208

Brief Description: Establishing the digital college in the high school pilot project.

Sponsors: Representatives Reykdal, Haler, Lytton, Carlyle, Seaquist, Wylie, Pollet, Jinkins, Ryu, Zeiger, Scott, Fagan, Kagi, Riccelli, Morrell, Kirby, Bergquist, Magendanz, Tarleton, Fey and Roberts.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Digital College in the High School as a two-year pilot project beginning in 2013-14.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to create a web-based portal for high school juniors and seniors to enroll in online courses through the Washington Online system operated by the SBCTC, and receive both high school and college credit.
- Provides that school districts transmit state funds to the SBCTC for each full-time equivalent student enrolled in the online courses, minus 15 percent.
- Requires the school district to provide progress monitoring and instructional assistance for enrolled students.
- Stipulates that enrolled students may not be charged tuition, fees, or textbook costs for the online courses.

Hearing Date: 1/29/13

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Running Start.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Running Start Program (Running Start) allows juniors and seniors in high school to enroll in college courses offered at a community or technical college or a participating public four-year institution of higher education, and receive both high school and college credit. Students must demonstrate that they are ready for college-level work, usually through a placement test administered by the college. Colleges may use different tests or have different readiness standards.

The Running Start students do not pay tuition. Instead, the student is reported as enrolled in the school district for purposes of state funding allocations, and then the district pays the college an amount equal to the statewide average Basic Education allocation, minus 7 percent which is retained by the district. The allocation amount for the 2012-13 school year is \$4,961.76 per full-time equivalent student for regular courses, and \$5,856.48 for vocational courses. Students must purchase textbooks, provide for their own travel, and pay any fees associated with the course. Since 2009 students have also been required to pay other mandatory college fees. Colleges must waive the mandatory fees for low-income students.

In 2011-12, approximately 18,000 students participated in the Running Start, primarily through a community or technical college. According to the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), 10,800 of these students took at least one online course.

Washington Online.

The Washington Online is a collaboration among the state community and technical colleges to offer online courses using a common software system, fee structure, and standards and training for faculty. Courses may be offered by a college only to its own students or to students from other colleges. The Washington Online has developed some courses for the overall system; other courses have been developed by faculty at a particular college. A student must enroll in one of the colleges to access the courses, and receives credit from that college for course completion. The Washington Online manages transfer of tuition and other fees among the colleges.

The Washington Online has also developed a series of courses using open source textbooks. Students enrolling in those courses pay no more than \$30 for textbooks.

Digital Learning Department.

In 2009 the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) was directed to establish an office of online learning, now called the Digital Learning Department (DLD). One of the functions of the DLD is to make online courses available on a subscription basis for any school district in the state. The DLD manages the contracts with the course vendors. Course fees may be paid by the school district or the student through tuition, depending on district policy.

Summary of Bill:

The Digital College in the High School Project (Project) is established for a two-year period beginning in the 2013-14 school year. The OSPI and the SBCTC create a single web-based portal, hosted on the DLD website, to enroll participating high school students in college courses through the Washington Online system, regardless of which college offers the course.

The courses must be applicable toward both high school graduation requirements and distribution requirements at a four-year institution under the statewide direct transfer agreement. Courses may be taught by college faculty, or by a high school teacher approved to be the course instructor on behalf of a college through the Washington Online.

The SBCTC, in consultation with the colleges, must establish a common admission standard for the courses. The standard may be based on current placement tests, but must be the same regardless of which college offers the course. The DLD portal must contain information about how students may access placement tests.

High school juniors and seniors in school districts that have decided to participate in the pilot project may apply to enroll in online courses using the DLD portal. The DLD notifies the school district, indicating the course information, the college offering the course, and contact information for the instructor. Students may not be required to pay any tuition, course fees, or other mandatory fees. Costs for textbooks are paid through the per-student funding.

The school district transmits to the SBCTC an amount equal to the statewide average Basic Education allocation per full-time equivalent student, minus 15 percent. The SBCTC pays the appropriate college through the Washington Online system, including covering textbook costs.

The school district must assign a staff member at the student's high school to provide progress monitoring, technical assistance, communication with the course instructor, and other instructional assistance to support the student in successfully completing the course. The SBCTC and the OSPI must develop a common consent form for students to permit disclosure of education records between the course instructor and the assigned staff member.

If a student continues also to be enrolled in courses at the high school, the student may access the online course from computers on the high school campus. School districts must grant academic credit toward high school graduation requirements, and the college must award college credit upon successful course completion.

The OSPI must conduct a marketing and communications campaign about the Project. An evaluation of the Project must be submitted to the Education and Higher Education Committees by January 15, 2015, including a comparison of student demographics, course enrollment, and course completion between the Project and the Running Start.

The provisions of the bill expire August 31, 2015.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/22/2013.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.