



Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Associate Degrees and the Issuance of High School Diplomas

Statutory Authority References:

[RCW 28B.50.535](#) (SHB 1758)–Community or technical college–Issuance of high school diploma or certificate

[RCW 28A.600.300 through RCW 28A.600.400](#)–Running Start

There are many pathways for students to obtain their high school diploma. In 2009, the state Legislature passed [Substitute House Bill 1758](#), which was codified as [RCW 28B.50.535](#), allowing students earning an associate degree from a community or technical college to receive a high school diploma, upon written request, even if they have not otherwise met the high school graduation requirements (credits, state assessments, high school and beyond plan, and culminating project).

Below are scenarios the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has identified in regards to students, how they obtain a high school diploma, and who issues it.

High School Status	Student Age	Associate Degree earned	High School Diploma Granted By	High School Transcript Code
Enrolled	<21	No	HS	GO
Enrolled	<21	Yes	CC (upon student written request)	GA
Not enrolled	21 or older	Yes	CC (upon student written request)	No code

The Secondary Education division has received several inquiries from the field relative to the impact of RCW 28B.50.535 on guidance provided students in Running Start. The status of a student relative to Running Start is not directly related to the provisions of this [Community or technical college–Issuance of high school diploma or certificate statute](#).

The following questions and answers, taken from the [Running Start FAQs](#), also posted to the OSPI Running Start page, are offered as clarification for those providing guidance to students enrolled in college through provisions of the Running Start program.

1) **High School Graduation Requirements → High School issues diploma**

- Student is enrolled in high school and meets all graduation requirements, takes courses at a community or technical college, high school issues the diploma and codes them "G0" (graduated).

- 2) **Associate Degree → Community or Technical College issues diploma upon student written request**
 - Student is enrolled in high school; the community or technical college issues an associate degree and the high school diploma upon student written request. When high school learns of associate degree attainment at community or technical college, the high school will code them "GA" (graduated via associate degree). There is currently no legal requirement for the college to inform the high school, and local agreements are recommended to assure this information is communicated to the high school.
- 3) **Associate Degree (age 21 or older)→ Community or Technical College authorized to issue high school diploma**
 - If the student earns an associate degree after at or beyond age 21, the community or technical college issues the high school diploma upon student written request.

Frequently Asked Questions Related to Students Enrolled in Running Start

Q1. When can Running Start students, who have completed their associate degrees, request the college-based high school diploma?

A1. A Running Start student may request the college-based high school diploma when they apply for graduation with their associate degree or anytime thereafter.

Q2: Should secondary schools continue to track a student's graduation status if the student has indicated intent to pursue his/her high school diploma through a college under the provisions of [RCW 28B.50.535](#) (SHB 1758) and Running Start?

A2: Yes. All Running Start students are considered public high school students and as such should be served and treated like other high school students. Providing all enrolled students with guidance as to graduation requirements and status is consistent with the guidance role of the high school, regardless of student intent relative to possible alternative graduation options. For purposes of graduation rates (and related AYP implications), students who are successful in earning their HS diploma under [RCW 28B.50.535](#) will count as graduates of the home high school, and students who are unsuccessful in completing graduation requirements either through school district or under the provisions of RCW 28B.50.535 (SHB 1758) will be considered non-graduates.

Q3: If a student earns his/her high school diploma through the college as provided in [RCW 28B.50.535](#) (SHB 1758), how would the secondary school document the student as a graduate, and thereby get credit that the student graduated?

A3: When the high school is informed by the college that the student has earned a high school diploma issued by the college under the provisions of [RCW 28B.50.535](#), the high school may withdraw the student using the Withdrawal code "GA" (Graduated through AA degree).

Q4: If a Running Start student earns an Associate degree after his/her expected graduation date, can we document this at the high school as an extended graduation so that this student does not count against our high school for AYP?

A4: Yes, though it would be a rare case for a student to maintain Running Start eligibility after his expected high school graduation date. If the student retained Running Start eligibility as a 12+ student and completed remaining requirements for an associate degree, the high school, if informed by the college, could code the student "GA".

**Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
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