










# Graduation Toolkit

Information for Planning Your  
High School Years & Beyond

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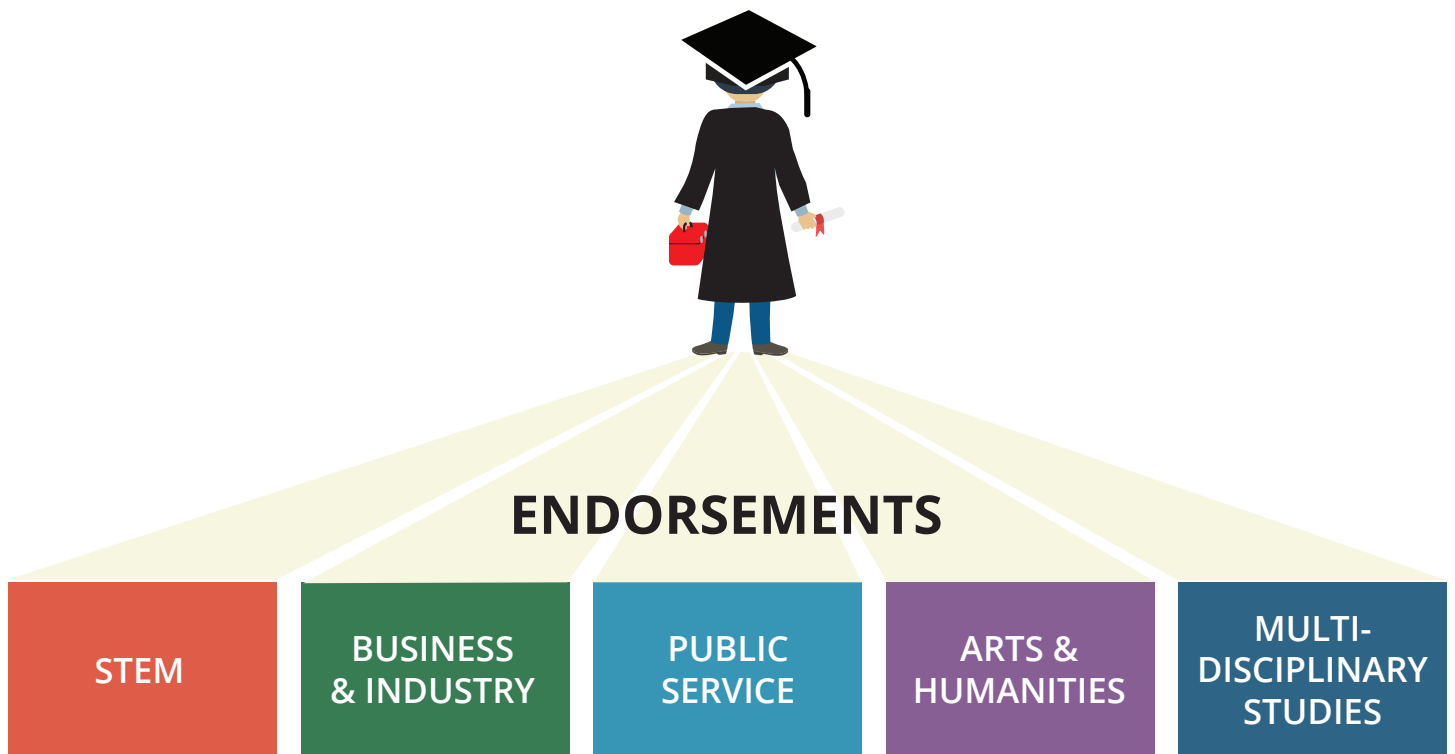
At least **60%** of Texans ages 25-34 will have a postsecondary certificate or degree by 2030.

[www.highered.texas.gov](http://www.highered.texas.gov)



## There are a lot of careers out there.

Texas students have a wealth of choices for their plans after high school. The careers highlighted above point out just a few of the many occupations that are high-wage, high-skill and in-demand in the state of Texas. The foundation high school program and endorsements help students focus their interest, select their coursework, and better plan for their postsecondary training and education.



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## Graduation Program – Overview

### Foundation High School Program

The Foundation High School Program is a flexible graduation program that allows all students to pursue their interests and prepare for high-wage, high-skill, and in-demand occupations.

Students may customize their high school experience beyond the Foundation High School Program by completing requirements for additional components such as endorsements, the distinguished level of achievement, and performance acknowledgments.



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## ✓ Foundation High School Program

**The Foundation High School Program** identifies the requirements that all Texas public school students need to satisfy to earn a high school diploma.

### Course Credit

A credit is a unit of measure awarded for successful completion of a high school course. To graduate under the Foundation High School Program, students must earn a minimum of **22 credits** in the following areas:

<b>English (4 credits)</b>	• English I	• English II	• English III	• An advanced English course
<b>Mathematics (3 credits)</b>	• Algebra I	• Geometry	• An advanced math course	
<b>Science (3 credits)</b>	• Biology	• Integrated Physics and Chemistry/Chemistry/Physics	• An advanced science course	
<b>Social Studies (3 credits)</b>	• World History or World Geography	• U.S. Government (one-half credit)	• U.S. History	• Economics (one-half credit)
<b>Languages Other Than English (2 credits)</b>	• 2 credits in the same language or • 2 credits from Computer programming, Languages, including Computer coding			
<b>Physical Education (1 credit)</b>	<b>Fine Arts (1 credit)</b>	<b>Electives (5 credits)</b>		

### Did You Know?



#### End-of-Course Exam Requirement

In addition to meeting graduation credit requirements, students are required to pass five end-of-course (EOC) exams to earn a diploma from a Texas public high school. Those five exams are given when a student takes English I and II, Biology, Algebra I, and U.S. History. A student who fails an EOC exam for no more than two of five courses can still receive a diploma if he or she qualifies to graduate as a result of an individual graduation committee review.

#### Speech Requirement

To qualify to earn a high school diploma, students must also satisfy the speech requirement

by demonstrating proficiency in communication skills identified by the State Board of Education in the graduation requirements. Districts may use a variety of ways to determine how students will complete the speech requirement.

#### Instruction on Proper Interaction with Peace Officers

Students must receive instruction in proper interaction with police officers at least once before graduation from high school.

#### Instruction in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

Students must receive instruction in CPR at least once in grades 7-12 before graduation.

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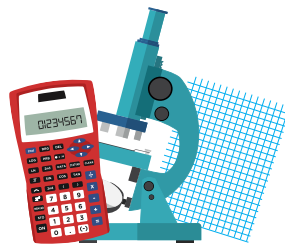
## Endorsement Options – Choices

### Endorsements

Students may earn one or more endorsements as part of their high school diploma. An endorsement consists of a sequence of courses that are grouped together by interest or occupational skill. They provide students with in-depth knowledge of a subject area or a high-wage, high-skill, and in-demand occupation. Every career and technical education (CTE) Program of Study leads to an endorsement.

Students earn an endorsement by completing four credits each in both math and science, two additional elective credits, and the curriculum requirements for the endorsement.

**Students can choose from five endorsement areas which include:**



### Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

**(a sequence of courses in one of the following areas or a combination of courses from no more than two areas)**

- CTE STEM courses or an approved STEM-related Program of Study\*
  - Mathematics
  - Science
- \* For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2YF42Uq>



### Business and Industry

**(a sequence of courses in one of the following areas or a combination of courses from no more than two areas)**

- CTE business and industry-related Programs of Study\*
  - Agriculture, food and natural resources
  - Architecture and construction
  - Arts, audio-video technology, and communications
  - Business management and administration
  - English electives in public speaking, debate, advanced broadcast journalism, and advanced journalism, including newspaper and yearbook
  - Information technology
  - Finance
  - Hospitality and tourism
  - Manufacturing
  - Marketing
  - Transportation, distribution, and logistics
- \* For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2YF42Uq>

Students must select an endorsement upon entry into the ninth grade. Districts and charter schools are not required to offer all endorsements. If only one endorsement is offered, it must be multidisciplinary studies.

A student may graduate without earning an endorsement, if, after the student's sophomore year, the student's parent signs a waiver permitting the student to graduate without earning an endorsement.



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## Public Service

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### (a sequence of courses in one of the following areas)

- CTE public-service-related Programs of Study\*
- Human services
- Law, public safety, corrections, and security
- Health science
- Education and training
- Government and public administration
- Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC)

\* For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2YF42Uq>



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## Arts and Humanities

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### (one of the following)

- Two levels each in two languages other than English (LOTE)
- Four levels in the same LOTE
- Courses from one or two disciplines in fine arts (music, theater, art, dance, or film)
- English electives not included in the business and industry endorsement
- Social studies
- American Sign Language (ASL)



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## Multidisciplinary Studies

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### (one of the following)

- Four advanced courses that prepare a student to enter the workforce successfully or postsecondary education without remediation
- Four credits in each foundation subject area, including chemistry and/or physics and English IV or a comparable Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) English course
- Four credits in AP, IB, or dual credit courses selected from English, mathematics, science, social studies, economics, LOTE or fine arts

\*Students may earn more than one endorsement.

Visit your school counselor to learn more about your options.

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## Distinguished Level of Achievement

### Choices Determine Options

Most of the high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand jobs available now and in the future require education and training beyond a high school diploma. Whether you intend to pursue an industry workforce credential from a community or technical college or a traditional four-year degree from a university, the choices you make in high school will determine your future options.

To best prepare yourself now for the transition to postsecondary education and career entrance, choosing and taking the right classes is essential.

### Distinguished Level of Achievement

The distinguished level of achievement requires:

- A total of four credits in math, including Algebra II;
- A total of four credits in science; and
- Successful completion of an endorsement in your area of interest.

A student must earn the distinguished level of achievement to be admitted to a Texas public university under the Top 10 percent automatic admission law.

### Why it matters — Benefits

The distinguished level of achievement opens a world of educational and employment opportunities for you beyond high school. The distinguished level of achievement does the following:

- **Allows you to compete for Top 10% automatic admissions eligibility at almost any Texas public university;**
- **Makes you a more competitive applicant at selective colleges and universities;**
- **Prepares you for college-level coursework at community/technical colleges and universities;**
- **Lays a strong foundation for successful completion of an industry workforce credential or college degree.**

\* The University of Texas at Austin can limit automatic admission to fewer students than the top 10%. Check with your counselor to learn about the percent of students eligible for automatic admission at UT Austin.



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## Performance Acknowledgments

**Performance Acknowledgments** note outstanding achievement in specific areas. These distinctions will be included in your high school transcript and better position you for successful entry into college and/or the workforce.

### Performance Acknowledgments Areas

- dual credit courses
- bilingualism and biliteracy
- PSAT, ACT ASPIRE®, SAT, or ACT
- Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams
- State-, nationally- or internationally-recognized business or industry certification or license



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## College and Career Resources

### Ask ADVi

<https://www.askadvi.org>

ADVi uses artificial intelligence to answer your questions about attending public colleges and universities in Texas.

### Big Future

<https://bit.ly/2EcKdJl>

There are more than 2,000 colleges in the United States. Find the right college for you!

### Job's Y'all

<https://jobsyall.com/>

Jobs Y'all is where you can explore meaningful, high-wage careers in growing industries. Here, you will discover rewarding jobs in your hometown and throughout Texas. Find a career that matches your interests and goals.

### Texas OnCourse

<https://texasoncourse.org>

Texas OnCourse offers students access to free and trustworthy resources on college and career planning. Featured tools by Texas OnCourse include:

- **MapMyGrad**

<https://texasoncourse.org/tools/mapmygrad/>

Students zero in on skills and interests to explore careers and endorsements and plan a path through high school.

- **Middle Galaxy**

<https://www.middlegalaxy.org/>

Texas middle school students have big decisions to make about their futures, starting in eighth grade! This space-themed game makes it easy to learn about options in high school and beyond.

### Road Trip Nation

<https://roadtripnation.com/>

Need a little inspiration? Learn how others got to where they are today from real stories of career and life journeys of people from all walks of life.

### Texas Career Check

<https://texascareercheck.com/>

Students can use this interactive tool to search and explore occupations that interest them. Labor market information is provided regarding annual salary and projected job openings and can be filtered by region.

### Texas Internship Challenge

<https://www.txinternshipchallenge.com/vosnet/Default.aspx>

This internship connection site enables students to gain valuable work-based learning experience while in high school. Students across the state can search for an internship where they live.

### Texas Reality Check

<https://texasrealitycheck.com/>

Students can use this lifestyle calculator to walk through the expenses that they are likely to incur each month and decide how much to spend on their lifestyle. This tool provides a realistic understanding of minimum salary needs and explores occupations that enable students to earn the salary they want.



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## College and Career Resources

### Preparing for Your Career

Two-thirds of the high demand jobs openings in Texas will require some postsecondary education. You can position yourself for successful career entry in several ways:

#### While in high school, you will want to do the following:

- Learn** about industry fields and targeted occupations that provide high-wages and are in-demand in your region.
- Take** assessments that match you with potential careers to expand your research.
- Determine** which of the five endorsement options offered by your high school under the Foundation High School Program best align with your career goals and explore the aligned CTE Programs of Study.
- Complete** the required Foundation High School Program, your selected endorsement, and CTE Program of Study, if applicable.
- Research** what training and education levels beyond high school are required to enter your CTE Program of Study or industry field of interest. For a complete list of statewide CTE Programs of Study, visit <https://bit.ly/2UWredv>.
- Take** every opportunity to connect directly with employers. Ask your counselor or college advisor for help!
- Find** training and certifications for specific occupations or skills through community colleges or career and technical schools at [www.texasworkforce.org/svcs/propschools/career-schools-colleges.html](http://www.texasworkforce.org/svcs/propschools/career-schools-colleges.html).
- Practice** or get hands on experience through internships, apprenticeships, or volunteering.

### Did You Know...



...over their lifetime a high school graduate with a bachelor's degree **earns 84 percent more**<sup>1,2</sup> than a high school graduate without a bachelor's degree?

...the highest-ranking graduate at each Texas public high school receives a voucher from the Texas Education Agency that can be used as a **scholarship to cover tuition costs** at any Texas public college or university?

...students ranked in the Top 10 percent of their graduating class at an accredited public or private Texas high school may be **eligible for automatic admission** to a Texas public university if they have completed the distinguished level of achievement?<sup>3</sup>

...over their lifetime, high school graduates with a workforce certification from a community or technical college **earn 20 percent more**<sup>4</sup> than those with only a high school diploma?

<sup>1</sup>Texas Workforce Commission

<sup>2</sup>Center on Education and the Workforce, "The College Payoff: Education, \*Occupations, Lifetime Earnings," August 2011. Georgetown University

<sup>3</sup>Get the facts at [www.collegeforalltexas.com](http://www.collegeforalltexas.com) or [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov)

<sup>4</sup>Center on Education and the Workforce, "Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees," 3 June 2012. Georgetown University

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## Graduation Checklists

### 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Review** choices offered under the **Foundation High School Program** and the **endorsements** to decide on your future academic path.
- Select** the endorsement and CTE Program of Study, if applicable, that best fits your area of personal interest and the major you plan to study in college or the career training you plan to pursue.
- Recognize** that most college admissions processes value rigorous advanced courses including **Algebra II**, higher-level science courses, and languages other than English.

### 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Monitor** high school credits; be sure to meet all **local and state requirements**.
- Take dual credit** or **AP courses** if possible, to earn college credit while still in high school.
- Consider** CTE courses related to your career interests.
- Keep** a list of awards, honors, and extracurricular activities for scholarship and college applications.
- Research** colleges or universities you are interested in attending.
- Check** admission and application requirements and timelines.
- Consider** taking SAT/ACT preparation classes.
- Explore** interests, take advantage of **career exploration** opportunities, and attend site visits during college open house days.
- Attend college nights** hosted by your high school.
- Talk** with college representatives about academic programs and financial aid available.
- Take** the preliminary SAT (PSAT)/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test in your sophomore year for practice. In your junior year, take the PSAT for eligibility for the National Merit Scholarship Competition. Students who take the PSAT or ACT ASPIRE® tend to score higher on the SAT or ACT than those who do not.

### 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Grade

- Sign up** and take the ACT and/or SAT test preferably in your junior year but no later than the fall of your senior year.
- Take dual credit** or **AP courses** if possible to earn college credit while you are still in high school.
- Visit** with your counselor or college advisor about available scholarships. Be sure to apply early and for as many scholarships as possible. Do not limit yourself to local scholarships.
- Fill out** the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) or the TASFA (Texas Application for State Financial Aid) early in the fall of your senior year.
- Apply** to college during the fall of your senior year.

If you plan to pursue technical training or enter the workforce after graduation, see the Information - Workforce Resources page or visit Texas Reality Check at [www.texasrealitycheck.com/](http://www.texasrealitycheck.com/).

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## Glossary

### **Advanced Academics**

Advanced academics includes courses, programs, assessments, services, and supports that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate college and career readiness and earn postsecondary credit.

### **Advanced Placement (AP)**

College-level coursework designed by the College Board that provides students the potential to earn college credit with a qualifying score on an AP exam.

### **Course Credit**

A unit of measure awarded for successful completion of a course.

### **CTE Completer**

A student who completes, passes, and receives credit for three or more CTE courses for at least four or more credits (course selection must include at least one level three or level four-course).

### **CTE Concentrator**

A student who completes, passes, and receives credit for two more CTE courses for at least two credits within the same CTE Program of Study.

### **Distinguished Level of Achievement**

A high level of academic achievement earned by going beyond the Foundation High School Program. It requires completion of a total of 26-course credits, including Algebra II, four credits in both math and science, and an endorsement. A student must earn this designation to be eligible for Top 10 percent automatic admission to a Texas public college or university.

### **Dual Credit**

Dual credit is a process by which a high school student enrolls in a college course and receives simultaneous academic credit for the course from both the college and the high school.

### **End-of-Course Exams (EOC)**

State-mandated tests given during the final weeks of a high school course. There are five EOC exams required to earn a diploma from a Texas public high school. The five exams are given when a student completes English I and II, Biology, Algebra I, and U.S. History.

### **Endorsements**

Endorsements are areas of specialized study. The areas include science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); business and industry; arts and humanities; public services; and multidisciplinary studies. (A district or charter school that offers only one endorsement must offer multidisciplinary studies.)

### **Foundation High School Program (FHSP)**

The basic 22-credit graduation program for Texas public school students.

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## Glossary

### **Industry-Based Certifications**

A certification is a validation that an individual possesses certain skills, usually related to an occupation and measured against a set of accepted standards. An occupation may have multiple certifications, with different levels of expertise. An individual earns a certification by successfully passing a test or battery of tests.

### **Performance Acknowledgments**

Students may earn an additional acknowledgment on their transcripts for outstanding performance in areas such as dual credit courses bilinguism and biliteracy; and AP, IB, PSAT, ACT ASPIRE®, SAT, or ACT exams or by earning a state-, nationally-, or internationally-recognized business or industry certification or license.

### **Programs of Study**

Perkins V describes a CTE Program of Study as a coordinated, nonduplicative sequence of academic and technical content at the secondary and post-secondary level that does the following:

- Incorporates challenging state academic standards
- Addresses academic, technical, and employability skills
- Aligns with the needs of industries in the state, regional, and/or local economy
- Progresses in specificity, beginning with all aspects of the industry and leading to more occupation-specific instruction
- Has multiple entry and exit points that incorporate credentialing
- Culminates in the attainment of a recognized postsecondary credential

For more information on CTE Programs of Study or a complete list of career clusters, visit <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/college-career-and-military-prep/career-and-technical-education/approved-cte-programs-of-study>.

### **STAAR**

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) is the state-mandated test given annually to students in grades 3-8 and at the end of five high school courses.

### **Work-Based Learning**

Work-based learning is a continuum of intentional activities and experiences designed to expand the boundaries of the classroom and prepare students for future career opportunities. Activities and experiences begin as early as pre-kindergarten and continue through postsecondary education.





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