

Texas Education Agency

# Graduation Toolkit

Information for Planning Your High School Years & Beyond



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

 *Overview*

 *Steps*

 *Checklists*

 *Workforce  
resources*

 *Benefits*

 *Choices*

 *University  
resources*

 *Glossary*

Texas Education Agency

# Graduation Toolkit

Graduation Program - *Overview*

Distinguished Level of Achievement - *Benefits*

Texas High School Diploma - *Steps*

Endorsements - *Choices*

Graduation Program - *Checklists*

Information - *University Resources*

Information - *Workforce Resources*

Graduation Program - *Glossary*

# Graduation Program – Overview

## Foundation High School Program

The Foundation High School Program with endorsements is a flexible program that allows students to pursue their interests. It is the default graduation program for students who entered high school in the 2014-15 school year or later.

### The program contains up to four parts:

- A 22-credit foundation plan which is the core of the Texas high school diploma program
- 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 in specific areas\*\*

### 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 Areas\*\*

- dual credit courses
- bilingualism and biliteracy
- PSAT, ACT ASPIRE®, SAT or ACT
- Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams
- earning a state-, nationally- or internationally-recognized business or industry certification or license

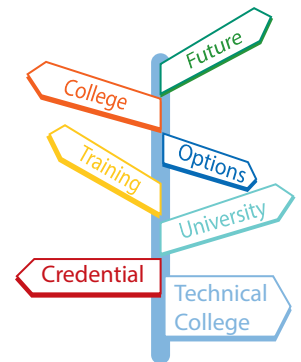
\*A student entering 9th grade must indicate an endorsement he or she plans to follow. A student may change or add an endorsement at any time.

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.

### 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:

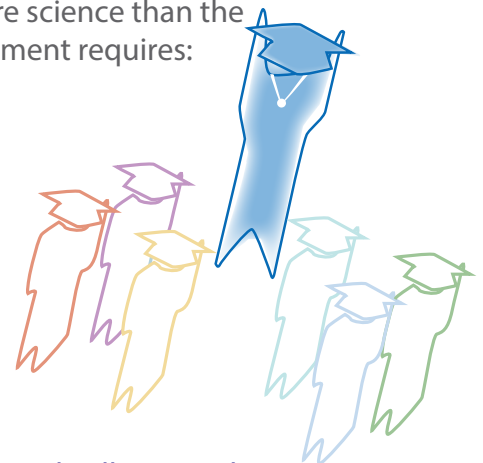
- Allow you to compete for Top 10% automatic admissions eligibility at any Texas public university;
- Position you among those first in line for a TEXAS Grant\* to help pay for university tuition and fees; and
- Ensure you are a more competitive applicant at the most selective colleges and universities.

\*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







## Resources

### Foundation High School Program with Endorsements

[tea.texas.gov/graduation-requirements/hb5.aspx](http://tea.texas.gov/graduation-requirements/hb5.aspx)

In 2013, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 5 creating 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 programs
- A Foundation High School Program Frequently Asked Questions
- Approved Foundation High School Program Rules — Detailed information about the state's graduation program

### 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 may be eligible for automatic admission to a Texas public university if they have completed the Distinguished Level of Achievement?

### *earnings*

over their lifetime a high school graduate 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 on their transcripts by earning a state-, 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

# Graduation Program – *Glossary*

## 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 Services
- 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 transcripts because of outstanding performance in areas such as dual credit courses and bilingualism and biliteracy; on Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, PSAT, ACT ASPIRE<sup>®</sup>, the SAT or ACT exams; or by earning a state-, 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

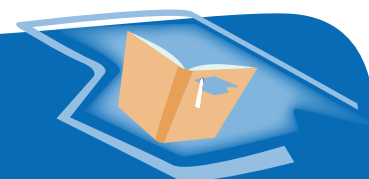
A state-, national- or internationally-recognized credential that aligns with the knowledge and skills standards identified by an association or government entity representing a particular profession or occupation and valued by business or industry. Examples include a credential for certified nurse aid (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

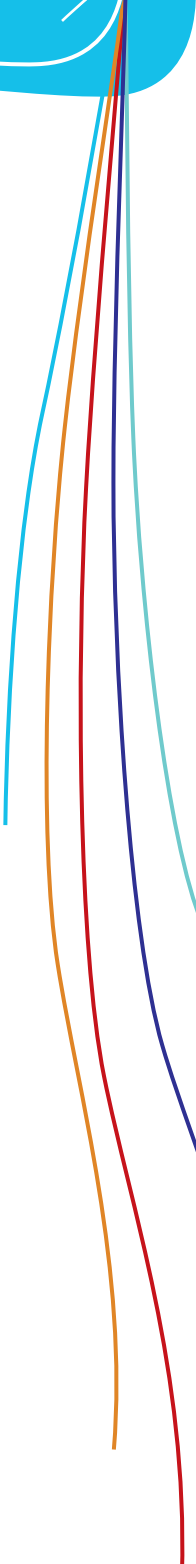
STAAR end-of-course exams are state mandated tests given during the final weeks of a high school course. In addition to meeting graduation course requirements, students are required to pass five end-of-course exams to earn a diploma from a Texas public high school. Those five exams are given when a student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



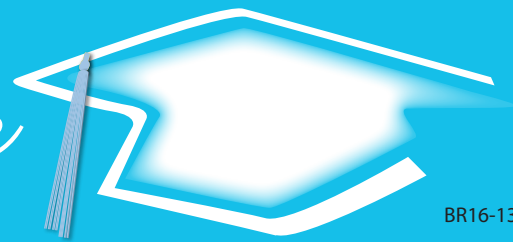
# My Notes



Two columns of horizontal lines for writing notes.



# My Graduation Date





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