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State Board of Education gives final approval to upgraded high school graduation plans

AUSTIN – The State Board of Education today gave final approval to two upgraded high school graduation plans that increase the number of math and science credits, as well as the total number of course credits, that students must earn to receive a diploma.

Their action comes in response to HB1, passed by the legislature earlier this year, which requires students to earn four credits in each of the core subject areas: math, science, English language arts and social studies. Under the current plans, four credits in English language arts and social studies are already required so the board's discussion focused on which courses would be acceptable areas of study for the fourth credit of math and science.

Because of the additional math and science study, the board increased the total number of credits required for graduation under the Recommended High School Program and the Distinguished Achievement Program to 26 in order to preserve time for elective courses. Currently, 24 credits are required.

The board voted to adopt the amendments that were presented in September with the following changes:

- Principles of Technology was added to the list of courses for which a physics credit can be earned.
- The board revised the math graduation requirements to list the specific courses that can be taken to obtain the fourth math credit.
- The board voted to include Mathematical Models with Applications as an acceptable course for the fourth credit.
- Language was added indicating that the board may create additional courses for either math or science at a later date.

Students entering high school next fall will be the first group of students who will follow the revised graduation plans. However, there will be one additional change for students who enter ninth grade beginning with school year 2012-2013. As of that year, Integrated Physics and Chemistry will no longer be a course option for students earning a diploma under these two degree plans.

Under the additional math requirements, all the courses available for the fourth math credit except Mathematical Models with Applications have Algebra II as a prerequisite. Those classes are Precalculus; Advanced Placement (AP) Statistics; AP Calculus AB; AP Calculus BC; AP Computer Science; Independent Study in Mathematics; International Baccalaureate (IB) Mathematical Studies Subsidiary Level; IB Mathematical Methods Subsidiary Level; IB

Mathematics Higher Level; IB Advanced Mathematics Subsidiary Level; and concurrent enrollment in college math courses. The board stipulated that, if selected, Mathematical Models with Applications must be taken prior to Algebra II.

The first three math credits must be earned in Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry.

Students may continue to earn high school credit in middle school. Thousands of Texas students take Algebra I and foreign languages for high school credit while still in middle school or junior high.

The new graduation plans, known as the “4x4,” do not impact students who are already enrolled in high school.

Neither HB1, nor the new board rule, affect the Minimum Graduation Program, which requires 22 credits. Under that plan, students must earn at least three credits in math and two in science.

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