

Texas Alliance for Geographic Education

Texas' High School Graduation Plans and the Future of Social Studies

Over the last several months, the Texas Alliance has spoken with numerous school district administrators and teachers. The focus of our discussions has been how best to implement the education reforms outlined in House Bill 5. The Texas Alliance, in consultation with key social studies educators and leaders, developed a consolidated list of recommendations and rationales.

- ***The Texas Alliance recommends that school districts require either the “Foundation with Endorsements” or the “Distinguished” graduation plans.***
- With regard to social studies specifically, ***the Texas Alliance recommends that four courses be taken in sequence: World Geography, World History, US History, and Government/Economics.***

Rationale:

- Adopting either the “Foundation with Endorsements” or the “Distinguished” graduation plans maintains a ***rigorous high school curriculum***.
- Both the “Foundation with Endorsements” and “Distinguished” graduation plans provide ***a path to college while developing critical career skills for 21st century jobs.***
- Four years of social studies provides students the opportunity to become ***world class citizens.***
- Social studies provides students an opportunity to ***practice 21st century skills.***
- Studying World Geography teaches students how to ***understand past, present, and future world issues*** from multiple perspectives.
- World Geography provides students the ***foundation for skills needed in the geospatial industry*** which generates global annual revenues of between \$150-\$270 billion (for comparison – global video games industry \$25 billion; global security services \$140 billion).*
- ***Career training*** related to geography is most appropriate through a geographic information systems (GIS) course ***within the STEM cluster.***
- ***Vertical alignment*** is needed in order to promote a systematic approach for student success.
- The TEKS were laid out for ***World Geography to be the foundation course*** that leads into World History and promotes a solid understanding of the United States and the World today.
- Success on the 11th grade US History EOC will depend on an ***academically mature student with knowledge and skills*** from a 9th grade World Geography and a 10th grade World History course.
- Maintaining the existing social studies sequence keeps ***horizontal alignment among campuses and districts*** and facilitates professional development.
- World Geography and World History complement each other in ***developing the critical thinking and writing skills*** demanded by today’s global economy.

House Bill 5, <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=83R&Bill=HB5>

Texas Education Agency HB 5 Overview, <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=25769806149>

Texas Alliance’s Campus Recommendation Survey, <http://bit.ly/1cpYHSv>

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*Source: Oxera Consulting Studies, http://www.oxera.com/Oxera/media/Oxera/downloads/reports/What-is-the-economic-impact-of-Geo-services_1.pdf