



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# Recommendations for Providing Career and Technical Education through Alternative Learning Experiences

2018

Authorizing legislation: [SB 6032 Sec. 501 \(66\)](#)

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## Executive Summary

Career and technical education (CTE) is a planned program of courses and learning experiences that (a) begins with exploration of career options; (b) supports basic academic and life skills; and (c) enables achievement of high academic standards, leadership, options for high skill and high wage employment preparation, and advancing and continuing education (Revised Code of Washington [RCW] 28A.700.010). Washington's current basic education funding model provides a CTE enhancement specifically intended to support the implementation of a high quality CTE program.

An alternative learning experience (ALE) is a course where some or all of the instruction takes place away from the regular classroom setting or schedule. Both CTE and ALE have state and federal law, regulation, and compliance components. Consistency across all programs is critical to ensure the expected outcomes for students.

State-approved CTE programs generate funding based on a formula that considers seat-based instructional time. In contrast, ALE programs generate funding that considers flexible scheduling for the student, with components of the instructional time independent from any formal classroom time.

The 2018 Supplemental Operating Budget requires the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to make recommendations on how to provide and fund career and technical education and career-connected learning through ALE courses. In addition, OSPI must solicit and incorporate input received from the Online Learning Advisory Committee in making its report recommendations.

Providing enhanced funding to ALE programs could expand access and quality of student experiences through the CTE model; however, there are concerns about addressing alignment to CTE standards and student access to the full CTE program components. If the Legislature intends to pursue ALE programs accessing CTE enhanced funding, OSPI recommends a pilot program to determine the appropriate adjustments needed in funding, ALE course type, documentation, and approval processes prior to statewide access of ALE programs for CTE enhancement. A pilot would provide schools the opportunity to demonstrate they can meet the requirements and expectations of CTE and the associated enhanced funding. It will also provide OSPI data and information necessary to inform costs, rules, and systems to support statewide implementation.

## Introduction

Alternative learning experience (ALE) courses do not currently generate career and technical education (CTE) enhanced funding. There are many reasons why allowing students enrolled in ALE to access enhanced CTE funding may be beneficial. The enhanced funding could support access to high-quality CTE programming for students in ALE, expand access to CTE to students who may not be able to access a traditional schedule, and expand CTE options for many school districts.

However, there are also some concerns about CTE model implementation through the various ALE models. It is necessary to ensure all CTE components (including those beyond instruction) are included, and the enhanced funding will go toward qualifying expenditures and have a direct impact on participating students.

## Background

There have been several changes in funding for ALE over the last decade. Prior to the 2011–12 school year, alternative learning experience (ALE) enrollment was funded through the prototypical school model and included career and technical education (CTE) enhancements. In 2011-12 and 2012-13, House Bill 2026 (2011) allowed qualifying ALE programs to generate the CTE enhancement, but based upon course characteristics, only allowed them to receive 80 or 90 percent of the total funding, including the enhancement. In 2013, the Legislature determined the funding rate for all CTE ALE instruction would be equivalent to the unenhanced Running Start (a program where students receive both college and high school credit at the same time) rate, no longer generating the enhanced CTE rate. While ALE courses do not qualify for enhanced CTE funding, ALE programs are able to provide student access to courses that meet the required occupational education credit.

The State Board of Education (SBE) defines occupational education credit in Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 180-51-068 as, "credits resulting from a series of learning experiences designed to assist the student to acquire and demonstrate competency of skills under student learning goal four and which skills are required for success in current and emerging occupations. At a minimum, these competencies shall align with the definition of an exploratory course as contained in the career and technical education (CTE) program standards of the office of the superintendent of public instruction." School districts offer students opportunity to earn this required credit through a non-CTE course if the course delivers the four outcomes of an exploratory CTE course. These outcomes are summarized as:

1. Demonstrate the application of essential academic learning requirements in the context of preparing for living, learning, and work.
2. Demonstrate occupational specific skills.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of career options within a chosen pathway.
4. Demonstrate employability and leadership skills.

While school districts have flexibility in offering courses that provide occupational education credit through non-CTE and/or non-state approved courses, the enhanced funding is contingent upon state-approved CTE coursework. Students in ALE programs can access credit opportunities, but do not currently generate the enhanced CTE funding. State and federal laws for ALE and CTE programs guide program requirements.

## **ALE Basics**

Alternative learning experience (ALE) is a funding and instructional model for basic education. It is a set of requirements and expectations when a school is claiming funding for courses where some or all of the instruction takes place away from the regular classroom setting or schedule.

### **Basic Education Requirements**

ALE courses have the same educational standards as non-ALE courses:

- Certificated and endorsed teachers.
- Assessment requirements.
- Curriculum approved by the school board.
- Access to state and federal programs including English Learner (EL) services, 504 accommodations, special education, etc.
- Reporting in the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), a warehouse of educational data collected by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

### **Additional ALE Requirements**

To accommodate and be accountable to education independent of a classroom and schedule, ALE has additional requirements in place for funding. These include:

- A written student learning plan (WSLP) developed by the certificated teacher that explains the activities for the month, what the student expectations are, and how progress will be demonstrated.
- Minimum weekly contact time.
- Monthly evaluation of progress.
- Required interventions when a student does not make adequate monthly progress.

### **Three ALE Course Types**

Alternative learning experiences are defined in CEDARS by course type, which identifies how and how much a student interacts with their teacher. This helps understand how students are accessing ALE courses. The three types are:

1. **Online:** More than half of the course content is digital and more than half of the instructional time occurs online with the certificated teacher remote from the student.
2. **Remote:** The WSLP does not require in-person instructional contact time.
3. **Site Based:** The WSLP requires in-person instructional contact time.

Schools are not limited to one instructional model or course type. They may offer both traditionally funded instruction as well as ALE funded instruction. Students may enroll in any combination of courses the district allows. They are not restricted to one instructional model.

### **Audit Component**

In 2013, the Legislature specifically required the State Auditor’s Office (SAO) to audit ALE programs for two years. This requirement has sunset and the results have shown a strong reduction in audit findings for ALE enrollments. The SAO will continue to audit ALE, but as a component of their regular school district audit process. This will continue to ensure school districts meet the expectations of accessing this funding model.

### **ALE Funding**

Allocations for ALE enrollment are provided to school districts for each 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) student at an amount equal to the regular Running Start rate. For the 2018–19 school year, the Running Start rate is equal to \$8,135. A student enrolled in five estimated weekly hours (0.18 FTE), would generate \$1,464 per year. School districts report student FTE enrolled in ALE courses based on estimated weekly instructional hours. This funding is contingent on the district maintaining the appropriate documentation of these instructional hours and other ALE requirements.

## **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program Funding and Requirements**

### **CTE Model**

Career and technical education (CTE) is a program model of delivery, not simply a technical topic that aligns with a skillset that may help with career placement. Both state and federal law provide requirements for in-class instruction, as well as the extended learning and work-based learning components required of all CTE coursework. Extended learning is defined in the CTE program standards as, “learning and teaching activities related to career and technical education course or program competencies which occur beyond the scheduled school day and/or school year under the supervision of a certified CTE teacher.”



As evidenced through the CTE model, the integration of classroom instruction and theory, hands-on application through a laboratory or shop setting, and the application of extended learning outside of the classroom are critical components. Central to the CTE model are Washington’s eight program-aligned Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs). A CTSO is an organization for students enrolled in a CTE program that engages in leadership skill development activities as an integral part of the instructional program.

### **Program Standards**

Career and technical education programs must meet standards established by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). These CTE standards are designed to ensure high-quality, consistent, and relevant CTE programs as essential components of educational and career pathways. These standards provide OSPI approval guidelines for CTE courses and guide the development and continuous improvement of CTE programs in local school districts. The Washington Career and Technical Education Program Standards are located on the [OSPI website](#).

### **CTE Approval**

Per Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.700.010, OSPI must review and approve school district plans for the delivery of career and technical education. To receive approval, school district plans must “demonstrate how career and technical programs will ensure academic rigor; align with the state’s education reform requirements; help address the skills gap of Washington’s economy; and maintain strong relationships with local career and technical education advisory councils for the design and delivery of career and technical education.” The school district plan for delivery of CTE is approved on an annual basis by both the CTE advisory committee and the local school board, and must include all items outlined in RCW 28A.700.010. In addition to the district plan and program evaluation requirements, OSPI manages a course and program approval system required for CTE programs prior to eligibility for enhanced funding.

### **Course Approval Requirements**

All CTE courses are submitted for approval to OSPI through the Education Data System (EDS) using the CTE application. The course application includes the submission of detailed course level information. The district provides a complete course framework, outlining the grade level appropriate academic Washington State Learning Standards; the aligned industry standards specific to program area; and the leadership and employability standards by unit, hours of instruction, and the identified performance assessments. The district must select either a Career and Technical Student Organization or a leadership equivalency program of work to meet the requirements of extended learning. The course must be offered based on review of labor market data, and substantial reason for offering the course. This information is reviewed by the program and/or general advisory committee annually, and local approval is demonstrated through an upload of advisory minutes and labor market data showing cause for the course to be offered. If the course is preparatory, it must additionally align with preparatory course standards as defined in RCW 28A.700.030. If a middle school course is requested, it is required to have a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) focus according to RCW 28A.230.130.

### **Program Approval**

Once a course has been approved by OSPI, it is renewed as part of a program review and approval. District programs are reviewed based on the 5-year cycle of CTE program approval. Districts are to maintain updated frameworks, advisory committee documents, and CTSO/leadership equivalency documents. The program approval cycle is located on the [OSPI website](#).

### **Funding**

Once a school district has an approved CTE course, the district is able to claim the students enrolled in the course for the enhanced CTE allocation. The calculation for CTE allocation considers seat-based instructional time. Career and technical education is funded through the prototypical school funding formula including enhancements for staffing, materials, supplies, and operating costs. For the 2018–19 school year, the CTE enhancement is approximately \$950 per 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) student. A student enrolled in one hour of instruction (0.18 FTE) would generate an enhancement of \$171 per year. The permissible uses of CTE enhancement are defined in RCW 28A.150.265.

### **Audit and High Demand Consideration**

In the 2017 performance audit report, “Leading Practices for the State’s Secondary Career and Technical Education Programs,” the State Auditor’s Office recommended the state “strengthen procedures and documentation requirements to assess whether CTE programs that districts propose or renew correspond with local high demand.” Additionally, the 2018 Supplemental Operating Budget charged OSPI with ensuring CTE courses are aligned with high-demand, high-wage jobs. To do this, OSPI must verify current courses meet high-demand criteria, and must remove any CTE courses that do not align with high-demand industry areas in Washington state. For these reasons, any established courses, regardless of modality of delivery, must meet approval criteria and align with high-demand, high-wage careers.

### **Stakeholder Input**

The Alternative Learning Education Department and the Career and Technical Education Department within OSPI collaborated to solicit feedback from key stakeholders in a variety of ways including webinars, advisory committee meetings, surveys, and conference workshops. Through these avenues, stakeholders provided the following input.

Alternative learning experience and online learning providers stated they could provide quality CTE programming through ALE, noting ALE was eligible for enhanced funding in a previous funding allocation model. The CTE framework approval process, CTE requirements, and ALE documentation requirements provide oversight and structure to ensure courses meet the state and federal expectations. The ALE and CTE departments at OSPI believe these systems should be reviewed to ensure they complement and support each other.

Alternative learning experience stakeholders contended that the enhanced funding would improve their ALE CTE offerings by providing targeted funds for students to access appropriate facilities, hardware and software, certification tests and processes, access and support for extended learning opportunities, as well as professional development for staff. Career and technical education enhanced funding would incentivize school districts to offer required occupational credit courses through CTE-approved programs for ALE students.

Stakeholders agree it is imperative the existing requirements for CTE stay intact, regardless of modality of course taking. Stakeholders strongly recommended the integrity of the CTE model, and the existing requirements, should remain the same for all courses. Any additional CTE courses offered through ALE should include the required work-based learning and extended learning requirements, be aligned to

high-demand careers, and include an opportunity to demonstrate industry competencies and standards. The ability for students to actively engage in extended leadership through Career and Technical Student Organizations was a critical feedback point as well.

Stakeholders provided the feedback that it may be easier to offer some CTE courses through ALE than others. However, the stakeholder committee recommended against restricting CTE courses that could be eligible for ALE. Ensuring the funding directly benefits student experience was identified as being a critical component. The enhanced funding should align with the cost to implement the program and directly support enhanced student experience.

### **Identified Barriers and Concerns**

Some students have limited access to CTE options. Stakeholders and OSPI identified some of these barriers, including, but are not limited to:

- Schools may not have an approved CTE program, or access to a certificated CTE instructor.
- Schools may lack or have limited facilities or equipment necessary for CTE instruction.
- Small schools may not have enough students to substantiate multiple CTE options.
- Students have barriers to attending school on a traditional schedule such as work, parenting, or health challenges.
- Students enrolled in ALE programs in another district or region may not be able to access CTE through their enrolled district and may not be able to access a local course at their local school district or regional skill center.
- Students primarily enrolled in ALE may lack transportation to getting to another location for CTE courses.

Simply allowing ALE programs to access enhanced funding will not solve the identified barriers. In addition, there will be a need for school districts offering CTE through ALE to ensure fidelity to the CTE program model and framework approval. Considerations include:

- Variability in ALE program delivery will potentially result in no hands-on access to learning or evaluation of industry standard-based competency.
- Determining how to provide extended learning requirements, and guaranteeing work-based learning opportunities for all CTE students.
- Ensuring the integrity of the CTE program model, including an opportunity for in-person, hands-on demonstration of industry and technical skill for instruction and evaluation.
- Equity of access for technology and equipment.
- Ensuring any investment follows the cost to implement the program, potentially differentiating funding depending upon the course type and cost associated with delivery.
- Complying with state and federal CTE policy.
- Creating state and district tracking systems to determine how districts are spending CTE enhancement to better determine costs to implement high-quality programs.

## **Data**

Existing data quality is poor because there is no incentive for school districts to report ALE CTE enrollment for apportionment. There is also no means through CEDARS to identify whether a course meets the requirements for CTE and CTE enhanced funding. This limits OSPI's ability to estimate potential impact to funding and enrollment. Alternative learning experience students may be accessing courses that qualify for occupational credit, and would not be reported as ALE CTE courses, as they are not included as state approved CTE programs of study. The ALE CTE data reported for 2017–18 is located in Appendix A.

## **Conclusion and Next Steps**

### **Recommendation**

In consideration of expanding access to career and technical education (CTE) enhanced funding as well as addressing concerns related to compliance and implementation of CTE program standards, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) recommends the development of a pilot program that is designed, developed, and implemented by OSPI.

A pilot program could be open to a variety of alternative learning experience (ALE) models including online, remote, site-based with limited in-person instructional time, and site-based with significant in-person instructional time. A pilot program would allow OSPI to provide enhanced oversight to ensure these opportunities meet CTE program expectations, identify where and how they may not, and develop possible long-term solutions in systems, processes, and requirements.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends the enhanced funding associated with CTE program delivery be distributed through the iGrants system. This approach will allow for more direct oversight of the expenditures through monitoring of budgets and required reporting of supplemental fiscal data as requested. All approved pilot programs should comply with regulations associated with ALE programs (Revised Code of Washington [RCW] 28A.232, and when applicable RCW 28A.250) and CTE programs (RCW 28A.700) and be expected to demonstrate the ability to meet all requirements as a component of the selection process.

In consideration of the differences in the way CTE and ALE programs generate funding, adjustments to the current requirements that consider seat-based instructional time allocation is necessary if ALE programs are to access CTE enhanced funding. A pilot program is a way to determine the appropriate adjustments needed in funding, ALE course type, documentation, and approval processes prior to statewide access of ALE programs for CTE enhancement.

To support the implementation of this pilot project, a minimum of a 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff at OSPI is necessary to provide project, grant, and compliance management, data collection and analysis, and technical assistance and resource development.

If CTE prototypical funding is authorized to all or limited ALE model programs following the pilot program, there will be system changes necessary including, but not limited to, updates to the CTE

approval process, requirements of the ALE written student learning plan (WSLP), compliance management for ALE model programs, technical assistance, and data management additions.

## Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the stakeholders involved in this process, including:

- Online Learning Advisory Committee
- ALE Advisory Committee
- School district CTE directors
- ALE and CTE teachers
- OSPI Student Information Department
- OSPI School Apportionment and Financial Services Department
- OSPI CTE Department
- OSPI Alternative Learning Department
- All of the teachers, administrators, and staff that participated in the online survey

**Table 1: CTE ALE Committee Members**

Participant	School District	Role
Adam Smith	Cheney	Business Education & CTE Director
Andrew Nydam	None	retired educator
Brian Long	Sultan	CTE Director
Brian McClay	NWESD 189	Program specialist
Chance Gower	Highline Public Schools	CTE Director
Cheri Osmuss	West Valley School District	Teacher
Christi Kershaw	Elma	CTE Director
Claudia Cooley	Richland	CTE Director
Erin O'Neill	Peninsula School District	Executive Director - CCLR
Jeremy Matthews	Edmonds	Edmonds Community College
John Waller	North Kitsap	CTE Director
Karen Hay	Lake Washington	WANIC Director
Katie Siewert	Vancouver	Assistant Director
Kevin Gary	North Thurston	Computer Science, IT, Business, Marketing Teacher
Lauren House	West Valley SD	Principal
Lisa Whitling	Battle Ground PS	CTE - Business ED / Tech / Civics 9-12
Lori Paxton	Kent	CTE Director
Mark Wreath	Vancouver Public Schools	CTE Director
Niki Oliver	Centralia School District	Centralia High School
Ron Mayberry	Bethel	Director
Sara Hatfield	South Kitsap	CTE Director
Sharon Fochtman	Sumner	Executive Director, Career and College Readiness

Tim Knue	WA-ACTE	Executive Director
Vicki Leifer	West Valley SD Spokane	CTE Director
Wendie Balmer	Chehalis	CTE Director/Assistant Principal

**Table 2: Online Learning Advisory Committee Participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Role</b>
Adriana Julian	Puyallup School District	Director, Puyallup Digital Learning
Ann Hopkins-Austin	Washington Connections Academy	Assistant Principal
April Williams	Federal Way School District	Dean and Teacher, Federal Way Internet Academy
Ashley Barker	Federal Way School District	Principal Federal Way Internet Academy
Ashley Lieberknecht	West Valley School District	Coordinator West Valley Virtual Academy
Brad Sprague	Washington Association of Learning Alternatives (WALA)	Executive Director
Carolyn Logue	K12, Inc.	Lobbyist
Dang Phan	AdvancED Accreditation	Director of Digital Learning
Darlene Wilgus	Battleground School District	Online Learning Administrator
Jayme Evans	Omak School District	Principal Washington Virtual Academy
Jeff Bush	Insight School of Washington/K12 Inc.	Executive Director
Jill Smith	Battleground School District	Executive Director of Federal Programs and Instructional Support Services
Kathryn Hobbs	Washington State PTA	CEO/Executive Director
Kevin Corbett	Everett School District	Teacher
Kristin Whiteaker	Spokane Public Schools	Director, Spokane Virtual Learning
Liselotte Thompson	AdvancEd Accreditation	Director
Mark Christiano	Omak School District/K12 Inc.	Head of School Washington Virtual Academy,
Mike Lunde	Mary M. Knight School District	Principal Washington Connections Academy
Myron Hammond	Quillayute Valley School District	Principal Insight School of Washington
Rob Perkins	Evergreen Public Schools	School Board Member
Ron Mayberry	Bethel School District	Director, Career and College Readiness
Shanea Giroux	Spokane Virtual Academy	Student Support Specialist, Spokane Virtual Academy

Stephen Miller	Washington Education Association	Vice President
Todd Dalsted	Graduation Alliance	Program Manager

**Table 3: ALE Advisory Participants**

Participant	School District	Role
Brad Sprague	Washington Association of Learning Alternatives	Executive Director
Carrie Deforest	Kennewick	Principal, Mid-Columbia Partnership
Gina Longland	Sumner	Principal, Elhi Hill Alternative High School
Gwen Harris	Spokane	Director of Option Schools and Program Support
Kristen Morga	Bremerton	Principal
Mark Clements	Battleground	Principal, River HomeLink

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: State Level CTE ALE Data

In 2017–18, schools reported through CEDARS:

- 234,283 students participated in CTE courses
  - These students participated in an average of 2.6 different CTE courses each
- 4,433 students participated in CTE courses through ALE
  - These students participated in an average of 1.7 different ALE CTE courses each
- 8,353 students in ALE only participated in ALE funded courses
- 6,830 students in ALE participated in a non-ALE CTE course

2017–18 enrollment from P223 report:

- 738.34 total FTE of high school vocational ALE reported by 27 school districts
- 34.02 FTE of skill center vocational ALE



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