RUNNING START GUIDE STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Federal Way Public Schools

This guide summarizes the Running Start program, outlining its benefits and challenges, eligibility, enrollment steps, and key responsibilities. It is designed to help students and families understand and navigate dual enrollment in high school and college.

School Year 2026-2027, v1

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What is Running Start?

Running Start is a dual enrollment program that allows eligible high school juniors and seniors to take college-level courses at participating community and technical colleges. These courses count for both high school graduation and college credit, and tuition is covered for up to the allowed credit limit per quarter. Students may earn an associate degree alongside their high school diploma.

Benefits

- Free college tuition for eligible credits (typically up to 19 per quarter, depending on high school enrollment).
- Advanced coursework and academic challenge.
- Wide variety of classes and degree options (including CTE, foreign languages, sciences, arts).
- Flexible scheduling: day, evening, hybrid, and online courses.
- Opportunity to earn an associate degree while in high school.
- Participation in college activities and leadership (except intercollegiate athletics).
- Experience adult learning environment and increased personal responsibility.

Challenges & Considerations

- Students pay for books ($100–$900/year), fees (about $200/quarter), transportation, parking, and any credits above the tuition-free limit. Fee waivers may be available for students on free/reduced lunch.
- College classes move faster than high school; one quarter = one year of high school.
- Different academic calendars: breaks and start/end dates may not align.
- Limited parent/guardian access to college records due to FERPA privacy laws.
- Grades earned are permanent on both high school and college transcripts.
- Students must arrange their own transportation.
- Scheduling conflicts may occur; high school schedules do not change to accommodate college classes.
- Students must monitor their own progress; colleges do not send progress reports to parents or high schools.
- Part-time Running Start is possible but highly discouraged due to logistical challenges.

Eligibility

- Must be a high school junior or senior enrolled in a public high school.
- Minimum GPA (usually 2.0 or higher; some colleges require 3.0 for English placement).
- Must place into college-level English (via placement test, transcript review, or qualifying scores on AP/SAT/ACT/SBAC).
- Must not have already met all high school graduation requirements.
- “Rising Juniors” may enroll in up to 10 Running Start credits in the summer following their sophomore year.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Can I participate in high school activities and sports?
    - Yes, Running Start students remain part of their high school community and are eligible for clubs and athletics (must meet WIAA eligibility). Scheduling may be challenging.

- Do I have to attend a specific college?
    - No, you may attend any participating college. Most students choose local options like Highline College or Green River College.

- How are grades transferred?
    - Colleges send grades to the high school at the end of each quarter; these are added to your high school transcript.

- Will colleges/universities accept Running Start credits?
    - All Washington public universities accept RS credits; many private and out-of-state colleges do as well, but policies vary. Check with each institution.

- What is the Enrollment Verification Form (EVF)?
    - The EVF is completed with your counselor each quarter and lists the courses needed for graduation. It must be submitted to the college before registering for classes.
    - OSPI Link to 2026-27 EVF

- How many high school credits are earned in college classes?
    - 5 college credits = 1 high school credit. Courses must be 100-level or above to be eligible for Running Start funding.

- How many college credits can I take in Running Start?
    - It is generally recommended that students take no more than 15 college credits or a combined 1.0 FTE of classes, especially during their first quarter of Running Start.
    - If students are taking any classes at the high school, the amount of credits allowed at the college are reduced.
    - See the chart on the EVF for calculating FTE if also taking classes at the high school.
    - While not recommended, students can enroll in classes for a total of 1.3 FTE, which is a total of 19 college credits.

- What if I am not eligible to take college level math?
    - Some Running Start students take Algebra 2 at their high school. This will reduce the number of credits that can be taken at the college.
    - Students need to pay tuition for any below-college level courses taken at the college.

- Who pays for tuition, fees, and books in Running Start?
    - Tuition for eligible college-level courses (up to the credit limit) is covered. Students are responsible for fees, textbooks, and transportation. Fee waivers and book assistance may be available for students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

- Can I attend Running Start part-time and still take classes at my high school?
    - Yes, students may enroll in both high school and college classes, but is not recommended. The number of college credits funded depends on the number of high school classes taken.

- Can homeschool students participate in Running Start?

    - Yes, but students must enroll through their local public high school to participate in Running Start.

- Will Running Start affect my high school graduation?
    - Yes, you must work closely with your high school counselor to ensure college courses meet high school graduation requirements. Students are responsible for ensuring that college courses taken through Running Start meet high school graduation requirements.

- Do I have to meet high school graduation requirements?
    - If you want to walk in your high school's graduation ceremony, you must meet the FWPS graduation requirements.
    - If you choose to earn your high school diploma through the college, you must sign an acknowledgement form and will not be eligible to walk in an FWPS graduation ceremony.

- What happens if I fail or withdraw from a Running Start class?
    - The grade or withdrawal will appear on both your high school and college transcripts and may affect graduation and future financial aid eligibility.

- Will parents/guardians have access to college grades and information?
    - No, access to college information is limited by federal privacy guidelines. This includes class changes, withdrawals, and grades. Parents/guardians will not be notified if their student is failing a college course.

- Can Running Start students be in the high school building during the school day?
    - Running Start students cannot be at their high school building unless they have a class, club, sport, appointment, or specific administrator approval.

- Can Running Start students receive accommodations for disabilities?
    - Yes, students should contact the college's disability services office to arrange accommodations. Colleges may not offer the same accommodations as high schools.

- Can I participate in Running Start during summer quarter?
    - Summer quarter Running Start is now open for a maximum of 10 credits to students completing the 10th grade and those in 11th and 12th grade with available FTE.
    - OSPI link to 2026 Summer quarter EVF
    - OSPI link to Seniors delaying high school graduation to participate in summer term following their senior year: Summer Running Start Assurances for Delaying Graduation Form.

- Online Resources:
    - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Running Start Information
    - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction FAQs
    - OSPI for Families: How to Enroll in Running Start Guide

Key Contacts & Additional Resources

- High School Counseling Office: For EVF, graduation requirements, and academic planning.
  - Career Academy: https://careeracademy.fwps.org/contact
  - Decatur High School: https://dhs.fwps.org/resources/counseling
  - Federal Way High School: https://fwhs.fwps.org/resources/counseling
  - Federal Way Public Academy: https://fwpa.fwps.org/contact
  - Federal Way Open Doors: https://opendoors.fwps.org/contact
  - Internet Academy: https://iacademy.fwps.org/contact
  - TAF@Saghalie: https://tafatsaghalie.fwps.org/contact
  - Thomas Jefferson High School: https://tjhs.fwps.org/resources/counseling-center
  - Todd Beamer High School: https://tbhs.fwps.org/resources/counseling

- College Running Start Office: For placement, registration, orientation, and advising.
  - Bates Technical College: https://www.batestech.edu/high-school-students/
  - Bellevue College: https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/runningstart/
  - Clover Park Technical College: https://www.cptc.edu/advising/running-start
  - Green River College: https://www.greenriver.edu/students/academics/running-start/index.html
  - Highline College: https://runningstart.highline.edu/
  - Pierce College Running Start: https://www.pierce.ctc.edu/programs/running-start/index.html
  - Renton Technical College: https://rtc.edu/academics/high-school-programs/running-start/index.php
  - Tacoma Community College: https://www.tacomacc.edu/academics-programs/college-high-school/runningstart

Steps to Enroll

- Learn About the Program
  - Attend FWPS Running Start info session (live or recorded)
  - Consult with teachers, parents/guardians, and counselors about readiness for college-level work.

- Pre-Application Tasks
  - Review eligibility requirements for placement into college-level English and math for the specific college planning on attending for Running Start.
  - Review and sign the Running Start Agreement (with parent/guardian).
  - Email your school counselor for next steps to complete your Enrollment Verification Form (EVF).

- Apply for Admission
  - Apply online to the college of your choice. SBCTC - OAA - User Login
  - Receive your student ID and activate your college account.

- Complete Agreements & Forms
  - Review, complete student section, and sign the EVF with parent/guardian.
  - Complete the EVF with your counselor.
  - Review and sign the Equivalency Guide Worksheet with your counselor.
  - Submit all required documents to the college Running Start office.

- Orientation & Academic Planning
  - Attend college orientation sessions.
  - Meet with college Running Start advisors to map out your academic plan.
  - Register for college classes once all forms are complete.
  - Pay any applicable fees and purchase textbooks before classes start.

- Ongoing Responsibilities
  - Maintain a minimum college GPA (usually 2.0).
  - Maintain full-time status as required. Full-time status at the college is 15 credits.
  - Review and sign the EVF (with parent/guardian) before registration each quarter.
  - Complete the EVF with your counselor before registration for each quarter
  - Communicate with both college and high school counselors about schedule changes, withdrawals, or academic concerns.
  - Monitor your own progress in your courses.
  - Check both high school and college emails regularly.
  - Complete all high school graduation requirements.
  - Plan ahead for transportation and scheduling.
  - Register early for desired college courses.
  - Keep track of all deadlines and requirements.
  - Use available resources for fee waivers and textbook assistance if eligible.
  - Communicate regularly with both high school and college advisors.

Running Start Agreement

Student Name: _____FWPS Student ID: _____

Quarter/year you plan to enroll: _____College you plan to attend: _____

We acknowledge that we have attended or watched a Running Start information session through Federal Way Public Schools. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that Running Start courses are rigorous, college-level classes and may require more time and effort than traditional high school courses. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that the student must maintain a minimum cumulative college GPA of 2.0 to remain in good academic standing. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that Running Start students cannot be at their high school building unless they have a class, club, sport, appointment, or specific administrator approval. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that students should submit EVF requests to counselors well in advance, as processing may take a couple of weeks _____(student) _____ (P/G)

We understand that the student must connect with their high school counselor each quarter to complete the Enrollment Verification Form (EVF) prior to registration opening for the following quarter and that registration at the college cannot occur without this step. We understand that the student is responsible for knowing and meeting all college registration and add/drop deadlines each quarter. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that it is the student's responsibility to ensure that college courses taken through Running Start meet high school graduation requirements. We understand we need to follow the equivalency guide provided by the school counselor. We understand that enrollment in specific college courses cannot be guaranteed, even if those courses are needed for graduation. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that the student must regularly check their FWPS school email for important communications and updates and that EVFs can only be sent to FWPS email. _____(student) _____ (P/G)

We understand that, in addition to earning required credits, the student must complete a graduation pathway, the High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP), and the Washington State History requirement in order to graduate. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that the student must remain on track with High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) tasks in SchooLinks in order for Enrollment Verification Forms to be approved and signed by the high school counselor. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that if the student plans to transfer to a four-year college or university, it is the student's responsibility to research and understand admissions requirements, application deadlines, and credit transfer policies. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that grades earned through Running Start are permanently recorded on both the high school and college transcripts. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that if the student adds or withdraws from a college course, they must follow the college's add/drop procedures by the published deadlines and notify the high school counselor immediately of any schedule changes. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that the family is responsible for all non-tuition costs associated with Running Start, including but not limited to textbooks, technology, fees, transportation, parking, tuition charges for credits beyond the allowable limit based on high school enrollment, and full tuition for any course below the 100-level. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that enrolling in more credits than allowed or making changes to the student's schedule may result in additional tuition charges for which the family is responsible. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that parent/guardian access to college grades and student information is limited by college policy and federal privacy regulations. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that the student is responsible for staying informed about all high school senior activities, including cap and gown information, testing dates, and graduation requirements. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that the student should complete all required courses for high school graduation by the end of winter quarter senior year to ensure they will graduate on time. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that the student must regularly check their FWPS school email for important communications and updates. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that the student must notify their high school counselor immediately if they wish to change their high school schedule, fail a college course, or enroll in a college course that differs from what is listed on the Enrollment Verification Form. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that the family should establish a system to monitor the student's academic progress, such as scheduling regular check-ins to review grades, attendance, upcoming assignments or exams, and quarterly registration status. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that high school and college academic calendars and breaks are not aligned, and that missing school at one institution because the other is not in session is not acceptable. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

We understand that the student is responsible for their own transportation to and from college classes and related Running Start activities. _____(*student*) _____ (*P/G*)

I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and will comply with the conditions of Running Start participation and the expectations of college course enrollment.

Student Signature_____Date_____

Student Personal Email Address_____Phone_____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Email Address_____Phone_____

Principal Signature _____ Date _____

Running Start Diploma Acknowledgement

(Only complete if you do NOT plan on graduating with Federal Way Public Schools)

Running Start students may earn a high school diploma issued by the college by completing any associate degree*, even if they have not otherwise met the high school graduation requirements (e.g. credits, state assessments, high school and beyond plan, and community service hours). While this option may be beneficial for some students, there are several important considerations to make before deciding to pursue this option.

Instructions:

- Meet with your Running Start advisor to create an education plan and review the considerations.
- Review this form and your educational plan with your parent/guardian and high school counselor, then obtain the appropriate signatures below.
- Submit this form to your high school counselor.

Considerations:

- Students earning their high school diploma through the college are not eligible to participate in a Federal Way Public Schools graduation ceremony and will not receive a high school diploma through Federal Way Public Schools
- Completing an associate degree requires careful planning.
    - Students must develop an educational plan with a Running Start advisor to ensure accurate course planning and feasibility of earning an associate degree within the timeframe of Running Start participation.
    - Full-time enrollment (typically 15 credits per quarter) at the college is necessary to earn an associate degree within two years.
    - Students who do not complete requirements will be withdrawn from Federal Way Public Schools at the end of their senior year to complete remaining requirements through the college.
    - Changing your mind or failing courses may result in having to take additional courses at the college at the student's expense.
- To be eligible for financial aid, a student must have a high school diploma or GED. If a student exhausts their eligibility in Running Start (only junior and senior year), they must pay full tuition for remaining credits to earn their associate degree/high school diploma and then will be eligible to apply for financial aid.
- University admission requirements
    - Completion of an associate degree does not guarantee admission to a university.
    - Students must complete the appropriate application process, such as meeting College Academic Distribution Requirements (CADRs) or completing a college admission test such as SAT or ACT.
    - Please consult with the admissions office at any universities you plan to apply to for specific requirements.

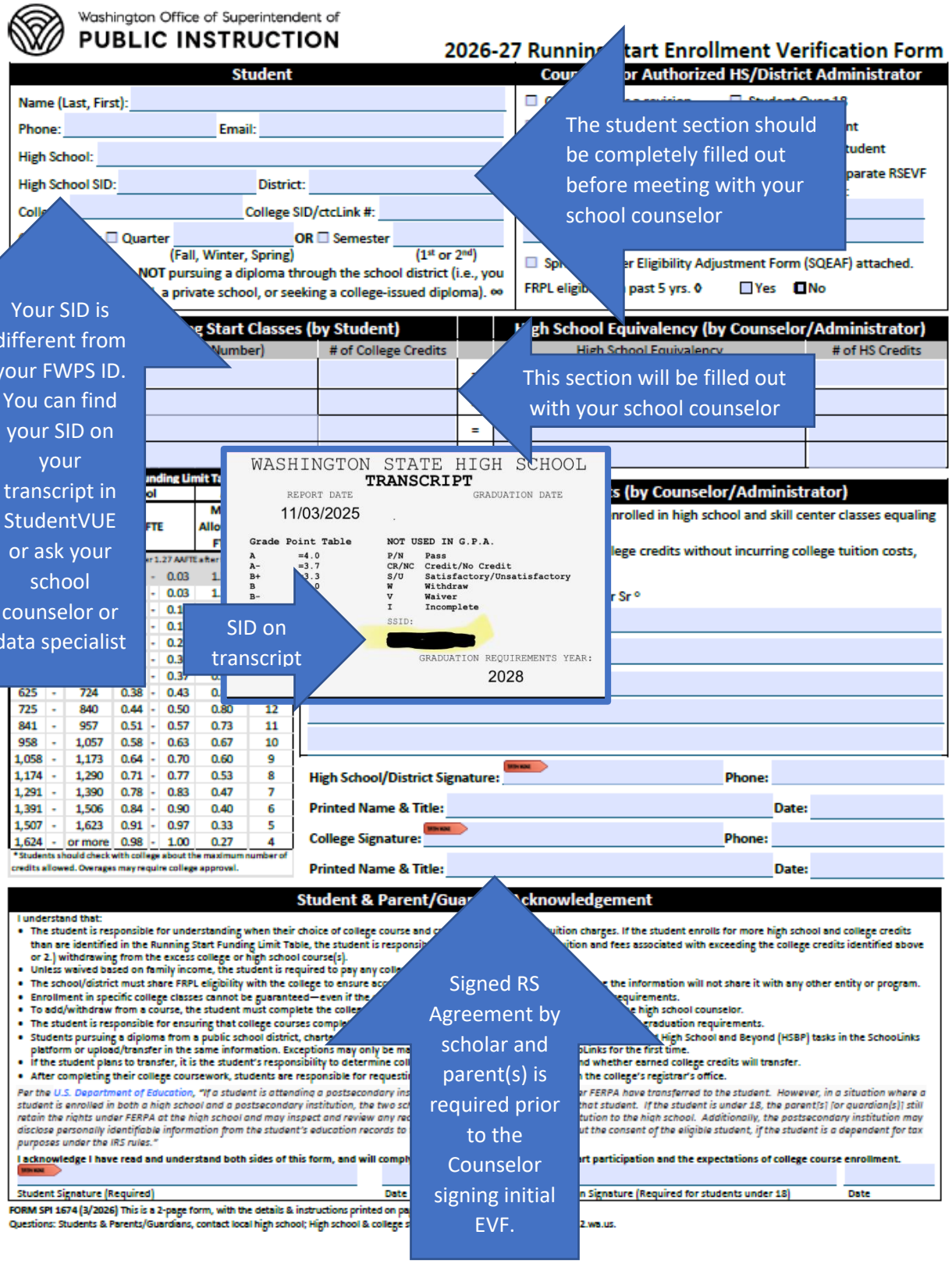
I, _____, have developed an education plan with my Running Start advisor, understand the risks and responsibilities required, and wish to earn my high school diploma through the college.

Student Signature_____Date_____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

*In 2009, Washington state legislature passed Substitute House Bill 1758 (RCW 28B.50.535) allowing students earning an associate degree form a community or technical college to receive a high school diploma issued by the college. RCW 28B.50.535 may be reviewed in full at https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.50.535

Enrollment Verification Form Instructions



The student section should be completely filled out before meeting with your school counselor

Your SID is different from your FWPS ID. You can find your SID on your transcript in StudentVUE or ask your school counselor or data specialist

This section will be filled out with your school counselor

SID on transcript

Signed RS Agreement by scholar and parent(s) is required prior to the Counselor signing initial EVF.