

The Texas Latino Education Coalition Expresses Disappointment with the State Board of Education's Vote to Exclude Algebra II in the Default Curriculum

The Texas State Board of Education cast a preliminary vote to exclude Algebra II from all but the STEM endorsement track, thereby limiting students' options for college and career achievement upon graduation. While the SBOE took an important step to route more students toward Algebra II by making it a prerequisite to 15 of 18 advanced math courses, the Board did not go far enough to ensure equity for all students.

The State Board of Education's attempt to route more students toward Algebra II is *not* the same as making Algebra II part of a default curriculum needed to leave students eligible for the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan and competitive for open admissions at many Texas and out-of-state universities, as well as community college and career certification programs. Neither does the SBOE's vote create a basis to prepare all students for success on college entrance exams like the ACT and SAT that test Algebra II concepts.

But the recent discussion is not simply an intellectual debate over whether Algebra II is the be-all and end-all indicator for college preparedness. Rather, it is about whether students will be expected to complete a gatekeeper course that opens the door to an opportunity structure toward higher education and/or jobs that lead to careers, not simply low-wage paychecks. This week's SBOE hearing process made very clear the distinction between what is needed to attain a job versus what it takes to start a career. As representatives for Latino and marginalized students, we will continue to fight to ensure that these students are not tracked into lower-level curricular paths.

Many questions remain after the State Board of Education's vote that illustrate why the Board should not make equal educational opportunities optional:

- Will some school districts lean toward offering the courses that do *not* require Algebra II as a prerequisite over courses that do?
- Will either the current or a future State Board of Education approve new math courses that do not require Algebra II as a prerequisite?
- Will the SBOE do everything in its power to confront low expectations and existing funding inequities across school districts by equalizing the rigor in each endorsement track?

Regardless of which endorsement(s) a school offers or which endorsement a student chooses upon registering for high school, students must be guaranteed an education that prepares them for college *and* career success. The Texas Latino Education Coalition and the families, children and educators we work with want to see a Texas of shared prosperity, contribution and opportunity.

The Coalition looks forward to continuing the dialogue with State Board of Education members and the community at large before the SBOE takes a final vote in January 2014.

The Texas Latino Education Coalition includes groups such as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), Texas League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), Mexican American School Board Association (MASBA), Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC), Texas Hispanics Organized for Political Education (HOPE), Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE), Texas Association for Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE), the Cesar E. Chavez Legacy and Educational Foundation, and the Hector P. Garcia G.I. Forum.