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The IB Story: Texas Gives Credit where Credit is Due

In May 2005, the Texas State Legislature passed a bill requiring postsecondary institutions to award a minimum of 24 hours of college credit to students who receive the IB Diploma. To ensure that the law is applied fairly and consistently the legislation directs the Texas Education Agency (public schools) and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (universities) to work together to evaluate the IB program and to keep it in alignment with the first-year college curriculum.

How did the Texas IB Schools (TIBS) manage to bring together the state's school officials, university administrators, and legislators in support of this plan?

The first and most essential step was to reach out to higher education leaders, gaining their support from the beginning, so that the legislation wouldn't come across as a top-down intrusion upon academic affairs. In fact, once they became satisfied that IB standards are as rigorous as any introductory college course of study, campus officials gave the plan their full endorsement. Moreover, they agreed to work closely with TIBS to identify a university to serve as a flagship model for the state, demonstrating that IB graduates can bypass introductory courses and still make a successful transition to college.

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With the support of the state universities in hand, TIBS found it easy to win the backing of local IB teachers and administrators, who knew that more students would jump at the chance to pursue the rigorous IB diploma if it meant they would get an early start on college, saving them thousands of dollars in tuition and freeing them from having to study material they have already mastered.

Given the enthusiasm of local teachers and principals, TIBS had relatively little trouble persuading a legislator to sponsor the bill and shepherd it along. After all, not only did the bill make good sense educationally — raising the bar

in high schools and then granting academic credit to students who have truly earned it — but it promised to save the state a considerable amount of money as well, by putting students on course to graduate in 3–4 years, rather than the average of five. Moreover, a generous IB Diploma policy provides a powerful incentive for outstanding students to stay in their home state, rather than taking their talents elsewhere.