

The Texas Latino Education Coalition Supports Inclusion of Algebra II in All Endorsement Tracks

The Texas Latino Education Coalition applauds the State Board of Education's efforts to ensure that *all* students, regardless of endorsement selection, have the best available options for college and career upon graduation, by including Algebra II in each endorsement track. Algebra II is not only a gateway course for college readiness and a key component in preparing students for postsecondary workforce options, it also is a requirement for eligibility for automatic college admissions through the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan.

When the state passed House Bill 5, it left undefined whether Algebra II, a non-negotiable prerequisite for automatic admissions eligibility, would be required under each endorsement. As expressed during the legislative session and at the recent SBOE public hearing, the Coalition remains vigorously opposed to any endorsement plan that fails to meet TTP eligibility. The Coalition was at the center of advocating in favor of keeping the 4x4 curriculum intact and promoting high expectations for all students as an important civil rights issue.

The Coalition is pleased that the draft rules, as offered by the SBOE, would require students to complete Algebra II in each of the endorsement plans. The proposed default "Foundation *plus* Endorsement" plan must emphasize requirements that set all Texas students – the majority of whom are Latino – on a pathway to college success, regardless of whether a student will ultimately choose that path.

Some stakeholders in Texas oppose the Algebra II requirement, because they do not find the course a necessary component of a Texas public education and argue for less rigor and that students need more "curricular flexibility." However, a review of research clearly indicates that Algebra II is a vetted indicator of college success and a key component of college-readiness tests like the SAT/ACT. Regardless of whether one believes that Algebra II is fundamental, the fact remains that the course is a determining factor for automatic admissions, and removing it from the "default" reduces opportunities for students after high school. Colleges and universities (both inside and outside of Texas) will continue to use students' transcript reviews and college entrance exam scores as key determinates for admission and scholarships.

The Coalition also has concerns that variance in the availability of the five endorsements across school districts in Texas will largely mirror the tremendous differences in school districts' available resources, a critical issue currently being litigated in Texas. Thus, in addition to requiring Algebra II, the SBOE should consider using its authority to equalize these endorsements to the greatest extent possible. The SBOE has an important duty to work with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to make sure that classes considered "advanced" under House Bill 5's new curriculum scheme are truly recognized as advanced by institutions of higher education. The SBOE must also collaborate with THECB and others to ensure that courses classified as "applied" under the state's revised curriculum plan truly reflect admission requirements set by institutions of higher education.

Regardless of 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. Texas cannot afford to exacerbate the already striking disparities that currently exist between property-poor and property-wealthy school districts.

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.