

Paths to Graduation

Action Requested:

- Refine the default Recommended Graduation Plan to provide additional, rigorous high school course choices that recognize individual students’ natural talents, interests and abilities including career and college paths.

Background:

Since 2006, Texas law has required all students to enter high school on the Recommended graduation plan. A student may choose to enroll in the more rigorous Distinguished plan. Students who fail to be successful under the Recommended plan may be eligible to enroll in less rigorous the Minimum plan if they meet certain criteria.

The course requirements in both the Recommended and Distinguished plans currently employ a “one size fits all” approach to all students. The limited course offerings result in an educational experience that makes it nearly impossible for students to be both college and career ready and to participate in the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that interest them and round out their experience.

Texas Graduation Plans

Courses	Minimum	Recommended	Distinguished
English	4	4	4
Social Studies	4	4	4
Math	3	4 *	4 *
Science	2	4 **	4 **
Academic elective	1	0	0
Foreign language	0	2	3
PE	1	1	1
Speech	.5	.5	.5
Fine Arts	1	1	1
Electives	6.5	5.5	4.5
Total Required Credits	22	26	26

* Must take Algebra II in order to choose a math class for the 4th year of math from an approved course list

** Must take Physics in order to choose a science class for the 4th year of science from an approved course list

The Recommended or Distinguished High School Graduation plans require students to complete four years each of Math, Science, English and Social Studies in order to graduate. These “4x4” curricular requirements restrict the number of elective credits available within the Recommended and Distinguished plans including those courses that could contribute to a career focus. If a student is in fine arts, or athletics, there are even fewer opportunities available through elective credits.

When this legislation passed in 2006, the 4-year Texas universities followed suit and changed their admissions requirements to correlate with these graduation plans. Students wishing to either attend a 4-year university in Texas must graduate high school under the Recommended or Distinguished plans. College options for students who graduate under the Minimum plan are limited to a community college or technical school after high school. Students need more course choices that address their interests and abilities to pursue the post-secondary option of their choice.

Rationale:

Data is emerging that proves that students require more choice in their plans to effectively find their pathway to graduation and thereafter. College-ready and career-ready paths can co-exist under the Recommended and Distinguished plans. Students need more course options to allow them to take advantage of both opportunities, remain connected, and see the relevance of their high school education.

Change the Recommended and Distinguished graduation requirements to allow pathways for a variety of post-secondary options. This would include Career and Technical (CTE) options in all disciplines.