



## Moving English Language Learners to College- and Career-Readiness May 07-08, 2009

### ***AYPF Fact-Finding Trip to Rio Grande Valley***

#### **Key Terms for College Readiness, Accountability and High School Reform in Texas**

##### **Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)**

The statewide assessment program includes the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). This test is used in primary and secondary schools across Texas to measure students' attainment of reading, writing, math, social studies, and science skills mandated under the Texas state education standards. TAKS was created before the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, but it does comply with this law. In grades 3-6, LEP students are allowed to take the TAKS in Spanish.

In order for seniors in Texas to be eligible to receive a high school diploma, they must pass the exit-level TAKS tests in English-Language Arts, math, science, and social studies. Students are given five chances to pass the test throughout their junior and senior years of high school.

##### **Texas Recommended High School Program**

Texas has instituted a rigorous college-preparatory curriculum, the Texas Recommended High School Program (RHSP) as the state's default curriculum for all students. This curriculum requires students to complete 24 credits distributed among the major disciplines. Beginning with the class entering ninth grade in 2004 all students are automatically enrolled in the RHSP, unless parents explicitly opt out of this curriculum for their students. The RHSP was revised in 2007-2008 to include 4 credits of mathematics and 4 credits of science, along with the existing requirement of 4 credits in English. The Texas Recommended Curriculum, also known as the Recommended High School Program, is the requirement for a student to qualify for the Texas Scholars program.

##### **Texas Distinguished High School Program—Advanced High School Program**

Students must earn 26 credits to complete the Distinguished program, which includes the RHSP requirements as well as 4 "advanced measures," including passing scores on AP exams and IB exams, as well as grades of 3.0 or higher in college academic courses, advanced technical credit courses and dual credit courses.

##### **Texas Scholars**

Texas Scholars is an initiative of **Texas Business and Education Coalition (TBEC)**. The Texas business community was a key advocate for rigorous standards and the adoption of the Recommended High School Program (RHSP). The Texas Scholars program is a community-based initiative through which business mentors and educators work together to communicate to low-income students the importance of a rigorous academic program. To receive recognition as a Texas Scholar, students are required to complete at least two courses eligible for college credit while in high school, and graduate from high school having completed the RHSP. Examples of courses eligible for college credit are: Advanced Placement (AP) courses, International Baccalaureate courses (IB), CTE courses leading to a post-secondary certification,

and dual credit /concurrent enrollment courses. Eligible students generally receive scholarships equal to their tuition and fees at public institutions.

### **Early College High School**

Early College High Schools (ECHS) are small schools that aim to directly connect all students with a college experience and allow them to simultaneously earn high school and college credit. They offer all students the chance to earn both a high school diploma and an Associate's degree, or comparable college credit. The ECHS model is based upon the theory that a rigorous curriculum and the incentive of earning college credits will enhance the aspirations, readiness, and college enrollment of students who are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary institutions. ECHSs also have the potential to reduce the cost of a college education, by providing the opportunity to earn free college credits and reduce the amount of time it takes to complete a degree.

### **Texas Policy Framework for Early College High School**

- Texas is using Early College as a priority strategy for increasing college-going rates. The development of Early Colleges is supported by **House Bill 1**, which was passed in 2006 and provides additional funding streams to support dual enrollment course offerings, including early colleges.
- Both high schools and partner colleges receive per-pupil funding for each dually-enrolled student.
- High schools receive an additional \$275 per pupil for academic support to help all students reach college-readiness standards. Every high school student in Texas is given the opportunity to earn at least 12 college credits through dual enrollment.
- The start-up capital necessary for many Early College High Schools has been provided by the **Texas High School Project (THSP)**, a public-private initiative. The THSP focuses its efforts on high-need schools and districts statewide, with an emphasis on urban areas and the Texas-Mexico border.
- **Hidalgo Early College High School**, a part of the Hidalgo Independent School District, was named a recipient of a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant (\$1.2 million) in 2006, allowing Hidalgo High School to become an early college high school in partnership with the University of Texas – Pan American.

### **Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (T-STEM) Initiative:**

**The T-STEM initiative of the Texas High School Project** builds on state and local efforts to improve mathematics and science achievement among all Texas students and focuses on increasing the number of students who enter STEM fields. The initiative aims to build 35 T-STEM academies in high-need areas across the state, each year producing 3,500 graduates from diverse backgrounds, as well as to develop T-STEM centers that will coordinate teacher preparation and professional development in these fields.