



Texas Promotion, Graduation, and Credit Requirements

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Spring in the school calendar means more than just beautiful weather. Often spring brings a flurry of questions regarding graduation and promotion. Texas law creates several requirements and opportunities for students to advance from one grade to the next. Students also have a variety of options regarding how they earn credits toward graduation. Below is a list of frequently asked questions regarding requirements for graduation and promotion, and options for earning credit toward graduation.

Q: What does a student need to do in order to advance to the next grade level?

A: The requirements for advancing to the next grade level depend on the grade of the student. In addition, the special needs of certain student populations may also be relevant.

Under the Texas Education Code, a student must demonstrate academic achievement of the subject matter of the grade level in order to be promoted to the next grade. To determine whether this has happened, the school will look to a student's grades, teacher recommendations, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores, and other academic information. If a student is in 5th or 8th grade, the student must perform satisfactorily on the STAAR test in reading and math to advance to the next grade level. Tex. Educ. Code §§ 28.021(a)-(c), .0211(a)(1)-(2).

Local Policy

Districts are required to make requirements for promotion and retention public at the beginning of each school year. This information is usually communicated in the student handbook. The EIE(LOCAL) policy also contains the district's local decisions regarding promotion, including which subject areas students must pass in order to be promoted to the next grade. For example, the district may require students in grades 1–5 to receive a passing grade in language arts and mathematics, while students in grades 6–8 may be required to receive a passing grade in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Grade advancement for students in grades 9–12 is usually based on course credits. Tex. Educ. Code § 28.021(d).

Special Populations

Students with disabilities may have an admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee determine the manner in which the student will be promoted or retained, including grade advancement based on student performance on the STAAR test. For English language learners, a language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC) determines appropriate assessment, accelerated instruction and, if necessary, makes decisions regarding grade advancement in conjunction with the grade placement committee. If a student is dyslexic, a student's potential for achievement or proficiency in the subject matter must also be considered. Tex. Educ. Code. §§ 28.021(b), .0211(i); 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 101.2003(d)-(g).

Q: Does a student need to pass the STAAR test to advance to the next grade level?

A: As mentioned above, if a student is in 5th or 8th grade, a student is required to pass the STAAR in reading and math before being promoted to the next grade. The requirement applies to students that are enrolled in the school district on any day between January 1 and the date of the first administration of the STAAR test. All students must be given the opportunity to take the STAAR test and to receive the required advanced accelerated instruction, including students who enroll in the district after the first administration of the STAAR test. Tex. Educ. Code § 28.0211(a)(1)-(2); 19 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 101.2001, .2003, .2006.

Q: What happens if a student fails the STAAR test?

A: If a student in 5th or 8th grade performs unsatisfactorily on the STAAR test, the student will have two opportunities to re-take the assessment. If the student performs unsatisfactorily on the re-take, the student may take an additional state-approved alternate assessment as their second re-take or may take the STAAR test a third time. Tex. Educ. Code § 28.0211(b).

If a student in 5th or 8th grade does not perform satisfactorily on the STAAR test and the two re-takes, the student will be retained. However, the student's parents or guardians may appeal the retention, and the appeal may be granted if the district's grade placement committee, consisting of the principal or designee, the teacher, and the student's parent, unanimously decides the student is likely to perform at the subsequent grade level if promoted and given accelerated instruction. Tex. Educ. Code § 28.0211(e).

Students in 3rd through 8th grade who perform unsatisfactorily on the STAAR test must complete accelerated grade instruction before they can be promoted to the next grade. Districts are also required to provide accelerated instruction for high school students who perform unsatisfactorily on STAAR End-of-Course (EOC) assessments. Accelerated instruction may require participation outside of the normal school hours and often is provided through tutoring. Tex. Educ. Code §§ 28.0211(a-2), .0217.

Q: Can a student graduate if he or she did not perform satisfactorily on the STAAR End-of-Course (EOC) tests?

A: Students must pass five EOC assessments in order to graduate (Algebra I, biology, English 1, English II, and United States history). A student in 11th or 12th grade who did not perform satisfactorily on the STAAR test in no more than two courses may be permitted to graduate if an individual graduation committee determines the student is qualified to do so. Tex. Educ. Code §§ 28.0258, 39.023(c); 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 101.3022.

Q: How many days can a student miss per school year and still earn credit for a course or a final grade in a class?

A: Districts may not issue a final grade in a class or class credit if a student attends less than 90% of the days the class is offered. In accordance with local policy, a student who attends at least 75% of class days but less than 90% can be give credit or a final grade if the student completes a plan approved by the school's principal that provides for the student to meet the instructional requirements of the class. Tex. Educ. Code § 25.092(a), (a-1).

A student can also receive credit or a final grade by petitioning an attendance committee, the board of trustees (on appeal from the committee), or the district court of the county in which the school district's administrative office is located (on appeal from the board). Tex. Educ. Code § 25.092(b)-(d).

Q: How many credits does a student need to graduate?

A: Students graduating after 2017 must fulfill the High School Foundation Program's requirements. Under the High School Foundation Program, students must earn at least 22 credits and must demonstrate proficiency in four credits of English, three credits each of math, social studies, and science, two credits in languages other than English (which computer programming may satisfy), one credit each of fine arts and physical education, and five credits of electives. Students must also earn an endorsement to graduate under the High School Foundation program unless the student and parent or guardian complete school counseling and fill out a form designated by the Texas Education Agency allowing the student to graduate without an endorsement. This option is unavailable until after the completion of the student's sophomore year. Tex. Educ. Code § 28.025.

Under the Foundation High School Program, students can earn endorsements by earning additional credits and successfully completing curriculum set by the State Board of Education in the areas of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), business, public service, arts and humanities, and multidisciplinary studies. A student is eligible to earn the distinguished level of achievement if he or she completes all of the credit requirement for the Foundation High School Program, earns at least one endorsement, and successfully completes Algebra II. Tex. Educ. Code § 28.025; 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 74.13.

Districts may choose to create additional requirements beyond the Foundation High School Program, including additional credit requirements for endorsements. The district's policy under EIF(LOCAL) and other district publications reflect the district's local graduation and credit decisions.

Q: *What courses count toward high school graduation requirements?*

A: Many students earn credit by passing a course in the traditional classroom, but Texas has created options for districts to assist students in earning credits, including credit by examination and credit earned through distance learning. Students may earn course credit for a course taught through a distance learning technology, including the Internet, two-way videoconferencing, satellite, online courses, and instructional television. Texas also allows students to earn credit online by commissioner-approved institutions of higher education or through the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN) statewide course catalog or Online School Program (OLS). 19 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 70.1001, 74.23(2)-(3).

Local colleges may partner with school districts to provide credit for high school students in several different manners, including community college classes designed for high school credit, remedial courses, drop-out recovery programs, or an Early College High School program to enable at-risk students to graduate faster. In addition, school districts are required to offer programs that provide students the opportunity to earn at least 12 semester hours of college credit while in high school, and in certain circumstances the credit may transfer to high school credit. Students can also receive dual credit toward high school and college by completing certain courses if the district has established a dual credit partnership. Tex. Educ. Code §§ 11.166, 28.014(a)-(c), .009, 29.908; 19 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 9.125, 74.25.

Other alternative academic arrangements include career and technical education courses held off-campus, private or commercially sponsored physical activity programs for physical education credit, or qualified fine arts programs for fine arts credit. These arrangements require certain procedures. For example, offering credit for fine arts and physical education programs requires board action and commissioner approval. Your district's EIF(LOCAL), EHDD(LOCAL), EHDE(LOCAL) policies and district guidelines contain the district's local decisions on these alternative arrangements. Tex. Educ. Code § 28.025(b-1)(7)-(8), (b-9)-(b-10).

Additional Information

For more information and resources on curriculum and instruction, including information about dual credit and distance learning, visit [TASB School Law eSource](#) or visit the [Texas Education Agency's](#) Website.

If you have additional questions, contact TASB Legal Services at legal@tasb.org or 800.580.5345 or call your school attorney.

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