

Texas Education Agency

# Graduation Toolkit

Information for Planning Your High School Years & Beyond

including information about the new  
**Foundation High School Program**

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Texas Education Agency

# Graduation Toolkit

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# Graduation Program – Overview

## Foundation High School Program

A new, more flexible graduation program that allows students to pursue their interests will be in place for all students who enter high school, beginning in the 2014-2015 school year.

### The program contains up to four parts:

- A 22-credit foundation program which is the core of the new Texas high school diploma
- Five endorsement\* options that allow students to focus on a related series of courses
- A higher performance category called Distinguished Level of Achievement
- Performance Acknowledgments that note outstanding achievement

### The Foundation requirements (22 credits) include:

**English (4 credits)** • English I • English II • English III • An advanced English course

**Mathematics (3 credits)** • Algebra I • Geometry • An advanced math course

**Science (3 credits)** • Biology • Integrated Physics & Chemistry or an advanced science course  
• An advanced science course

**Social Studies (3 credits)** • World History or World Geography • U.S. History  
• U.S. Government (one-half credit) • Economics (one-half credit)

**Languages Other Than English (2 credits)** • 2 credits in the same language or  
• 2 credits from Computer Science I, II, III

**Physical Education (1 credit)**      **Fine Arts (1 credit)**      **Electives (5 credits)**

**Speech:** Demonstrated proficiency

**Endorsements** Total credits with endorsements 26

## Enhancements

Additionally, a student may earn the Distinguished Level of Achievement and/or a Performance Acknowledgment for outstanding performance. The Distinguished Level of Achievement must be earned to be admitted to a Texas public university under the Top 10 percent automatic admission law.

### Distinguished Level of Achievement

- Foundation Program requirements
- 4 credits in math including Algebra II
- 4 credits in science
- at least 1 endorsement

### Performance Acknowledgments

- dual credit course
- bilingualism and biliteracy
- PSAT, ACT's Plan, SAT or ACT
- Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exam
- earning a nationally or internationally recognized business or industry certification or license

\*A student entering 9th grade must indicate an endorsement he or she plans to follow. A student may change or add an endorsement at any time.

A student may graduate without earning an endorsement if, after his or her sophomore year, the student's parent signs a form permitting the student to omit the endorsement requirement.

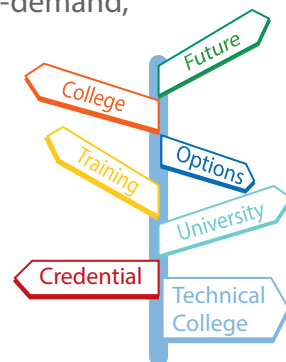


## Distinguished Level of Achievement – *Benefits*

### Choices determine options

Most of the very best jobs available now and in the future require education and training beyond a high school diploma. Whether you intend to pursue a high-demand, industry workforce credential from a community or technical college or a traditional four-year degree from a university, the choices made in high school will determine your future options.

To best prepare yourself now for the transition to post-high school education or quality workforce training, choosing and taking the right classes is essential. The Distinguished Level of Achievement will ensure the best preparation for your future.



### Why it matters — *Benefits*

The Distinguished Level of Achievement opens a world of educational and employment opportunities for you beyond high school. The Distinguished Level of Achievement will:

- Allow you to compete for Top 10% automatic admissions eligibility at any Texas public university;
- Position you among those first in line for a TEXAS Grant\* to help pay for university tuition and fees; and
- Ensure you are a more competitive applicant at the most selective colleges and universities.

\*Must be financially qualified

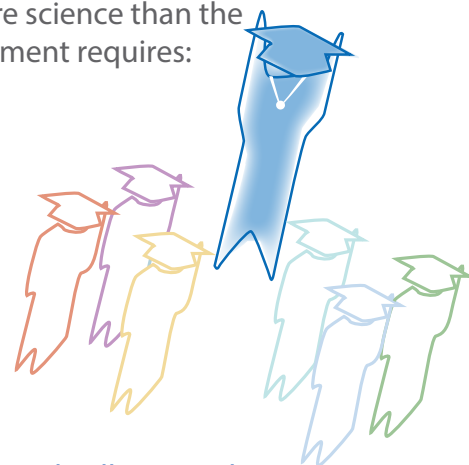
### What it means

The Distinguished Level of Achievement requires more math and more science than the Foundation High School Program. The Distinguished Level of Achievement requires:

- A total of four credits in math, including Algebra II;
- A total of four credits in science; and
- Successful completion of an endorsement in your area of interest.

### Advantages

- Opportunity to earn an endorsement in an area of interest
- More college and university options
- More financial aid options
- Better preparation for college-level coursework at community/technical colleges and universities
- Opportunity for immediate enrollment in classes related to your chosen field of study
- Strong foundation to successfully complete an industry workforce credential or college degree



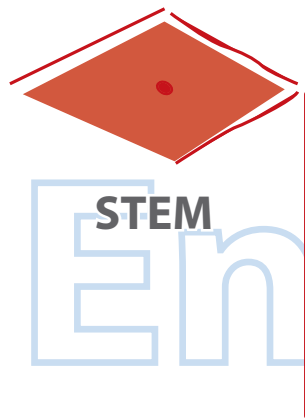
# Texas High School Diploma – *Steps*

## Distinguished Level of Achievement

26 Credits • Algebra II Required • Eligible for Top 10% Automatic Admissions to Texas Public Universities

22 Credits for the Foundation High School Program

Requirements of 1 Endorsement  
(including 4<sup>th</sup> credit of Math and Science and 2 additional electives)



Be sure to visit your school counselor to learn more about your options.  
Students may earn more than one endorsement.

## Endorsements – *Choices*

### Endorsements

For the first time, students will be able to earn one or more endorsements as part of their graduation requirements. Endorsements consist of a related series of courses that are grouped together by interest or skill set. They provide students with in-depth knowledge of a subject area.

Students must select an endorsement\* in the ninth grade. Districts and charters are not required to offer all endorsements. If only one endorsement is offered, it must be multi-disciplinary studies.

Students earn an endorsement by completing the curriculum requirements for the endorsement, including 4th credit of math and science and 2 additional elective credits.

### Students can choose from 5 endorsement areas

#### Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

- Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses related to STEM
- Mathematics
- Science
- Computer Science
- Combination of no more than two of the categories listed above

#### Business and Industry (one of the following or a combination of areas)

- Agriculture
- Arts
- Audio/Video
- Finance
- Marketing
- Food and Natural Resources
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Technology Applications
- Architecture and Construction
- Technology and Communications
- Business Management and Administration
- Transportation or Distribution and Logistics
- English electives in public speaking, debate, advanced broadcast journalism, advanced journalism including newspaper and yearbook

#### Public Service (one of the following)

- Human Services
- Law
- Corrections and Security
- Health Science
- Public Safety
- Education and Training
- Government and Public Administration
- Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC)

#### Arts and Humanities (one of the following)

- 2 levels each in two languages other than English (LOTE)
- 4 levels in the same LOTE
- Courses from one or two areas (music, theater, art, dance) in fine arts
- English electives not included in Business and Industry
- Social Studies
- American Sign Language (ASL)

#### Multi-Disciplinary Studies (one of the following)

- 4 advanced courses from other endorsement areas
- 4 credits in each foundation subject area, including English IV and chemistry and/or physics
- 4 credits in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or dual credit selected from English, mathematics, science, social studies, economics, LOTE or fine arts

\*Visit your school counselor to learn more about your options.  
Students may earn more than one endorsement.

ENDORSEMENTS

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Review** choices offered under the **Foundation High School Program** and the **Endorsements** to decide on your future academic path.
- Select** the endorsement that best fits your area of personal interest and the major you plan to study in college.
- Recognize** that most college entrance requirements include rigorous advanced courses including **Algebra II**, higher-level science courses and languages other than English.

## 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Monitor** high school credits; be sure to meet all **local and state requirements** by the end of the senior year.
- Take dual enrollment** or **Advanced Placement courses** if possible to earn college credit while still in high school.
- Keep** list of awards, honors and extracurricular activities for scholarship and college applications.
- Research** colleges or universities you are interested in attending. **Check** admission and application requirements and timelines.
- Explore** interests and take advantage of **Career Day** opportunities.
- Attend college nights** hosted by your high school. **Talk** with school representatives about the types of financial aid available.
- Take** the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test in your sophomore year for practice. In your junior year, take the PSAT for eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship Competition. Students who take the PSAT or ACT's PLAN tend to score higher on the SAT or ACT than those who do not.

## 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Take dual enrollment** or **Advanced Placement courses** if possible to earn college credit while you are still in high school.
- Check** with your counselor's office to learn about available scholarships. Be sure to apply early and for as many scholarships as possible. Do not limit yourself to local scholarships.
- Consider** taking SAT/ACT preparation classes. **Sign up** and take the ACT and/or SAT test, preferably in your junior year but no later than the fall of your senior year.
- Fill out** the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) early in the spring of your senior year.
- Apply** to college during the fall of your senior year.

If you plan to pursue technical training or enter the workforce after graduation, see the Information - *Workforce Resources* page or visit Texas Reality Check at [www.texasrealitycheck.com/](http://www.texasrealitycheck.com/).



## Resources

### House Bill 5

[www.tea.state.tx.us/graduation-requirements/hb5.aspx](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/graduation-requirements/hb5.aspx)

In 2013, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 5 creating a new graduation plan for Texas students — the Foundation High School Program. This webpage provides an array of information including:

- A side-by-side comparison of the Foundation High School Program and the previous graduation plans (PDF)
- A Foundation High School Program Frequently Asked Questions (PDF)
- Approved Foundation High School Program Rules — Detailed information about the state's graduation plan (PDF)

### Compare College TX

[www.comparecollegetx.com](http://www.comparecollegetx.com)

Compare College TX is an interactive, mobile-friendly web tool designed to help students and parents learn more about Texas public universities and community/technical colleges.

## Did you know...

### *credit*

students can earn college credit while still in high school by taking Advanced Placement courses and earning high scores on the AP tests or by enrolling in and passing dual credit courses?

### *eligible*

students ranked in the Top 10 percent of their graduating class from an accredited public or private Texas high school are eligible for automatic admission to any Texas public university if they have completed the Distinguished Level of Achievement?

### *earnings*

over their lifetime, high school graduates with a bachelor's degree earn 84 percent more\* than a high school graduate?

### *tuition*

the highest ranking graduate at each Texas public high school receives a certificate from the Texas Education Agency that can be used as a scholarship to cover tuition costs at any Texas public college or university?



\*Center on Education and the Workforce, "The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings," August 2011. Georgetown University



## Career

If you are considering going straight into the workforce or into a technical training program following graduation, you still need to complete your high school education and earn a high school diploma.

### While in high school, you will want to:

- Look** at the five endorsements offered under the Foundation High School Program.
- Determine** your area of interest.
- Complete** your selected endorsement along with the required foundation program to earn your high school diploma.
- Learn** about available jobs, and any required post-high school or technical training.
- Explore** new career opportunities.
- Research** wage and occupation information, required levels of education and training requirements.
- Discover** your interests and abilities; use labor market resources at [www.texasrealitycheck.com/](http://www.texasrealitycheck.com/) and at [www.texasworkforce.org/customers/jsemp/career-exploration-trends.html](http://www.texasworkforce.org/customers/jsemp/career-exploration-trends.html).
- Research** which jobs are among the fastest and most in-demand in Texas at [www.texascaresonline.com/hotshots/hotshotslists.asp](http://www.texascaresonline.com/hotshots/hotshotslists.asp).

### Community College & Career Schools

- Find** training and certifications for specific occupations or skills through community colleges or career schools and colleges at [www.texasworkforce.org/svcs/propschools/career-schools-colleges.html](http://www.texasworkforce.org/svcs/propschools/career-schools-colleges.html).

## Did you know... training

many of the high-demand jobs<sup>1</sup> will require some postsecondary education?

## tuition

students attending community colleges or trade schools may also be eligible for state or federal financial aid?<sup>2</sup>

## credential

that Texas public school students can earn a Performance Acknowledgement with their diploma by earning a nationally- or internationally-recognized credential for a specific professional occupation, such as certified nurses' aid certification (CAN) or computer tech certification (CTC) while in high school?

## earnings

over their lifetime, high school graduates with a workforce certificate from a community or technical college earn 20 percent more<sup>3</sup> than those with only a high school diploma?

<sup>1</sup> Texas Workforce Commission

<sup>2</sup> Get the facts at [www.collegeforalltexans.com](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com) or [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov)

<sup>3</sup> Center on Education and the Workforce, "Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees," June 2012. Georgetown University

### Foundation High School Program

The basic 22-credit graduation program for Texas public school students.

### Endorsements

Areas of specialized study. The areas are:

- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)
- Arts and Humanities
- Public Service
- Business and Industry
- Multidisciplinary Studies

A district or charter that offers only one endorsement must offer Multidisciplinary Studies.

### Distinguished Level of Achievement

A high level of academic achievement earned by going beyond the Foundation High School Program. It requires a total of 26 course credits, including Algebra II, a fourth science credit and an endorsement. A student must earn this designation to be eligible for Top 10 percent automatic admission to a Texas public university.

### Performance Acknowledgments

Students may earn an additional acknowledgment on their diploma because of outstanding performance in areas such as dual credit courses and bilingualism and biliteracy; on Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, PSAT, ACT's Plan, the SAT or ACT exams; or by earning a nationally- or internationally-recognized business or industry certification.

### Course Credit

A unit of measure awarded for successful completion of a course. Completion of a one semester course typically earns one-half credit for a student.

### Industry Workforce Credential

A state, nationally, or internationally-recognized credential that aligns with the knowledge and skills standards identified by an association or government entity representing a particular profession or occupation and valued by business or industry. Examples include a credential for certified nurse aid (CNA) or the automotive service excellence (ASE) certification in the automotive industry.

### STAAR

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) is the state-mandated test given annually to students in grades 3-8 and in five high school courses.

### EOC

STAAR end-of-course exams are state mandated tests given during the final weeks of a course. In addition to meeting graduation course requirements, students are required to pass five end-of-course exams to earn a diploma from a Texas public high school. Those five exams are given when a student takes English I and II, Biology, Algebra I and U.S. History courses.







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