

Lessons for Implementing Texas House Bill 5

Prepared for Northwest Independent School District

December 2013



In the following report, Hanover Research presents lessons learned from districts around the country for implementing Texas House Bill 5 and similar state-level changes to graduation requirements.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Executive Summary and Key Findings 3**
 - Introduction3
 - Key Findings3
- Section I: Lessons Learned from District Experience 5**
 - Methodology5
 - Lessons Learned from District Experience.....6
 - Applying Lessons Learned to Northwest ISD and House Bill 57
- Section II: State and District Profiles 12**
 - South Carolina.....12
 - Tennessee15
 - Washington.....17
 - Georgia.....18
- Appendix 19**
 - High School Major in Interdisciplinary Studies – Advanced Placement19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

With Texas House Bill 5, the requirements for students and school districts are changing very substantially throughout the state of Texas. Course offerings, counseling, and graduation planning will all be affected, with implications in a wide variety of areas for school districts. In order to better understand how other school districts handle these types of changes to graduation requirements, course offerings, and counseling, Hanover Research interviewed representatives from school districts in other states that had experienced similar shifts. This report presents the lessons learned from their experiences, as well as secondary research prompted and guided by these conversations. In addition to sharing the experiences of other districts, this report also applies these lessons to Northwest ISD's current situation to examine the major areas in which the district will need to adapt. Moreover, the report highlights the pre-existing resources, programs, and initiatives in the district that can provide a foundation for complying with the new regulations.

The report's structure is as follows:

- **Section I** presents lessons learned from other districts and applies them to the context facing Northwest ISD.
- **Section II** provides more thorough case profiles of the requirements, actions, and ideas in other states and districts, highlighting curricular innovations that could serve as examples for the district in developing a curriculum in compliance with House Bill 5.

The Appendix presents sample information regarding a program similar to the multidisciplinary studies endorsement required under House Bill 5.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Other districts around the country have faced similar policy shifts.** No other state has implemented the same endorsement plan as Texas, but some states have recently implemented similar requirements for students to complete an elective focus, a major, or another coherent set of courses. Moreover, several states mandate regular interaction between students and counselors. Specifically, it appears that South Carolina has requirements that are very similar to those of House Bill 5.
- **Representatives from every district interviewed for this report downplayed the amount of change required to adjust to new state-level requirements.** Districts have primarily been able to shift to new requirements without substantial additions or revisions to course offerings, staffing, and facilities. One district expanded its schedule, course offerings, staffing, and facilities, but these efforts reflected a

growing population and a desire to provide additional coursework well beyond requirements. Another district indicated that finding qualified teachers in specialty subjects has been a long-standing challenge.

- **It appears that Northwest ISD is currently capable of offering every endorsement identified in House Bill 5.** As experiences from other districts suggest, Northwest ISD would not need to expand its course offerings to be able to offer the new endorsements. By leveraging course offerings currently available in the district, students already have multiple pathways to each endorsement.
- **Whether the district must adapt the composition of its course offerings and staff depends primarily on student demand.** Under the new system, there is greater flexibility for students to demand courses in a variety of disciplines, and Northwest ISD will need to continue to plan according student demand. For this purpose, the district might benefit from a survey of students to determine which endorsement pathways would be most popular.
- **Evidence suggests that Northwest ISD could meet its new guidance requirements with its current guidance staff.** For other districts with universal counseling requirements, the ratio of students to guidance counselors is very similar to the current ratio in Northwest ISD. Some districts have had success with restructuring guidance counseling, however, by assigning one counselor to each grade of students or blocking specific time each semester or year for advising.
- **For transitioning to and supporting the new curriculum framework, interviewees highlighted the value of professional development and restructuring guidance counseling.** Representatives from districts that have experienced these policy shifts report providing additional professional development and training for counselors to ensure that the counseling staff fully understands the new requirements and implications for students.
- **For managing the transition, interviewees emphasized the importance of leadership, communication, and knowledge among staff.** It is critical that the district's administrative and counseling staff are well versed in the details, benefits, and implications of policy changes. Moreover, most districts communicate the changes through every media form available, including public presentations.

SECTION I: LESSONS LEARNED FROM DISTRICT EXPERIENCE

This section summarizes the lessons learned from the experiences of seven school districts from four states that have recently implemented policy shifts in graduation requirements.

The situation facing Texas districts is daunting, but districts in certain other states have previously faced similar policy shifts. **Multiple other states have implemented curricular, graduation, or guidance requirements with features resembling the endorsements and other requirements in Texas House Bill 5.** South Carolina requires every school to offer a variety of majors, one of which each high school student must take. In addition, the state requires every student to have an individual plan and for a counselor to meet with every student and his or her parent every year. Similarly, Tennessee students must complete an elective focus, and one school district in Washington independently requires students to declare a high school major. This report will more thoroughly explore each state's requirements in Section II, and the Appendix provides a sample information table for a curricular program similar to the multidisciplinary studies endorsement pathway.

METHODOLOGY

To identify how similar districts in comparable situations in other states have adapted to state policy shifts akin to House Bill 5, Hanover Research conducted interviews with representatives of these districts. Based on the information gathered through these interviews, we also pursued secondary research related to these states and districts. With this information in mind, we also explored Northwest ISD's resources and challenges in comparison to those of the districts whose representatives spoke with us.

The criteria for inclusion in this research were twofold. First, we only included districts in states with recent policy shifts in graduation requirements that added endorsements, elective focuses, pathways, or similar structures, or that required additions in school course offerings and counseling requirements. This report considered shifts from the past 15 years, but the majority of shifts are substantially more recent. We then searched among these states for districts comparable in size and structure to Northwest ISD, based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, as well as the preferences of Northwest ISD to highlight districts with between 15,000 and 25,000 students and at least two high schools. Figure 1.1 on the following page compares the characteristics of the various districts.

Figure 1.1: Characteristics of Districts Included in This Report

DISTRICT	DISTRICT-WIDE ENROLLMENT	NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOLS	DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH
Coweta County School System (GA)	21,864	3 high schools	White: 66% Black: 22%	41%
Fayette County Public Schools (GA)*	21,069	5 high schools	White: 57% Black: 23%	22%
Edmonds School District (WA)	20,763	5 high schools	White: 54% Hispanic: 17% Asian: 13%	39%
Northwest ISD (TX)	16,556	2 traditional high schools and one accelerated	White: 68% Hispanic: 19%	24%
School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties (SC)**	16,452	5 high schools, including one all magnet school	White: 63% Black: 30%	33%
Wilson County Schools (TN)	16,339	4 high schools	White: 86% Black: 8%	30%
Auburn School District (WA)	14,780	3 high schools	White: 50% Hispanic: 23%	56%
Fort Mill School District (SC)	11,066	2 high schools	White: 78% Black: 12%	20%

* A representative from the Fayette County Board of Education corresponded with Hanover Research via email. All other primary research took the form of phone interviews.

** We were not able to reach School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties for primary research, but we include secondary research findings from the district.

For demographic composition figures, the statistics present all groups representing at least 10 percent of the total student body. The only exception is Wilson County Schools, where the second-largest group represents only eight percent of the total.

Source: State accountability data¹

LESSONS LEARNED FROM DISTRICT EXPERIENCE

Drawing from interviews and secondary research on the seven districts identified through the discussed methodology, several lessons emerge that are relevant for Northwest ISD as it prepares to comply with House Bill 5. These lessons include:

- The great extent to which districts use pre-existing resources and curricula to comply with new regulations,

¹ For Auburn School District and Edmonds School District: “Education Quick Facts.” Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington. <http://data.k12.wa.us/PublicDWP/Web/WashingtonWeb/Home.aspx>

For the Coweta County School System: “2010-2011 Report Card Coweta County.” Georgia Department of Education. <http://archives.gadoe.org/ReportingFW.aspx?PageReq=102&CountyId=638&T=1&FY=2011>

For Fayette County Public Schools: “2010-2011 Report Card Fayette County.” Georgia Department of Education. <http://archives.gadoe.org/ReportingFW.aspx?PageReq=102&CountyId=656&T=1&FY=2011>

For Northwest ISD: “2011-12 Academic Excellence Indicator System, Northwest ISD.” Northwest ISD. <http://www.nisdtx.org/cms/lib/TX21000351/Centricity/Domain/51/aeis%20report.pdf>

For School District 5 of Lexington and Richland Counties and Fort Mill School District – York 4: “Public School Student Headcount.” South Carolina State Department of Education. http://www.ed.sc.gov/data/student-counts/Student_Headcounts/ActiveStudentHeadcounts.cfm

For Wilson County Schools: “2013 Report Card.” Tennessee Department of Education. <http://www.tn.gov/education/reportcard/2013.shtml>

- The importance of leadership, communication, and ensuring staff and stakeholders are thoroughly informed of the new requirements and curriculum,
- The significance of structuring guidance counseling to fit mandates and provide the maximum communication and benefits for students, and
- The need to focus on professional development for guidance counselors to ensure that they are able to perform their roles as experts and sources of guidance regarding course planning.

Based on interviews and secondary research, the most striking lesson is how **pre-existing local-level requirements have often allowed districts to comply with new state requirements without substantial changes**. Every representative interviewed for this report noted that the requirements and practices at the local level were above most new state requirements. As a result, many of these shifts have not affected school districts to a great extent, and when they have, the shifts have been fairly small. Moreover, since many or most students in these districts arrange their high school studies on the basis of college admissions requirements, these changes typically only affect at-risk students and students in career and technical education (CTE) tracks. While the endorsements will apply to and affect every student, the impact of this can be nominal, as most students can, and likely will, take the same set of courses within the new system.

In transitioning to new requirements, **districts identify the most important considerations to be leadership, communication, and knowledge among staff, especially counselors and district leaders**. District administration must sell the benefits of the new requirements to parents and staff, and they must be highly knowledgeable about the details of the law. Districts typically rely on every form of media available to communicate the benefits and details of the new requirements to parents and the public. In addition to print and online media, the districts have presented in public meetings, including community meetings for other organizations and meetings for the purpose of presenting changes to requirements and the curriculum. In order to properly communicate the requirements to students, counselors must also be experts on the details and implications of the changes. Multiple districts indicated utilizing professional development to ensure counselors become experts before the changes take place.

APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED TO NORTHWEST ISD AND HOUSE BILL 5

Based on the experiences of other districts, Northwest ISD may be likely be able to provide regular advising to all students without hiring a large number of additional counselors. With House Bill 5, counselors must meet with each student and each student's parent or guardian regarding academic options, personal graduation plans, and graduation requirements.² However, other similar districts in South Carolina and Washington provide this service with a ratio of students to counselors very similar to that of Northwest ISD. In fact, the district fits almost exactly in the middle when ranked with four similar districts on

² "H.B. No. 5." The Legislature of the State of Texas. Section 14(a).

the basis of this ratio, as shown in Figure 1.2. If excluding the Steele Accelerated High School, the ratio for high schools in Northwest ISD would be closer to 350, but this is still lower than in Auburn School District in Washington.

The American School Counselor Association has compiled a list of mandated and recommended ratios of students per guidance counselor. These ratios can be as low as the mandate for one counselor for every 250 students in Maine, but the most common requirements at the secondary level are for one counselor for every 300 to 500 students.³ Because many of these mandates include career advisors and other specialists in the guidance department not included for the purposes of Figure 1.2, the actual number of students per counselor may be higher than the requirement. For example, South Carolina requires one guidance staff member for every 300 students, but the districts in Figure 1.2 only have one counselor for approximately 325 to 345 students, on average. The figures in the table represent the average number of students and guidance counselors for all secondary schools in the district, and then are divided out by middle and high school levels.

Figure 1.2: Students per Guidance Counselor, Northwest ISD and Select Other Districts

DISTRICT (STATE)	TOTAL (SECONDARY)			HIGH SCHOOLS			MIDDLE SCHOOLS		
	RATIO	STUDENTS	GUIDANCE COUNSELORS	RATIO	STUDENTS	GUIDANCE COUNSELORS	RATIO	STUDENTS	GUIDANCE COUNSELORS
Edmonds School District (Washington)	302.7	975.4	3.2	293.5	1232.8	4.2	326.9	653.8	2.0
School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties (South Carolina)	328.9	1315.6	4.0	330.6	1763.0	5.3	326.7	980.0	3.0
Northwest ISD (Texas)	336.4	1093.1	3.3	330.8	1543.7	4.7	342.8	822.8	2.4
Fort Mill School District (South Carolina)	342.7	1028.2	3.0	343.5	1717.5	5.0	341.8	683.5	2.0
Auburn School District (Washington)	375.6	1201.8	3.2	373.3	1493.0	4.0	382.5	765.0	2.0

Source: The websites of Edmonds School District, School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties, Northwest ISD, Fort Mill School District, and Auburn School District, supplemented by data from NCES

In addition to guidance mandates, another major component of the new state regulations is a requirement for districts to offer endorsements.⁴ A student may earn an endorsement by completing the curriculum requirements for the endorsement, in addition to the general curriculum requirements. The Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) is responsible for determining the curriculum requirements for endorsements, which are not finalized. At present, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) provides examples of potential course requirements and options for each of the five endorsements in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); Business and Industry; Public Services; Arts and

³ "State School Counseling Mandates and Legislation." American School Counselor Association. <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors-members/careers-roles/state-school-counseling-mandates-and-legislation>

⁴ "House Bill 5 and High School Graduation Requirements." Texas Education Agency. p. 17. Available from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=25769806149>

Humanities; and Multidisciplinary Studies. Based on the Northwest ISD High School Course Selection Guide for 2013-2014, **it is clear that the district could offer every endorsement without significant alterations to course offerings**, given the TEA's current recommended requirements. This reinforces what representatives from similar districts have indicated – that districts with high standards and extensive course offerings are typically able to meet new requirements without substantial changes.

Northwest ISD already offers every course necessary for the multidisciplinary studies endorsement. Districts that are only able to offer one endorsement must offer the endorsement in multidisciplinary studies, which aligns well with a college-bound high school curriculum.⁵ TEA notes four example means to achieve the endorsement through four relevant credits, though the SBOE has not finalized the requirements. The examples include:

- Four advanced courses from within one endorsement area that are not in a coherent sequence,
- Two advanced courses from each of two endorsement areas,
- Four credits in each of the four foundation subject areas to include English IV and chemistry and/or physics, or
- Four AP or IB courses to include one credit in each of the four foundation subjects.⁶

A curriculum with four credits in each of the four foundation subject areas of English, mathematics, science, and social studies is standard for students seeking to enter college after high school, and many colleges recommend taking an AP or IB course in each of these subject areas. Both of these routes are readily available among courses offered in the district.⁷ Furthermore, advanced courses from various endorsement areas are available among the district's elective courses.

As with the multidisciplinary studies endorsement, **Northwest ISD already offers all of the courses necessary for the arts and humanities endorsement.** The arts and humanities endorsement focuses on political science, English literature, world languages, history, cultural studies, and fine arts.⁸ In addition to requiring English IV and, therefore, the four-credit sequence of English, students must complete a coherent four-credit sequence in art, AP or IB social studies, dance, music, a single language other than English (LOTE), theatre, or American Sign Language. According to the course selection guide, Northwest ISD currently offers coherent four-credit sequences in art, dance, music, LOTE, and theatre.⁹ While the district offers more than four AP courses in social studies, a four-credit sequence of AP courses in social studies would require the district to offer an AP social studies course to students in grade 9, which it does not appear to currently provide. The course selection guide does not include American Sign Language, but the options already offered through

⁵ Ibid., pp. 17, 26-27.

⁶ Bulleted points taken verbatim from ibid., p. 27.

⁷ "High School Course Selection Guide 2013-2014." Northwest Independent School District.

http://www.nisdtx.org/cms/lib/TX21000351/Centricity/Domain/92/CourseGuide_2013_2014%20final.pdf

⁸ "House Bill 5 and High School Graduation Requirements," Op. cit., pp. 25-26.

⁹ "High School Course Selection Guide 2013-2014," Op. cit.

the district would be more than sufficient to comply with the latest recommendations suggested by the TEA.

Through mathematics, science, and CTE coursework, **Northwest ISD also offers courses and sequences necessary for the STEM endorsement.** The STEM endorsement will likely require Algebra II, chemistry, and physics, as well as coherent four-credit sequences of computer science, mathematics, science, or CTE courses. The mathematics sequence focuses on courses for which Algebra II is a prerequisite, and the science courses must be beyond biology, chemistry, and physics, including at least two AP or IB credits.¹⁰ Northwest ISD's Engineering Technology Pathway and Computer Programming Pathway would likely both count for this endorsement. It is unclear at what grade level a student would need to have completed biology, chemistry, and physics, but Northwest ISD does offer an array of mathematics and science courses beyond the noted levels. As a result, if the final requirements allow the four credits to occur over the course of fewer than four years, the current course offerings would also enable students to obtain a STEM endorsement.¹¹

Given current CTE course offerings, **the district would also be able to offer the public services endorsement.** The public services endorsement includes coursework in health science, education and training, law enforcement, and culinary arts and hospitality. The TEA recommends shifting culinary arts and hospitality to the business and industry endorsement, while adding political science to the public services endorsement. As of the TEA's latest recommendations, students would only need a coherent four-credit sequence of courses in a related CTE cluster or four credits in JROTC.¹² While Northwest ISD does not offer courses in all of the related CTE clusters, the current course offerings in education and training, health science, and human services would provide students with several pathways to complete the endorsement.¹³

Northwest ISD would also be able to offer multiple pathways for the business and industry endorsement, if the SBOE adopts the latest TEA recommendations. As with public services, the pathways to the business and industry endorsement primarily involve CTE coursework. Coherent four-credit CTE sequences in one of the following clusters would meet the requirement:

- Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
- Architecture and Construction
- Arts, A/V Technology, and Communications
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Marketing

¹⁰ "House Bill 5 and High School Graduation Requirements," Op. cit., pp. 18-19.

¹¹ "High School Course Selection Guide 2013-2014," Op. cit.

¹² "House Bill 5 and High School Graduation Requirements," Op. cit., pp. 22-23.

¹³ "High School Course Selection Guide 2013-2014," Op. cit.

- Business Management & Administration
- Finance
- Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics¹⁴

Currently, Northwest ISD offers CTE pathways in agriculture, food, and natural resources; architecture and construction; arts, A/V technology, and communications; business management and administration; finance; information technology; and marketing.¹⁵ As a result, there are already many pathways available to Northwest ISD students to complete the recommended requirements for the business and industry endorsement.

In addition, there is a non-CTE pathway available for the business and industry endorsement. This pathway includes four English elective credits, including public speaking, newspaper, or advanced broadcast journalism.¹⁶ While Northwest ISD does not currently offer advanced broadcast journalism, the district does offer newspaper, public speaking, and a variety of other English electives that would fulfill the requirements.¹⁷

For each CTE pathway, students may also take a coherent sequence that combines multiple clusters. The student must take at least two courses in the same cluster and take the final course from one of the relevant clusters. Regardless of whether the student takes one or all of the courses from the related cluster, the sequence must include at least one advanced CTE course.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the definition of advanced is ambiguous, but it appears that the final course of most CTE sequences at Northwest ISD would fit with the general use of the term in the bill.¹⁹

¹⁴ Bulleted points taken verbatim from "House Bill 5 and High School Graduation Requirements," Op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁵ "High School Course Selection Guide 2013-2014," Op. cit.

¹⁶ "House Bill 5 and High School Graduation Requirements," Op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁷ "High School Course Selection Guide 2013-2014," Op. cit.

¹⁸ "House Bill 5 and High School Graduation Requirements," Op. cit.

¹⁹ "High School Course Selection Guide 2013-2014," Op. cit.

SECTION II: STATE AND DISTRICT PROFILES

This section profiles policy shifts similar to House Bill 5 in other states, combining primary and secondary research findings. While these profiles are the main inputs to Section I, this section provides additional context and detail regarding different policy shifts and the responses from districts comparable in size and structure to Northwest ISD. The majority of the information in these profiles stems from the contributions of district representatives contacted for this report.

SOUTH CAROLINA

As with Texas House Bill 5, **South Carolina also recently moved to require high school students to have a curricular focus.** The district representative interviewed for this report noted that South Carolina has revised requirements multiple times in the past 20 years, including a move toward requiring 24 credits first announced in 1993.²⁰ The regulations in effect for the 2013-2014 academic year include four credits of both mathematics and English, with three credits each of science and social studies. In addition, the state requires one credit of computer science, as well as one credit of either foreign language or CTE courses, leaving seven of 24 credits as electives.²¹

The state regulations also dictate the minimum instructional program for high schools. While the clusters of study and cluster majors are only broadly defined, South Carolina's requirements for offering these clusters and majors resembles the regulations present in Texas House Bill 5.

School districts must organize high school curricula around a minimum of three clusters of study and cluster majors. Such curricula must be designed to provide a well-rounded education that fosters artistic creativity, critical thinking, and self-discipline through the teaching of academic content and skills that students will use in postsecondary study and in the workplace. Students must declare an area of academic focus, also known as a career major, within a cluster of study before the end of the second semester of their tenth-grade year.²²

While the clusters reflect national career clusters, these majors are for all students. To comply with the South Carolina curriculum framework, the two districts examined for this report present their curricula with a structure similar to that of a university. Each of the two districts houses dozens of majors by cluster within four schools, as illustrated in Figures 2.1 and 2.2. The course catalog at each district lists the requirements and sample courses for every major, as well as potential complementary curricular and extracurricular opportunities. In addition, the catalogs list professional career opportunities after

²⁰ Young, C. Fort Mill School District. Phone interview conducted December 4, 2013.

²¹ "Defined Program, Grades 9-12 and Graduation Requirements." South Carolina State Department of Education. <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/124/documents/2013version43-234.pdf>

²² Ibid.

graduation from high school, a two-year associate’s degree, and a four-year bachelor’s degree. The Appendix presents a sample information page for a major in interdisciplinary studies (advanced placement) from School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties, which resembles the pathway to the multidisciplinary studies endorsement suggested by the TEA. Other majors may also serve as potential models for pathways to endorsements.

Figure 2.1: School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties Curriculum Framework, 2014—2015

SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS AND HUMANITIES	SCHOOL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS	SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING, MANUFACTURING, AND INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY	SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCE, HUMAN AND PUBLIC SERVICES
<p>Arts, Audio-Video Technology and Communication Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interdisciplinary Studies ▪ AP ▪ IB (IHS) ▪ Journalism ▪ Liberal Arts ▪ Media Technology and Visual Arts (The Center, DFHS) ▪ Performing Arts ▪ Visual and Digital Graphic Communication (The Center) ▪ Visual Arts and Design ▪ World Language <p>Education and Training Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Early Childhood Education (DFHS, IHS) ▪ Teacher Training 	<p>Business Management and Administration Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business Information Management ▪ General Management ▪ Leadership (SHHS) ▪ Operations Management (DFHS, SHHS) <p>Finance Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accounting ▪ Hospitality and Tourism Cluster ▪ Culinary Arts and Technology (The Center) <p>Information Technology Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cyber Security Technology (The Center) ▪ Programming & Software Development ▪ Web & Digital Communications <p>Marketing, Sales, and Service Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marketing Management 	<p>Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Biosystems Engineering Technology (The Center) ▪ Veterinary Science and Technology (The Center) <p>Architecture and Construction Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Architecture ▪ Building Construction Design and Integrated Technology (The Center) ▪ Electrical Design and Integrated Systems (The Center) <p>Manufacturing Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engineering Design and Machine Tool Technology (The Center) ▪ Mechatronics Systems Technology (The Center) ▪ Welding Technology (The Center) <p>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aerospace Engineering (The Center) ▪ Alternative Energy and Engineering Systems (The Center) ▪ Engineering & Engineering Technology ▪ Life Science ▪ Mathematics ▪ Physical Science <p>Transportation, Distribution and Logistics Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Automotive Collision Technology and Design (IHS) ▪ Automotive Service and Maintenance (The Center) 	<p>Government and Public Administration Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Military Science <p>Health Science Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Biomedical Sciences and Nanotechnology (The Center) ▪ Health Diagnosis and Treatment ▪ Medical Science and Research ▪ Physical Education ▪ Sports Medicine <p>Human Service Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cosmetology (IHS) ▪ Counseling, Mental Health, and Social Services ▪ Family and Consumer Sciences -- Nutrition (IHS) <p>Law, Public Safety, and Security Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emergency and Fire Management Services (The Center) ▪ Law and Legal Services ▪ Law Enforcement (The Center)

Source: School District 5 of Lexington and Richland Counties²³

²³ Reproduced from: “District Course Catalog 2014-2015.” School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties. p. xii. <http://www.lexrich5.org/files/filesystem/coursecatalog2014-2015r.pdf>

Figure 2.2: Fort Mill School District Curriculum Framework

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES	SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS	SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGIES	SCHOOL OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
<p>Arts Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Choral Music ▪ Dance ▪ Drama ▪ Instrumental Music ▪ Visual Arts <p>AV Technology and Communications Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Digital Art and Design (NF) ▪ Media Technology (TV) (FM) ▪ Graphic Communication (FM) ▪ Journalism <p>Humanities Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AP: Interdisciplinary Studies ▪ English ▪ International Studies ▪ Social Studies 	<p>Business Management and Administration Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General Management ▪ Operations Management <p>Finance Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accounting <p>Information Technology Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programming and Software Development <p>Marketing, Sales and Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marketing Management 	<p>Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resource Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Animal Science ▪ Environmental and Natural Resources Management <p>Architecture and Construction Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Computer Assisted Drafting (CAD)-Project Lead the Way <p>STEM Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Math ▪ Pre-Engineering (PLTW) ▪ Science <p>Transportation, Distribution & Logistics Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Automotive Technology (NF) 	<p>Education and Training Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Early Childhood Education <p>Health Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Biomedical Sciences ▪ Health Science ▪ Sports Medicine ▪ Diversified Health Science <p>Law and Public Service Cluster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Law and Legal Services ▪ Military Science <p>Hospitality and Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culinary Arts

Source: Fort Mill School District²⁴

Counselors begin to discuss the clusters, majors, and the individual graduation plan with students in grade 8. Students must select a preferred cluster before the end of grade 8 and a major before the end of grade 10. **According to state law, guidance counselors must meet with every student at least once each year during grades 8 through 12, with a parent or guardian in attendance.** In addition, at least 80 percent of these conferences must be in-person meetings, while the remainder may utilize technology, such as telephone, email, video conferencing, or an online meeting site, such as GoTo meeting, Webex, or Elluminate.²⁵ As with districts in Washington, Figure 1.2 demonstrates that districts in South Carolina comply with these requirements with an average student load for their counselors similar to the average load at Northwest ISD.

A district representative indicated that the district well-prepared for many of the recent changes due to early long-term planning. **When the state moved to 24 credits in 1993, the district decided to transition to a block schedule with four classes per semester.** This allowed the district to build a buffer beyond the required 24 credits with students attempting 32 classes over the course of four years. However, the expanded class schedule also required an expanded set of offerings, and the district decided to address this through a mix of integrating CTE and expanding electives. At the time, the district had sent students to an adjacent town 45 minutes away for CTE classes, and the physical and social obstacles were preventing many students from enrolling in CTE classes. By 2000, the district added more CTE and similar courses and physically integrated the offerings into the district. With

²⁴ Reproduced from: "Fort Mill School District Program of Studies 2013-2014." Fort Mill School District. Available from: http://www.fort-mill.k12.sc.us/group_profile_view.aspx?id=100d15da-7817-4845-b41c-7aac4c7168bb

²⁵ "Individual Graduation Plan Conferences 2013-2014." South Carolina State Department of Education. http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/174/Pathways/documents/2013-14_IGP_Guidelines.pdf

the increasing requirements for majors, the district added an increasing variety of classes, including business and finance.

Expanding offerings did require expanding staff and facilities, but these both occurred at a time of growth in the district. While adding new offerings meant adding teachers with new expertise, the district was in need of additional teaching staff at the time to address the growing size of the student body. Accordingly, this resulted in a focus on hiring teachers with expertise in specialty areas, but these teachers did not replace existing teachers. Moreover, the district held a bond auction and acquired a former elementary school, which it used primarily for CTE courses requiring special equipment. Since the district needed more space to accommodate the growth in students, the shift to adding more CTE and elective courses only changed how district used the new space.

As with other districts, leadership and communication was a key factor in the transition process. The district presented the changes at the parent-teacher association meetings for every district school with a PowerPoint presentation, extensively selling the benefits of the changes. Through every communication channel available to the district, the leadership worked to establish parent buy-in for the new system. The district representative indicated that the parents in the district are typically wealthy, and parents bought in to the changes because they understand that employers are looking for students with extensive academic and technical preparation.

The district added assistant principals for students in grade 9 exclusively, as well as an additional counselor. The 2005 law requires one guidance counselor for every 300 students and that guidance counselors meet with every student and his or her parent or guardian every year. As a result, it was relatively easy to convince the local board of education to fund an additional counselor, and counselors bought into the changes with the career plans for all students. However, this requirement was mainly a formality for the district, as counselors were already implementing similar practices. In order to address the curricular changes and a variety of other initiatives, the district also added an assistant principal in each of the two high schools.

For transitioning students from one plan to another, the district representative suggested that the district simply persevered through the challenges. The most important consideration is for every staff member, particularly counselors and leadership, to remember which students have what requirements, as well as what the responsibilities are for students and staff.

TENNESSEE

Tennessee recently implemented a policy shift similar to those in Texas and South Carolina. Effective for the graduating class of 2013, the Tennessee Department of Education altered high school graduation requirements as part of initiative designed to align the curriculum with expectations for graduates in post-secondary education and the workplace. The state shifted toward a single diploma with a mandatory three-credit elective focus. While the

state's standards had previously been lagging, according to the state, the new Tennessee standards feature more requirements than House Bill 5. In addition to four credits in English and three credits each in science and social studies, Tennessee now requires four credits in mathematics for all students. The previous graduation requirements had required Algebra I and Geometry, but all students must now take Algebra II and an upper level mathematics course. For students who have not yet earned a 19 on the mathematics section of the ACT before their senior year, the state recommends a bridge math course designed to accelerate college and career readiness in mathematics.²⁶

For the elective focus, students may complete three units from the same CTE program or another approved program, or they may complete a focus in science and math, humanities, fine arts, or AP or IB coursework. In addition, local boards of education may approve additional tracks for the elective focus.²⁷ The elective focus is shorter than the TEA-recommended endorsement structure, but the intention is similar. However, despite these substantial changes and other, smaller changes, a representative of the only Tennessee district meeting the criteria for inclusion in this report indicated that there had been minimal impact on the district.²⁸ As he noted, local education agencies decided which elective focuses to offer, and the district made very few additions of courses. Consequently, the law had no substantial impact on facilities or staffing. **According to the district representative, the main areas of focus were guidance, leadership, and communicating with parents.**

Modeling guidance after the higher education model, the requirements follow the student through his or her time in the school system. As a result, the district representative was unable to provide advice related to transitioning continuing students from one plan to another. However, since counselors would still typically advise students with different requirements, he stressed ensuring students, parents, and especially guidance counselors fully understand the changes. The district offers both sets of requirements in the policies and materials that the district makes available to students, parents, and counselors, and the district also provided additional professional development. **The district allowed schools to decide how to structure guidance, and some schools moved to a system of assigning counselors to focus on only one grade.** Those counselors in this new system fared better than those staying with the traditional system of assigning the entire school on the basis of name, according to the individual interviewed for the report.

In addition to changes in counseling, **the district representative stressed the importance of district leaders understanding, promoting, and explaining the law.** The district began promoting the change more than a year before it actually took place, and the leadership focused on explaining why this change was important and how it was going to improve education in the district. As a result, everyone in district- and school-level leadership were

²⁶ [1] "Graduation Requirements." Tennessee Department of Education. <http://www.tn.gov/education/gradreq.shtml>

[2] "The Tennessee Diploma Project." Tennessee Department of Education. <http://www.tn.gov/sbe/TDP%201-23-08.pdf>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Wilson, M. Wilson County Schools. Phone interview conducted December 10, 2013.

required become experts on the law and the reasoning behind the law, so that they could explain and convey the new requirements to stakeholders, especially parents.

For the purpose of communicating the change to parents and the public, the district used local media as much as possible. In addition to presenting and explaining the changes and the important details of the law in newspapers and online media, the district held public events at high schools to answer questions. Administrators also compiled an FAQ sheet and posted all information about the change, including PowerPoints, online on the district's website.

WASHINGTON

As with South Carolina and Tennessee, the State of Washington recently shifted graduation requirements. In 2006, the state legislature in Washington initiated the process of revising high school graduation requirements and expectations. The process included research, stakeholder input, and extensive work in committees, and in 2010, the state board of education approved, but did not implement, a set of requirements known as the Career and College-Ready Graduation Requirements.²⁹ While the state is only slowly transitioning toward these requirements, and there will be continuing flexibility, districts in Washington are preparing for the full implementation.³⁰ However, both districts interviewed for this report already maintained requirements above and beyond the state requirements, and representatives discussed how they made these transitions independently.

One of the districts implemented fields of study several years ago, where students could concentrate in a field of study that aligns with their interests and abilities after taking the grade 10 assessment. At the time, the district had to consider the level of full-time equivalents for staffing and the allocation of classroom space. For the most part, however, there was only a shift in offerings based on what students want. **The main challenge for this district was finding qualified science, technology, engineering, and math teachers, as well as instructors for Chinese language courses.**

In addressing the increase in requirements for core courses, representatives indicated that the biggest impact will be for electives and for at-risk students. Since most students plan their high school curriculum around college entry requirements, the changes in Washington primarily affect students in CTE pathways and students not performing well academically. As a result, these representatives emphasized a focus on working with these students to ensure they are making adequate progress and have options available that lead to fulfilling the requirements. In addition, these changes shift the curriculum away from electives, meaning that there may be insufficient demand for certain electives after the transition.

²⁹ "Graduation Requirements." The Washington State Board of Education.
<http://www.sbe.wa.gov/graduation.php#.UqowqvRDsk0>

³⁰ [1] O'Dell, G. Auburn School District. Phone interview conducted December 10, 2013.

[2] Schumacher, S. Edmonds School District. Phone interview conducted December 9, 2013.

With the current discussion of expanding graduation requirements to 24 credits, there will be important implications for at-risk students, as well as for staffing, facilities, and textbooks. While current requirements are high, representatives noted the importance of offering enough room in the schedule for students to complete graduation requirements without earning credit for every course taken. Having a buffer, however, would require an expansion or reconfiguration of the schedule, as occurred in the South Carolina district profiled in this report.

While one district indicated that little had or would change in counseling, **another district indicated that three of four high schools in the district added advisory time during the previous shift in guidance requirements.** Among these schools, advisory models have changed over time, but schools block time either once per month, once per quarter, or once per year for advising time. This allows counselors to meet with every student to discuss plans for high school and beyond, as required by the state. As noted in Figure 1.2, the examined districts in Washington meet these requirements and perform these services with a similar ratio of students to counselors in their buildings.

GEORGIA

In 2007, the Georgia Department of Education revised the state's high school graduation requirements, streamlining the diploma options and increasing the minimum requirements.³¹ All students must now complete four credits of English, mathematics, and science, as well as three credits in social studies. While the new requirements do not involve endorsements or a similar requirement, they do require more coursework in mathematics, science, and either CTE, foreign language, or fine arts than was previously expected of students. However, representatives from both of the districts contacted for this report indicated that complying with the new requirements was not difficult.³²

One of the districts has been losing enrollment and, therefore, funding from the state and federal level. The resulting school closures and staff reductions have created challenges, including offering CTE and fine arts courses. One school in the district is currently piloting a seven-period day with five classes per day for core teachers and six classes per day for fine arts and CTE teachers.

While information from these districts was limited, discussions with district leaders corroborated the findings included throughout this report: that changes in state legislation do not necessitate large-scale reforms in district offerings, staffing, or facilities.

³¹ "Graduation Requirements." Georgia Department of Education. <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/AskDOE/Pages/Graduation-Requirements.aspx>

³² [1] Barker, K. Coweta County School System. Phone interview conducted December 12, 2013.

[2] Fleming, T. Fayette County Board of Education. Email correspondence, December 12, 2013.

APPENDIX

HIGH SCHOOL MAJOR IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES – ADVANCED PLACEMENT

School District 5 of Lexington and Richland Counties provides an information table for each major at the district's high school, in accordance with South Carolina law. Given the potential applicability of the interdisciplinary studies major to the Texas multidisciplinary studies endorsement, Figure A.1 reproduces the Advanced Placement track of that major from the district's course catalog. For the same major, it is possible to take the International Baccalaureate (IB) track at schools offering IB courses.

Figure A.1: Information for the Interdisciplinary Studies Major – Advanced Placement, School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties

SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS AND HUMANITIES		MAJOR: INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES - ADVANCED PLACEMENT		
		Required Courses for Major (Minimum 4 Credits Required) *One course from each of the 4 categories below REQUIRED	Complementary Coursework	Learning Opportunities (Options related to major)
CLUSTER: ARTS, AUDIO-VIDEO TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION		<u>One of the following:</u> AP Calculus AB AP Calculus BC AP Statistics <u>One of the following:</u> AP European History AP Psychology AP World History AP Human Geography	AP English Language or AP English Literature AP Macroeconomics — CHS, DFHS AP Microeconomics — DFHS AP Government AP US History IB Language B SL or HL 1, 2—IHS Performing Arts Psychology 101 PreCalculus Research 1, 2 HN—CHS, DFHS Theory of Knowledge 1, 2—IHS Visual Arts World Language 1, 2, 3 HN, 4 HN, 5 HN World Language AP—CHS, DFHS	Career Info Delivery Sys Exposure Career Mentoring Career Shadowing Cooperative Education Senior Internship
GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS				
Subject	Units Required	<u>One of the following:</u> AP Art Studio: Drawing, 2D Design, or 3D Design AP Music Theory AP Computer Science A—DFHS, IHS AP Spanish <u>One of the following:</u> AP Physics AP Biology AP Chemistry AP Environmental Science—CHS, DFHS		
English/Language Arts	4.0			
Mathematics	4.0			
Science	3.0			
U.S History and Constitution	1.0			
Economics	0.5			
U.S. Government	0.5			
Other Social Studies	1.0			
Physical Education or ROTC	1.0			
Computer Science (including keyboarding courses)	1.0			
FL or CATE*	1.0			
Electives	7.0			
Total	24.0			
These 24 credit requirements work collaboratively with your selected major's required and complementary coursework.		High School Diploma Certified Medical Assistant Robotics Technician Real Estate Sales Agent Law Clerk	2-Year Associate Degree Executive Assistant Medical Interpreter Reporter Sales Manager	4-Year Degree and Higher Attorney Computer Scientist Financial Manager / Planner Physician
Professional Opportunities upon Graduation (For additional college entrance requirements refer to college of your choice.)				

* FL stands for Foreign Language, and CATE stands for Career and Technical Education.
 CHS, DFHS, and IHS are Chapin High School, Dutch Fork High School, and Irmo High School, respectively. Certain classes are only offered on certain campuses, as indicated with their acronyms.
 HN denotes an Honors course
 Source: School District 5 of Lexington and Richland Counties³³

³³ "District Course Catalog 2014-2015," Op. cit., p. 1.

PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

Hanover Research is committed to providing a work product that meets or exceeds partner expectations. In keeping with that goal, we would like to hear your opinions regarding our reports. Feedback is critically important and serves as the strongest mechanism by which we tailor our research to your organization. When you have had a chance to evaluate this report, please take a moment to fill out the following questionnaire.

<http://www.hanoverresearch.com/evaluation/index.php>

CAVEAT

The publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this brief. The publisher and authors make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this brief and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. There are no warranties which extend beyond the descriptions contained in this paragraph. No warranty may be created or extended by representatives of Hanover Research or its marketing materials. The accuracy and completeness of the information provided herein and the opinions stated herein are not guaranteed or warranted to produce any particular results, and the advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every partner. Neither the publisher nor the authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages. Moreover, Hanover Research is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. Partners requiring such services are advised to consult an appropriate professional.



1750 H Street NW, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20006

P 202.756.2971 F 866.808.6585
www.hanoverresearch.com