

Trend-starting Texas drops algebra II mandate

January 25 2014, by Will Weissert



In a Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2014 photo, math teacher Tracy Popescu, right, helps high school junior Carter Buono, 17, with a problem in an algebra II class at Flower Mound High School in Flower Mound, Texas. Texas became the first state to require its high school students to take algebra II, betting tougher graduation standards would better prepare its youngsters for college and life beyond it. Since then, 16 other states and the District of Columbia have followed suit, and two more will by 2020. But Texas is now bucking the trend it began, abandoning advanced-math mandates to give high school students more flexibility to focus on vocational training for jobs that pay top dollar but don't necessarily require a college degree. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

Texas started a trend by making most of its high school students tackle algebra II. But eight years later, the state often watched for education policy is abandoning the requirement.

The move is being praised by [school districts](#) for affording them more flexibility. But some policy experts are nervous because nearly 20 states have since followed Texas' lead in requiring the advanced math course.

Supporters say fewer curriculum mandates give students more time to focus on vocational training for high-paying jobs that don't necessarily require a college degree.

But critics say the state is watering down its academic standards, noting that [graduation rates](#) and college-exam scores have increased.

Texas will join Florida in dropping the requirement when its Board of Education gives final approval to a curriculum overhaul next week.

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