

Lesson 5.3: How Does House Bill 5 Support College and Career Readiness?

This is a challenging and exciting time for education in Texas. With the passage of House Bill 5, Texas schools are working to implement changes to high school graduation plans and course requirements. Although there are many challenges, the good news is that the end result will provide students with greater flexibility and assurances that they leave our high schools “world ready.” Let’s take a look at some of the changes.

The Minimum High School Program has been replaced by the Foundation Program which requires four credits for English language arts, three credits for math, science, and social studies, two credits for languages other than English, five elective credits, one credit for P.E., and one credit for fine arts.

Next, there’s the Foundation Program with a Distinguished Level of Achievement, which is a 26 credit program designed to qualify the student to meet eligibility requirements for automatic admission to Texas institutions of higher education. In this option, students must complete at least one endorsement and successfully complete Algebra II. The Foundation Program with the Distinguished Level of Achievement requires four credits for English language arts, four credits for math, which include that Algebra II, four credits for science, and three credits for social studies, two credits for languages other than English, seven elective credits, one credit for P.E., and one credit for fine arts. Remember the endorsements we talked about? Those endorsements reflect successful completion of coursework focused on a particular career readiness area. The endorsement option is designed to encourage students to explore career options at an appropriate level of academic depth and rigor. Students may complete more than one endorsement if desired, and they may change endorsements any time prior to graduation.

Let’s take a look at some of those endorsements, there are five. The first is STEM; next, is Business and Industry; third, is Public Service; fourth is Arts and Humanities; and lastly, Multidisciplinary Studies. If a district offers only one, it must be the last, Multidisciplinary Studies. To further support students’ work in high school, their academic record may reflect performance acknowledgements. These performance acknowledgements recognize outstanding student performance in one or more of the following categories: performance in a dual credit course, bilingualism or biliteracy, AP or IB exam performance, PSAT, ACT-Plan, SAT, or ACT performance, or for earning a nationally or internationally recognized business or industry certification or licensure.

Although this approach to graduation will require adjustments and planning to phase in effectively, the outcome is greater course taking flexibility, more consistency in levels of student preparedness, and a greater emphasis on ensuring that students are world ready. And that’s good news for all levels of the P16 system, for the business community, for our community at large, and most importantly, our Texas high school graduates.