

Class Rank and the Foundation Graduation Program

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With implementation of the new graduation requirements under the foundation program and HB 5, districts need to consider whether their current practice for determining class rank—and local graduation honors such as valedictorian—needs adjustments. TASB Policy Service recommends that each district review its current EIC(LOCAL) soon to ensure the district’s class rank policy reflects current practices. Once that is confirmed, district administrators can consider how the new foundation program will affect the district’s class rank practices, such as calculation procedures and criteria for local honors. So that the district can inform next year’s incoming ninth graders of any changes, administrators should work with the district’s policy consultant to draft any necessary policy adjustments for EIC(LOCAL) to present to the board for approval this summer.* While some districts may have few or no changes to their provisions addressing the calculation of class rank, other districts may have significant revisions. **We anticipate that most districts will need to make some adjustments to their EIC(LOCAL) to address local graduation honors, including eligibility criteria for recognition as valedictorian and salutatorian.**

**TASB Legal Services recommends that districts adopt class ranking policies prospectively, making any changes applicable to incoming ninth grade classes.*

Transition Period

Students who entered high school prior to the 2014–15 school year have the option of graduating under one of the current graduation programs—Minimum Program, Recommended Program, and Advanced/Distinguished Achievement Program—or switching to the new foundation program. Districts will need to review current practice and determine how to best accommodate the needs of students during this transition period. Any effect on eligibility for local honor designations will need to be clearly communicated to students who are interested in changing to the foundation program.

Grade 9 in 2014-15

Beginning with students who enter grade 9 in the 2014–15 school year, all students will graduate under the new foundation program. Therefore, any changes to the district’s method for calculating class rank or determining local honors as a result of the foundation program should be timely communicated to students and parents as soon as possible, ideally by the start of the school year.

Things to Consider

In determining what changes may be needed in the district’s EIC(LOCAL) regarding class rank calculation procedures and criteria for local honors, consider the following items:

Which semester grades are included in and/or specifically excluded from the calculation?

- Does the district only use semester grades for courses taken in grades 9–12 or does the district use semester grades earned for all high school credit courses, regardless of when the grades are earned?
- Are semester grades earned through specific methods or in specific courses excluded from the calculation?
- Will the foundation program affect these decisions?

What makes up the grade weight categories used by the district in its weighted grade system?

- Does your current policy accurately reflect the categories and system used by the district?
- Will the new foundation program change the categories or courses included in the weighted grade system?

Criteria for local honor designations:**

- What are the specific criteria currently used for local honor recognitions such as valedictorian, salutatorian, summa cum laude, magna cum laude, etc?
- Are any adjustments needed to the criteria for local honor designations for students entering grade 9 in the 2014–15 school year and graduating under the foundation program?
- Will the district’s criteria for local honor designations be affected by students graduating under different programs during the next three years as the foundation program is fully implemented?

*** Calculation of class rank for purposes of automatic admission to a Texas public college or university and the State of Texas honor certificate offered to the highest ranking graduate of each Texas public high school is different from criteria established by the district for local honor recognitions such as valedictorian and salutatorian. [See Education Code 51.083(a); 54.301]*

Policy Changes

Contact your TASB policy consultant soon to discuss the information in this Alert and for assistance in drafting changes to EIC(LOCAL) to accommodate the new foundation program.

Find your consultant on our [website](#) or call 800-580-7529.