



# Graduation Toolkit

Information for  
Planning Your  
High School Years

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# Foundation High School Program

The “Foundation High School Program with endorsements” is a program that allows students to pursue their interests. It is the default graduation program for students who entered high school in the 2014-15 school year or later.

### The Foundation High School program contains up to three parts:

- a 22-credit foundation program which is the core of the Texas high school diploma,
- five endorsement\* options that allow students to focus on a related series of courses,
- and a higher performance category called Distinguished Level of Achievement.

The Foundation Requirements (22 credits) include:	
English (4 Credits)	English I • English II • English III • English IV (including College Prep, On Ramps, Dual Credit, or Advanced Placement)
Mathematics (3 Credits)	Algebra I • Geometry • An advanced math course
Science (3 Credits)	Biology • A physical science course • An advanced science course
Social Studies (3 credits)	U.S. History • U.S. Government (one-half credit) • Economics (one-half credit) • World History/World Geography/AP Human Geography
Languages Other Than English (2 credits)	2 credits in the same language
Physical Education (1 credit), Fine Arts (1 credit), Speech (0.5 credit), Health (0.5 credit), Electives (4 credits)	

### Foundation + Endorsements

Total credits with endorsements: **26**, including four credits within a coherent sequence, [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics \(STEM\)](#), [Business and Industry](#), [Public Service](#), [Arts and Humanities](#), [Multidisciplinary Studies](#).

### Enhancements

Additionally, a student may earn the Distinguished Level of Achievement for outstanding performance. This level must be earned to be admitted to a Texas public university under the Top 10 percent automatic admission law.

### Distinguished Level Of Achievement

- Foundation Program Requirements
- 4 credits in math including Algebra II
- 4 credits in science
- At least 1 endorsement

\*A student entering 9th grade must indicate an endorsement he or she plans to follow. A student may change or add an endorsement at any time. A student may graduate without earning an endorsement if, after his or her sophomore year, the student’s parent signs a form permitting the student to omit the endorsement requirement.

# Endorsements

Students can choose from 5 endorsement areas

See course catalog for course descriptions

<http://bit.ly/NISDCatalog19>



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

- CTE Courses related to STEM
- Mathematics
- Computer Science
- Science



## Business and Industry

- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
- Architecture and Construction
- Arts, Audio/Video Tech Communication
- Business Management and Administration
- Advanced Broadcast Journalism
- Debate
- Finance
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Information Technology
- Marketing
- Manufacturing
- Public Speaking
- Renewable Energy
- Technology Applications



## Public Service

- Corrections and Security
- Education and Training
- Government and Public Admin
- Health Science
- Human Science
- Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC)
- Law
- Public Safety



## Arts and Humanities

- American Sign Language
- English Electives (not Advanced Broadcast Journalism or Debate)
- Fine Arts (music, theater, art, and dance)
- Language other than English (LOTE) - 2 levels in two languages
- Language other than English (LOTE) - 4 levels in same language
- Social Studies



## Multidisciplinary Studies

- 4 advanced courses from other endorsement areas
- 4 credits in each foundation area, including English IV and Chemistry and/or Physics
- 4 credits in Advanced Placement, or dual credit selected from English, math, science, social studies, LOTE, or fine arts

# Distinguished Level of Achievement

26 Credits  
Algebra II Required  
Eligible for Top 10% Automatic Admissions to  
Texas Public Universities



**22 Credits for the Foundation Program**



## Requirements of 1 Endorsement

(including 4 credits in Math and Science)



STEM



Business  
and  
Industry



Public  
Service



Arts and  
Humanities



Multi-  
disciplinary  
Studies

# Distinguished Level of Achievement

### 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 will:

- Allow you to compete for Top 10% automatic admissions eligibility at any Texas public university;
- Position you among those first in line for a TEXAS Grant\* to help pay for university tuition and fees; and
- Ensure that you are a more competitive applicant at the most selective colleges and universities.

\*Must be financially qualified

### What it means

The Distinguished Level of Achievement requires more math and more science than the Foundation High School Program. 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.

### Advantages

- Opportunity to earn an endorsement in an area of interest
- More college and university options
- More financial aid options
- Better preparation for college-level coursework at community/ technical colleges and universities
- Opportunity for immediate enrollment in classes related to your chosen field of study
- Strong foundation to successfully complete an industry workforce credential or college degree

# Graduation Program

### 9th / 10th Grade

- ❑ **Monitor** high school credits being sure to meet all local and state requirements by the end of the senior year.
- ❑ **Take** dual enrollment or Advanced Placement courses, if possible, to earn college credit while still in high school.
- ❑ **Keep** 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.
- ❑ **Explore** interests and take advantage of Career Day opportunities.
- ❑ **Attend** college nights hosted by your high school. Talk with school representatives about the types of financial aid available.
- ❑ **Take** the Preliminary SAT/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's PLAN tend to score higher on the SAT or ACT than those who do not.

### 11th / 12th Grade

- ❑ **Take** dual enrollment or Advanced Placement courses if possible to earn college credit while you are still in high school.
- ❑ **Check** with your counselor's office or your college career center to learn about available scholarships. Be sure to apply early and for as many scholarships as possible. Do not limit yourself to local scholarships.
- ❑ **Consider** taking SAT/ACT preparation classes such as Senior Seminar. All 11th grade students will participate in an SAT administration during the school day. Seniors are encouraged to sign up and take the ACT and/or SAT test to improve their scores no later than the fall of your senior year.
- ❑ **Apply** to college during the fall of your senior year.
- ❑ **Fill** out the FAFSA (Free Application For Federal Student Aid) early in the spring of your senior year.



Access the College and Career Transition Booklet here: [bit.ly/NISDCollegeandCareer](https://bit.ly/NISDCollegeandCareer)



Access the NISD Graduation site here: [nisd.net/schools/graduation](https://nisd.net/schools/graduation)

# Graduation Program

**Course Credit:** A unit of measure awarded for successful completion of a course. Completion of a one semester course typically earns one-half credit for a student.

**Distinguished Level of Achievement:** A high level of academic achievement earned by going beyond the Foundation High School Program. It requires a total of 26 course credits, including: Algebra II, a fourth science credit and an endorsement. A student must earn this designation to be eligible for top ten percent automatic admission to a Texas public university.

**Endorsements:** Areas of specialized study. The areas are:

- ▶ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)
- ▶ Business and Industry
- ▶ Arts and Humanities
- ▶ Public Service
- ▶ Multidisciplinary Studies

**EOC:** STAAR end-of-course exams are state mandated tests given during the final weeks of a course. In addition to meeting graduation course requirements, students are required to pass five end-of-course 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 courses.

**Foundation High School Program:** The basic 22-credit graduation program for Texas public school students.

**Industry Workforce Credential:** A state, nationally, or internationally-recognized credential that aligns with the knowledge and skills standards identified by an association or government entity representing a particular profession or occupation and valued by business or industry. Examples include a credential for certified nurse aide (CNA) or the automotive service excellence (ASE) certification in the automotive industry.

**Performance Acknowledgments:** Students may earn an additional acknowledgment on their diploma because of outstanding performance in areas such as dual credit courses and bilingualism and biliteracy; on Advanced Placement, PSAT, ACT's Plan, the SAT, or the ACT exams; or by earning a nationally- or internationally-recognized business or industry certification.