



# Ready Texas

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**A Study of HB5  
Implementation in  
Texas and  
Implications for  
College Readiness**

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**House Bill 5  
Background**



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House Bill 5 Background

Policy Brief and Recommendations

Infographic: Ready Texas – IDRA study points to the troubling effects of the state's new graduation requirements

Ready Texas Study of New Graduation Requirements – Podcast Episode 178

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### House Bill 5 Background:

#### Ready Texas – A Study of the Implementation of HB5 in Texas and Implications for College Readiness

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# House Bill 5 Background

## Timeline

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### 1997-98: Minimum HSP, Recommended HSP & DAP

Students entering the ninth grade in the 1997-98 school year were the first students required to graduate under the Texas' Minimum High School Program (HSP), Recommended HSP or Distinguished Achievement Plan (DAP) (Mellor, Stoker & Reese, 2015). The Recommended HSP and the DAP were designed to more closely align high school coursework with college admission requirements, better preparing all students with the knowledge and credits they would need to pursue college.

### 2004-05: Default Recommended HSP

The Recommended HSP was established as the standard graduation plan for public high school students (Mellor, Stoker & Reese, 2015).

### 2006: 4x4

To promote college and career readiness, Texas increased the overall number of credits required for graduation from 24 to 26 with the "4x4" curriculum. The 4x4 required all students to complete four credits each in English, mathematics, science and social studies. This new requirement was incorporated into the Recommended HSP and DAP for incoming freshmen in 2007-08.

Student outcomes under the established graduation plans improved over time in college readiness, high school graduation, college completion and earnings (Mellor, Stoker, & Reese, 2015; IDRA, 2016). Additionally, more students were taking and mastering higher level math courses under the 4x4 system. Schools also saw an overall reduction in the achievement gap between high and low-income students (Wiseman, et al., 2015; IDRA, 2016).

### 2009: Differentiated Curriculum Tracks

In the 2009 legislative session, a group of policymakers developed an accountability reform plan to go beyond adjusting rating and reporting requirements. Approved reforms included differentiated curriculum tracks, which were created for minimum, college bound, and career-technical students. Minimum, in this case, referred to students who had been retained at least once prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and who required parent approval to opt-out of the Recommended HSP. The "career-technical" track diverted students as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> grade and required fewer and less stringent math and science courses in the upper high school grades. Overall, these changes represented an incremental move toward a tracking system that risked placing minority and low-income students into vocational curricula, while affluent students would still access college prep (Cortez, 2009).

### 2013: House Bill 5

House Bill 5 was introduced in Texas' 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Session and in June of 2013, former Texas Governor Rick Perry signed HB5 into law. HB5 replaced the Minimum HSP, Recommended HSP and DAP with the Foundation HSP. Lawmakers stated that the sweeping changes were intended to maintain "rigorous standards" for students bound for college while allowing those not interested in pursuing a college education to focus on career and the technical skills needed for a job after graduation (Stutz, 2014). Additionally, the law reduced the number of state assessments required for graduation (Mellor, Stoker & Reese, 2015).

Under HB5, the commissioner of education was required to transition from the Minimum HSP, Recommended HSP and DAP to the Foundation HSP beginning with the 2014-15 school year. Under the transition plan, students in grades 9-11 in the 2013-14 school year could choose the Minimum HSP, Recommended HSP, DAP, or the new Foundation HSP as their degree plan (Mellor, Stoker & Reese, 2015).

The impetus to change the state's graduation requirements came from two different directions. Some proponents, including some school leaders, felt challenged and ill-equipped to meet accountability requirements that measure how many students graduate and how many are college ready. And some business manufacturing interests felt that too many Texas high school graduates were not sufficiently prepared to go directly into their workplaces. Despite objections by education advocates, community leaders and many school leaders, these interests succeeded in convincing the majority of Texas policymakers that schools should not be required to provide a high quality education to all students. (Cortez, 2013)

## Side-by-Side Comparison

The Foundation HSP dramatically changed the minimum course requirements for all high schoolers from the former graduation plans available to Texas students (Minimum HSP, Recommended HSP and DAP). Notably, students were no longer required to take four credits in mathematics and science. Additional credits are reflected in the required “endorsements” under the Foundation HSP, for a total of four additional credits.

Exhibit 1: Texas Current and Former Graduation Plan Comparison

Courses	Recommended HSP	Distinguished Achievement Plan (DAP)	Foundation HSP (2013)
<b>English/Language Arts</b>	<b>4.0:</b> English I, II, III, IV	<b>4.0:</b> English I, II, III, IV	<b>4.0:</b> English I, II, III, and an Advanced English Course
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>4.0:</b> Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, and a 4 <sup>th</sup> course	<b>4.0:</b> Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, and a 4 <sup>th</sup> course	<b>3.0:</b> Algebra I, Geometry, and an Advanced Mathematics Course
<b>Science</b>	<b>4.0:</b> Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and a lab-based course	<b>4.0:</b> Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and a lab-based course	<b>3.0:</b> Biology, AP Biology, or IB Biology  IPC or advanced lab-based science course  Advanced lab-based science course, subject to pre-requisites
<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>3.5:</b> World History, World Geography, U.S. History since Reconstruction, and U.S. Government (0.5)	<b>3.5:</b> World History, World Geography, U.S. History since Reconstruction, and U.S. Government (0.5)	<b>2.5:</b> World History or World Geography, U.S. History, U.S. Government (½ credit), economics (½ credit)
<b>Economics</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.5</b>	
<b>Languages other than English</b>	<b>2.0:</b> Any two levels in the same language	<b>3.0</b> Any three levels in the same language	<b>2.0:</b> Languages other than English or Computer Science I, II, III
<b>Physical Education</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Fine Arts</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Electives</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>5.0</b>
<b>Total Credits</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>22.0</b>

# The Law: A Summary

## Curriculum

The Foundation HSP replaced the Minimum HSP, Recommended HSP, and DAP, with a single, 22-credit school program (plus four endorsement credits). The State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted rules requiring the following:

- 4 credits in English: I, II, III and an advanced English course
- 3+1 credits in mathematics: Algebra I, geometry, and an advanced math course. Plus 1 credit for an endorsement. (Algebra II is required for the Distinguished Level of Achievement and eligibility for the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan.)
- 3+1 credits in science: biology, Integrated Physics & Chemistry or an advanced science course, plus an advanced science course. Plus 1 credit for an endorsement.
- 3 credits in social studies: World History or World Geography, U.S. History, U.S. Government (½ credit), economics (½ credit)
- 2 credits in languages other than English: 2 credits in the same language or 2 credits from Computer Science I, II, III
- 1 credit in physical education
- 1 credit in fine arts
- 5+2 credits in electives. Plus 2 credits for an endorsement.
- Demonstrated proficiency in speech

Courses that are no longer required are: English IV, Algebra II, chemistry, physics, speech, and world history or world geography (which as replaced with choice of either world history or world geography or a combination of the two). Chemistry was replaced with choice of Integrated Physics and Chemistry or other science.

Additionally, the SBOE adopted rules and approved various advanced courses that can be taken to comply with the program's requirements to prepare students to enter the workforce or post-secondary education without remediation. The law requires that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) commissioner adopt a transition plan for replacing the Minimum HSP, Recommended HSP and DAP beginning with the 2014-15 school year and to make allowances for students who were completing their fourth year of high school during the 2014-15 school year to graduate under the Foundation HSP if he or she meets its requirements.

The new curriculum also introduced endorsements: each student must choose one or more of

five endorsements, which require additional core content courses, depending on the endorsement's focus.

## Endorsements

Endorsements are “pathways” for students to take in high school that require successfully completing 26 credits to include four math credits, four science credits, and two additional elective credits. Endorsement choices require parent approval and written notice from the student as he or she enters ninth grade.

## Performance Acknowledgement

A student can earn a “performance acknowledgement” to be placed on his or her diploma and transcript if he or she:

- had an outstanding performance in a dual credits course, bilingualism and biliteracy, on a college AP test or IB exam, on the PSAT, the ACT-Plan, the SAT, or the ACT.
- earned a nationally- or internationally-recognized business or industry certification or license.

## Distinguished Level of Achievement

A student may earn the Distinguished Level of Achievement designation if he or she has completed 26 credits, to include the Foundation HSP requirements plus Algebra II, credits for at least one endorsement, and a fourth advanced science credit.

## Career and Technology Education Courses Developed through Local Partnerships

Districts can develop Career and Technology (CTE) courses in partnership with public/private institutions of higher education or local business, labor and community leaders. CTE courses allow students to obtain industry-recognized credentials or certificates.

## College Preparatory Courses

TEA is no longer responsible for developing college preparatory courses, placing the responsibility on districts to partner with at least one institution of higher education to develop and provide college preparatory courses in English language arts and math. Credits earned with these courses can be applied to the foundation school program as an advanced credit.

## High School Personal Graduation Plan

Essentially, this part of the law requires TEA to provide, in English and Spanish, information on

the advantages of the Distinguished Level of Achievement designation and each endorsement. Additionally, the school must review personal graduation plan options, to include providing information on endorsements and the Distinguished Level of Achievement designation with every student entering the ninth grade and his or her parent or guardian.

### **Automatic College Admission**

HB5 requires that a student must earn the Distinguished Level of Achievement designation under the Foundation HSP to be eligible for automatic admission into a state university upon graduation from high school. HB5 maintains the option of allowing satisfactory performance on the ACT or SAT to meet automatic entry requirements.