












# Graduation Toolkit


Information for Planning Your  
High School Years & Beyond

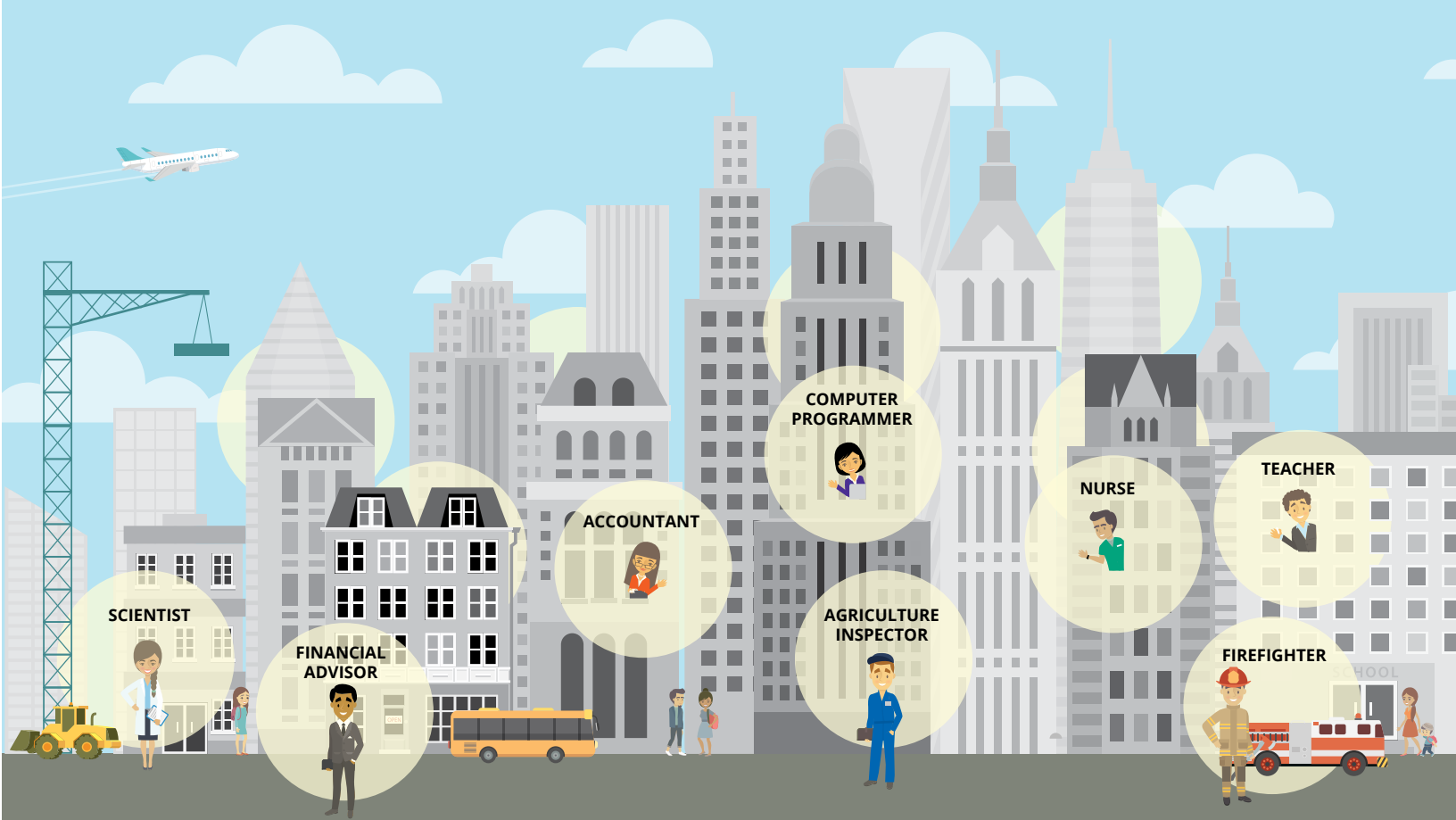
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 Benefits

 Choices  
 Checklists

 Resources  
 Glossary

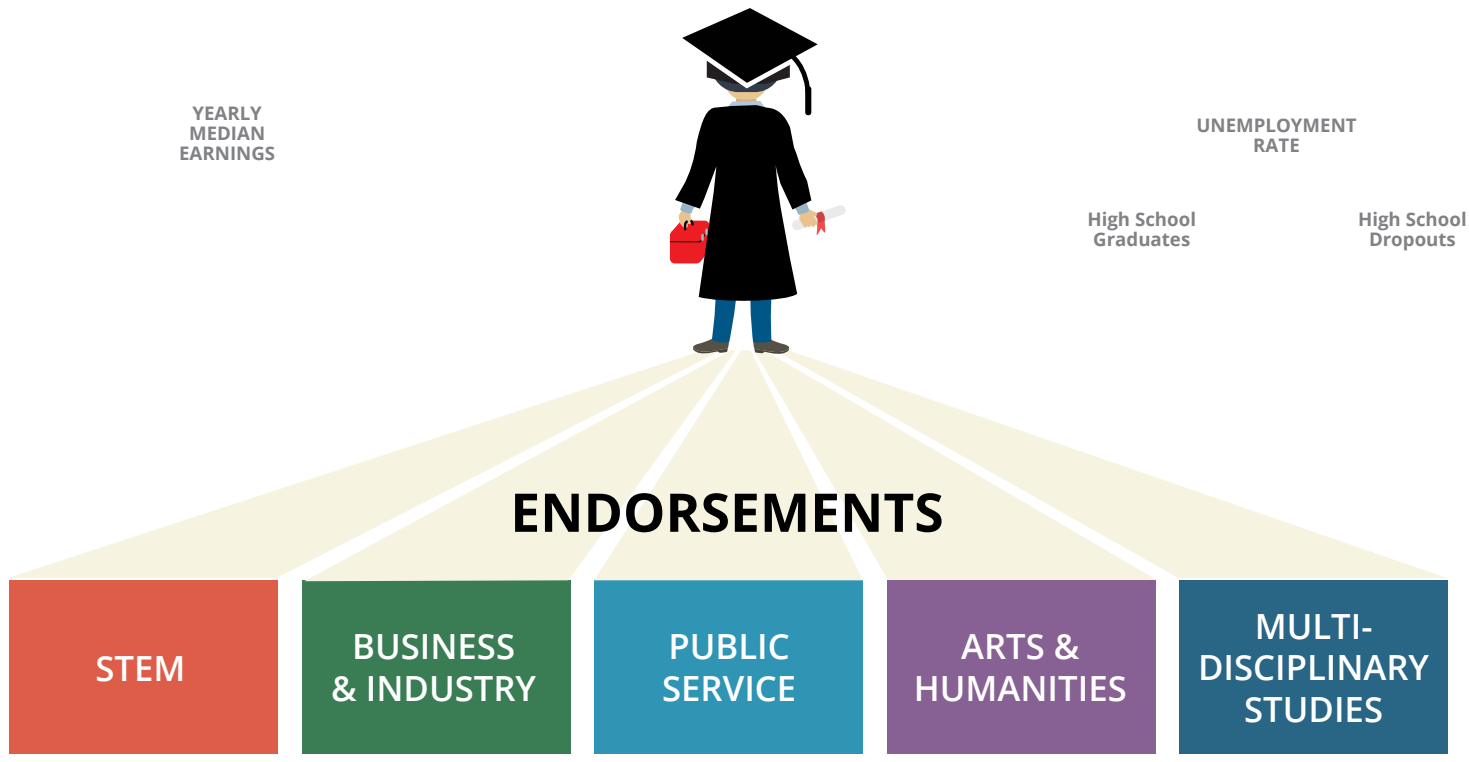
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	At least <b>60%</b> of Texans ages 25-34 will have a postsecondary certificate or degree by 2030. <a href="http://60x30TX.com">60x30TX.com</a>
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# There are a lot of careers out there.

Texas students have a wealth of choices for their plans after high school. The careers displayed here represent several of the many occupations that are in demand in the state of Texas. The Foundation High School Program and Endorsements help students effectively determine their interests and plan for their postsecondary training and education.



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## Graduation Program – Overview

### Foundation High School Program

A flexible graduation program that allows students to pursue their interests have been in place for all students who enter high school since the 2014-2015 school year.

Students may customize their high school experience beyond the Foundation High School Program.



\*A student may graduate without earning an endorsement if, after his or her sophomore year, the student's parent signs a waiver permitting the student to omit the endorsement requirement.

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## ✓ Foundation High School Program

A **Foundation High School Program** is required to graduate and makes up the core of the Texas high school diploma program.

### Course Credit: What is a credit, anyway?

A credit is a unit of measure awarded for successful completion of a high school course. Completion of a one-semester course typically earns one-half of a credit for a student. For the Foundation High School Program, the basic requirement is for Texas public school students to earn **22 credits**.

<b>English (4 credits)</b>	• English I	• English II	• English III	• An advanced English course
<b>Mathematics (3 credits)</b>	• Algebra I	• Geometry	• An advanced math course	
<b>Science (3 credits)</b>	• Biology	• Physics	• Chemistry	• An advanced science course
<b>Social Studies (3 credits)</b>	• World History or World Geography		• U.S. History	
	• U.S. Government (one-half credit)		• Economics (one-half credit)	
<b>Languages Other Than English (2 credits)</b>	• 2 credits in the same language or			
	• 2 credits from Computer Science I, II, III			
<b>Physical Education (1 credit)</b>				
<b>Fine Arts (1 credit)</b>				
<b>Electives and Career Technical Education (CTE) (5 credits)</b>				
<b>Speech:</b>	• Demonstrated proficiency			

### Did You Know?



### Industry-Based Certification

Students can earn a performance acknowledgement on their diploma by earning an Industry-Based Certification. Industry-Based Certifications assist students in entering into careers.

### Work-Based Learning

Interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings or simulated environments at an educational institution that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required of a given career field, which are aligned to curriculum and instruction. These experiences can include participation in cooperative education, internships, apprenticeships, or mentoring programs in high school which are related to the career interests of the student.

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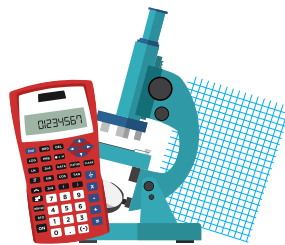
## Endorsement Options – Choices

### Endorsements

Students can earn one or more endorsements as part of their graduation requirements. Endorsements consist of a related series of courses that are grouped together by interest or skill set. They provide students with in-depth knowledge of a subject area.

Students earn an endorsement by completing the curriculum requirements for the endorsement, including 4 credits in both math and science and 2 additional elective credits.

**Students can choose from 5 endorsement areas:**



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

**(one of the following or a combination of no more than two of these categories)**

- Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses related to STEM
- Computer Science
- Mathematics
- Science



### Business and Industry

**(one of the following or a combination of areas)**

- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
- Arts, Audio Video Technology and Communications
- Finance
- Marketing
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Technology Applications
- Architecture and Construction
- Business Management and Administration
- Transportation or Distribution and Logistics
- English electives in public speaking, debate, advanced broadcast journalism, advanced journalism including newspaper and yearbook

\*Students must select an endorsement\* upon entry into the ninth grade. Districts and charters are not required to offer all endorsements. If only one endorsement is offered, it must be multidisciplinary studies.



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## Public Service

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### (one of the following)

- Human Services
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security\*\*
- Health Science

- Education and Training
- Government and Public Administration
- Junior Reserve Officer

Training Corps (JROTC)



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## Arts and Humanities

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### (one of the following)

- 2 levels each in two languages other than English (LOTE)
- 4 levels in the same LOTE

- Courses from one or two areas (music, theater, art, dance) in fine arts
- English electives not included in Business and Industry

- Social Studies
- American Sign Language (ASL)



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## Multi-Disciplinary Studies

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### (one of the following)

- 4 advanced courses from other endorsement areas

- 4 credits in each foundation subject area, including English IV and chemistry and/or physics and Algebra II

- 4 credits in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or dual credit selected from English, mathematics, science, social studies, economics, LOTE or fine arts

\*Students may earn more than one endorsement.  
Visit your school counselor to learn more about your options.

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## Distinguished Level of Achievement

### Distinguished Level of Achievement

A student may earn the Distinguished Level of Achievement and/or a Performance Acknowledgment for outstanding performance. 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.

The Distinguished Level of Achievement **must** be earned to be admitted to a Texas public university under the Top 10 percent automatic admission law. Moreover, any student receiving state financial aid must have completed this rigorous program.

### Choices Determine Options

Most of the high-wage and in-demand jobs available now and in the future require education and training beyond a high school diploma. Whether you intend to pursue a high-demand, industry workforce credential from a community or technical college or a traditional four-year degree from a university, the choices made in high school will determine your future options.

To best prepare yourself now for the transition to post-high school education and career entrance, choosing and taking the right classes is essential.

### 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:

- **Allows you to compete for Top 10% automatic admissions eligibility at any Texas public university;**
- **Positions you among those first in line for a TEXAS Grant\* to help pay for university tuition and fees; and other financial aid options**
- **Ensures you are a more competitive applicant at the most selective colleges and universities.**
- **Prepares you for college-level coursework at community/technical colleges and universities**
- **Provides opportunity for immediate enrollment in classes related to your chosen field of study; and**
- **Lays a strong foundation to successfully complete an industry workforce credential or college degree.**

\*A student may graduate without earning an endorsement if, after his or her sophomore year, the student's parent signs a waiver permitting the student to omit the endorsement requirement.



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**Performance Acknowledgments** note outstanding achievement in specific areas. These distinctions will be included in your high school diploma and better position you for successful entry into college and/or the workforce.

## \*Performance Acknowledgments Areas

- dual credit courses
- bilingualism and biliteracy
- PSAT, ACT ASPIRE®, SAT or ACT
- Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams
- earning a state-, nationally- or internationally-recognized business or industry certification or license
- OnRamps courses



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## College and Career Resources

### Big Future

<https://bit.ly/2EcKdJl>

There are more than 2,000 colleges in the United States. Find the right college for you!

### Compare College TX

[www.comparecollegetx.com](http://www.comparecollegetx.com)

Compare College TX is an interactive, mobile-friendly web tool designed to help students and parents learn more about Texas public universities and community/technical colleges.

### GEAR UP

<https://www.texasgearup.com/>

GEAR UP helps Texas students to be successful in college and beyond. Explore resources to answer your burning college questions.

### Job's Y'all

<https://jobsyall.com/>

Jobs Y'all is where you can explore meaningful, high wage careers in growing industries. Here, you will discover rewarding jobs in your hometown and throughout Texas. Find the career that matches your interests and goals.

### MapMyGrad

<https://texasoncourse.org/tools/mapmygrad/>

Students zero in on skills and interests to explore careers and endorsements and plan a path through high school



### Middle Galaxy

<https://www.middlegalaxy.org/>

Texas middle school students have big decisions to make about their futures, starting in eighth grade! This space-themed game makes it easy to learn about options in high school and beyond.

### Share Your Road

<https://roadtriplation.shareyourroad.com/>

Need a little inspiration? Learn how others got to where they are today from real stories of career and life journeys of people from all walks of life.

### Texas Career Check

<https://texascareercheck.com/>

Students can use this interactive tool to search and explore occupations that interest them. Labor Market Information is provided regarding annual salary and projected job openings and can be filtered by region.

### Texas Internship Challenge

<https://www.txinternshipchallenge.com/vosnet/Default.aspx>

This internship connection site enables students to gain valuable work-based learning experience while in high school. Students across the state can search for an internship where they live.

### Texas Reality Check

<https://texasrealitycheck.com/>

Students can use this lifestyle calculator to walk through the expenses that they are likely to incur each month and decide how much to spend on their lifestyle. This tool provides a realistic understanding of minimum salary needs and explores occupations that enable students to earn the salary they want.

# Texas Education Agency Graduation Toolkit

## College and Career Resources

### Preparing for Your Career

Two-thirds of the high demand jobs opening in Texas will require some postsecondary education. You can position yourself for successful career entry in several ways:

#### While in high school, you will want to:

- Determine** which of the five endorsements offered under the Foundation High School Program best aligns with your career goals.
- Complete** your selected endorsement along with the required Foundation High School Program.
- Learn** about industry fields and targeted occupations that provide high wages and are in-demand in your region.
- Research** what training and education levels beyond high school are required to enter your industry field of interest.
- Take** every opportunity to connect directly with employers. Ask your college advisor for help!
- Find** training and certifications for specific occupations or skills through community colleges or career and technical schools and community colleges at [www.texasworkforce.org/svcs/propschools/career-schools-colleges.html](http://www.texasworkforce.org/svcs/propschools/career-schools-colleges.html).

### Did You Know...



...over their lifetime a high school graduate with a bachelor's degree **earn 84 percent more**<sup>1,2</sup> than a high school graduate?

...the highest ranking graduate at each Texas public high school receives a voucher from the Texas Education Agency that can be used as a **scholarship to cover tuition costs** at any Texas public college or university?

...students ranked in the Top 10 percent of their graduating class from an accredited public or private Texas high school may be **eligible for automatic admission** to a Texas public university if they have completed the Distinguished Level of Achievement?<sup>3</sup>

...over their lifetime, high school graduates with a workforce certification from a community or technical college **earn 20 percent more**<sup>4</sup> than those with only a high school diploma?

<sup>1</sup>Texas Workforce Commission

<sup>2</sup>Center on Education and the Workforce, "The College Payoff: Education, \*Occupations, Lifetime Earnings," August 2011. Georgetown University

<sup>3</sup>Get the facts at [www.collegeforalltexas.com](http://www.collegeforalltexas.com) or [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov)

<sup>4</sup>Center on Education and the Workforce, "Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees," 3 June 2012. Georgetown University

# Texas Education Agency Graduation Toolkit



## Graduation Checklists

### 8th Grade

- Review** choices offered under the **Foundation High School Program** and the **Endorsements** to decide on your future academic path.
- Select** the endorsement that best fits your area of personal interest and the major you plan to study in college.
- Recognize** that most college admissions processes value rigorous advanced courses including **Algebra II**, higher-level science courses and languages other than English.

### 9th/10th Grade

- Monitor** high school credits; be sure to meet all **local and state requirements**.
- Take dual credit** 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.
- Consider** taking SAT/ACT preparation classes.
- Sign up** and take the ACT and/or SAT test, preferably in your junior year but no later than the fall of your senior year.
- Explore** interests and take advantage of **Career Exploration** opportunities and attend site visits during college open house days.
- Attend college nights** hosted by your high school.
- Talk** with school representatives about the types of financial aid available.
- Take** the Preliminary SAT (PSAT)/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 ASPIRE® tend to score higher on the SAT or ACT than those who do not.
- Take** Career and Technical Education courses related to your career interests.

### 11th/12th Grade

- Take dual credit** or **Advanced Placement courses** if possible to earn college credit while you are still in high school.
- Visit** with your counselor or college advisor about available scholarships. Be sure to apply early and for as many scholarships as possible. Do not limit yourself to local scholarships.
- Fill out** the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) or the TAFSA (Texas Application for State Financial Aid) early in the fall of your senior year.
- Apply** to college during the fall of your senior year.

If you plan to pursue technical training or enter the workforce after graduation, see the **Information - Workforce Resources** page or visit **Texas Reality Check** at [www.texasrealitycheck.com/](http://www.texasrealitycheck.com/).

# Texas Education Agency Graduation Toolkit

## Glossary

### **Advanced Academics**

Advanced Academics includes courses, programs, assessments, services and supports that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate college and career readiness and earn postsecondary credit.

### **Advanced Placement**

College-level coursework designed by the College Board which provides students the potential to earn college credit with a qualifying score on an Advanced Placement exam.

### **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 10 percent automatic admission to a Texas public community college or university. It is also a requirement for receiving state financial aid.

### **Dual Credit**

Dual credit is a process by which a high school student enrolls in a college course and receives simultaneous academic credit for the course from both the college and the high school.

### **End-of-Course Exams (EOC)**

STAAR end-of-course exams are state mandated tests given during the final weeks of a high school 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. **Endorsements**

Areas of specialized study. The areas are:

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

A district or charter that offers only one endorsement must offer Multidisciplinary Studies.

### **Foundation High School Program (FHSP)**

The basic 22-credit graduation program for Texas public school students.

### **Industry-Based Certificate**

A state-, national- 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 aid (CNA) or the automotive service excellence (ASE) certification in the automotive industry.

# Texas Education Agency Graduation Toolkit

## Glossary

### **Performance Acknowledgments**

Students may earn an additional acknowledgment on their transcripts because of outstanding performance in areas such as dual credit courses and bilingualism and biliteracy; on Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, PSAT, ACT ASPIRE<sup>®</sup>, the SAT or ACT exams; or by earning a state-, nationally- or internationally-recognized business or industry certification.

### **STAAR**

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) is the state-mandated test given annually to students in grades 3-8 and in five high school courses.



