

House Bill 3 Graduation Requirements Frequently Asked Questions – Volume One

General

1. Does the added flexibility apply to students who will be seniors in 2009-2010?

The changes to the graduation requirements that affect the enrichment areas apply to all students in the recommended high school program (RHSP) regardless of when they entered Grade 9. The requirements for the foundation areas still depend on when a student entered Grade 9.

Students in the RHSP are no longer required to complete a ½ credit in health education or one credit in technology applications and are now required to complete one credit in physical education rather than one and ½ credits.

Students must still complete ½ credit in communication applications (speech) and the requirements for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies (including economics) that were in place when they entered Grade 9.

2. Do students who will be seniors in 2009-2010 now have to earn four credits in mathematics and four credits in science?

No. Any student who entered Grade 9 before the 2007-08 school year only needs to earn 3 credits in mathematics and 3 credits in science to satisfy the state graduation requirements.

3. What if a district policy already requires the students who will be seniors in 2009-2010 to earn four credits in mathematics and four credits in science?

If a district policy is already in place requiring more than what the state requires for graduation, the district still has authority to enforce those requirements.

4. Do students who will be seniors in 2009-2010 now have to earn 26 credits in order to graduate?

No. Students who entered Grade 9 before the 2007-08 school year still only need 24 credits to satisfy the state graduation requirements.

5. What if a district policy already requires the students who will be seniors in 2009-2010 to earn 26 credits to graduate?

If a district policy is already in place requiring more than what the state requires for graduation, the district still has authority to enforce those requirements.

6. If a district is still required to offer as a required curriculum all subjects in the required and enrichment curriculum through grade 12 (TEC 28.002) and is required to provide instruction in the essential knowledge and skills of the appropriate grade levels in the foundation and enrichment curriculum (19 TAC §74.1), is a district required to ensure that all students are instructed in the essential knowledge and skills for health and technology applications even though students can no longer be required by state law to take these courses?

No. School districts and charters are required to make available the subjects in the enrichment curriculum, but are not required to offer every course in each subject, or to enroll and instruct each student in each subject. Students have to have access to courses in the enrichment curriculum under

Section 28.002(a)(2) of the Education Code, but districts may choose locally how often courses are offered and which individual courses are offered. Whenever a district does offer a course in the enrichment curriculum, it is required to teach all of the essential knowledge and skills in that course.

Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP)

7. How does House Bill 3 change the DAP?

House Bill 3 does not change any of the course requirements for students on the DAP. The law limits the State Board of Education's (SBOE) authority to require specific courses in the enrichment curriculum beyond what is required in law for the *RHSP only*. Consequently, requirements in SBOE rule that go beyond the requirements in the law are still in effect for the DAP.

Minimum High School Program

8. How does House Bill 3 change the minimum high school program?

House Bill 3 requires students on the minimum high school program to complete 1 fine arts credit. House Bill 3 does not change any other course requirements for students on the minimum high school program. The law limits the SBOE's authority to require specific courses in the enrichment curriculum beyond what is required in law for the *RHSP only*. Consequently, requirements in SBOE rule that go beyond the requirements in the law are still in effect for the minimum high school program.

9. In order to opt into the minimum program a student must:

- (1) be at least 16 years of age;
- (2) have completed two credits required for graduation in each subject of the foundation curriculum; **or**
- (3) have failed to be promoted to the tenth grade one or more times as determined by the school district in order to be permitted to take courses under the minimum high school program.

Does this mean that a student must be at least 16 years of age and then satisfy one of the second two criteria or does this mean that a student must satisfy only one of these criteria i.e. be at least 16 years of age **or** have completed two credits required for graduation in each subject of the foundation curriculum **or** have failed to be promoted to the tenth grade one or more times as determined by the school district in order to be permitted to take courses under the minimum high school program.

No. A student may enroll in the minimum program if the parent and administrator agree and any one of those three circumstances is met. Remember, HB3 also gives any student the right to reenroll in the recommended high school program at any time.

10. Are students now only required to earn two credits in each subject of the foundation curriculum to graduate?

No. A student must have earned two credits in each subject of the foundation curriculum in order to opt into the minimum high school program, if the student is less than 16 or has not been classified as a 9th grader for more than one school year. Once the student is in the minimum high school program, the student must satisfy all the course requirements listed in 19 TAC Chapter 74 for a total of 22 credits to graduate.

Physical Education

11. Do students still have to take Foundations of Personal Fitness for ½ of the required physical education graduation requirement?

Since HB 3 does not allow the SBOE to designate a specific course in the enrichment curriculum as a requirement for graduation under the RHSP, students would no longer be required to take Foundations of Personal Fitness to satisfy the physical education graduation requirement.

Since the SBOE still has authority to require specific courses in the enrichment curriculum beyond what is required in law for the minimum and DAP, students must still take Foundations of Personal Fitness under these two graduation programs per SBOE rule.

12. Do the changes in House Bill 3 allow students to count more than two credits in physical education toward graduation requirements?

There are currently five courses in physical education, each of which is a ½ credit course. If a student were to take all five courses, the student could earn 2 and ½ credits toward graduation (1 credit to satisfy the physical education requirement and 1 and ½ credits to count toward elective requirements).

Current SBOE rule allows certain physical education substitutions such as athletics. There is not a limit on the number of physical education substitutions a student may have, so there is not a limit at this time on the number of physical education substitutions that may be counted toward the total number of graduation requirements. The SBOE retains the authority to determine course substitutions for physical education.

Speech

13. If the law does not require speech, why are students still required to take this course?

The law limits the SBOE's authority to require specific courses in the enrichment curriculum beyond what is required in law for the RHSP. Speech is part of English language arts and therefore, part of the foundation curriculum rather than the enrichment curriculum. Consequently, the SBOE still has authority to require speech and that part of the rule is still in effect. Students under all three graduation programs are still required to earn ½ credit in speech.

14. Are students still required to take Communication Applications as the speech credit?

Yes.

15. Why does the side-by-side chart indicate that speech may count as an elective?

Since speech is not required in law, but the SBOE still has authority to require speech, this course may count toward the 6 required electives so that students still only need 26 credits to graduate rather than needing 26 and ½ credits to graduate.

Health Education

16. If students are no longer required to take health education as part of the graduation requirements for the RHSP, but districts are required to provide instruction in the p.a.p.a. program, are districts required to provide students with instruction in the p.a.p.a. program during another required course?

No. Section 28.002(p) of the Education Code requires the p.a.p.a. program to be part of “the district’s high school health curriculum.” That program must be part of a high school health class, but students in the recommended high school program are no longer required to take a health class for graduation.