

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

A State Policy Roadmap for Equity & Quality in
College in High School Programs



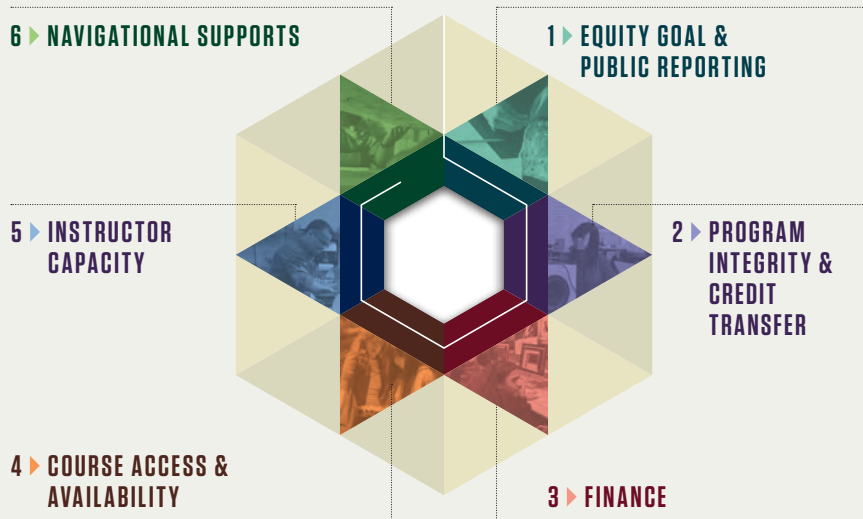
PROFILES IN PROGRESS

Washington

Every state has more work to do in order to advance policy that supports equitable access to high-quality college in high school programs such as dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, and early college high school. However, several states are standing at the forefront of progress in intentionally crafting policies to support college in high school programs that center on equity and quality, and Washington stands out for the number of policies in place designed to do just that.

Washington's efforts are highlighted more than any other state in the College in High School Alliance and the Level Up coalition's 2019 report Unlocking Potential: A State Policy Roadmap for Equity and Quality in College in High School Programs. This landmark resource provides a six-part framework for policymakers to assess and build upon their current policies for these programs, with multiple policy recommendations and examples from select states.

This profile is designed to demonstrate how states can think holistically across the six framework categories of Unlocking Potential and use the experiences of Washington as a guide for their own work. While Washington still has challenges to solve in advancing equitable access to high quality college in high school programs, particularly as it relates to further reducing or eliminating cost barriers for low income students and finding qualified instructors for rural schools, there are many instructive examples that can be derived from the state's experiences.



▶ COLLEGE IN HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN WASHINGTON STATE

Washington uses the umbrella term “[Dual Credit](#)” in state policy to describe a number of programs that allow high school students to earn college credit while still in high school. Dual Credit describes two types of programs: exam-based college preparatory programs (such as Advanced Placement, Cambridge International, and International Baccalaureate) and what is described in Washington state policy as “concurrent enrollment” programs, which include College in the High School, Running Start, and CTE Dual Credit.

Of those, the state has two programs that fall within the College in High School Alliance’s definition of a “[college in high school program](#),” College in the High School and Running Start. This profile focuses on these two programs only. The key features of each are:

- ***College in the High School*** — College in the High School offers college academic courses to 10th to 12th grade students. Courses are taught at the high school, by a high school instructor approved by the appropriate college or university’s academic leadership and who meets the minimum qualifications for instructors teaching the course on campus. Students may earn college and high school credit when they complete the course. If students choose to earn college credit, the credit and grade students earn will be transcribed on their permanent college transcript. Students pay tuition, though some state subsidies are available for rural, small schools, and for low-income students.
- ***Running Start*** — Running Start provides 11th and 12th grade students the opportunity to take college courses at a Washington community and technical college or public, four-year university or college. The course is taught by college faculty. Students earn college and high school credit when they complete the course. The credit and grades students earn are transcribed on their permanent college and high school transcripts. Students pay no tuition; however, they may pay for textbooks, fees, and transportation.

The following sections will provide an overview of Washington’s progress along the six framework categories of *Unlocking Potential*.

▶ EQUITY GOAL & PUBLIC REPORTING



From Unlocking Potential: States set an equitable, statewide public goal for increasing the participation and success of traditionally underserved student groups in college in high school programs, with clear, disaggregated public reporting and accountability for progress toward the goal.

Equity Goal

State policymakers have recognized the important role that expanding equitable access to college in high school programs can play in meeting postsecondary attainment goals. [HB 1546](#), the state’s 2015 dual credit opportunities law, acknowledges the importance of breaking down barriers for participation in concurrent enrollment programs in Washington, particularly for low income students, as “a critical step toward achieving the state educational attainment goals outlined” in the state’s [2013 Roadmap](#).

In addition, a [2019 report](#) from the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) recognizes the importance of these programs in meeting that attainment goal, citing specifically that students who are “traditionally underrepresented in higher education — students of color, low-income students, rural students, and first-generation college students — must not only have access to postsecondary pathways, but these pathways must also seem viable for students who may not readily see themselves as fitting into the traditional college system.”

Public Reporting

Washington is one of the few states that produces annual, publicly available reporting on participation in the state's dual credit programs, which is available on the [Washington State Report Card](#). This data is broken down by type of dual credit taken, with demographic information provided for dual credit participation inclusive of race, income status, and students with disabilities, among others. Unfortunately, the demographic data does not also break out by type of dual credit (College in the High School, Running Start, etc.), but it does provide an overall picture of student participation in the state.

In addition, the state has built a metric of measuring student success in dual credit programs as a School Quality and Student Success indicator in its [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) State Plan](#). The indicator examines, “[a]mong all enrolled students (grades 9–12), the percent of students who completed a dual credit course or program (i.e., AP, IB, College in the High School, Cambridge, Running Start, Advanced Certificated Courses, or Tech Prep).” Completion for this metric is defined as a student who completes a dual credit course, regardless of grade earned. The ESSA plan also addresses opportunity gaps in the education system and works to promote equitable access and opportunity for all Washington students.

Finally, the state has been active in providing support to district leaders and school administrators in working to analyze their own data to identify barriers to achieving equity in dual credit programs. In addition to publishing a [Dual Credit System Improvement Guide](#), there were also a series of webinars on equity, and workshops on serving rural schools. The Washington Education Research and Data Center also convened a multi-sector group of policy leaders and researchers to develop a data set and analysis for current and emerging dual credit data-driven questions and topics.

PROGRAM INTEGRITY & CREDIT TRANSFER



From Unlocking Potential: States support and promote high-quality college in high school programs through effective oversight and cross-sector collaboration between the K-12 and postsecondary sectors, as well as ensuring credit articulation.

Credit Transfer

Washington has [robust statewide transfer agreements](#) for college courses, which may include college credit earned through Running Start and College in the High School. If a student earns a Direct Transfer Agreement Associate Degree (DTA) or Associate of Science — Transfer Degree (AS-T), the following are transferable toward a bachelor's degree at all Washington public and some private not-for-profit baccalaureate institutions of higher education: a general education core of lower-division courses; 90 quarter credits or 60 semester credits; and junior standing.

Ensuring Equivalency with College Courses

In 2019, the legislature passed [SHB 1734](#), which makes it a requirement that College in the High School programs be accredited. [By the 2027–2028 school year](#), College in the High School programs “must receive accreditation by a national accrediting body for concurrent enrollment.” The [National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships \(NACEP\)](#) is the sole national accrediting body for these programs. NACEP accreditation standards ensure that the high-school taught courses are equivalent to those of the offering college or university.

Cultivating Cross-System Collaboration

Washington has a robust history of cross-sector collaboration to advance policy for its concurrent enrollment programs. In 2016, the state produced a [Dual Credit Report](#) that provides recommendations for improving policy for dual credit programs in Washington. The report built upon work conducted by multiple cross-sector collaborations. The WSAC, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Council of Presidents, the Independent Colleges of Washington, and the Association of Washington School Principals also have a history of collaborating on joint communications, including regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, grading, and admissions.

FINANCE



From Unlocking Potential: States design funding mechanisms that remove financial barriers for low-income and moderate-income students to participate and excel in college level work in high school.

For more information on state financing mechanisms for dual enrollment, see [Funding for Equity: Designing State Dual Enrollment Funding Models to Close Equity Gaps](#).

Remove Barriers

Though students incur costs under both College in the High School and Running Start, Washington has made progress in recent years in making available additional funding support, particularly for low income students, to offset the costs incurred and close equity gaps.

For College in the High School, colleges may charge students \$65 in tuition per college credit. State subsidies exist to help mitigate some of those expenses for students, and are reserved for rural schools and those schools that have a higher proportion of students who receive free and reduced price lunch.

In Running Start, students may earn up to 15 credits of college courses each quarter without incurring tuition costs. Above 15 credits, the college is entitled to charge tuition. Students are responsible for paying course fees, as well as costs incurred on books and transportation. Colleges must supply fee waivers for all Running Start students that qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, and it is the responsibility of the school district to inform the college of the students' eligibility for the fee waiver. Many colleges also provide book loan assistance that may cover partial to all book costs each quarter for students that qualify for free and reduced-price lunch.

Finally, in 2019 the Washington legislature created the [Dual Enrollment Scholarship Pilot Program](#) for students participating in College in the High School and Running Start at pilot site schools if they qualify for free and reduced price lunch. [The pilot program](#), which is independently funded by the legislature, selected 17 high schools and 3 colleges across the state to participate as pilot site locations, with selection criteria focusing on geographic diversity and a range of other factors.

COURSE ACCESS & AVAILABILITY



From Unlocking Potential: States ensure that students are able to access college in high school courses, regardless of geography, with pathways that maximize opportunities for students to earn multiple college credits, and facilitate students exploring academic and career areas of interest while ensuring that those courses count toward high school graduation requirements.

Making Courses Available to All Students

Washington school districts are required to notify students and parents about the concurrent enrollment opportunities available to them.

In addition, Washington has become the first state in the nation — beginning with the 2021-2022 school year — to adopt automatic academic acceleration policies for all students. HB 1599, which builds upon the state’s Academic Acceleration Incentive Program, will require school districts to develop a policy to automatically advance a student into the next most rigorous course if the student meets or exceeds either the 8th grade or high school competency in Math, English Language Arts, or Science. The accelerated course must be in alignment with the student’s High School and Beyond plan (see “Navigational Supports.”) Automatic placement, which saw success in the Washington school districts that have implemented the practice for almost a decade, is designed to help reduce equity gaps in these programs by moving away from the traditional opt-in approach for enrollment in these programs.

INSTRUCTOR CAPACITY



From Unlocking Potential: States develop strategies to recruit, support, and diversify the pool of instructors with the qualifications to teach college in high school while encouraging collaboration between K-12 and postsecondary partners as college in high school programs are scaled.

Expanding the Pool of Qualified Instructors

Washington’s Academic Acceleration Incentive Program, in addition to funding support for low income students to participate in concurrent enrollment programs in the state, may also be used by school districts to support teacher training activities and curriculum development.

Teacher-Faculty Collaboration and Professional Development

Washington now requires all College in the High School programs to meet the NACEP accreditation standards. NACEP’s standards have several provisions outlining collegial collaboration and structured professional development. For example, faculty liaisons at postsecondary institutions are required to provide “annual discipline-specific professional development and ongoing collegial interaction” for instructors. Additionally, the standards require that all new concurrent enrollment instructors are to be properly on boarded with the college, including training in the course curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.

▶ NAVIGATIONAL SUPPORTS



***From Unlocking Potential:** States prioritize the student navigational supports and advising needed to ensure student success in college in high school courses, particularly for those students historically underserved by these programs.*

Providing Student Supports

As a criteria of high school graduation, students are required to work with teachers and counselors to develop a “High School and Beyond Plan” beginning in middle school, which includes options to participate in dual credit. The High School and Beyond plan is a strategy for providing students with the advising opportunities necessary to help them locate and become involved with these opportunities, including concurrent enrollment. In addition, Washington agencies and institutions have been engaged in an intentional process of providing information to counselors about dual credit.