



To the Administrator Addressed

Commissioner Mike Morath

1701 North Congress Avenue • Austin, Texas 78701-1494 • 512 463-9734 • 512 463-9838 FAX • tea.texas.gov

DATE:	April 16, 2026
SUBJECT:	Highest Ranking Graduate
CATEGORY:	Tuition Waiver
NEXT STEPS:	Share with principal and/or lead counselor

Overview

The Highest Ranking Graduate (HRG) program provides a tuition waiver for students graduating at the top of their high school class for their freshman year of college. Each public and accredited nonpublic high school in Texas may identify one student to receive a “Highest Ranking Graduate” certificate and tuition waiver under [Texas Education Code \(TEC\), §54.301](#).

Schools must present these documents to the highest-ranking graduate in the senior class. A school may not award this honor to a student ranked lower than “highest.”

Selection Criteria

Each local school board must adopt a policy that defines the criteria and process for selecting its HRG. The local school district has sole authority to determine the selection methodology. State law does not assign this responsibility to the Commissioner of Education or the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Ties

Each high school may award only one HRG, except in rare cases of a tie. If a district certifies a tie for the highest-ranking graduate, it may issue two certificates. Under no circumstances may a district issue more than two certificates for a single high school. Please see the Attorney General’s opinion below:

An institution of higher education is authorized to issue scholarships to more than one person in any case in which the relevant school district certifies a tie for the title of "highest ranking graduate," pursuant to Section 54.201 of the Texas Education Code (TEC). [Op. Atty. Gen. 19892-No. MW-529](#) (PDF).

***Please note TEC §54.201 was re-designated §54.301 by the 82nd Legislature.**

Tuition Waiver

TEA will send separate instructions to the superintendent and principal on completing the certificate and tuition waiver document. The HRG must present the tuition waiver to a college or university upon admission and may retain the certificate for personal use. The tuition waiver authorizes state-supported colleges and universities to waive tuition in accordance with [TEC §54.301](#).

Questions

For additional questions, please visit the [HRG Frequently Asked Questions](#) page or submit an [HRG Help Desk Ticket](#).