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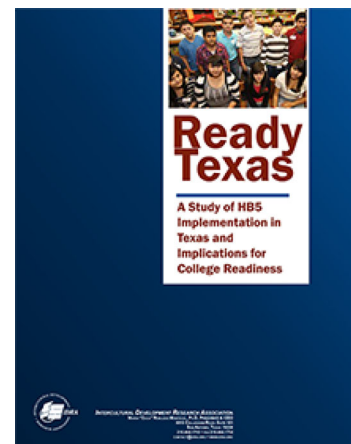
Rural School Districts See 24% Drop in Students Taking Algebra II

Study on the Impact of Texas' New Weakened Graduation Requirements in HB5 Released by IDRA

San Antonio (June 7, 2018) - The class of 2018 is the first to graduate under the new graduation requirements put in place in 2013 by the Texas legislature. Many advocates raised concerns that lowering graduation requirements could possibly affect college readiness and preparation.

With funding from the Greater Texas Foundation, IDRA conducted a mixed method study to examine the early effects of the new graduation requirements. Key findings show:

- Rural districts lost 24 percent in Algebra II course enrollments.
- Forty-five districts studied chose to require the "distinguished level of achievement" designation as part of their default graduation plan for their students, thereby mirroring the previous graduation requirements. Losses in Algebra II course enrollment are less pronounced among these districts.
- Students in high-poverty schools are more likely to declare non-college bound endorsements than students in low-poverty schools. (While no endorsement path is set



up specifically to prepare students for college, the multidisciplinary studies and STEM endorsements are described as most likely to do so.)

- Students and parents interviewed perceive that there are no real-life counterparts to endorsements.
- Most counselors were concerned that endorsements may derail students' college plans because they often are seen equally as important to college preparatory coursework. Counselors reported having to consistently emphasize coursework over endorsements, especially for high-achieving students.

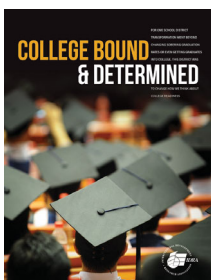
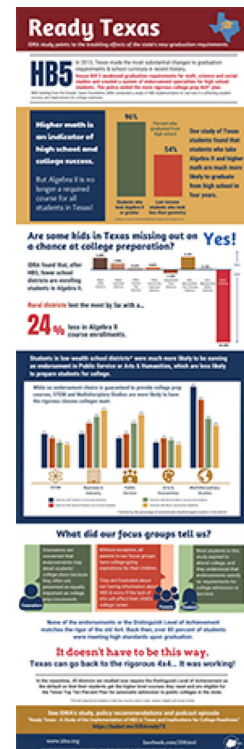
Taking Algebra II, at a minimum, is required to best prepare students for college, and it is a requirement to be eligible for the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan for automatic admission in Texas public universities.

Before HB5, most Texas students graduated with at least Algebra II. And 80 percent of students graduated with a plan that provided courses required by most institutions of higher education.

E3 Alliance found that students who took Algebra II, regardless of socio-economic background, remained and succeeded in college at higher rates than students who did not take Algebra II.

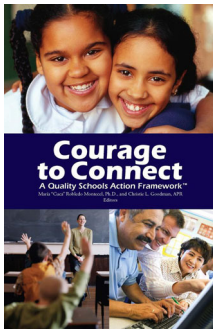
"A vital Texas must have educational parity for all Texans and not parcel out one set of opportunities for some and minimal expectations for others," said **Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel**, IDRA president and CEO. "The research and decades of experience behind IDRA's Quality School Action Framework, show that a high-quality curriculum is essential to success for all students for them to reach a true level of college readiness. Our state must take responsibility for the academic success of all students."

"As an organization focused on postsecondary success for Texas students, we know a student's math trajectory is critically important," said Sue McMillin, President & CEO of **Greater Texas Foundation**. "This report by IDRA is an important early indicator of the academic impact of Texas's new graduation requirements, particularly for rural students. We should be paying attention and work together at all levels - state to communities to schools - to ensure we are providing students the opportunities, supports, systems, and resources for success."



IDRA released a report, **College Bound and Determined**, in February 2014 showing how one south Texas school district transformed itself from low achievement and low expectations to planning for all students to graduate from high school and college. The result was a school district that doubled its number of high school graduates, cut dropout rates in half and increased college-going rates. Half of the district's students are earning college credit while still in high school.

IDRA's Quality School Action Framework™ guides communities and schools in identifying weak areas and strengthening public schools' capacities to graduate and prepare all students for success. IDRA's book, **Courage to Connect: A Quality Schools Action Framework** shows how



communities and schools can work together to be successful with all of their students.

*The new policy (HB5), lowered graduation requirements for mathematics, science and social studies; implemented a new graduation requirement for career readiness, called endorsements; and added a "distinguished level of achievement" designation that closely resembles the previous graduation requirements.

Infographic



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 conducted a study of HB5 implementation to see how it is affecting student courses and implications for college readiness.

Higher math is an indicator of high school and college success.

But Algebra II is no longer a required course for all students in Texas!

96%



Students who took Algebra II or greater

Percent who graduated from high school

54%



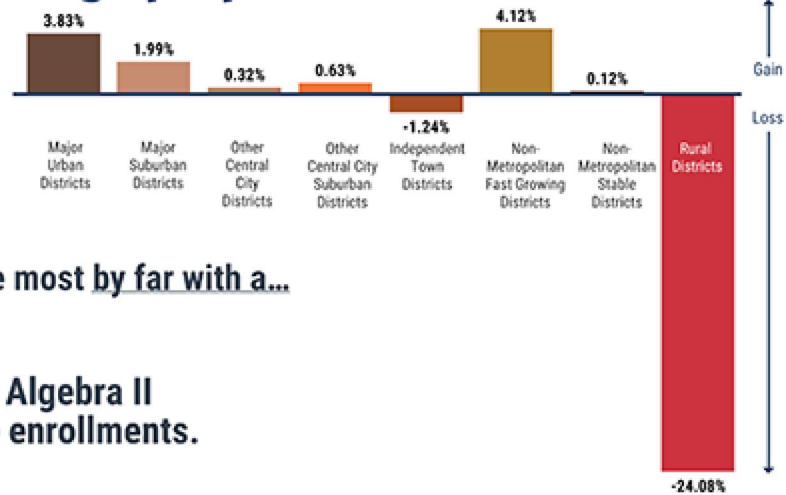
Low-income students who took less than geometry

One study of Texas students found that students who take Algebra II and higher math are much more likely to graduate from high school in four years.

Pathways of Promise: Statewide Mathematics Analysis, by E3 Alliance, 2015

Are some kids in Texas missing out on a chance at college preparation? **Yes!**

IDRA found that, after HB5, fewer school districts are enrolling students in Algebra II.

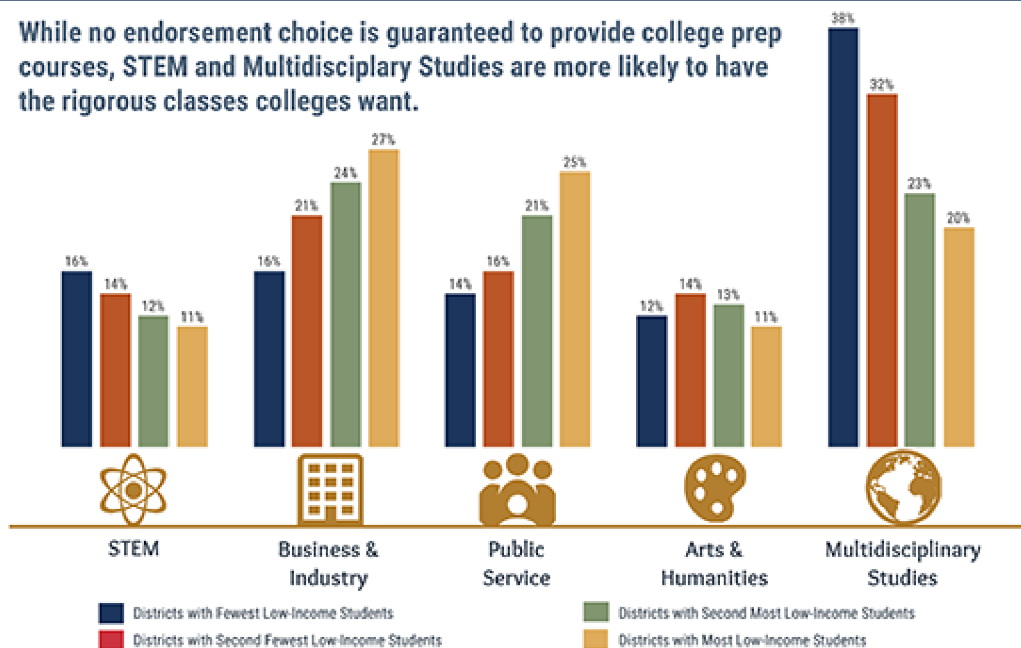


Rural districts lost the most by far with a...

24% loss in Algebra II course enrollments.




Students in low-wealth school districts* were much more likely to be earning an endorsement in Public Service or Arts & Humanities, which are less likely to prepare students for college.

While no endorsement choice is guaranteed to provide college prep courses, STEM and Multidisciplinary Studies are more likely to have the rigorous classes colleges want.



* Defined by the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the district

What did our focus groups tell us?

 <p>Counselors are concerned that endorsements may derail students' college plans because they often are presented as equally important as college prep coursework.</p> <p>Counselors</p>	 <p>Without exception, all parents in our focus groups have college-going aspirations for their children.</p> <p>They are frustrated about not having information about HB5 & worry if the lack of info will affect their child's college career.</p> <p>Parents</p>	 <p>Most students in this study aspired to attend college, and they understood that endorsements satisfy no requirements for college admission or success.</p> <p>Students</p>
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None of the endorsements or the Distinguish Level of Achievement matches the rigor of the old 4x4. Back then, over 80 percent of students were meeting high standards upon graduation.

It doesn't have to be this way.
Texas can go back to the rigorous 4x4... It was working!

In the meantime, 45 districts we studied now require the Distinguish Level of Achievement as the default so that their students get the higher level courses they need and are eligible for the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan for automatic admission to public colleges in the state.

*The 4x4 required all students to take four courses each in math, science, English and social studies.

See IDRA's study, policy recommendations and podcast episode
"Ready Texas - A Study of the Implementation of HB5 in Texas and Implications for College Readiness"
<https://budurl.me/IDRAreadyTX>

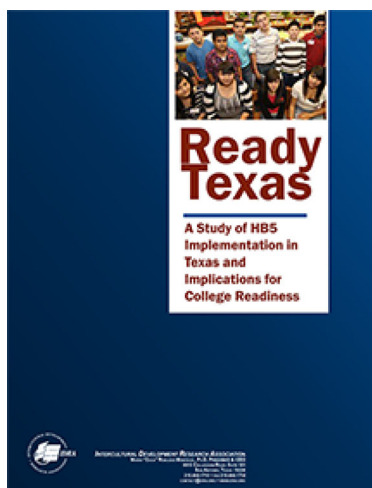
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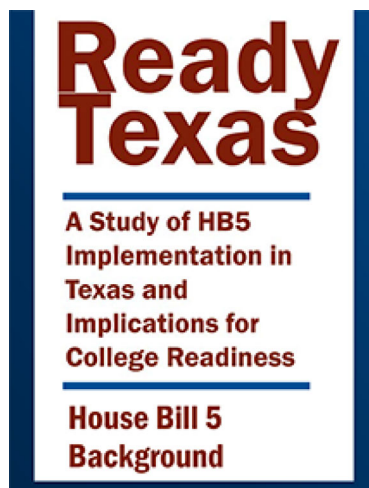
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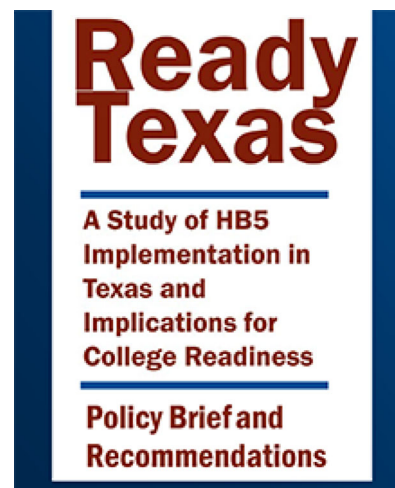
Full Study and Excerpts



**Ready Texas -
Full Report**



House Bill 5 Background



**Policy Brief &
Recommendations**

Podcast Episodes



Classnotes Podcast 178

In 2013, Texas lowered graduation requirements for math, science and social studies. Lead researcher, Hector Bojorquez, gives a highlights of IDRA's study on the impact and shares implications for potential similar changes in other states.

[Go to Podcast](#)



Classnotes Podcast 133

Math educator, Paula Johnson, M.A., talks about why Algebra II is critical for all students and, particularly, for low-income and minority students who will undoubtedly suffer the consequences of being sidelined into watered-down, non-college prep courses..

[Go to Podcast](#)

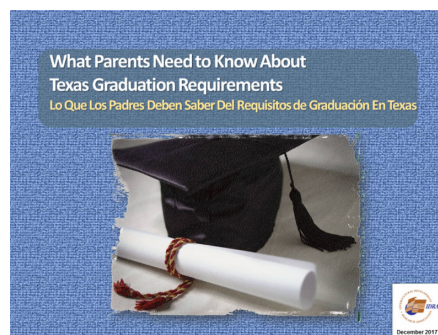
Slideshow for Parents

See what parents need to look out for and how to make sure students take the courses they need to be prepared for college and career. See our bilingual slideshow:

What Parents Need to Know about Texas Graduation Requirements (English-Spanish).

[View in Slideshare](#)

[See PDF](#)



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We are always interested in feedback about our main communication tools. This survey has simple questions about how you use the IDRA Newsletter, podcast, website and social media. Your responses will be confidential, even if you provide your email address. Please let us know how we're doing!

As a token of our appreciation, you can be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card.

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June 7, 2018

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We are committed to the IDRA valuing philosophy, respecting the knowledge and skills of the individuals we work with and build on the strengths of the students and parents in their schools.