



The Four-by-Four

Albert Einstein said, “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

Forcing every high school senior to take an upper-level math class could cause them to think differently of themselves. According to a news release from Sen. Jeff Wentworth, students who graduated from high school in 2011 were the first to fall under new graduation requirements. This graduation plan is known across the state as the four-by-four. The plan made it mandatory for high school students to complete four credits in each of the four core subjects.

Jett Mason graduated from Texas Tech University with a degree in agricultural education in 2010. He is an agriculture teacher at Stamford High School in Stamford, Texas. Mason said the new requirements have been an obstacle for agricultural and technical classes in high schools because it takes away from the number of class periods a student can choose to fill with an elective.

“From that point of view, it’s been a challenge for us to keep our numbers up,” Mason said.

He said he believes the four-by-four plan does create opportunities for agricultural education. Mason said the creation of new agriculture classes, and the re-thinking of existing classes, has come from the updated requirements since

some agriculture classes can serve as a student’s fourth credit of math or science.

“It shows agricultural education’s ability to adapt to the new requirements and change our philosophy on classes,” Mason said.

According to the Texas Education Agency’s website, three of a student’s math and science credits must come from specific courses. The fourth credit can be selected from a longer list. Mathematical applications in agriculture, food and natural resources is an example of an agriculture course which can fulfill the fourth math requirement. On the 25-item list of approved science courses, you will find advanced animal science, and advanced plant and soil science.

Julie Martin has been teaching algebra in Sonora, Texas, for 21 years. Her first 15 years were spent at Sonora Middle School, but she has been teaching algebra to freshmen at Sonora High School for the past six years. She said she also teaches a college algebra course which counts as the students’ fourth math credit.

“Not everyone needs to have calculus for their future,” Martin said. “They need something they can apply to their field of interest.” **T**

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