

Texas Latino Education Coalition



Testimony on HB 5 Implementation, 60x30TX/Higher Education Alignment Joint Interim Charge

**Presented by David Hinojosa, J.D., TLEC Co-Chair, before the Texas Senate Education
and Higher Education Committees, March 29, 2016**

Members of the Joint Committee:

Thank you for allowing the Texas Latino Education Coalition (TLEC) the opportunity to provide written and oral testimony on the implementation of House Bill 5 in Texas and alignment with the 60x30TX higher education plan. TLEC is a collaborative of organizations and individuals who advocate for the rights of Latino students at the local, state and national levels. The coalition was organized to focus specifically on critical educational issues in Texas and to improve the state of education for Latino students in public schools.

Our testimony today focuses on three areas: (1) concerns over tracking minority and low income students into HB 5 graduation plans that do not prepare students for college; (2) the misalignment between HB 5 graduation plans and college admission requirements; and (3) the lack of information provided to parents and students regarding HB 5's graduation requirements. We end with key recommendations that the Joint Committee may consider as HB 5 continues its rollout in the schools.

Continuing Concerns with Tracking Students of Color and Low-Income Students into non-College-Ready Graduation Plans

Before the adoption of the new Foundation High School Program through House Bill 5 in 2013 (83rd RS), Texas's default graduation plan-the Recommended High School Program (RHSP)-prepared an increasing number of students for college. In 2013, approximately five out of every six students (83.5%) graduated under the RHSP or the Distinguished Achievement Program, compared to just 68% nine years earlier (Source: TEA 2013-14 Texas Academic Performance Report-Longitudinal Cohort). The gaps among racial and income groups also were much smaller in 2013:

State	African American	Hispanic	White	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Econ Disad	ELL
83.5%	76.7%	83.7%	84.6%	79.8%	94.0%	85.7%	79.6%	70.0%

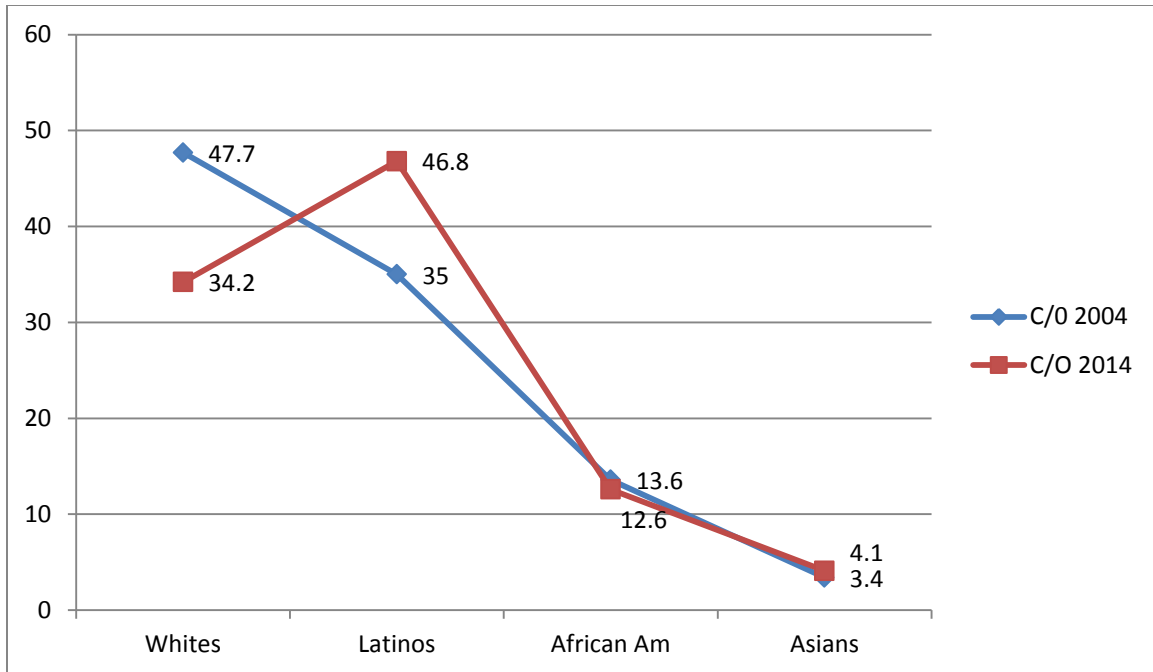
A 2015 evaluation report by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), created at the request of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), found that under the RHSP, graduation rates rose as did the number and percentage of students graduating under the RHSP (AIR House Bill 5 Implementation, 2015). During this time period, the student demographics also changed, with the state growing in the number and percentage of Latina/o students, particularly. This demonstrated that students and schools were achieving the higher expectations set before them.

The adoption of the Foundation program, which does not require college preparation for all endorsements, places this progress at risk. As the chart below shows, only the distinguished level of achievement (which in reality is the old RHSP) will ensure students access curriculum that more adequately prepares them for college.



(IDRA Ready Texas HB 5 Graduation Requirements, Feb. 2016)

Today, Latino and African American students make up nearly 60% of all Texas public high school graduates, compared to 34% white students. (Texas Academic Performance Report, State 2014-15) This is a huge leap, even over the past ten years when whites comprised 47.7% of high school graduates compared to 48% between Latino and African American graduates (TEA Academic Excellence Indicator System, State Report 2004-05). But the demographic change is even more telling when you consider that for the Class of 2014 (the last year reported), the total number of graduates was 303,109, compared to 244,165 for the Class of 2004, and all student racial/ethnic groups increased the number of graduates, except white students who graduated nearly 13,000 fewer students in 2014.



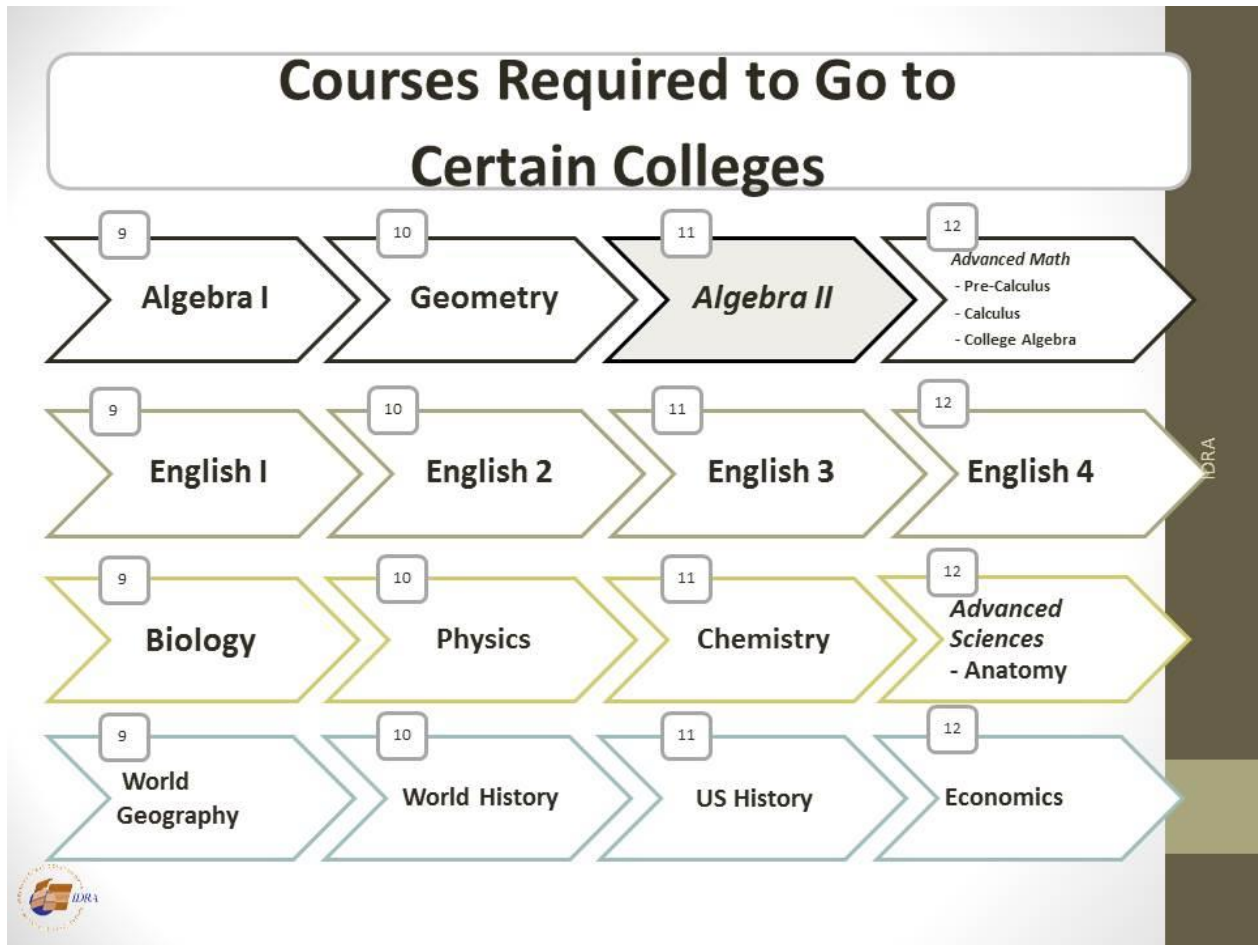
(Racial/Ethnic Demographic Percentages of Graduation Classes, 2004-05 State AEIS Report and 2014-15 State Texas Academic Performance Report)

Given the changing demographics and the new graduation requirements, TLEC is particularly concerned about whether the State of Texas is heading in the right direction. We understand that the state is pursuing research as school districts continue to implement HB 5 and will monitor those efforts closely. TLEC encourages the Senate Education and Higher Education Committees to adopt policies in the area of curriculum graduation plans that guarantee the following:

- No student or any group of students should be tracked into low-level courses nor into different diploma routes or graduation plans.
- Schools should provide a high quality curriculum that prepares all students to enroll in and complete college, supplemented by optional courses that prepare them to enter the workforce after graduation.
- The same high quality curriculum should be available to all students in all schools, including those placed in alternative education settings.

Further Alignment between K-12 Graduation Plans and Higher Education Admission Course Requirements is Necessary

As noted above, the previous default graduation plan, RHSP, was well-aligned with most four-year Texas university college admission requirements. The following chart outlines typical courses required by four-year universities:



Under the RHSP, the high school required courses often matched the general course requirements for university admissions. However, under the Foundation program, there is stark misalignment, even with a Multidisciplinary Endorsement. The chart below shows (from left to right) the required courses under the RHSP, the Foundation Program, the Foundation plus Multidisciplinary Endorsement, the Distinguished Level of Achievement, and Certain Texas College requirements (the colleges reviewed online included UT-Austin, Texas A&M, Baylor, Texas Tech, among others). The courses highlighted in red in the far-right column identify courses that are not required under the Foundation plus Multidisciplinary Endorsement. (IDRA La Feria Presentation, 2015; TEA Side-by-Side, 2014)

How Courses Under Texas HS Graduation Programs Match with Required Courses for Certain Colleges

Recommended High School Program (Current Default for students entering 9 th Grade before 2014)	Foundation High School Program (Requires at least one endorsement; default for 9 th Grade in 2014-15))	Foundation plus Multidisciplinary Endorsement (Default Endorsement)	Distinguished Level of Achievement (*Required for Top 10%)	Certain Texas Colleges (Red indicates add'l requirements above Foundation Program and potentially endorsement)
English Language Arts (4 credits) Eng I, II, III and IV	ELA (3 Credits) Eng I, II, III and advanced Eng Course	Same plus see below	Same	Eng I, II, III and IV
Math (4 credits) Alg I, II, Geometry, Additional Math	Math (3 credits) Alg I, Geometry, Adv Math	Same plus see below	(4 Credits, incl. Alg II)	Alg I, Geometry, Alg II, and Adv. Math: Pre Cal; Calculus; College Algebra
Science (4 credits) Biology, IPC or Adv Sci Course, Adv Sci Course	Science (3 credits) Biology, IPC or Adv Science, Adv Science	Same plus see below	(4 credits)	Biology, Physics, Chemistry, and Adv. Science
Social Studies (4 credits) World Hist or World Geog; US Hist; Economics (1/2); US Gov't (1/2)	Soc Stud (3 credits) World Hist or World Geog; US Hist; Economics (1/2); US Gov't (1/2)	Same plus see below	(4 credits)	World Geog; World His; US Hist; Economics/Gov't (4 credits)
Other PE- (1); Langs other than Eng- (2) in same lang); Fine Arts- (1); Communications Applications or Prof'l Communications (CTE) (½ credit; Elective credits (5 1/2)	Other PE- (1); Langs other than Eng- (2) in same lang) or (2) in Comp Sci I, II, III; Fine Arts- (1); demonstrated speech skills; Elective credits (5)	Other, One of following: 4 adv courses w/in one endorsement area or among endorsement areas that are not in a coherent sequence; 4 credits in each of 4 foundation subj areas incl Eng IV & Chem &/or Physics; 4 credits in AP, IB or dual credit from Eng, math, science, soc stud, econ, Lang other than Eng, or fine arts)	Other: Completion of at least one endorsement	



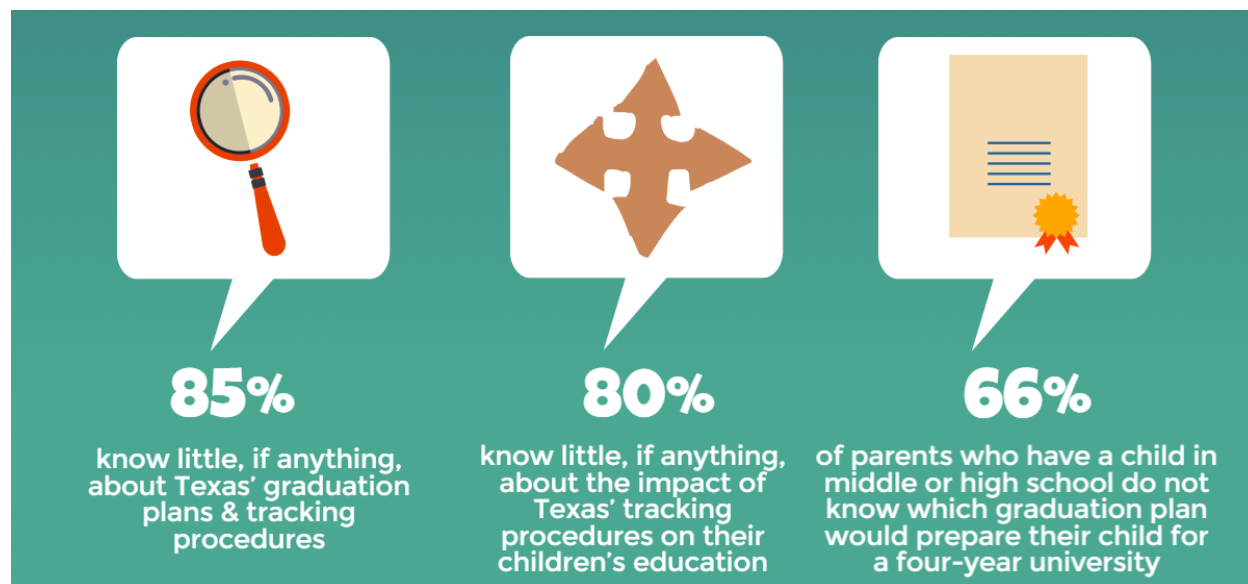
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Policies both in PK-12 and higher education must ensure that the required courses align between the endorsements and those required by college admission offices. *Legislators can begin to take steps of ensuring proper alignment by: (1) studying the latest changes in course requirements by colleges across the state; and (2) encouraging local school districts to offer courses that align with basic admission requirements.*

Students and Parents Must be Adequately Informed of the Benefits and Consequences of Selecting Endorsements and the Distinguished Level of Achievement

The potential rollback on college preparedness for all students and the possibility of tracking minority and low income students into less rigorous graduation plans led to several amendments of HB 5 that would help ensure that parents and students were adequately informed before selecting an endorsement. For example, students in middle school are required to receive counseling; parents and students are to receive notice from their schooling informing them of the need to take the distinguished level of achievement in order to qualify for Top Ten Percent Plan eligibility; and a study of the implementation of HB 5 is required every year.

Anecdotal information from the field of TLEC’s organizational members indicates that students and parents are not adequately informed of the consequences of their decisions from selecting certain graduation plans and that counselors are ill-prepared and/or understaffed to perform the necessary work. In a survey of more than 1,600 parents conducted by the Equal Voice-Rio Grande Valley Network, they found that the following.



(Equal Voice-Rio Grande Valley Network, Ready Texas Presentation, 2016)

These numbers are highly concerning for TLEC. The complexities of HB 5 endorsements, coupled with the lack of essential information held by parents and the misalignment between high school coursework and college course requirements, heighten the potential risk of placing students off-track from graduating college-ready. While not all students may choose college as an option, certainly the legislature did not envision that students and parents would be making uninformed decisions about their child’s future.

The consequences are even greater now because under HB 5, if a student does not graduate with the distinguished level, the student will not be eligible for automatic admission to a Texas public college or university if the student ranks in the top ten percent of his/her graduating class.

TLEC Recommendations

In order to ensure that all students and parents can make an informed decision on the student’s graduation plan, that no student or student groups are tracked into less rigorous graduation plans, and that high school graduation course requirements are properly aligned with basic college admission requirements, TLEC recommends that the Joint Committee consider policies that take into account the following:

- 1) Ensure that schools provide a high quality curriculum that prepares all students to enroll in and complete college, supplemented by optional courses that prepare them to enter the workforce for a good career after graduation;

- 2) Study the quality of curriculum available to students across schools, including those placed in alternative education settings and take appropriate action to ensure equity for all students;
- 3) Study the latest changes in course requirements by colleges across the state;
- 4) Encourage local school districts to offer courses that align with basic admission requirements and provide support with materials, resources and teacher certification programs where necessary;
- 5) Ensure counselor-student ratios align with the research and provide schools with additional, necessary resources where appropriate;
- 6) Ensure counselors are competent and capable of communicating the benefits and consequences of HB 5 graduation requirements with all communities served.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this important issue. For questions, please contact David Hinojosa, TLEC co-chair, at david.hinojosa@idra.org or (210) 444-1710, ext. 1739, or Celina Moreno, TLEC co-chair, at celina.moreno@maldef.org or (210) 224-5476.