

How can Texas High Schools prepare students to make a living wage?

One of the important issues in public education today centers around what our high schools are doing and could do to “train” the non-college-bound students so that they have **skills** that allow them to find “living” wage jobs, rather than just “minimum” wage jobs. While most school districts are expected to prepare their students for additional higher education opportunities, there are significant numbers of students who do not aspire to attend college or who are not encouraged to seek more education beyond a high school diploma. Given the increased use of technology in the workplace and the specialized skills that many employers are seeking today, there is a growing recognition of the need for public schools to develop and implement better school-to-work transition programs that prepare high school graduates for some career or vocational opportunities. The challenges involved in preparing high school graduates for living wage employment opportunities is complicated by the ever-changing skills that are needed among employers, the limitations of schools in providing career assessment and counseling for individuals students, the difficulties in connecting students with on-the-job training opportunities, and the motivational issues that lead to school drop-outs and discipline problems.

Currently in Texas, school districts now are addressing the changes that have been made to graduation requirements by the 2013 Texas legislature and how these new requirements will impact traditional vocation and career programs within our local high schools.

The previous Texas High School Diploma system included three distinct academic levels of achievement:

The Minimum High School Program

The Recommended High School Program

The Distinguished Achievement Program or the Advanced High School Program.

The graduation plan passed in 2013 calls for a Foundation High School Program with five “Endorsements”, broad areas of interest that will guide their course selections through high school. Starting in the fall of 2014, every ninth-grader will be required to choose one of the five endorsements- (1) science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); (2) business and industry; (3) public services; (4) arts and humanities; and (5) multidisciplinary studies.

The apparent purpose of this new Foundation and Endorsement plan is to offer a broader tailoring of high school graduation requirements for a diverse student population with a recognition of the variety of interests and skills needed in pursuing different career goals.

Each of the five endorsements includes a set of courses and credits specific to its aims:

STEM	Science, technology, engineering, advanced math for college preparation
Business and Industry	Database management, information technology, communications, accounting, finance, marketing, graphic design, architecture, construction, welding, logistics, automotive technology, agricultural science, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning
Public Services	Health sciences and occupations, education and training, law enforcement, culinary arts and hospitality

Arts and Humanities	Political science, world languages, cultural studies, English literature, history, fine arts
Multidisciplinary Studies	Various advanced courses from several endorsement

There are several documents posted on the CIC web site with more detail on the credit requirements.

Our CIC meeting will focus on the challenges in preparing non-college-bound high school graduates for living wage jobs and how our local school district is seeking to address these challenges. We have invited the Career and Vocation Coordinator with Georgetown ISD to address some of the following issues with us:

- How many students in Georgetown ISD are not preparing to go to college?
- How many students are currently in the GISD “Vocation and Career” Programs?
- How many graduate each year from the “Vocation and Career” Programs?
- What is Georgetown ISD high school dropout rate?

- What vocation and career programs does GISD offer for the non-college-bound students?
- Do any of these lead to a “certificate” in that field at high school graduation?
- What does GISD do to interface with Texas State Technical College and/or Austin Community College?

Does GISD have Distributive Education (where students do actual “business” internships during high school) opportunities in place and what are they?

What does GISD do to identify on-the-job training opportunities for students in vocation and career programs?

How will the new Texas Foundation and Endorsement graduation requirements impact the career and vocation programs within GISD?

What help does GISD need to develop stronger vocation and career training programs and opportunities for our high school students?