

# More Ready Texas



IDRA study shows counselor concerns about the state's graduation requirements

## HB5

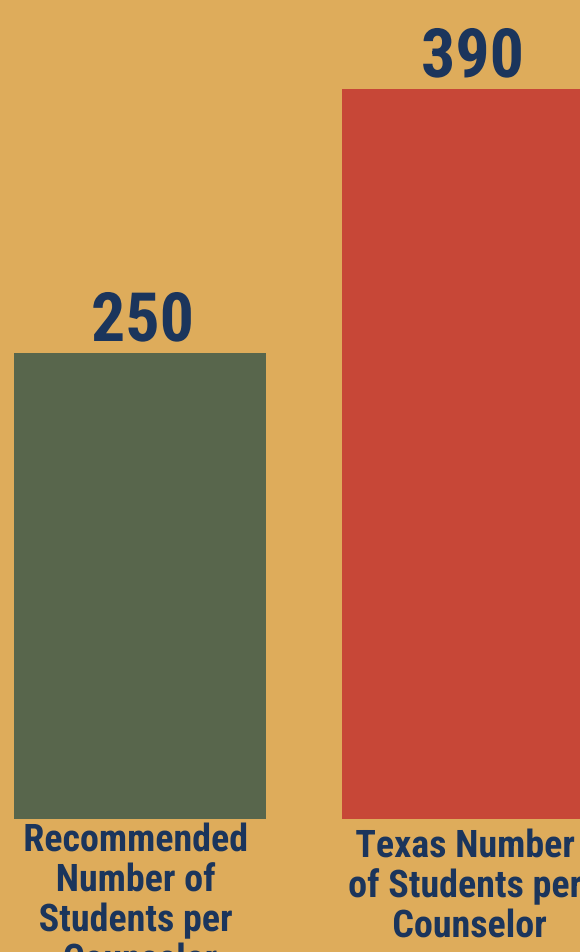
In 2013, Texas made the most substantial changes to graduation requirements & school curricula in recent history.

**House Bill 5 weakened graduation requirements for math, science and social studies and created a system of endorsement specialties for high school students. The policy ended the more rigorous college prep 4x4 plan.**

With funding from the Greater Texas Foundation, IDRA interviewed eighth grade counselors across the state that serve predominantly students of color and students from families with low-incomes to see how HB 5 is affecting their ability to support students.

**The law put eighth grade counselors at a critical juncture in students' lives.**

But they do not have enough time or information to provide college and career counseling.



The number of counselors employed by school districts and the amount of time they have to meet students one-on-one depends on each school's finances and priorities.

Data source: American School Counselor Association, 2023

The majority of middle school counselors reported to IDRA that they spend at least

**75%** of their time performing tasks that have nothing to do with college and career counseling.

**Almost all**

counselors reported not knowing if students followed the career path chosen as an endorsement in eighth grade.

## What else did our interviews tell us?

Many counselors used the word "pressure" to describe the situation where eighth graders must decide their future before they have tried anything.

Counselors repeatedly stated that they were not sure HB 5 had really helped anything and thought it might be hurting some students.

The emphasis on career exploration could have the effect of tracking students out of college preparation and into vocational classes.

## Ready Texas Study Key Findings

- Endorsement and career exploration methods vary greatly.
- Communication between middle and high school counselors is rare.
- Non-counseling work monopolizes most counselor time.
- HB 5 pressures students to determine their future early.
- HB 5 neglects underrepresented racial and ethnic student groups.
- More school support is needed to help families navigate the HB 5 system.
- COVID-19 limited middle school counseling about college.

**It doesn't have to be this way.**

### Texas leaders should...

**1** Address counseling time and funding so that middle school counselors can better serve students, including reducing counselor-to-student ratios.\*

**2** Address issues of equity to prepare school counselors to support all students' college readiness and to address racial-ethnic and socio-economic disparities.

**3** Equip counselors to engage with families in navigating the system for students' college preparation and access and with their community to leverage community resources and knowledge.

**4** Provide counselors data on college readiness, success and endorsement outcomes.

**5** Prepare all students for college! Really!

\*In 2021, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 179, which expanded school counselors' capacity to deliver critical counseling services to students. The measure instructs school districts to adopt a policy that requires school counselors to spend at least 80% of their work time on actual counseling to support the academic and emotional needs of the students. The measure did not provide funding for additional counselors.

## Key info for students and families

For college, students need rigorous courses: 4 in math, 4 in science, 4 in English, 4 in social studies ("4x4").

This includes Algebra 2!

Students should insist that they be on a path to earn the Distinguish Level of Achievement. Otherwise they are not eligible for the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan for automatic admission to public colleges in the state or for some scholarship and grant funds, thanks to HB 5.

See IDRA's new study

"School Counselors on College Advising Constraints – A Ready Texas Study"

and see our previous study that found rural school districts had a 24% drop in students taking Algebra 2: "Ready Texas - A Study of the Implementation of HB5 in Texas and Implications for College Readiness"

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