



To the Administrator Addressed

Commissioner Mike Morath

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DATE:	April 15, 2019
SUBJECT:	Highest Ranking Graduate
CATEGORY:	Tuition Waiver
NEXT STEPS:	Action required of LEA; share with principal and/or lead counselor

In conjunction with [Texas Education Code \(TEC\), §54.301](#), the Texas Education Agency (TEA) provides an opportunity for each public and accredited non-public high school in Texas to identify a student to award a "Highest Ranking Graduate" certificate and tuition waiver document. These documents shall be presented to the highest ranking graduate (HRG) in the senior class. Under no circumstances may a student ranked lower than "highest" be awarded this honor. The HRG should present the tuition waiver document to the college or university upon admission and retain the certificate for personal use. The HRG tuition waiver document authorizes the president of any state-supported college or university to provide a waiver for tuition in accordance with [TEC §54.301](#).

The local school board should adopt and adhere to a policy that outlines the criteria and the method to select one student as their HRG to receive the tuition waiver. The methodology for determining the HRG is strictly a local decision. State law contains no provision that designates the Commissioner of Education or the TEA as the decision-making authority in this area.

[Visit the HRG "frequently asked questions" web page](#) for additional information regarding the award. Each high school may award only one student, except in the case of a tie as specified in 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](#).

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

Although this opinion authorizes the issuance of more than one certificate in the event of a tie for "highest ranking graduate," the criteria for identifying such students must be stringently applied. It is the responsibility of the district to establish a selection process that will result in the identification of the single "highest ranking graduate." In rare cases in which more than one student meets the district's criteria for selection, two certificates may be issued; however, in no event will more than two certificates be issued for one high school.

TEA will send the superintendent and principal separate correspondence detailing the process for completing the certificate and tuition waiver document. Additional questions regarding this matter may be sent to hrq@tea.texas.gov.