MILLARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BOARD MEETING NOTICE

The Board of Education will meet on Monday, February 10,2003 at 7:00 p.m. at the Don Stroh Administration Center, 5606 South 147th Street.

Public Comments on agenda items - This is the proper time for public questions and comments on agenda items only. Please make sure a request form is given to the Board Vice-President before the meeting begins.

A G E N D A

1. Weighted Grades

2. Update of Board Initiatives and Superintendent Goals

Millard
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

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FEBRUARY 10,2003

Minutes
Board of Education
February 10,2003

The members of the Board of Education met for a Committee Meeting on Monday, February 10, 2003 at 7 p.m. at the Don Stroh Administration Center, 5606 South 147th Street. The discussion topics included weighted grades and a review of the Board initiatives and the Superintendent's goals.

PRESENT: Jean Stothert, Mike Pate, Brad Burwell, Linda Poole Julie Johnson, and Mike Kennedy.

Others in attendance were Keith Lutz, Martha Bruckner, Judy Porter, and other administrators

One board member mentioned that the current grading system allowed a student with a GPA of 3.75, who was taking 8 classes to have a higher class rank than a student with a GPA of 4.0, who was taking 7 classes. Another board member suggested that if honors courses were weighted, then AP and IB courses might need to be weighted more heavily.

A board member asked if we would have to offer more honors classes if they were weighted. Dr. Porter said that was a possibility.

Board members asked what was the motivation for students to take honors classes. Since the classes are not now weighted, students usually take them to be challenged, to prepare for AP or IB classes, or to better prepare themselves for ACT or SAT tests.

It was noted that each school system is different in determining which courses will be called "honors" or what that means. Since there is no external determinant or test, honors courses differ much more from one district to another.

Board members and a counselor present mentioned that scholarships are usually awarded based on ACT or SAT score and grade point average, although there are times that class rank is a determinant.

One board member asked if the District could explain the difference between regular, honors, and AP classes. Since there is not an external standard, the differences are harder to decipher. Dr. Lutz mentioned that the AP test can serve as an external evaluation, and he suggested that the district might consider requiring the test for those students who take AP classes. Without the test, Dr. Lutz contended that the system of honors and AP classes'is simply a form for tracking students – a mechanism that is less popular now than several years ago.

Board members asked if the current system of college advisement was sufficient to meet the needs of all students. Dr. Lutz mentioned that the sheer force of numbers of students to counselors meant that not all students get individualized assistance from counselors, although the

advisement system is meant to help. A counselor suggested that if kids were proactive and motivated, they would search out the information.

One board member mentioned that the current system of mark points honors quantity instead of quality and punishes students for taking a study hall. Another board member mentioned that the stress seems to be worst at the freshman level, and that by the senior level, most students have learned to balance their time. Some seniors would take a release period rather than a class or a study hall.

Dr. Lutz mentioned that Dr. Bruckner and Dr. Porter have no ownership of the current system since they were not in their positions when it was developed. He said that the system was developed based on best information we had at that time. It is the job or Drs. Bruckner and Porter to defend the system as developed up to point that the board decides to change it. He suggested that the board could decide to have the issue go back to a curriculum committee made up of an eclectic group of people to talk about the issue with broad input and then bring it back to the Board.

Dr. Lutz suggests that at a future meeting we will illustrate the differences between regular, honors and AP classes.

Dr. Lutz reviewed the progress on the Board's initiatives and on his goals.

CHAIRMAN

Weighted Grades

Committee of the Whole Meeting
February 10,2003

BACKGROUND: In 1998, a committee comprised of 57 members including curriculum representatives, high school administrators, 10 parents, 5 business representatives and 16 high school students conducted an extensive study of graduation requirements for the Class of 2004. This committee addressed many questions surrounding graduation requirement changes. Although concerns about the manner in which grade point averages are calculated and how rank in class is determined had also existed for several years, the committee deferred to administration to address these issues. This committee did succeed in making recommendations that included increasing the credits required for graduation to 225 and identifying other specific requirements within the 225 total.

Once the increase in credits was approved by the Board, a new committee consisting of the high school principals and registrars was convened to continue discussions regarding grade point averages, weighted grades, and class rank. The committee related an interest in clear definition of the rigor of a course based on a recognized external standard such as the College Board sanction of Advanced Placement classes or the International Baccalaureate requirements for courses. Advanced Placement classes are reviewed during the MEP phase process. College Board requirements are followed as best we are able and teachers are reminded during the curriculum phase cycle of the need to follow the curriculum. In the past, we eliminated a course because it did not follow College Board curriculum.

Recommendations of this subsequent committee were that:

- The grading scale described herein be retained.
- The system of weighted grades for Advanced Placement courses be retained.
- The system of weighted grades be applied to those courses taken for International Baccalaureate purposes where in students are required to meet IB requirements for standard level or high level assessment.
- The high school physical education classes be graded.
- Rank in class be determined by calculating Total Rank Points which is equal to the Grade Point averages times the Mark Point Total.
- That these changes would be applied to all three Millard high schools.

Advantages to the system adopted in 1998 and applied to the graduating class of 2004 are as follows:

- The system emphasizes taking the maximum class load per semester.
- It emphasizes high achievement by factoring GPA twice.
- The system achieves a better balance between high achievement and the number of courses and types of courses taken.
- The system emphasizes quality and quantity.
- It eliminates students having to make decisions or "play games" with GPA and class load.
- The system encourages students to take electives as well as advanced placement courses.

TIMELINE: It was recommended that the new recommendation be applied to the graduating class of 2004 and that the classes of 2001, 2002, and 2003 would retain the current system of calculating class rank. Further, the application of weighted grades to International Baccalaureate classes would be effective in 2002-03. The International Baccalaureate recommendation was delayed one year based on year of approval for the International Baccalaureate program in Millard. The new recommendations have not yet been fully implemented.

OTHER METRO AREA DISTRICTS

See attachment

SCHOOL PROFILES

COLLEGE ADMISSION INFORMATION

See attachment for information obtained fall of 2002.

SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

See attachment

ENROLLMENT INFORMATION (Examples of effect on GPA)

Transcripts of transferring students are adjusted to meet our weighting scale.

Honors and AP enrollment trends are included.

INFORMAL INTERVIEWS

Representative students from each Millard high school who might have "qualified" for an honors course but did not take them were interviewed. See attachment.

Counselors who deal with college admission and credit transfers from each high school were interviewed. See attachment.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Committee reports on Graduation Requirements; Approval of Policy 6330 and Rule 6330.1 Grading Guidelines – Kindergarten – Twelfth (April 24,2000)
- Listing of honors, AP, and IB classes
- Survey results of surrounding school districts as it applies to weighted grades and GPA
- School profiles
- Survey results of selected colleges as it applies to some admission requirements
- Article of recent Newsletter of the National Association for College Admission Counseling reporting college admission information and a college point system for admissions
- Academic Scholarship Information – Metro Schools
- AP and honors enrollment information
- Comments from Millard high school students, principals, and counselors
- Articles addressing weighted grades and GPA from a recent review of literature

CONSIDERATIONS

- In the 1998 study, the system of weighted grades was proposed for courses that were universally recognized as having high standards. Such standards are sometimes missing in determining the rigor of courses taken outside of a known school or district.
- We currently offer honors courses in three subject areas. It is possible that many or all subject areas may request honors course status. (This may result in a need for additional teachers.)
- If we were to grant weighted credit to honors courses, the change would need to go into effect 4 years after adoption for class rank so all students and parents could plan course registration accordingly.
- For other school districts, weighting grades is used to encourage enrollment in challenging courses. We don't seem to need that encouragement as seen in our high honors enrollment.
- If a course is not weighted, teachers and students may be sent the message that the course is not as important as weighted courses.
- Students may take courses that are weighted only to enhance GPA and avoid courses that may not enhance GPA.
- Elective experiences may suffer.
- Enrollment in honors courses may increase.

Committee Reports and Policy

AGENDA SUMMARY SHEET

AGENDA ITEM: Weighted Grades and Grade Point Average

MEETING DATE: October 21,2002

DEPARTMENT: Educational Services

TITLE AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Weighted Grades and Grade Point Average

ACTION DESIRED: INFORMATION ONLY X

BACKGROUND: In 1998, a committee comprised of 57 members including curriculum representatives, high school administrators, 10 parents, 5 business representatives and 16 high school students conducted an extensive study of graduation requirements for the Class of 2004. This committee addressed many questions surrounding graduation requirement changes. Although concerns about the manner in which grade point averages are calculated and how rank in class is determined had also existed for several years, the committee deferred to administration to address these issues. This committee did succeed in making recommendations that included increasing the credits required for graduation to 225 and identifying other specific requirements within the 225 total.

Once the increase in credits was approved by the Board, a new committee consisting of the high school principals and registrars was convened to continue discussions regarding grade point averages, weighted grades, and class rank. The committee related an interest in clear definition of the rigor of a course based on a recognized external standard such as the College Board sanction of Advanced Placement classes or the International Baccalaureate requirements for courses. Advanced Placement classes are reviewed during the MEP phase process. College Board requirements are followed as best we are able and teachers are reminded during the curriculum phase cycle of the need to follow the curriculum. In the past, we eliminated a course because it did not follow College Board curriculum.

Recommendations of this subsequent committee were that:

- The grading scale described herein be retained.
- The system of weighted grades for Advanced Placement courses be retained.
- The system of weighted grades be applied to those courses taken for International Baccalaureate purposes where in students are required to meet IB requirements for standard level or high level assessment.
- The high school physical education classes be graded.
- Rank in class be determined by calculating Total Rank Points which is equal to the Grade Point averages times the Mark Point Total.
- That these changes would be applied to all three Millard high schools.

4.

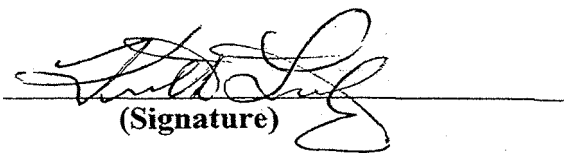
TIMELINE: It was recommended that the new recommendation be applied to the graduating class of 2004 and that the classes of 2001, 2002, and 2003 would retain the current system of calculating class rank. Further the application of weighted grades to International Baccalaureate classes would be effective in 2002-03. The International Baccalaureate recommendation was delayed one year based on year of approval for the International Baccalaureate program in Millard. The new recommendations have not yet been fully implemented.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Copy of the report given to the Board on January 3, 2000 – Weighted Grades, Grade Point Average, and Class Rank
- Approval of Policy 6330 - Grades and Rule 6330.1 Grading Guidelines for Third - Twelfth Grade (April 24,2000)
- Current AP and IB courses
  Approved Honors Courses

RESPONSIBLE PERSON: Dr. Judy Porter

SUPERINTENDENT'S APPROVAL:



AGENDA SUMMARY SHEET Enclosure I.3.
January 3, 2000

AGENDA ITEM: Weighted Grades, Grade Point Average, and Class Rank

MEETING DATE: January 3,2000

DEPARTMENT: Educational Services

TITLE AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Weighted Grades, Grade Point Average, and Class Rank

ACTION DESIRED: **Information Only** _X_

BACKGROUND: Concerns about the manner in which grade point averages are calculated and how rank in class is determined have existed for several years. Although briefly addressed last year during the graduation requirements study, conclusions were not reached. These discussions continued this fall and recommendations for changes that the principals endorse have been formulated. The attachment compares the current system and the proposed revisions with regard to the ranking of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The recommendations are:

1. That the grading scale described herein be retained.
2. That the system of weighted grades for Advance Placement courses be retained.
3. That the system of weighted grades be applied .to those courses taken for International Baccalaureate purposes wherein students are required to meet IB requirements for standard level or high level assessment.
4. That high school physical education classes be graded.
5. That rank in class be determined by calculating Total Rank Points which is equal to the Grade Point Average times the Mark Point Total.
6. That these changes would be applied to all three Millard high schools.

STRATEGIC PLAN REFERENCE: N/A

TIMELINE: These recommendations would be applied to the graduating class of 2004 and that the classes of 2001, 2002, and 2003 would retain the current system of calculating class rank. The application of weighted grades to International Baccalaureate classes as described above would be effective in 2001-2002.

RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S): Dr. Mark Feldhausen, Dr. Linda Wyatt, Dr. Dick Wollman, Dr. Rick Kolowski, Jeff Alfrey, Jeff Petersen, Dave Collins

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT APPROVAL: Penny H Koval Ed.
(Signature)

BOARD ACTION:

Example #2 who earned 25 credits with the 4.40 GPA would be ranked ahead of Example #1 who earned 30 credits and received a 4.33 GPA.

Other examples can be provided but these two illustrate the concerns that have been expressed by parents, students, faculty, and administrators,

Concerns:

1. The high schools and the district want students to maximize their educational opportunities by taking as many classes as possible.
2. The current system appears to penalize students who wish to take electives
3. A pattern has been detected in which the best students take fewer classes, especially when taking AP courses, and thus are able to 'manipulate the GPA and thus class rank.
4. The current system results in students wanting to drop classes in order to retain class rank and GPA.
5. A pattern among the top students has been found in which students drop out of band and other elective programs.

Proposed Program

Retain the current grading system including weighted mark points and method of calculating GPA. The class rank would be determined by multiplying the GPA times the Total **Mark** Points.

Example #1

Course	Grd.	Credits	Mark Pts.
Honors Spanish III	A	5	20
Math Topics I	A	5	20
A.P. European History	A	5	25
A.P. Biology	A	5	25
Band	A	5	20
English 11	A	5	20
Total Credits Earned		30	130

130 Mark Points ÷ 30 Credits Earned = 4.33 GPA
130 Total Mark Points x 4.33 GPA = 562.9 Rank Points

Example #2

Course	Grd.	Credits	Mark Pts.
Honors Spanish III	A	5	20
Math Topics I	A	5	20
A.P. European History	A	5	25
A.P. Biology	A	5	25
English 11	A	5	20
Total Credits Earned		25	110

110 Mark Points ÷ 25 Credits Earned = 4.40 GPA
110 Total Mark Points x 4.40 GPA = 484.0 Rank Points

Weighted Grades, Grade Point Average, and Class Rank

Background

During the graduation study committee's deliberations of last year (September–November 1998) the administrators, teachers, parents, and students who participated discussed the issue of weighted grades, grade point averages, and class rank. Unfortunately, no closure to this topic was achieved at that time. This fall the discussions were continued. These meetings were attended by the high school principals and registrars and facilitated by the Director of Secondary Education.

Current System

Below is the current Millard Public Schools' Marking System. This system is used to compute Grade Point Averages (GPA), and Class Rank. Weighted mark points are given to grades received in Advanced Placement Classes.

No. Grd.		Letter Grd.		% Grd. Range		Standard Mark Pts.		Weighted Mark Pts.
1	–	A	=	100 – 93	=	20 markpts.	Or	25 markpts.
2	–	B	=	92 – 85	=	15 mark pts.	Or	20 mark pts.
3	–	C	=	84 – 77	=	10 mark pts.	Or	15 mark pts.
4	–	D	=	76 – 69	=	5 markpts.	Or	5 mark pts.
5	–	F	=	68 - 0	=	0 mark pts.		0 mark pts.
P	–	P	=	Pass	=	0 mark pts.		0 mark pts.
F	–	F	=	Fail	=	0 mark pts.		0 mark pts.

Example #1

Course	Grd.	Credits	Mark Pts.
Honors Spanish III	A	5	20
Math Topics I	A	5	20
A.P. European History	A	5	25
A.P. Biology	A	5	25
Band	A	5	20
English 11	A	5	20
Total Credits Earned		30	130

130 Mark Points – 30 Credits Earned = 4.33 GPA

Example #2

Course	Grd.	Credits	Mark Pts.
Honors Spanish III	A	5	20
Math Topics I	A	5	20
A.P. European History	A	5	25
A.P. Biology	A	5	25
English 11	A	5	20
Total Credits Earned		25	110

110 Mark Points – 25 Credits Earned = 4.40 GPA

9.

Weighted Grades, Grade Point Average, and Class Rank

(Student/Parent Information Sheet for Class of 2004 & Beyond)

Below is the Millard Public schools' Marking System. This system is used to compute Grade Point Averages (GPA), and Class Rank. Weighted mark points are given to grades received in Advanced Placement Classes.

No. Grd.	Letter Grd.	% Grd. Range	Standard Mark Pts.		Weighted Mark Pts.
1 =	A =	100 – 93 =	20 mark pts.	Or	25 mark pts.
2 =	B =	92 – 85 =	15 mark pts.	Or	20 mark pts.
3 =	C =	84 – 77 =	10 mark pts.	Or	15 mark pts.
4 =	D =	76 – 69 =	5 markpts.	Or	5 mark pts.
5 =	F =	68 - 0 =	0 mark pts.		0 mark pts.
P =	P =	Pass =	0 mark pts.		0 mark pts.
F =	F =	Fail =	0 mark pts.		0 mark pts.

Class rank is determined by multiplying the GPA times the Total Mark Points.

Example #1

Course	Grd.	Credits	Mark Pts.
Honors Spanish III	A	5	20
Math Topics I	A	5	20
A.P. European History	A	5	25
A.P. Biology	A	5	25
Band	A	5	20
English 11	A	5	20
Total Credits Earned		30	130

130 Mark Points = 30 Credits Earned = 4.33 GPA
130 Total Mark Points x 4.33 GPA = 562.9 Rank Points

Example #2

Course	Grd.	Credits	Mark Pts.
Honors Spanish III	A	5	20
Math Topics I	A	5	20
A.P. European History	A	5	25
A.P. Biology	A	5	25
English 1 I	A	5	20
Total Credits Earned		25	110

110 Mark Points = 25 Credits Earned = 4.40 GPA
110 Total Mark Points x 4.40 GPA = 484.0 Rank Points

Thus, example #1 with 562.9 Rank Points would be placed ahead of example #2 with 484.0 Rank Points for class rank purposes.

Students are encouraged to take as many classes as possible and work as hard as they can to achieve the highest grades possible.

In this scenario, Example #1 is ranked ahead of example #2.

As further example, the following chart shows what would happen to the top 20 graduates of 1998 from one of the high schools had this system been in place. (A detailed analysis of current seniors, with the assistance of ESU#3, has also been examined.)

Student #	TMP	GPA	GPA Rank	TMP x GPA	Rank Pts. Position
1	1110	4.27	1	4739.70	1
2	965	4.20	2	4053.00	12
3	1110	4.19	3	4650.90	2
4	1105	4.17	4	4607.85	3
5	1020	4.15	5	4233.00	9
6	1090	4.15	5	4523.50	4
7	985	4.15	5	4087.75	11
8	960	4.13	8	3964.80	15
9	885	4.12	9	3646.20	19
10	1005	4.10	10	4120.50	10
11	1050	4.08	11	4284.00	6
12	1040	4.08	11	4243.20	8
13	895	4.07	13	3642.65	20
14	1085	4.06	14	4405.10	5
15	955	4.06	14	3877.30	16
16	1055	4.06	14	4283.30	7
17	950	4.04	17	3838.00	17
18	1000	4.04	17	4040.00	13
19	925	4.02	19	3718.50	18
20	995	4.02	19	3999.90	14

Advantages to the Proposed System:

1. Proposed system emphasizes taking the maximum class load per semester.
2. It emphasizes high achievement by factoring in GPA twice.
3. This proposed system achieves a better balance between high achievement and the number of courses and types of courses taken.
4. System emphasizes quality and quantity.
5. Eliminates students having to make decisions/game playing with GPA and class load.
6. Encourages students to take electives as well as advanced placement courses.

Disadvantages:

1. May result in more students taking more courses (recall that graduation requirements for class of 2004 go to 225 any way).

Implementation Schedule:

The proposed system would take effect with the incoming 9th graders, the graduating class of 2004. This would begin next academic year, 2000-2001. The graduating classes of 2001,2002, and 2003 will remain on the current system.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Grades ***6330***

The Superintendent or designee shall develop and implement student grading guidelines. The objectives of grading guidelines shall be to quantify and report the academic achievement of each student. Grades should fairly reflect the level of student achievement in the knowledge and skills specified by grade level or course enabling objectives and outcomes and shall be in accordance with the District's Essential Learner Outcomes. The Superintendent or designee shall develop a system which shall be utilized by the teachers of the District.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Grading Guidelines for Third -- Twelfth Grade ***6330.1***

The Millard Public Schools Grading Guidelines for third through twelfth grade shall be used to report achievement, academic progress, and compute Grade Point Averages (GPA) and Class Rankings where applicable. Weighted grade points shall be given to those grades received in Advanced Placement (AP) classes or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes where applicable.

No. Grade	Letter Grade	% Grade Range	Standard Grade Pts.	Weighted Grade Pts. (AP) (IB)
1 =	A =	100-93 =	20 Grade pts. or	25 Grade pts.
2 =	B =	92-85 =	15 Grade pts. or	20 Grade pts.
3 =	C =	84-77 =	10 Grade pts. or	15 Grade pts.
4 =	D =	76-69 =	5 Grade pts. or	5 Grade pts.
5 =	F =	68- 0 =	0 Grade pts.	0 Grade pts.
P =	P =	Pass =	0 Grade pts.	0 Grade pts.
F =	F =	Fail =	0 Grade pts.	0 Grade pts.

A student's Grade Point Average (GPA) shall be calculated by dividing the total grade points achieved (standard and weighted) by the total course credits earned. Weighted grade points will apply to Advanced Placement courses and to those courses taken for International Baccalaureate purposes wherein students are required to meet IB requirements for standard level or high level assessment. Pre-IB courses do not qualify for weighted grade points.

For all students in those classes scheduled to graduate prior to and including the 2002-2003 school year; the same being those students enrolled in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 during the 1999-2000 school year, class rank shall be determined by placing the cumulative Grade Point Average in rank order from highest to lowest.

For all students who are in classes scheduled to graduate in the 2003-2004 school year and thereafter, class rank shall be determined by Total Class Rank Points. The Grade Point Average multiplied by the total Grade Points shall equal Total Class Rank Pointsfor each student. The listing of the Total Class Rank Points from highest to lowest shall determine the class rank of each student.

Honors Courses

HIGH SCHOOL HONORS CLASSES 2002-2003

English

003 Honors English 9 – Y
004 Honors English 10 – Y

Foreign Language

114 Honors German II – 9/10 Y
116 Honors German III – 10112 Y
118 Honors German IV – 11/12 Y
134 Honors French II – 9/10 Y
136 Honors French III – 10112 Y
138 Honors French IV – 11/12 Y
149 Honors Spanish I – 9/12 Y
154 Honors Spanish II – 9/10 Y
156 Honors Spanish III – 10112 Y
158 Honors Spanish IV – 11/12 Y

Mathematics

221 Honors Geometry (2003-2004)
232 Honors Advanced Algebra (2003-2004)
239 Honors Precalculus (2003-2004)

Millard PUBLIC SCHOOLS

10/15/2002

AP / IB Classes

ADVANCED PLACEMENT CLASSES 2002-2003

Computer Science
260 Advanced Placement Computer Science - 11/12 Y

English
048 Advanced Placement English – 12 Y

Foreign Language
119 Advanced Placement German – 12 Y
139 Advanced Placement French – 12 Y
159 Advanced Placement **Spanish** – 12 Y
165 Advanced Placement **Latin** – 11/12 Y

Mathematics
243 'Advanced Placement Statistics - 11/12 S
244 Advanced Placement Calculus - 12 Y

Music
781 Advanced Placement Music Theory - 11/12 **S**

Science
370 Advanced Placement Chemistry –11112Y
377 Advanced Placement Biology – 11/12Y
379 Advanced Placement Physics – 11/12Y

Social Studies
450 Advanced Placement American History – 11/12Y
451 Advanced Placement European History – 11/12Y
452 Advanced Placement Macro Economics – 11/12S
453 Advanced Placement Psychology – 11/12S

15.

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE CLASSES 2002-2003

Art
732 IB Visual *Arts* SL – 11/12 Y
733 IB Visual Arts HL – 11 Y
734 IB Visual Arts HL – 12 Y

English
016 IB English HL – 11 Y
017 IB English HL – 12 Y (2003-04)

Foreign Language
120 IB/AP German SL – 12 Y (2003-04)
140 IB/AP French SL – 12 Y (2003-04)
160 IB/AP Spanish SL – 12 Y (2003-04)
161 IB/AP Latin SL – 12 Y (2003-04)

Mathematics
245 IB Mathematics HL I-11 Y
246 IB Mathematics HL II – 12 Y (2003-04)
247 IB Mathematical Studies SL-11/12 Y)
248 IB Mathematical Methods SL – 1/12 Y

Music
759 IB Music SL – 11/12 Band Y
764 IB Music SL – 11/12 Orchestra Y
776 IB Music SL – 11/12 Chorus Y
789 IB/AP Music SL – 11/12 Y

Science
321 Intro to Chemistry & Physics – 10 Y (Pre IB)
363 IB Chemistry SL – 11/12 Y
371 IB/AP Chemistry HL – 12 Y
372 IB Chemistry HL – 12 Y (2003-04)
375 IB/AP Biology SL – 11/12 Y
376 IB Biology HL – 11 Y
378 IB Biology HL – 12 Y (2003-04)
380 IB Physics SL – 11/12 Y

Social Studies
418 IB 20'' Century World History Topics – 11/12 Y
433 IB Psychology SL – 11/12 Y
455 IB History of the Americas HL – 12 Y (2003-04)

Special Programs
850 IB Theory of Knowledge – 11/12 Y

Mo.

Millard PUBLIC SCHOOLS

10/15/2002

Other Metro Districts

Weighted Grades Survey
Metro Area High School Districts

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8	Question 9
District	Grad. GPA	Grading scale	Weight grades	GPA-honor roll	GPA - valed /salut	GPA - class rank	Decide to weight	Ever not weight	Orig. Time-frame
Elkhorn	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Honors Classes in Core curriculum - Teacher driven	Yes	Unknown over 20 years
Gretna	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Unknown over 20 years
Lincoln	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	District committee reviews, discusses, preference for one class per subject area	Yes	Unknown over 20 years
OPS	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Currently - Teacher to building to TAC admin. Study is reviewing courses that may have weighted	Yes	Unknown over 20 years
Papillion	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Principal's system	Yes / both	Curriculum driven, teacher to building to administration	Yes	Unknown over 20 years
Ralston	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes - teacher driven	Yes	Unknown over 20 years
Westside	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Starts with student survey at end of each semester - to teachers - to department heads - to building admin.	No	Unknown over 20 years
Bellevue		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Curriculum driven	No	Unknown over 20 years
Millard	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No valed. / salut.	Yes	External Standards --AP Courses --IB Courses	Not from recollection	1998

1. Do you require a certain GPA for graduation?
2. Do all High Schools have same grading scale (District approved)?
3. Do you have weighted grades?
4. Are your GPA and honor roll tied together?
5. Do you have a specific GPA requirement for Valedictorian / salutatorian?
6. Is GPA tied to classrank?
7. How do you decide what courses are weighted?
8. Have you ever not had weighted grades?
9. Origination timeframe of Honor's weighted–classes

17.

2/5/2003

School Profiles

ABBREVIATED COURSE TITLES AND NOTES

• Arch Drft Des:	Architectural Drafting and Design
• Alg Essen	One year equals one semester Algebra
• IBS:	Introduction to the Behavioral Sciences
• Int Comp Sci:	Introduction to Computer Science
• Int Design:	Interior Design in the Home
• Res Meth:	Research Methods
• Res Drft & Des	Residential Drafting and Design
• Res:	Level II Resource classes
• SpRd/StRef:	Speed Reading Study and Reference Skills
• Hon	Honors Courses for the Gifted

'Millard North High School is a member of College Board and National Association of College Admission Counselors, and complies with the NACAC ***Statement*** of ***Principles*** of Good ***Practice.***

2002 - 2003

PROFILE OF MILLARD NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

1010 S. 144 Street
Omaha, NE 68154
402-691-1365
Fax: 402-691-1336

CEEB Code: 281-506

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Rick Werkheiser, Principal
Curtis Case, Asst. Principal-Registrar
Dr. Dorothy Farr, Asst. Principal
Chuck Story, Asst. Principal
Greg Tiemann, Asst. Principal
June Morrissey, Asst. Principal - Activities

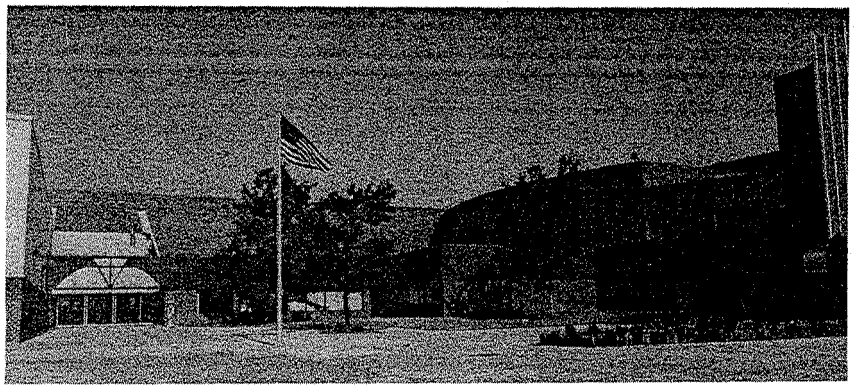
COUNSELORS

Bev Johnson (A-Che)
Vince Lenz (Chi-Es)
Robin Breedlove (Et-Hun)
Joe Caruso (Hup-Mac)
Vicki Griffin (Mad-Petersen)
Jodi Therkelsen (Peterson-Soro)
Andy Hahn (Sort-Z)
Shelley Boyd (Community Counselor)

Counseling Center Phone (402-691-1379)
Counseling Center Fax: (402-691-1253)

Nancy Buda (IB Coordinator) (402-691-1363)

In 2001 Millard North became Nebraska's first International Baccalaureate Diploma Program School.



COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL DATA

Millard North High School is one of three public high schools in Millard, a suburban, predominantly residential district in west Omaha (Metro area population 600,000). The Millard School District has the reputation of being among the finest in the state; students consistently score high on national tests and 83% go on to higher education. With the community expectation of higher education, the curriculum emphasizes skills in English, mathematics, science and social studies. Due to the large percentage of college-bound students, these basic requirements are usually exceeded. In addition to the three high schools, the Millard District operates 22 elementary schools and six middle schools.

Millard North High School opened in 1981, so its history is short but its traditions are well established. Millard North was a winner in the 1983-1984 Secondary Schools Recognition Program sponsored by the U. S. Department of Education to recognize excellence. The district has AA accreditation, the highest recognition awarded by the Nebraska Department of Education. Secondary schools are accredited by the North Central Association of College and Secondary Schools.

ENROLLMENT

Anticipated enrollment for 2002-2003

Freshmen	573
Sophomores	629
Juniors	544
Seniors	557
Total	2303

CLASSSCHEDULE

The school day consists of seven fifty-minute periods; a few classes are offered during "zero hour. Students earn five credits per course per semester. The school year consists of 180 days divided into two semesters. Some classes are offered in a Block format.

MARKING SYSTEM

1	= A =	93-100%	=	20 mark points	P = zero mark points
2	= B =	85-92%	=	15 mark points	F = zero mark points
3	= C =	77-84%	=	10 mark points	
4	= D =	69-76%	=	5 mark points	
5	= F =	0-68%	=	zero mark points	

CLASS RANK

All students grades 9-12 are ranked; all courses for which the student receives a 1-5 grade are included in the GPA. Advanced Placement courses follow a weighted scale of: 1 or A=5.0 mark points, 2 or B=4.0 mark points, 3 or C=3.0 mark points, 4 or D=1.0 mark point.

The student's rank and GPA are designated in the upper right corner of the transcript.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

A minimum of 205 credits are required for graduation, including:

* 35	English
* 5	Oral Communication
* 30	Social Studies
* 25	Math
* 25	Science
* 15	Physical Education
* 5	Health Education
* 60	Electives
* 5	Human Resources
205	

COLLEGE PREP CURRICULUM NOTES

AP Courses offered: English, Statistics, American History, European History, Macro Economics, Psychology, Computer Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Calculus, Spanish, German, French, Latin, and Music Theory. Other courses considered to be more demanding college preparatory courses: English Lit., Research Methods, Math Topics, Physics and Advanced Studio Art.

PROFILE OF THE CLASS OF 2002

* 543	Graduates
* 16%	plan to attend two-year colleges
* 66%	plan to attend four-year colleges
	(*66% Nebraska Colleges)
	(*34% Out-of-State Colleges)

ACT	NAT	STATE	MNHS	SAT	NAT	STATE	MNHS
Engl	20.2	21.1	22.8	V	504	561	576
Math	20.6	21.5	23.1	M	516	570	590
Rdng	21.1	22.0	23.4				
Sci.Reas.	20.8	21.7	22.9				
Comp	20.8	21.7	23.2				

MILLARD SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL
14905 "Q" Street
Omaha NE 68137
(402) 895-8268 Fax (402) 895-8472
Counseling Center (402) 895-8432 Fax (402) 894-6161
School Code 281505
Principal: Mr. Jon Lopez

Assistant Principals
Mr. Jeff Petersen (A-F)
Mr. John Nattermann (G-L)
Mrs. Vicki Kaspar (M-R)
Dr. Kim Saum-Mills (S-Z & New Frontier)
Ms. Barbara Wagner (Activities)

Counselors
Sheri Harrach (A-Co)
Gary Neuhaus (Cr-G)
Reid Brakke (H-K)
Jan Brown (L-O)
Kelli Crump (P-So)
Chris Wilson (Sp-Z)

Community/Intervention Counselor: Kelly Latimer

2002-2003 SCHOOL PROFILE

DISTRICT INFORMATION

Millard is an independent suburban school system in Southwest Omaha covering a total of 35 square miles. District enrollment is 19,084 students throughout Millard's 22 elementary schools, five middle schools, and three high schools. Millard employs 2,498 staff members. The District has AA Accreditation; the highest recognition awarded by the Nebraska Department of Education.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Millard South is also accredited by the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges. Enrollment for 2002-03 is as follows:

Seniors: 486 Juniors: 486: Sophomores: 468 Freshman: 493 Total: 1933

CLASS PERIODS

Millard's school year is divided into two semesters that allow for a total of 180 instructional days. Millard South High School operates an alternating A-B Block Schedule with each block having an 87 minute time span. Semester classes meet every other day. Credits are assigned to all classes at five credit hours per course per semester for one semester. Year long classes meet every other day all year.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

There is a minimum of 205 credits required for this year's senior class. The class of 2004 and beyond will be required to meet a minimum of 225 credits to graduate plus pass specific assessments.

	Grade 12 Credit Requirements	Grades 9-11 Credit Requirements
English (including five for oral communication)	40	40
Social Studies	30	30
Math	25	25
Science	25	25
Physical Education	15	15
Included in Electives (5) Human Resources & (5) Everyday Living	70	80
Grades 9-11 Additional Electives (5) Technology & (5) Fine Arts		10
Totals	205	225

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

In addition to 225 credits, students in the class of 2004 and beyond must successfully meet the district's Essential Learner Outcome assessment score requirements in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Assessments are given according to the accompanying timetable.

ESSENTIAL LEARNER OUTCOME STRAND	HIGH SCHOOL GRADE WHEN MEASURED
Reading Comprehension	9th Grade
Six-Trait Analytical Writing	10th Grade
Mathematics	10th Grade
Social Studies	11th Grade
Science	11th Grade

20.

MARKINGSYSTEM

1	=	A	=	100-93	=	20 mark points	=	superior achievement
2	=	B	=	92-85	=	15 mark points	=	above average
3	=	C	=	84-77	=	10 mark points	=	average
4	=	D	=	76-69	=	5 mark points	=	below average
5	=	F	=	68-0	=	zero mark points	=	failing
P	=				-	zero mark points	=	pass
F	=				-	zero mark points	=	fail

RANK IN CLASS & GRADE POINT

Rank in class is determined for grades 9 through 12 by the Mark-Point-System listed above. All courses are weighted equally with the exception of Advanced Placement Courses which are weighted and receive an extra five mark points. Each student's class rank information is located in the upper right hand corner of the transcript.

DISTRIBUTION OF POST-SECONDARY CHOICES FOR THE CLASS OF 2002 (436 GRADUATES)

Attending Four-Year Colleges	62%
Attending Two-Year Colleges and Vocational/Technical School	21%
Serving in the Military Service	2%
Employed	15%

FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES (272)

Enrolled in Nebraska Colleges	77.5%
Enrolled in Out-of-State	22.5%
Enrolled in Public Colleges	83%
Enrolled in Private Colleges	17%

TWO YEAR COLLEGES/VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

Enrolled in Nebraska Colleges	86%
Out-of-State Enrolled in Colleges	14%
Enrolled in Public Colleges	88%
Enrolled in Private Colleges	12%

American College Test (Enhanced ACT)
Mean Scores

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
English	21.5	21.3	21.7
Math	21.9	21.3	21.7
Reading	22.0	21.6	22.2
Science Reasoning	22.0	21.8	22.0
Composite	22.0	21.6	22.0

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT ▮)
Mean Scores

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Verbal	553	550	601
Math	570	570	599

PSAT/NMSQT
Mean Scores

	1999-00	2000-01
Verbal	50.8	55.5
Math	52.4	56.2
Writing	52.6	55.9

#of students who took ACT in 2001-02: 340 SAT ▮ =37 PSAT: 100

Millard South High School Website - www.mil.esu3.k12.ne.us/mshs/home.html
Counseling Center Website - **http://www.esu3.org/web/mscc.htm1**

Millard West High School

Profile 2002-2003

5710 South 176th Avenue
Omaha, NE 68135-2268

Telephone (402) 894-6015
Fax (402) 894-6080.
ACT/ SAT School Code 281-723

DISTRICT INFORMATION:
Millard is an independent school system in southwest Omaha, Nebraska. A predominantly suburban, residential district serving approximately 19,000 students including twenty-two elementary schools, *six* middle schools and three high schools. Millard Public Schools has the reputation of being among the finest in the state; students consistently score well on national tests and nearly 85% of the students go on to higher education. With the community expectation of higher education, the curriculum emphasizes skills in English, math, science, social studies and foreign languages. We also have very strong vocational and tech prep programs. The district has AA accreditation, the highest recognition awarded by the Nebraska Department of Education. Millard West is also accredited by the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges.

SCHOOL INFORMATION:
Millard West opened in August 1995 to serve the rapidly growing western area of the district. Millard West operates on a four by four semester block schedule. Data collection indicates increased test scores, higher credit accumulation, and increased preparedness for college. For example 21% of seniors taking the ACT are in the top 10% nationally. Credits are assigned to classes at five (5) credits per course per semester. Class periods are 88 minutes in length. Because of four by four block scheduling, the transcript reflects four semester grading periods each year. Enrollment for 2001-2002 is as follows:

FACULTY
Of the 129 certified teaching staff 62% have masters or higher degrees. Student/teacher ratio is 15/1; Student /Counselor ratio is 290/1.

Freshmen	446
Sophomores	447
Juniors	419
Seniors	427

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS:
A minimum of 225 credits for the classes begining 2004-2005 & 205 credits for the classes 2001-2003 is required for graduation. Elective credits include requirements in health and human resources. The distribution of credits is as follows: * Classes of 2004-beyond.

English (inc. 5 for oral communication)	40
Math	25
Science	25
Social Studies	30
Physical Education/Health	20
*Technology	5
*Fine and Performing Arts..	5
Human Resource..	5
Electives.	70

COLLEGE PREP CURRICULUM NOTES:
AP courses offered: English, American History, European History, Computer Science, Chemistry, Calculus, Statistics, Biology, Physics, Economics, Psychology, Spanish, German, French, Latin, and Music Theory, . Other courses considered to be more demanding are: all honors courses, English Literature, Research Methods, Physics, Math Topics and Psychology.

MARKING SYSTEM:
1 = A = 100 - 93 = 20 Mark Points - Superior Achievement
2 = B = 92 - 85 = 15 Mark Points - Above Average
3 = C = 84 - 77 = 10 Mark Points - Average
4 = D = 76 - 69 = 5 Mark Points - Below Average
5 = F = 68 - 0 = 0 Mark Points - Failing
P = Zero Mark Points - Pass
F = Zero Mark Points - Fail

RANK IN CLASS & GRADE POINT AVERAGE:
Class rank is computed by using semester grades beginning with ninth grade, All courses are weighted equally with the exception of pass-fail courses which do not receive any weight in the Mark Point process and AP classes which are weighted and receive an extra five mark points for the top three grades. The location of each student's cumulative grade point average and class rank is in the upper right hand corner of the transcript.

Principal:	Dr. Richard Kolowski
Assistant Principals:	
Pupil Services	Dr. Kathy Ryan
Activities	Mr. Steve Joekel
Curriculum	Dr. Deb Kolc
Discipline/Attendance	Mr. Harry Grimminger
Dean of Students	Mrs. Stacy Longacre
Counselors	
Guidance Director1	
Careers/Occupations	Mrs. Linda Brewer
College Planning/ Scholarship	Ms. Susan Hancock
College Planning	Mr. Loel Schettler
Student Support	Mr. Scott Butler
Student Support	Mr. Dellyn Feighner
Academic Transitions	Mrs. Debbie Finnicum
Community Counselor	Mrs. Shelley Boyd

MISSION STATEMENT

Millard West, dedicated to the process of continuous improvement, Will ensure a Quality Education For all Learners

Millard West is a member of the National Association for College Admission Counseling and complies with the NACAC Statement ***of Principles of Good Practice.***

CLASS OF **2002** STANDARDIZED TEST DATA

American College Test (ACT)
331 tested
Average ACT score **22.7**

Range	Eng.	Math	Read	Sci.	Comp
28 - 36	16%	14%	23%	12%	14%
24 - 27	21%	27%	23%	22%	26%
20 - 23	34%	25%	28%	38%	37%
16 - 19	21%	29%	18%	26%	21%
1 - 15	8%	5%	8%	2%	2%

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)
47 tested
Averages: Verbal **562** Math 583

Range:	Verbal	Math
700 - 800	6%	15%
600 - 699	28%	33%
500 - 599	40%	38%
400 - 499	21%	13%
300 - 399	4%	1%

PSAT/NMSQT
141 tested (40% of the class)

Verbal	52.8
Math	52.4
Writing	51.6

National Merit Finalists	3
National Merit Commended	3

Medium cumulative grade point for the class of 2002 is 3.31 on a 4.0 scale. The highest rank was 4.25. Grade distribution was as follows:

First Quartile	3.72 - 4.53
Second Quartile	3.36 - 3.71
Third Quartile	2.78 - 3.34
Fourth Quartile	1.00 - 2.77

DISTRIBUTION OF POST-SECONDARY ACTIVITIES - CLASS OF 2002:

Attending Four Year Colleges	74.5%
Two-Year Colleges & Technical Schools	13.5%
Serving in the Military Service	2.0%
Full-Time Employment	9.0%
Foreign Exchange Students	.1%
Other	.1%

FOUR YEAR COLLEGES

Enrolled in Nebraska Colleges	58%
Enrolled in Out-Of-State Colleges	42%
Enrolled in Private Colleges	30%
Enrolled in Public Colleges	70%

TWO YEAR **COLLEGES/TECHNICAL** SCHOOLS

Enrolled in Nebraska Colleges	89%
Enrolled in Out-Of-State Colleges	11%

In the short seven year history of Millard West High School, our **students** are attending or have attended **267** different colleges and universities in **42** states and three foreign countries.

Information compiled as of ***August,*** *2002*

College Admissions

Weighted Grades Survey
Colleges/Universities

School	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7
Creighton University	taken in account	taken in account	Yes	Yes 3 or higher *	None *	Yes - if higher level exams	Yes
University of Missouri	No	No	whatever helps the student	Yes & 4,5 *	None *	Yes - if higher level exams	University department
University of Nebraska - Lincoln	We use what is sent to us by the high school	No	No	Yes *	Yes *	Yes	Yes
University of Nebraska - Omaha	We use what is sent to us by the high school	No	No	Yes *	Yes *	Yes	No
Northwestern University	No	No	Yes	4 or higher *	Yes *	Yes-if higher level exams	No - own University test
Harvard University	No	No	Yes	See Attached	See Attached	See Attached	See Attached
Stanford University	No	No	Yes	" " " "	" " " "	" " " "	" " " "
UCLA	taken in account	Yes	AP-3 or higher IB- 5 or higher	" " " "	" " " "	" " " "	" " " "
Yale	taken in account	taken in account		" " " "	" " " "	" " " "	" " " "
Northwest Missouri State	No - Index w/particular total of GPA, classrank & ACT score is used for admission	No - Index w/particular total of GPA, classrank & ACT score is used for admission	Yes	Yes*	Yes*	Yes	Yes
Nebraska Wesleyan	Taken into account	No	No	Yes*	Yes*	Yes	Yes - high enough score may be waived from whole requirement
Iowa State	Taken into account	No	No	Yes*	Yes*	No	Depends on language

Weighted Grades Survey
Colleges/Universities

University of Kansas	No	No	yes	Yes*	Yes*	No - look at higher-level testing	Yes - depends on language

* depends on department

1. What role do weighted grades play in the review of an admissions application?"
2. Are applications positively influenced if the high schools don't weigh honors classes?
3. Do you reconfigure high school GPA's to the same scale?
4. Must a student in high school take and pass the AP test with a 3 or better to get college credit for that class?
5. What are any variables in accepting the AP exam scores?
6. Do you give credit for an International Baccalaureate diploma?
7. Should a high school student in a foreign language class take the AP exam?

* Depends on department.

Harvard –

Q. Are there secondary school course requirements for admission?
A. There is no single academic path we expect all students to follow, but the strongest applicants take the most rigorous secondary school curricula available to them. An ideal four-year preparatory program includes four years of English, with extensive practice in writing; four years of math; four years of science: biology, chemistry, physics, and an advanced course in one of these subjects; three years of history, including American and European history; and four years of one foreign language. Back to top

Q. Is it to a student's advantage to take advanced, accelerated or honors courses?
A. Yes. Although schools provide different opportunities, students should pursue the most demanding college-preparatory program available. Back to top

Q. Must a student have certain grades or marks to be considered for admission?
A. The Admissions Committee recognizes that schools vary by size, academic program, and grading policies, so we do not have rigid grade requirements. We do seek student who achieve at a high level, and most admitted students rank in the top 10-15% of their graduating classes. Back to top

Q. How familiar is the Admissions Committee with secondary schools? their rigor? what marks mean in a particular school or educational system?
A. We have worked hard for many years to learn about schools in the U.S. and around the world. Our careful study of different schools, curricula, and educational systems benefits, too, from information we receive directly each year from schools, extensive personal communication we have with school personnel, and the interview reports we receive from our alumni/ae, who meet thousands of applicants to the College each year. We can always learn more, so we welcome information students think might be helpful to the Admissions Committee in understanding their accomplishments in their school communities. Back to top

Q. Does Harvard rank secondary schools in the U.S. and abroad?
A. No. While we understand there are differences in the overall strengths of secondary school, we are most interested in how well applicants have taken advantage of available resources. Back to top

Q. What if a student has attended more than one secondary school?
A. We ask students to provide Secondary School Reports from the college counselor of each school they have attended in their last two years of secondary school. Back to top

Q. Does Harvard consider non-required test results, such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Abitur, or GCE A-levels?
A. Yes. We value any information that helps us form a complete picture of an applicant's academic interests and strengths. Back to top

Stanford –

Academic Preparation
More than 5,000 high schools are represented in our applicant pool, and their course offerings vary widely. We seek students who will take best advantage of the educational opportunities available at Stanford. For this reason, we evaluate how well applicants have used the resources available to them wherever they might be. A program from one school which may appear relatively light when compared with those taken by applicants from other schools may nevertheless represent the most challenging academic program available in that school to that student. While not required for admission to Stanford, we recommend a curriculum such as the following for grades 9-12:

English: four years, with significant emphasis on writing and literature. The stronger a student's preparation in English, the better the student's chance for success in whatever field of study he or she pursues.

Mathematics: four years, with significant emphasis on fundamental mathematical skills (algebra; trigonometry; plane, solid, and analytic geometry). The strongest possible grounding in math is especially desirable for students interested in scientific and technical fields.

History/Social Studies: three or more years, including a year of American History. Such courses should include the writing of essays.

Science: three or more years of laboratory science. For those with a preliminary academic interest in science or engineering, the strongest possible preparation in science is desirable.

Foreign Language: three or more years of one foreign language is preferable. The study of a foreign language ought to include the development of four basic skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening comprehension. It is better to have taken one foreign language in depth rather than introductory courses in two different languages.

Profile of the Class of 2005
Freshman applicants 19,052
Freshman admits 2,406
General admit rate 12.6%
Freshmen entering 1,616
Male 50.1%
Female 49.9%
High schools represented 1,048
Public 70%
Private 30%
Geographic Diversity

States represented 49
Largest state represented
California (44%)
Countries represented 38

Academic Achievement
Top 10 percent of class 84%
Top 20 percent of class 95%
SAT Verbal 700-800 67%
SAT Math 700-800 71%
3.8-4.0 high school GPA 84.8%
3.0 and higher high school GPA 99.7%

UCLA –

Q: What are the average GPA and SAT scores for freshmen admitted to UCLA?

A: These statistics and many more are available on our Fall 2001 Freshman Profile.
This is often the first question prospective freshmen ask us. Many students instinctively focus on GPA and test scores without fully understanding how these numbers are used in our admission process. These statistics are only two of the elements we use in our academic review; we carefully balance many factors to gain a complete sense of an applicant's achievements.

Here are some of the additional criteria we will use to evaluate your application:
The quality, content, and level of college prep courses you have taken throughout your entire high school program, especially coursework completed beyond the minimum courses required for eligibility to the University of California.

The strength of your senior year coursework.
The number of and performance in Advanced Placement [AP], International Baccalaureate [IB], school-designated honors, and college courses you have taken, particularly in your junior and senior years.
The degree to which you have challenged yourself within the context of your own high school.

Q: Which counts more in admission decisions--gradesor test scores?
A: GPA--combined with the quantity and level of your high school courses--is of primary importance [a strong GPA, for instance, on an academic program that lacks honors level courses or does not include courses well beyond those needed for basic UC eligibility, will not likely result in admission]. That being said, test scores are still an important element.

First and foremost, you should take the most challenging courses you are able to handle. This is also the best way to prepare for your standardized tests. It is also a good idea to be prepared to take the tests more than once--in other words, don't wait until your senior year. That way, if you do not perform your best on some tests, you have a chance retake them in the fall of your senior year.
We also find academic strength in AP exams with scores of 3 and above [and IB exams with scores of 5 and above].

It should be noted, however, that because UCLA does not use a mathematical formula when evaluating applicants, there is no fixed numerical weight attached to either GPA or test scores.

Q: Is it better to take a regular-level course and get an A or take an AP course and get a B?
A: We are looking for students who are taking advantage of the opportunities available to them. at their schools. IF you have the opportunity to take advanced courses, take them.

The University of California adds extra "weight" to grades received in UC-certified honors, AP/IB, and transferable college courses. [For more information about how letter grades are assigned point values in calculating GPAs, refer to the Scholarship Requirement section in the UC's online publication Quick Reference for Counselors.

At UCLA we recognize that honors, AP/IB, and college courses are more rigorous and require high levels of commitment and effort. By choosing the most advanced courses for which you are prepared-and by doing well in them-you can send a powerful message about your desire to challenge yourself in an academic environment and about your preparation for the demands of UCLA's academic programs.

Q: Which is better to take: honors, AP/IB, or college courses?

A: UC-certified honors, AP/IB, and transferable college courses are equally meritorious in the sense that they are all challenging courses, and they all add extra weight to an applicant's GPA.

[For more information about the definition of honors-level courses, refer to the Definition of Honors Courses section in the UC's online document Quick Reference for Counselors.

The benefit of an AP/IB course is that it is part of a nationally standardized program culminating in an exam that, if passed, can earn college credit. Similarly, satisfactory grades received in transferable college courses will also earn credit at UCLA. High school honors courses, in contrast, will not earn college credit. If you are still in high school and are interested in completing college courses, you can access a list of UC-transferable courses offered at California community colleges at www.assist.

Timely College Admissions Information

- Newsletter of NACAC
- Newsweek
- Recent sample of University of Michigan point system

NACAC BULLETIN

December 2002 Volume 40 Number 10

Newsletter of the National Association for College Admission Counseling

NACAC Surveys Provide Insight into the State of College Admission, 2002

For the first time ever. NACAC has combined two surveys to provide a national overview of the state of college admission and counseling in the United States. In the spring of 2002, NACAC conducted its first-ever Counseling Trends Survey, which was distributed to the more than 1,700 NACAC member secondary schools. More than 740 counselors responded, for an impressive first-time response rate of 42 percent.

In the fall, NACAC conducted its 14th annual postsecondary Admission Trends Survey, which was distributed to NACAC's 1,500 postsecondary member institutions. Response to this survey topped previous response records by more than ten percent with 562 institutions (the previous high was 430 in 2000) responding.

A full report on the analysis of these two surveys will be released in early January, 2003. The report will be available for free on NACAC's research Web page at www.nacac.com/research.html.

Overview

Analysis of the survey results and of external data revealed several trends that provide an overview of the state of college admission. While most trends transcended institutional differences, there are interesting patterns and divisions between types of institutions that will be included in the full report. Major findings that are the focus of this summary article include: 1) a continuing increase in high school graduates, applications to college and enrollments; 2) a well-funded and supported precollege counseling infrastructure at NACAC member schools, but a dearth of such support in most public schools; 3) changes in applications and the admission office due to economic factors; 4) a continuing escalation of "competition" among a small subset of selective schools; and 5) a continuation of trends regarding factors in the admission process.

Increased Graduations, Applications, Enrollments

Analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education shows that the number of high school graduates continues to grow and is projected to steadily increase over the next eight years. The increases of the late 1990s and early 2000s represent a return to the all-time highs reached in the 1970s, closely mirroring the ebb and flow of the U.S. population.

NACAC survey data reveal that applications to college have continued to increase at a high rate. Seventy-six percent of colleges and universities reported an increase in applications from 2001. This is the fifth straight year in which more than 60 percent of institutions responding to NACAC's survey have reported increases in applications.

Accordingly, the U.S. Department of Education reports steadily climbing enrollment rates in postsecondary education, with those numbers projected to increase until a t least 2010. While this trend indicates a bounty for college recruiters, it also leads to intensified competition among "competitive admission" institutions for the "most qualified" students, and increases the burden on an already over-burdened counseling infrastructure.

Pre-College Counseling infrastructure Strong Within NACAC, Lacking Nationally

Respondents to NACAC's Counseling Trends Survey clearly work in environments that are supportive of precollege counseling. The national student-to-counselor ratio in 2002 was 490:1. While this represents the first time since 1986 that the student-to-counselor ratio has dropped below 500:1, there is still a significant gap to close between that ratio and the ratio supported by NACAC.

(Continued on page 5)

BULLETIN Highlights

30.

ADMISSION TRENDS

(Continued from front *page)*

The median student-to-counselor ratio for NACAC survey respondents was 163:1. The mean ratio was 207:1, but the median is more reflective of the range and distribution of responses in this case. Both of those ratios best the 250:1 ratio that was recommended by the National Academy of Medicine, but neither meet the 100:1 ratio espoused by NACAC in the Statement on Precollege Guidance and the Role of the School Counselor.

The most telling statistics that emerged from the counseling survey were that 98 percent of survey respondents beat the 490:1 national ratio. Seventy-eight percent beat the 250:1 recommended ratio, and 20 percent beat the 100:1 ratio. NACAC schools appear to be among the most well equipped in the country to provide comprehensive pre-college counseling for their students. However, the survey was over-representative of private secondary schools, confirming that the precollege counseling infrastructure in public schools is badly in need of additional staff and resources. The geographic area of highest need, according to our survey was rural areas, which reported far fewer counselors and a significantly lower college attendance rate than counterpart schools in urban and suburban areas.

Economy Affecting Student and Institutional Behavior

Both counselors and admission officers reported that students and institutions alike are being hard hit by the economic downturn of the past two years. Counselors report that students are experiencing more stress when applying to college and that students are staying closer to home to take advantage of in-state tuition rates at public colleges.

Colleges and universities report drastic reductions in budgets as a result of the economy. However, public and private institutions appear to have differing reactions when it comes to the admission office. Seventy-seven percent of public institutions reported that the budget for their admission office had remained the same or decreased since 2001. On the other hand, 85 percent of private institutions reported that their admission budget had either stayed the same or increased.

A conclusion that may be gleaned from this finding is that the glut of applications to state institutions allows those institutions to cut back on recruitment, while private colleges are forced to step up their recruitment efforts to compensate for (1) a slightly smaller pool of applicants than state schools, and (2) the increased demand for financial aid as a result of the souring economy.

Competition

A large majority of institutions are selective (i.e. require certain qualifications beyond graduation and turn down some students who do not meet those qualifications), but most remain highly accessible to students graduating from high school. Only a small number, six percent, had acceptance rates of 40 percent or less. However, this subset of institutions is responsible for generating a great deal of public attention to practices intended to attract the students with the highest grades in high school. These colleges and universities continue to encourage and receive earlier consideration from prospective students. The use of admission strategies, including early decision, early action, and wait lists, continue to grow among this subset of selective institutions.

Both counselors and admission officers reported that competition for students was on the rise in 2002. Sixty-five percent of counselors reported that colleges and universities had stepped up their efforts to attract new students. In fact, newly collected postsecondary data in 2002 revealed that 70 percent of postsecondary institutions reported undertaking a public image overhaul in an effort to attract more students. Counselors noted that financial aid, particularly merit-based aid, figured more prominently in colleges' marketing efforts. In addition, counselors reported that students were being urged to apply early decision, and that colleges were reaching out to students much earlier in the process—as early as middle school in some cases.

Colleges and universities reported a continuing increase in the number of students applying early action and early decision. Seventy-seven percent of institutions with early action plans reported an increase in EA applications, while 53 percent of institutions with early

(Continued on *page* 7)

Table 1 Factors in the College Admission Decision

	Considerable Importance	Moderate Importance	Limited Importance	No Importance
Grades in College				
Prep Courses	76	13	3	8
Standardized Admission Tests	57	29	6	8
Grades in All Courses	50	33	11	7
Class Rank	35	35	16	15
Essay or Writing Sample	19	37	21	24
Counselor Recommendation	16	42	26	15
Teacher Recommendation	14	43	24	19
Interview	10	24	35	31
Work/Extracurricular Activities	7	39	35	19
State Graduation Exam Scores	6	14	22	57
Standardized Subject Tests	6	16	31	46
Ability to Pay	3	6	15	77
State or Country of Residence	2	8	16	74

ADMISSION TRENDS

(Continued *from page* 5)

decision plans noted an increase in ED applications. It is important to remember, however, that only 18 and 19 percent of institutions reported offering EA or ED plans, respectively. Somewhere between 60 and 80 percent of higher education institutions offer neither. With regard to early decision, our surveys revealed that most institutions offering ED are private institutions, and most students who apply and are accepted through ED are from private, non-parochial secondary schools.

The Admission Trends Survey also found an increase in the number of students placed on the wait list. Overall, 32 percent of institutions use a wait list, Among those institutions, 50 percent reported an increase in the number of students placed on the list, while 33 percent reported "about the same" number of students as 2001. A student's chances of being accepted from the wait list remain extraordinarily low, as nearly 60 percent of institutions reported accepting less than 10 percent of their wait listed students.

Full Report

NACAC will release the full research report in early January, 2003. Visit www.nacac.com/research.html to view a copy of the full report and for copies of previous surveys. Contact research@nacac.com with questions or requests for more information.

Factors in the Admission Decision

Finally. NACAC's Admission Trends survey again measured the top factors in the admission decision. The status quo reigned in 2002, as grades in college prep courses, standardized admission tests, grades in all courses, and class rank continued as the top four factors considered by admission officers. (see Table 1, page 5) The application essay, counselor and teacher recommendations, and extracurricular activities were reported widely as "tip" factors—factors not considered as baselines for admission. but that could figure prominently in differentiating similarly-qualified candidates. Interviews, state exams, subject tests, a student's ability to pay, and a student's state or city of residence were not considered to be important factors in admission.

32.

Univ. of Mich. Point System

The university uses a point scale to rate prospective students. Its policy of awarding minorities an extra 20 has stirred protest. Here's how a fictional applicant would score a promising 130:

GPA

Score	Points
2.0	40
2.1	42
2.2	44
2.3	46
2.4	48
2.5	50
2.6	52
2.7	54
2.8	56
2.9	58
3.0	60
3.1	62
3.2	64
3.3	66
3.4	68
3.5	(70)
3.6	72
3.7	74
3.8	76
3.9	78
4.0	80

HIGH-SCHOOL QUALITY

Score	Points
0	0
1	2
2	4
3	(6)
4	8
5	10

DIFFICULTY OF CURRICULUM

Score	Points
-2	-4
-1	-2
0	0
1	2
2	(4)
3	6
4	8

TEST SCORES

ACT	SAT1	Points
1-19	400-920	0
20-21	930-1000	6
22-26	1010-1190	(10)
27-30	1200-1350	11
31-36	1360-1600	12

Points (maximum of 40)

GEOGRAPHY
- (10) Michigan resident
- 6 Underrepresented Michigan county
- 2 Underrepresented state

ALUMNI
- 4 Legacy (parents, stepparents)
- 1 Other (grandparents, siblings)

ESSAY
- 1 Very good
- (2) Excellent
- 3 Outstanding

PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT
- 1 State
- (3) Regional
- 5 National

LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE
- 1 State
- 2 Regional
- (5) National

MISCELLANEOUS (choose one)
- 20 Socioeconomic disadvantage
- (20) Underrepresented racial/ethnic minority identification or education
- 5 Men in nursing
- 20 Scholarship athlete
- 20 Provost's discretion

Example of how higher education might rate student entry information.

Academic Scholarships

Academic scholarships are given to students who excel in academic abilities related to an academic subject area or areas.

Number of Academic Scholarships given to the class of 2002?	
Bellevue West	318 scholarships offered to 111 students
Bellevue East	224 total scholarships offered to 79 students
Ralston	304 Scholarships & grants offered to 92 students
Gretna	46 students received scholarships out of 100 in class, no available records on # of scholarships given
Papillion	510 scholarships offered to 140 students
Westside	381 academic scholarships offered to 127 students
Millard North	665 academic scholarships offered to 195 students
Millard South	484 academic scholarships offered to 149 students
Millard West	514 academic scholarships offered to 149 students
Omaha Central	$4.6 million in scholarships offered to 135 students
Omaha Burke	410 academic scholarships offered to 125 students
Average number of academic scholarships given?	
Bellevue West	'02' class scholarship recipients is 40% of total, that is in line with previous years
Bellevue East	On average, a total of 250 scholarships are offered per year, no distinction between academic and other scholarships
Ralston	Information not available.
Gretna	Information not available.
Papillion	Consistent w/ previous years
Westside	365 in 2001,379 in 2000,365 in 1999 – this is close to the average
Millard North	Average of 499 academic scholarships given (1998 – 2002)
Millard South	Average of 412 academic scholarships given (1998 – 2002)
Millard West	Average of 468 academic scholarships given (1998 – 2002)
Omaha Central	Average of $3.87 million in scholarships given (1999 – 2002)
Omaha Burke	Information not available.
Number of Regent Scholars in 2002?	
Bellevue West	12 were offered
Bellevue East	11 were offered
Ralston	Not available
Gretna	None
Papillion	40 were offered
Westside	12 were offered
Millard North	13 were offered
Millard South	26 were offered
Millard West	21 were offered
Omaha Central	20 were offered
Omaha Burke	9 were offered

Enrollment Information

Summary of AP English and AP Foreign Language Course Histories

The following provides course histories and AP testing information on students enrolled in AP English and AP Foreign Language courses during the 2001 – 2002 school year. This is the latest year that AP test information could be gathered on these students.

AP English:
There were 240 students who took AP English, 67 of whom took the AP English exam receiving an average test score of 3.4. The average grade for all students enrolled in AP English was 2.1. The course and test histories for this group can be broken down as follows.

- There were 46 students who took regular English 9, regular English 10 and AP English. They received an average grade of 1.9 in AP English. The 7 students who took the AP English exam received an average test score of 3.0.
- There were 29 students who took regular English 9, Honors English 10 and AP English. They received an average grade of 2.8 in AP English. The 9 students who took the AP English exam received an average test score of 3.4.
- There were 165 students who took both Honors English 9 and 10 as well as AP English. They received an average grade of 1.6 in AP English. The 51 students who took the AP English exam received an average test score of 3.6.

AP French:
There were 19 students who took **AP** French, 3 of whom took the AP French exam receiving an average test score of 3.3. The average grade for all students enrolled in AP French was 1.5. The course and test histories for this group can be broken down as follows.

- There were 16 students who took Honors French 2, 3, and 4 before taking **AP** French. They received an average grade of 1.5 in AP French. The 3 students who took the AP French exam were a part of this group.
- There were 3 students who took regular French 2, 3 and 4 prior to enrolling in AP French. They received an average grade of 1.3 in AP French.

AP German:
There were 30 students who took **AP** German, one of whom took the AP German exam, receiving a score of 2. The average grade for all students enrolled in AP German was 1.5. There were 9 combinations of course histories for students who took AP German in 2001 – 2002. Because of the small numbers, these have been condensed into 2 sets of course histories.

- There were 18 students who took Honors German 2, 3 and 4 before taking AP German. They received an average grade of 1.2 in AP German. The one student who took the **AP** German exam was a part of this group.
- There were 12 students who took other combinations of Honors and regular German courses prior to enrolling in AP German. They received an average grade of 1.8 in AP German.

AP Spanish:
There were 95 students who took AP Spanish, 7 of whom took the AP Spanish exam receiving an average test score of 2.7. The average grade for all students enrolled in AP Spanish was 1.7. The course and test histories for this group can be broken down as follows.

- There were 78 students who took Honors Spanish 2, 3 and 4 before taking **AP** Spanish. They received an average grade of 1.6 in AP Spanish. There were 5 of these students who took the **AP** Spanish exam, receiving an average score of 2.8.
- There were 17 students who took combinations of regular and Spanish 2, 3 and 4 before taking AP Spanish. They received an average grade of 2.1 in **AP** Spanish. There were 2 of these students who took the AP Spanish exam, receiving an average score of 2.5.

AP English	
# of students enrolled in AP Eng	240
# of students taking test(s)	67
Testors as % of total enrollment	28%
AP Eng Average Grade	2.1
Average AP Exam Score	3.4
46	Students taking Eng 9/Eng 10 and AP class
7	AP exams given Eng 9/Eng 10 and AP class
15%	% of students taking AP exam
Eng 9 Average Grade	1.3
Eng 10 Average Grade	1.2
AP Eng Average Grade	1.9
Average AP Exam Score	3.0
29	Students taking Eng 9/Hon Eng 10 and AP class
9	AP exams given Eng 9/Hon Eng 10 and AP class
31%	% of students taking AP exam
Eng 9 Average Grade	1.1
Hon Eng 10 Average Grade	2.0
AP Eng Average Grade	2.8
Average AP Exam Score	3.4
165	Students taking Hon Eng 9/Hon Eng 10 and AP class
51	AP exams given Hon Eng 9/Hon Eng 10 and AP class
31%	% of students taking AP exam
Hon Eng 9 Average Grade	1.3
Hon Eng 10 Average Grade	1 3
AP Eng Average Grade	1.6
Average AP Exam Score	3 6

AP German												
# of students enrolled in AP Ger	30											
# of students taking test(s)	1											
Testors as % of total enrollment	3%											
AP Ger Average Grade	1.5											
Average AP Exam Score	2											
Ger II Average Grade	1.3	Ger III Average Grade	1.8	Hon Ger IV Average Grade	2.5	AP Ger Average Grade	1.5					
Ger II Average Grade	1.5	Ger III Average Grade	2	No Ger IV	0	AP Ger Average Grade	2.3					
Ger II Average Grade	1.0	Ger III Average Grade	1.5	No Ger IV	0	Average Grade	2.5					
Hon Ger II Average Grade	2.5	Ger III Average Grade	2.5	No Ger IV	0	AP Ger Average Grade	2.5					
Hon Ger II Average Grade	**1.1**	**Hon Ger III Average Grade**	**1.1**	**Hon Ger IV Average Grade**	**1.2**	**AP Ger Average Grade**	**1.2**					
Hon Ger II Average Grade	2.0	Hon Ger III Average Grade	3	No Ger IV	0	Average Grade	2.5					
Hon Ger II Average Grade	1.0	No Ger III	0	Hon Ger IV Average Grade	1	AP Ger Average Grade	1					
No Ger II	0 0	Ger III Average Grade		No Ger IV	0	AP Ger Average Grade	1					
No Ger II	0 0	No Ger III	0	No Ger IV	0	AP Ger Average Grade	1					
All Honors Course History												
Hon Ger **II** Average Grade	**1.1**	**Hon** Ger **III** Average Grade	**1.1**	**Hon Ger IV Average Grade**	00	AP Ger Average Grade	1.2	AP Ger Exam	1 taking test	2	18 total	
All other Course Histories												
Ger **II**	**1.2**	**Ger III**	**1.5**	**Ger IV**	**1.8**	**AP Ger**	**1.8**					

AP **French**											
#of students enrolled in AP Fr	19										
#of students taking test(s)	3	(All Hon/Hon course combo)									
AP Fr Average Grade	1 5										
Average AP Exam Score	3.3										
Fr II Average Grade	**1.7**	**Fr III Average Grade**	**1.2**	**Fr IV Average Grade**	**1.3**	**AP Fr Average Grade**	**1.3**	3 students total			
Hon Fr II Average Grade	**1.5**	**Hon Fr III Average Grade**	**1.1**	**Hon Fr IV Average Grade**	**1.3**	**AP Fr Average Grade**	**1.5**	16 students total			

Weighted Grades: Course History with AP Test Scores

AP Spanish												
# of students enrolled in AP Sp	95											
# of students taking test(s)	5											
AP Sp Average Grade	1.7											
Average AP Exam Score	4.3											
A												
Span/Hon Span II Average Grade	**1.9**	**Span/Hon Span III Average Grade**	**1.6**	**Span/Hon Span IV Average Grade**	**1.4**	**AP Span Average Grade**	**2.1**	**Span/Hon Span/AP Test scores**	**2.5**	17 total		
B												
Hon Spanish Average Grade	**1.2**	**Hon Span III Average Grade**	**1.2**	**Hon Span IV Average Grade**	**1.2**	**AP Span Average Grade**	**1.6**	**Span/Hon Span/AP Test scores**	**2.8**	78 total		
AP Span Test - 'A'	# taking	2	Av Score	2.5								
AP Span Test - 'B'	# taking	5	Av Score	2.8								

Interviews

Dr. Rick Werkheiser – Millard North High School

It appears that non-weighted honor courses allow students to enroll in honor courses for the right reasons – to be challenged and to determine strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes without the pressure or focus of the weighted grade. Students are not enticed to enroll in honor courses only because of the weighted grade. In the Millard Public Schools, there is a continuum or sequence of courses where honor courses prepare the student for the more rigorous AP or IB courses, which are weighted. No universal standards exist for honor courses from district to district where national standards exist for AP courses and international standards exist for IB courses. Non-weighted honor courses do appear to reduce the competitiveness among students and parents regarding class rank and GPA.

Perspective from Another District

- Weighted grades in honor courses are many times used by a school to entice students to enroll in honor courses, especially if student not interested in taking honor courses but had ability. Weighted courses used as a "carrot" to encourage students to enroll. Necessary if school has low number of academic students.
- Elective departments or programs feel it necessary to also offer honor courses in order to compete with other departments or programs for students within a school. Created competitive atmosphere between departments. Honor courses, for example, in art, music, business, also offered honor courses. No standard or apparent differences existed between honor and regular courses in these areas even though a different weight is applied. Enrollments in a school can suffer if honor course offerings are not permitted also in elective areas.
- Pressure from parents for students to enroll in courses based on the "weight" of a course more so than what might be recommended or determined appropriate for a student.
- If honor courses are weighted, a new weighting scale would need to be considered for AP and IB courses. Should honor courses receive same weight as AP and IB courses? A new level or layer or rigor for weighted grades might possibly have to be created.

Jon Lopez – Millard South High School

I am not in support of weighting honors classes due to the lack of a universal curriculum and benchmark exam for all districts in honors courses. I am further concerned about the curricular and scheduling problems that may occur as a result of an increase in proposed honors offerings across the various departments in the building. After examining the information presented, I am not convinced that Millard South students are at a competitive disadvantage for college placement or scholarships under the current course weighting system. I am however, interested in studying the effects of our current class ranking system on student course selection.

Dr. Rick Kolowski – Millard West High School

My response to the issue of Weighted Grades is the same today as it was in the past years of my career when I had worked on the exact same issue as Secondary Director. I believe this is the third time in the past 20 years that I have examined this issue and the good thing is that the combined results of the research on the issue have not changed that dramatically over these years. Therefore I see no change in the previous decision that I had made to agree that there is no advantage to weighted grades in schools at any level beyond the current Millard Schools' plan of only tagging the Advanced Placement courses as weighted grades.

I am not convinced in any way that any Millard student has been or is now hurt by the current program of how we use weighted grades only for AP Courses. We have high achieving and top performing students in all three of our high schools and we are proud of the honors they have produced and of the schools they continue to be accepted into due to the quality of the Millard Educational Experience.

Notes on Counselor interviews – Weighted grades

North HS –

- "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" – That was the first thing said in the interview. The situation at NHS is complicated by the fact that both AP and IB courses are weighted. This becomes an issue, both when students transfer into the district and when transcripts are sent to colleges for admissions consideration.
- When transcripts are sent to post secondary institutions, "weighted" or "unweighted" are noted on the transcript. Many colleges, particularly those with competitive admissions policies, use their own systems to analyze grades.
- Because of the variations in the way grades are reported from district to district, they tend to put more weight on SAT/ACT scores.
- When students transfer into district, we get rid of weighting except for equivalent courses that have weighted grades here.
- A quote from a NHS Counselor – "I strongly believe in the system under current use. AP and IB titles are consistent and there is no confusion when we indicate that those are the only weighted grades we give. Other course titles change names so frequently (Honors, accelerated) that I think it would be a nightmare to keep an accurate list on the school profile. In addition, biology is an "honors" course when taken freshman year just as chemistry is an "honors" course when taken sophomore year.

SHS –

- Kids who are blessed with high abilities are rewarded even more with weighted grades. The system unfairly penalizes students who are not gifted.
- Expanding the list of courses that would be weighted would raise a number of questions and concerns. These include:
  - How do we justify these other classes as having additional academic weight? AP and IB classes have a standard curriculum that can be held up against standards independent of the district. That would not be the case with district created honors courses.
    Expanding the list of weighted courses could create animosity between and within departments. For example, how would it be defended if a freshman took Geometry for a weighted grade, but a student who took Advanced Studio Art might not get the same weight on his or her grade? Who will say if the same course taught by one teacher is more rigorous than when taught by another. These suppositions can be made, but could they be defended?

  An advantage to the use of weighted grades for AP courses, particularly when class rank will be separated from GPA, is that it will be easier to decide on scholarship applications. Make a comparison between the ranked student list of sophomores and seniors and it is apparent that the GPA's of the top ranked students "spread" once they have the opportunity to take weighted grade courses.

WHS –

- If we open honors courses for grade weighting, we would have to give weighted credit for courses for which we have no weighted equivalent (ex. Honors welding),
- With an increased selection of courses with weighted grades, parents would inappropriately push students into these courses. It could set some of the students up for failure.
- Having weighted grades for AP courses works because there are external criteria for the rigor of the curriculum. This would not hold for honors courses for which there are no comparable external benchmarks.
- Our philosophy is to emphasize learning as an end of itself. The focus should not be on "gaming" the system to maximize the number of credits or GPA a student can attain.
- Limiting weighted grades to AP courses encourages risk on the part of students.
- When we correspond with colleges, we indicate that students had taken challenging courses even though they may not have been weighted.
- We have had little concern about weighting honors classes except from those transferring from districts that had a wide range of weighted courses. The biggest concerns come from transferees from Texas, where it is customary to weight a wider range of courses.
- Having only AP courses weighted gives the student "prep time" to either become accustomed to the higher demands of honors courses, or find another route if he or she decides this is not the appropriate track. It helps cut down on parent pressure to sign up for particular courses.
- College admissions forms ask for weighted and unweighted GPA's. They will also factor their own GPA's to "level the playing field" with other applicants.
- Colleges and universities with competitive admissions policies look at what the student took, the "quality of schedule" irrespective of weighting.
- There is a real variation between districts as to what is considered as "honors" courses. Honors courses in some districts are not as rigorous as their equivalents in MPS as evidenced (anecdotal) by how these students usually do in our honors courses. If we weighted grades for honors courses, we would have to give the weight to transfers for equivalent honors courses even if they didn't have the rigor.
- Grade inflation – If we weight more classes, we will decrease the credibility of the district's GPA for college applicants.

Weighted Grades: Student Interview Questions (Currently enrolled in Honors, not planning on taking AP courses)

1. What Honors English courses have you taken to date?

   Honors English 9: Yes (SHS) 1,1,1,1,1 (NHS)=1,1 (WHS) 1,1,1,1,1,1,1 No (SHS) 1,1,1 (WHS)1

   Honors English 10: Yes (SHS) 1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1 (NHS) 1,1 (WHS) 1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1 No____

2. What other English courses (besides English 9 & 10) have you taken while in high school:

(SHS) Creative Writing, Debate, World Lit., Mass Media – World Lit, Research Methods, Mass Media, Speech – Research Methods, Mass Media, English Lit., Forensics, 1 semester, English 9 – Mass Media, Debate, Research Methods, Creative Writing – Am. Lit., World Lit., Speech, Mass Media – Research Methods, World Lit – World Lit, British Lit. – World Lit.
(NHS) Mass Media, Speech, Debate, World Lit, Creative Writing – Mass Media, Creative Writing, Research Methods
(WHS) None – all of these students are currently 10th graders & have not taken any other English classes except 9 & 10. None of them plan to enroll in AP English at this time.

3. What prompted you to enroll in the Honors English courses you are taking or have taken previously?

(SHS)
--"Regular was easy and M. _____ is the bomb."
--"I wanted to get ahead in English so I could do good on the ACT. I thought the other classes were too easy,"
--"Regular English was too easy."
--"My 8th grade teacher told me that was what I needed to take so 1 didn't have much of a choice."
--"Skutt puts all students in honors classes. I had no choice."
--"My teacher in 8th grade said I should take it so I did."
--"Because in English I received a 100%."
--"My 8th grade teacher told me that it would open up more possibilities in my high school career."

(NHS)
-- My 8th grade teacher recommended me for the course. It seemed to me that in the honors course I would be challenged & put on an accelerated curriculum.
-- I was highly skilled in 8th grade and my teacher recommended it.

(WHS)
--My parents said I should be in a more advanced writing class and my teacher said I should.
--My teacher suggested that I should take it and my parents also felt that it would be good for me.
--I wanted a challenge and my mom and 8th grade teacher wanted me to.
--I love writing, so I asked my 8" grade teacher to put me in Honors English
--After taking (regular) English 9 as a freshman, I decided to challenge myself as a sophomore, so I chose to take Honors English 10.
--My 8" grade teacher recommended it.
--8th grade teacher and parents encouraged me to.
--My 8" grade teacher recommended that I do Honors English because I have always done very well in English and I would like more of a challenge.

4. If you have not taken Honor English 9 and/or 10, would the availability of weighted grades (other than AP/IB courses) have influenced the selection of classes you have taken during your high school career? If yes, please give example(s).

(SHS)
--"No"
--"I would not have changed my mind. I thought both classes were so easy. If I had done bad in other classes I would have wanted it to be weighted."
--"No, I just enjoyed the challenge."
--"Yes, I would have loved that."
--"No"

(NHS)
-- The availability of weighted grades would heavily influence my decision in which classes to enroll in. The weighted GPA would be a huge incentive for someone to take honors/accelerated courses. This does not only apply in the English Dept.
--I don't think I would have changed my course structure based on weighted credits.

(WHS) – I asked this group to consider the above question in future tense.
--Yes, because a weighted grade would boost me GPA and that would be a good thing.
--Yes, it would influence me because of a higher GPA opportunity. I would definitely be more likely to take certain classes.
--No, probably not.
--No, I can do anything I put my mind to.
--No
--Yes, because it would boost my grade.
--Yes, because it then boosts your GPA.
--Definitely! I would be more interested in taking Research Methods or Creative Writing because I plan on taking several other AP classes and it would be helpful to have one that is more difficult, but could boost my GPA.

5. Based on information I received from your English teacher, you are either not currently enrolled in, or do not intend to enroll in an AP English class next year. Can you tell me why?

(SHS)
--"Too many books!! I was told it was really hard. Just because of rumors." Regular English there is more reading I thought Honors was more of English mechanics and vocab stuff."
--"I don't like to be forced to read. They had lists upon lists of books. I wouldn't have liked it. If I did bad, I wouldn't want to mess up my GPA. More was expected out of you. I always heard that the teacher was more respectful -??-than other classes."
--"True, too many books to read. They even had a summer list of books. In Honors English 10, we were treated with more respect, also, the teacher expected more out of us."
--"I was taking very difficult classes and did not want to add more work that was very time consuming."
--"Too much reading, I hate to read. All my Skutt English classes were very hard, there was no leeway."
--"They have to do a lot of reading, and I dislike reading a lot. I just don't think I'm ready to be in that hard of an English class yet."
--"I really never received a whole lot of information on the course...also a few people I know took it and said it was really hard and it takes a lot of time, so, I kinda stayed away from that and took the English electives."
--"The difficulty level of the AP English class has led me not to want to take the class. I've heard it is the most difficult class offered. Also, my GPA has suffered because of my poor English grades. "

(NHS)
--Due to the fact that most of my classes are advanced (accelerated or AP), the scheduling conflicts played a huge role. Having 7 AP classes by the end of my high school career is challenging (already). It really limited my flexibility in which the classes can be arranged.
--My senior year I am taking (have taken) research methods and creative writing. Based on my knowledge of these courses, they are similar in content to much of AP English, but on an easier scale. I am taking AP Calculus and AP European History, which are difficult courses, and I want to focus on them. I also feel that research papers and

writing creatively are two of my English weak points. Based on my *36* ACT Reading and 34 ACT English score, I am not too worried about grammar.

(WHS)
--I am not sure whether or not I will take AP English, but if I don't take AP it will be because I don't plan on having a career in writing.
--It is rumored that AP English is the hardest class in the school and based on this year of English difficulty, I don't feel I would succeed in it.
--Because I like the challenge, but not all the content of the class interests me.
--They told me I had to take it as a Senior, that's what I will do.
--I don't think AP classes would help me out in any way. They might pose a challenge, but hold no real interest for me.
--Because I don't intend to continue in English & don't like English.
--I am not really planning on doing anything that has to do with writing and English after college so I don't feel the need to take it.
--I do not on using English in my future career at all!

Addenda
(NHS)
--The advanced courses offered at Millard North are very rewarding. However, as a college applicant, taking these courses may be a strike against you. Most accelerated programs @ MN are not weighted (Math, English), therefore, as students, we are subjected to a more challenging curriculum, but are not rewarded on the GPA scale. Even our class of *2003* do not account for the number of classes taken. Potentially, someone with four easy classes (ex. Gym, Culinary Skills, Civics, Astronomy) may have an equal or higher GPA than someone who is juggling *7* harder classes. Obviously there is no clear solution to be fair, but there should be attempts to equalize.
--I personally am against expanding the weighted grades to younger students. This creates an unfair advantage because of the fast track. It is very difficult to get on this fast track, especially in Math, unless you start in 6^{th} or 7^{th} grade. I have taken 4 years of Japanese and Band and *3* years of Drafting courses so I have not extra room in my schedule. I took a '0' hour class my sophomore year and I still have a full schedule this semester of my senior year. I would advocate an 8 period day before expanding the weighted grades program.

(WHS)
--I think having weighted grades is a good idea if the class is very advanced and it is a class that deserves more points. It should definitely be a class for more advanced students.
--I don't feel it is totally fair that some students who are taking easy classes right now have to do less work while honors students work as hard as they can to get an 'A'. Some students do much less work for the same grade that honors students get when they work much harder.
--I think weighted grades are good because they encourage kids to do their best and try to learn at a higher level. I think that more courses should be weighted because of their difficulty, especially if you are an underclassman taking Senior credits.
--I think that weighted grades are a really good idea. It gives the students the option of taking challenging classes & being able to boost their GPA at the same time.

Literature

To: Judy Porter
Fr: Martha Bruckner
Date: December 27,2002
Re: Review of articles related to weighted grades and grade point average.

I have reviewed many articles related to the issues of weighted grades and grade point average, and have decided that it might be most helpful to give you a summary of 8 articles that provide a glimpse into the difficulty of the issue and a history of various schools' attempts to fairly award grades. Board members might be interested in seeing these articles rather than simply reading a summary. I selected articles that outline some of the facts surrounding weighted grades. Just as important, the articles demonstrate that the issue is a tough one for educators and board members to deal with. We're not alone in struggling with ways through which to most fairly grade our students.

"Schools reassess grading in gifted courses: Some students want more for their effort," by Michelle Krupa, published in the Times – Picayne (New Orleans) August 4,2002. This article summarizes various school dilemmas as school officials and board members wrestle with weighted grades. Several schools make very different decisions.

"When more is less: High school music and class rank," by Kirk Moss, published in Principal Leadership , February, 2002. This editorial presents a music educator's belief that a system of weighted grades is unfair in theory and in practice.

"Weighted grades: A conundrum for secondary schools," by Gail Downs, University of Maine, June, 2000. This article is an excellent summary of the issues surrounding weighted grades, a comparison of advantages and disadvantages, and a summary of several systems designed to fairly weight grades.

"Board reverses controversial grading change," by Daniel de Vise, published in the Miami Herald, February 17, 1999. This newspaper article describes the process through which a school board had studied and recommended change for a grading system. Controversy in the community led the board to make additional changes. The article outlines the difficulty of the decision process.

"Weighted grades pose dilemmas in some schools," by Kathleen Kennedy Manzo, published in Education Week, June 17, 1998. This newspaper article describes a scenario in which an ambitious, eager student dropped from valedictorian to salutatorian because of her enrollment in college classes. The non-weighted college grades dropped her grade point average.

"As protests wane, prestigious school swaps grade system." by Nicole Richards, published in Education Week on the Web for August 7, 1996. This web newspaper article describes the difficult decision making process related to reducing weighted courses at New Trier High School.

"The honors course dilemma," by William Cross, published in NASSP Bulletin, March, 1996. This opinion piece presents one educator's personal views about the unfairness of weighting honors courses.

"Our schools grappled with grade-point politics and lost," by John Ashenfelter in The Executive Educator, January, 1990. This case history outlines one district's attempt to do away with weighted grades, and the process of compromise that led school representatives to keep a system of weighting grades.

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Schools reassess grading in gifted courses ; Some students want more for their effort

rimes - Picayune; New Orleans, La.; Aug 4,2002; Michelle Krupa St. Tammany bureau;

Start Page: 01
Subject Terms: Reforms
Academic grading
Public schools
Geographic Names: New Orleans Louisiana

Abstract:
While St. Tammany is considering returning to ***weighted grades,*** *however, school officials in St. John the Baptist Parish are doing away with their weighted-grading system for the coming school year, saying inflated scores have hurt students who tried to earn scholarship money through Louisiana's Tuition Opportunity Program for Students.*

An informal survey of the state's 66 school systems conducted by St. Tammany administrators found that 35 districts did not award extra points for hard courses during the past school year. Fifteen, including those in St. Bernard and Jefferson parishes, used a 5.0 scale for Advanced Placement, honors or gifted classes, while six districts offered different grading scales in those courses.

Meanwhile, ***weighted grades*** *often hinder disabled students and those with poor organizational skills who cannot handle the intense reading load or lecture-heavy teaching style of advanced courses, [Gail Downs] said. Though these students often do well on standardized tests and in college, they are essentially guaranteed a low high school class rank because they do not thrive in advanced courses, she said.*

Full Text:

"The Adventures of Huckleberry'Finn" and "The Scarlet better" were not pleasure reading this summer for Erin O'Connell.

Ajunior at Northshore High School in Slidell, O'Connell took on Mark Twain and Nathaniel Hawthorne because it was required for the Advanced Placement English course she'll start when school opens this month.

It's just a fraction of the work O'Connell expects to be assigned this year beyond what is given in regular English classes, not to mention the all-day exam in May that will measure her knowledge of literature against that of every other AP English student in the country and determine whether she'll get college credit for the course.

So far, O'Connell's hopes of getting into Louisiana State University's class of 2008 have pushed her to take tough classes in English and math. Her teachers say advanced courses on a high school transcript "kind of boost your level a little" in the eyes of college admissions officers, O'Connell said.

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But if she were rewarded for her extra effort with additional quality points toward her grade-point average,

O'Connell said, she would be more eager to take advanced classes.

"Honors students do a lot more than in regular classes," O'Connell said. "If we have to do more work, there should be more incentive to want to do it. It just doesn't seem fair that we get the same number of points on our GPA for doing so much more work."

St. Tammany Parish School Board officials will assemble a committee of parents, teachers and administrators this month to study whether the district should adopt a weighted-grade system that would award extra quality points to students enrolled in Advanced Placement, honors and gifted courses.

A level field

Since 1992, when the School Board did away with weighted grades and initiated a lower grading scale for all classes, students at the north shore's seven public high schools have been able to earn the same number of quality points – 4.0 for an A, 3.0 for a B, and so forth – for each class, regardless of its difficulty level.

The change came after some parents and administrators complained that the weighting system was biased against students in regular classes, who would always be outranked by pupils who used weighted courses to inflate their GPAs.

While St. Tammany is considering returning to weighted grades, however, school officials in St. John the Baptist Parish are doing away with their weighted-grading system for the coming school year, saying inflated scores have hurt students who tried to earn scholarship money through Louisiana's Tuition Opportunity Program for Students.

An informal survey of the state's 66 school systems conducted by St. Tammany administrators found that 35 districts did not award extra points for hard courses during the past school year. Fifteen, including those in St. Bernard and Jefferson parishes, used a 5.0 scale for Advanced Placement, honors or gifted classes, while six districts offered different grading scales in those courses.

The rest designated advanced classes on report cards or added a set number of points to final grades in tough courses.

Weighted scale spreading

Nationwide, school districts are increasingly adopting weighted-grade systems, said Gail Downs, who studies the issue at the Center for Research and Evaluation at the University of Maine's College of Education and Human Development.

The trend has been driven mostly by parents of high-achieving kids, who see unfairness in a grading system that offers the same credit to students in regular and remedial classrooms that their kids earn in rigorous, college-level courses.

It has been buttressed by students who hope a high GPA will help them earn private and public scholarship dollars, despite concerns such as those in St. John the Baptist Parish.

Gayle Sloan, St. Tammany public schools' assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, said those are chief reasons parents have asked her district to consider weighted grades.

But Sloan cautioned that weighted grades have been known to discourage students from attempting advanced classes for fear they'll earn a mark that has more value in their own community than it does with a university.

Most colleges, in fact, ignore weighted grades, experts and admissions officers said. Instead, they use letter grades on transcripts to recalculate applicants' GPAs along the traditional 4.0 scale so they can fairly judge students against their peers from across the country.

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"We unweight all grades down to a 4.0 scale across the board," said Jean Jordan, director of enrollment services

at Emory University in Atlanta.

"Obviously, with 10,000 applications for freshman admissions, all with different grading scales, for our staff who are reading the files, it's just easier to look across the board and it all means the same thing," said Jordan.

Weighted grades have helped good students get into colleges and universities that do not refigure grades but instead look at class rank and weighted GPA, Downs said.

"The person with the weighted grades so much more often gets accepted to these schools, which are usually elite universities, than the person with the unweighted grade because the admissions officers don't have time to recompute everybody's grades onto the same scale," she said.

In Jefferson Parish, weighted grades spur students interested in elite colleges, including Ivy League schools, to take rigorous courses, said Diane Roussel, the district's executive director of instruction.

Other high achievers take weighted-grade courses to boost their GPAs and put themselves in the running for valedictorian or salutatorian, she said.

"We've had weighted grades for as long as I've been here, and that's going on 30 years," Roussel said. "We see the children who are really grade-conscious taking the weighted-grade classes because every honors credit counts for them, either to get into college or to get val or sal."

Some students left out

Meanwhile, weighted grades often hinder disabled students and those with poor organizational skills who cannot handle the intense reading load or lecture-heavy teaching style of advanced courses, Downs said. Though these students often do well on standardized tests and in college, they are essentially guaranteed a low high school class rank because they do not thrive in advanced courses, she said.

Locally, weighted-grade systems have disenfranchised students who apply for Louisiana's state-financed TOPS scholarship program.

Debbie Schum, principal at East St. John High School in Reserve, said her district will not offer five quality points for A's in honors classes next year because the system has denied TOPS money to students who got B's and C's in weighted classes.

When students across the state apply for TOPS money, their letter grades all are considered on a 4.0 scale, regardless of how many quality points the marks earned in the students' districts, said Gus Wales, a spokesman for the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance.

"There's a legislative requirement that all grades be converted to a 4.0 scale," Wales said. "The Legislature found that that was the only equitable way to make a level playing field."

Wales said, however, that the procedure works to students' advantage in districts that tack pluses and minuses onto letter grades. Because TOPS does not consider the partial-point allocations, students who earn less than a 3.0 for a B-, for instance, would be bumped up to a full 3-point B in the TOPS ranking.

To compensate for weighted-grading districts, TOPS rules recently were altered so seniors graduating in 2001, '02 and '03 who take at least 10 honors courses may qualify for scholarships with a lower GPA than ordinarily accepted, Wales said.

In St. Tammany, officials don't expect to make a decision about weighted grades for some time, but a parent committee already has begun considering the pros and cons that have influenced similar choices across the country.

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According to Sloan, college-bound students such as O'Connell and their parents are just beginning to understand

the issue.

"Right now, kids in gifted (classes) want us to have weighted grades," she said. "Among the rest of the **kids** who wouldn't get it, **I** think they wouldn't want it or wouldn't really care one way or another."

. . . . . .

Michelle Krupa can be reached at (985) 645-2853 or mkrupa@timespicayune.com.

AS I SEE IT

When More Is Less: High School Music and Class Rank

Music education enriches students academically and personally but may cost them their class rank—and possibly the competition for valedictorian.

BY KIRK D. MOSS

Weighted high school grade point averages (GPAs) were first introduced in the 1980s. According to Gramling and Nelson's 1983 proposal to institute a quality point system:

> The purpose of a weighted or **quality** point grading system is to encourage students to take the more difficult, more challenging courses without punishing those who are unable to do so . . . . [The] present system encourages students who are in high phase courses to drop to a lower phase course where higher grades will be easier achieved.

Although there is no uniformity among schools or school districts about how "honor" or "quality" points are awarded, the underlying principle in most is that students in upper-level courses receive more points than those in lower-level courses. For example:

Regular courses: A = *4*, B = *3*, C = *2*
Honors courses: A = 4.5, B = *3.5*, *C = 2.5*
Advanced Placement (AP) courses: A = 5, B = 4, C = 3

Although this scale seems logical, enrollment in a high school music ensemble (which is usually not considered "high phase" and thus does not give quality points) can cost a straight-A student his or her class rank and the competition for valedictorian.

By the 1990s, the limitations of a weighted GPA system received national attention:

> A distasteful scenario develops: students avoid the courses they are interested in to take courses that advance their rank; students resist intellectual risk-taking and engage in petty competition with their classmates, which impedes a positive spirit of learning; and parents and students become frantic when rankings shift dramatically, which is not uncommon because student grade point averages are bunched together. (Rutledge, 1991, p. 5)

One frustrated board of education president turned to *Parade* magazine's "Ask Marilyn" column for advice:

> One bright student went to high school four years and never took a regular elective course in order to finish first in the class. Other students are interested in taking band or art and find they are penalized for doing so. Is there a way to rank the students more fairly? (Schneider, 1998, p. 8)

An article in the Wall Street Journal stated:

> If your teenager takes four advanced-placement classes in high school, earns **an A** in all of them, and fills her idle time with study halls, she finishes the year at the top of her class with a 5.0 average on a 4.0 grading scale because AP classes *carry* extra credit. But, if she takes four advanced-placement classes, earns an **A** in all of them, and fills her idle time with a music class—and aces that, too--she ends up with **only** a 4.8 average; dragged down by that enrichment class that doesn't offer extra credit. (Kronholz, 1999, p. 12)

At the local level, parents and students experienced course devaluation firsthand. Wrote one agitated parent to a high school principal: "Through the

CORBIS

first semester of her senior year, [my daughter] has achieved a 4.477 GPA. Because of her strong commitment to the Orchestra program, she continued to take this class for credit her junior year and the first semester of her senior year. She does not need these credits in order to graduate. If she had audited these three semesters, her GPA would be 4.512, because the 4.0 grades that she has gotten in orchestra has actually pulled down her overall GPA . . . ."

"This letter is a request to change the orchestra classes that [my daughter] has taken her junior and senior years to audit status, rather than counting... toward the credits she needs for graduation" (W. S. McGill, personal communication, May 26, 1999).

Another high school senior was so concerned about the quality point issue that she devoted a portion of her college application essay to the topic: "I am fortunate enough to attend a high school that can afford to offer beginning, intermediate, and advanced orchestra classes, all three of which count for a grade. However, students who take the advanced orchestra course do not receive extra quality points; advanced orchestra requires as much work and dedication as an honors course, but it counts as an on-level course. I have seen talented musicians drop orchestra to enhance their class rank. Their grade point averages may rise a fraction of a point, and they may have a chance to compete for the title of valedictorian, but they miss out on an experience that is just as meaningful as any honors or advanced placement course" (Winders, 2001).

A high school sophomore chose the topic of an honors-level orchestra class for an American literature course paper. She wrote that students in the most advanced orchestra course "should receive honors quality points on their grades because of the expectations, workload, and higher level of thinking associated with this class" (Duncan, 2000).

Nationwide, a limited number of high schools and school districts offer their advanced music ensemble courses with quality points. In many cases, these schools require music students to complete several additional tasks before earning the quality point. The tasks usually involve some form of individual performance assessment, such as a recital; district or state level Solo & Ensemble Festival participation; or a jury, similar to what one might find at the collegiate level. An additional written project or term paper related to a music topic is a common requirement, as are mandatory concert attendance or written concert reviews. Finally, a music student may be asked to sign a contract that stipulates his or her commitment to the additional work to earn a quality point.

Although these additional activities have educational value, they raise the question of equity. In other academic disciplines, all students in a honors or AP courses earn quality points without additional individual work. Why should students in an advanced level, curricular music course have a different set of standards? Further, the extra activities require that the fine arts staff members assess a great deal of extra work. The computation of the point system can become quite labor intensive and may involve complex mathematical processes.

Some high schools and school districts have devised more user-friendly solutions. Each of these solutions has its pluses and minuses, but all have been implemented:

- Limit the overall number of honors credits that can be earned (not honors courses taken, just honors credits earned). In other words, a student could still take all honors or AP-level courses, but only four courses would count toward the additional quality points each term.
- Give music quality point credits to all juniors and seniors as a reward for their continuous participation in a music ensemble. For example:
  3rd year music: A = 4.5, B = 3.5, C = 2.5
  4th year music: A = 5.0, B = 4.0, C = 3.0
- Round each student's GPA to the 10th place and recognize multiple valedictorians. Rounding the numbers eliminates GPA hair-splitting.
- Eliminate the quality point system entirely because the original premise is no longer valid. In other words, high school students will no longer avoid advanced courses simply because they might not earn an A.

Today's high school music students take more classes but earn fewer credits than their peers who do not participate in music. This inequity needs to be addressed—the time for change is now. **PL**

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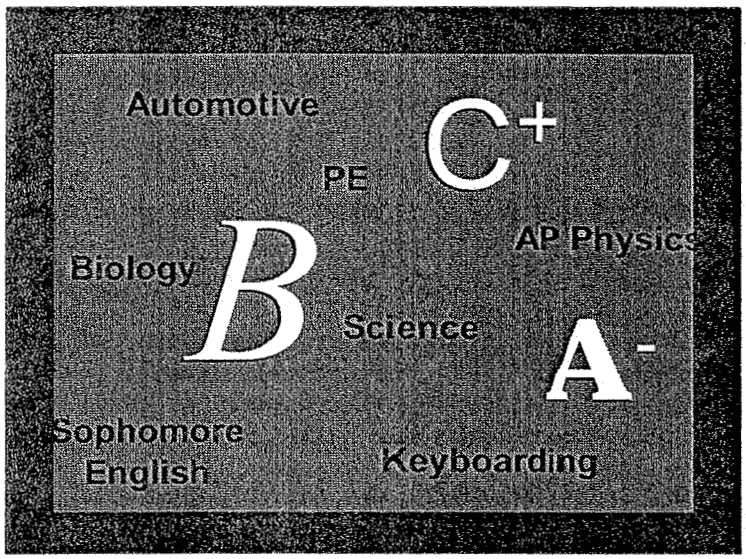
Occasional Paper no. 35

Weighted Grades:



A Conundrum for Secondary Schools

by Gail C. Downs, M.S.
Center for Research and Evaluation

June2000

a publication of the College of Education & Human Development at the University of Maine
and the Penquis Superintendents' Association

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Occasional Paper No. 35

Weighted Grades:
A Conundrum for Secondary Schools

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The Occasional Paper Series is intended to provide educators and policymakers in Maine with information that can assist them as they address the complex problems confronting their communities, education systems, or students. Papers are distributed periodically as topics vital to educational improvement are addressed by faculty and graduate students at the University of Maine. The opinions and information obtained in the Occasional Paper Series are the authors' and do not necessarily represent those of the University of Maine or the College of Education & Human Development.

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Weighted Grades: A Conundrum for Secondary Schools

Introduction

Maine high schools, as well as secondary schools throughout the nation, have been grappling with the issue of how best to assign grades. Developing an appropriate grading system has become paramount in Maine since the University of Maine instituted a program that makes a full tuition scholarship available to the two highest ranked students in their senior classes. The scholarship is awarded to students who enroll at the Orono Campus following graduation from high school. If the recipient maintains a **3.0** grade point average, the award continues for four years, providing a substantial financial benefit.

These high stakes have Maine college-bound students searching for strategies that will give them the highest rank in class possible. School administrators are being pressured to assign "weighted" values to more rigorous classes so that students enrolled in these classes would earn more quality points toward their grade point averages than students enrolled in average classes. School administrators, parents, teachers, and students are struggling to develop fair and equitable grading systems for their districts. However, what is fair and equitable?

Overview

About half the school systems in the country are currently assigning weighted grades and the number is increasing (Manzo, 1998). When computing a student's grade point average (GPA), different school systems may assign from four to eight points for an earned "A" in a comparable Advanced Placement (AP) English class. Furthermore, schools that do weight other types of courses (besides AP courses) assign inconsistent labels such as honors, advanced, college prep, accelerated, Level IV, etc. (Cognard, 1996). These discrepancies demonstrate the need for adopting a national standard for schools that elect to weight grades.

The problem is not only how to convey to colleges the meaning of a particular grade, but how best to award grades that encourage learning and equity (Lockhart, 1990). Some educators argue that

weighted grades are necessary in order to entice bright students into pursuing honors courses, while others are concerned about elitism if a weighted grade system is adopted (Mitchell, 1994). Even schools that weight grades often do not distribute school awards and distinctions based on weighted grades. This paper discusses the perceived advantages and disadvantages of weighting grades, describes how some school districts have developed weighted grading systems, provides information regarding the impact of weighted grades on college admissions, and examines possible legal ramifications.

Advantages and Disadvantages

School systems that responded to questionnaires sent out by the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented listed both positive and negative aspects regarding weighted grades. The advantages cited include the following: more students taking rigorous classes, top students who graduate at the highest rank in class (RIC) are taking the most demanding classes in school, better student self-esteem, higher acceptance rates into colleges and universities, and the opportunity for students to improve their GPA and to win college scholarships. The disadvantages centered on the tracking of students, greater stress among students, students at the lower end of the academic spectrum being left out, and greater parental pressure to take weighted classes (Cognard, 1996).

Schools in twelve Maryland counties that use some form of grade weighting listed what they felt were the advantages and disadvantages. Their comments were compiled in a report by Lockhart (1990) and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Advantages	Disadvantages
Ensures top ranking in class for advanced students.	Lowers class ranking for other than advanced students.
Encourages top students to take rigorous classes.	Limits course selections of college-bound students.
Increases grade point average.	May encourage students to attempt course work beyond their ability level.
Helps advanced students be more competitive during the college admission process.	Weakens the integrity of the grade.
Increases advanced students' chances for success in obtaining scholarships.	Suggests to students who are not in courses carrying weighted grades that their work is less important.
Allows teachers to give a greater range of grades.	Instruction becomes less differentiated in advanced as well as in grade level classes.
Highlights academic achievement.	Could lower student motivation to attain good grades in courses where grades are weighted.

In order to illustrate how weighted grades can make a significant difference in a student's RIC (rank in class), one school district recalculated the non-weighted grades to weighted grades for the top 25 students in three schools. At one school, the student ranked number 11 in a non-weighted system became number 1 in a weighted system. This student had taken ten AP courses resulting in a 3.850 GPA on a 4.0 system. His weighted GPA was 4.224 on a 4.0 system. Similar differences occurred at the other two schools where one student changed RIC position from 18 to 8, and at the third school the student ranked number 16 moved up to 7. These significant changes in RIC could influence admissions and scholarship decisions (Lockhart, 1990).

Admissions directors at most colleges cite GPA and RIC as important indicators of success. Directors at two highly selective universities report that the weighting of grades can make a difference in admission (Lockhart, 1993). In addition, scholarships may be awarded on the basis of weighted GPA and RIC.

Weighting *strategies* **and** systems: **One school's** *two-year* efforts lo **develop a** weighted-grade system

Ashenfelter (1990) described one Illinois school's two-year efforts to develop a fair and equitable weighted-grade system. Before the project got underway, grades in most courses counted equally when

computing a student's GPA. Although satisfactory completion of health and physical education was required for graduation, grades in these courses were not included in the GPA and RIC. However, with this system gifted students had little incentive to enroll in AP or honors classes; they enrolled in less rigorous classes in order to earn a higher GPA. The system failed with respect to ***encouraging learning.***

In the process of developing a weighted grade system, the school added one point to AP classes so that an A now was worth six points and a B in an AP class had the same point value (five) as an A in a regular class. Even with this new system a student's GPA could suffer if the student enrolled in extra courses. Compare the GPA of one "all-A" student who enrolled in four five-point courses and one six-point course (GPA = 5.20) with another "all-A" student who enrolled in five five-point courses and one six-point course (GPA = 5.17). The student who enrolled in an extra course was penalized with a lower GPA, a factor that discouraged student learning. To compensate, the system was amended to add one-half honor point for each course taken beyond the four-course minimum in any semester. Using this new method to re-compute the GPA for the two students above, we find that the GPA for the student taking five courses is increased to 5.40, while the GPA for the student taking six courses is increased to 5.50.

Board members then became concerned that departments with few or no AP classes would experience declining enrollments if students selected courses based on the possibility of earning a six-point A. A recommendation was made to award 5.5 points for an A earned in honors classes and to encourage departments to petition to designate additional courses as honors courses. Furthermore, the board recommended that an A in a low-level class be devalued from the standard 5-point A to a 4.5-point A.

At the end of two years, a new system was adopted with the following standards: Students were required to take six classes every semester. Physical education did not bear credit but health did. An extra half-point could be earned by taking a seventh class. It was decided that grades would be weighted in the following manner: 4.5-point A in basic and special education classes, 5-point A in regular classes, 5.5-point A in honors classes, and 6-point A in AP classes. Both a weighted and non-weighted GPA would be computed on transcripts submitted for college admission.

lol.

Other strategies and systems

A 1983 National Association of Secondary School Principals study reported that 73% of schools used "all" courses in computing GPA; the most frequent course exception being physical education. The study recommended that grades should be weighted if the procedure provides a more truthful representation of students' academic accomplishments and a better prediction of subsequent academic performance in college. A caution was attached to the recommendation that weighted grades and the resulting RIC may not be an appropriate basis for school awards and distinctions.

A "Windows" system described by Siegel and Anderson (1991) allowed students to "window out" selected courses from their weighted **GPA** calculation. Under this system an **A** could earn from 4 to 8 points depending on the difficulty of the course, and the student could limit the courses figured into his/her GPA calculation. Based on two semesters per year for four years, a student's **GPA** calculation would be limited to the best 22 credits in the fifth semester, best 25 in the sixth semester, best 29 in the seventh semester, and best 32 in the eighth semester. The final best ***32*** courses must include eight English credits, six social studies credits, four science credits, and four mathematics credits; the student could then select any other ten course credits for inclusion into the GPA calculation. The purpose of this system was to encourage students to enroll in lower weighted courses in which they had an interest without adversely affecting their final **GPA.**

The results of transcript analyses showed:

- a larger shift in RIC with windows than without for 85% of the students,
- a student with consistently high grades could be passed in class rank by a student with several Cs and Ds,
- students windowed out more academic than nonacademic courses,
- 37% of the courses windowed out were algebra I, geometry, Spanish I and biology,
- colleges questioned the high percent of courses excluded from the GPA, and
- most students selected courses on the basis of college subject pattern requirements.

Based on these results and input from colleges, the district limited the kinds of courses that could be windowed. The weighted GPA would be calculated on all courses in English, foreign language, mathematics, science, social studies, and all AP courses regardless of department. An adequate number of

other courses would be included to meet minimums for each semester. Although both weighted and non-weighted GPAs would be included on the student's transcript, only a weighted RIC would appear.

In another system, a rural New York school encouraged high ability students to follow a more rigorous academic curriculum by making a "hard B" carry more weight than a "soft A." The faculty established a weighted grade index that gave more weight to some classes than others. An elective with no homework and no academic requirements counted for two points, while a course that required research or college-level work counted for five points. To determine RIC a student with a B in a rigorous course would get a grade multiplied by a higher factor than a student who earned a B in a "no homework/no academic requirements" course. In addition, the teachers established an honors credit program by allowing a college bound student to design a yearlong special project in his/her own major interest area. If the project were approved, the student would be required to report every two weeks to an adviser and complete objectives in a timely manner in order to earn points toward a higher class ranking (Mead, 1991).

College/University admissions selection process

High school transcripts submitted to colleges and universities with prospective student applications are often the documents that determine which students are selected and which are offered scholarships. Hence, it is important to know how institutions of higher learning view transcripts. Information from university and college admissions offices indicate:

(1) A student's GPA, RIC, and the strength of the high school program weigh more heavily in the selection process than do SAT scores and extracurricular activities.

(2) Weighted grades are more important if the college is unfamiliar with the applicant's school.

(3) Even if an applicant's transcript shows honors and AP courses but the grades are not weighted, the majority of colleges/universities will not assign extra points.

(4) In general, the majority of highly competitive colleges/universities indicate that students with weighted grades have an advantage (Cognard, 1996; Lockhart, 1990).

Talley and Mohr (1993) reported that 74% of surveyed private college admission directors said that students with weighted grades on their transcripts have no advantage over students whose transcripts do not include weighted grades. However, a comparison of students with the same basic transcript show that the student with weighted grades was chosen over the student with non-weighted grades 76% of the time. Responses from 559 college admission directors from private and public four-year undergraduate institutions express their preferences regarding grade weighting:

- 33% prefer non-weighted grades
- 27% prefer quality points added to honors and AP courses
- 22% prefer specific point values for different levels of courses
- 15% prefer that honors and AP courses be multiplied by a specific factor
- 3% had no preference

Of the 74% that reported using students' GPAs in computing freshman profiles, 47.5% reported using weighted grades in the computation while 48.1% used non-weighted grades; 4.4% use both.

Legal implications

Both the University of California and California State University systems add one point to non-weighted honors and AP courses when calculating the GPA for applicants. The median GPA for students admitted to UCLA and UC Berkeley is over 4.0 - a score impossible for students to attain if their schools have no honors or AP courses. Students with little access to AP courses are competing for admission against students whose GPAs are increased because of weighted grades; these students are clearly at a disadvantage.

Inglewood High, a California school that enrolls approximately 2000 students, most of whom are either Latino or African American, until recently offered just three AP courses. About 10 miles away, Beverly Hills High School offered more than a dozen AP courses. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Southern California chapter filed suit in Los Angeles Superior Court alleging that the Inglewood Unified School District, the state of California, the state board of education, and the state superintendent of public instruction are denying students equal and adequate access to AP courses. An attorney for the

ACLU claims these students should not be denied the ability to compete equally for admission to California's elite universities (Hill, 2000). The charge, "denying students equal and adequate access to AP courses" can be interpreted to mean "denying students equal opportunity for college admission and for scholarships." Is the real issue AP courses or is it weighted grades?

Summary

School systems developing a weighted-grade plan should consider how best to award grades that encourage learning and equity as well as how best to increase students' opportunities for college admission and scholarships. Weighted grades encourage students to enroll in rigorous courses while often discouraging them from enrolling in courses of interest that would enrich their lives. Instruction becomes less differentiated for all students when the number of course offerings decreases due to lack of enrollment in less academically focused courses, courses unlikely to provide weighted quality points.

Although many college admissions directors state that students with weighted grades on their transcripts do not have an advantage, admission results refute this claim. College admissions offices frequently do not assign added value for honors and AP courses on transcripts that report only non-weighted grades, placing those applicants at a disadvantage for admission and scholarships. Because a student's GPA, RIC, and high school program are valued more highly than SAT scores and extracurricular activities in the admissions selection process, weighted grades ultimately have a large impact on students' academic futures.

Finally, school systems should consider the possible legal ramifications of denying students equal and adequate access to courses that enable college applicants to be competitive for admission and scholarships. Although the current legal issue is one of course availability, the courses in question are classes that most often are assigned weighted grades.

In conclusion, school systems have the option of developing a weighted grading system to achieve educational goals and objectives. A school system that adopts weighted grades is not required to consider weighted grades under all circumstances, but can employ non-weighted grades when distributing

school awards and distinctions or when deemed appropriate. There are no rules or consistent guidelines for weighting grades, yet college applicants with weighted grades on their transcripts have a clear advantage for admission and scholarships at many colleges and universities. Therefore, this issue should be given significant consideration when implementing a specific policy.

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Published Wednesday, February 17, 1999, in the Miami Herald

Board reverses controversial grading change

By DANIEL de VISE
Herald **Staff** Writer

Broward School Board members Tuesday reversed a 6-month-old grading change that parents blamed for playing havoc with class ranks, grade-point averages and the selection of valedictorians in the class of. 1999.

Under the rule change six months ago, students taking nearly any sort of advanced course in a Broward high school earned two extra grade points for their efforts, making a C the equivalent of an A.

Under the change adopted Tuesday, most such classes -- except for the most rigorous ones -- will be worth only one extra point.

Tuesday's revision sounds subtle, but it looms large in the lives of anyone taking advanced courses in Broward high schools.

''It changes class rankings. It will change the valedictorians, the salutatorians,'' said Lynn Sheft, a parent leader at Nova High School in Davie. ''This affects all the Broward County high schools.''

At stake are tiny gradations in GPAs that can spell the difference between class rankings as well as between success or failure in scholarship applications.

Under the latest change, which takes effect in August, students taking ultra-rigorous Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses will earn two extra points. Students taking honors courses -- generally considered less challenging than AP -- will get only one. Students who take community college courses for high school credit will get either one point or two, depending on the difficulty of the course.

Under the change made last year, students got two extra points regardless of which sort of advanced course they took.

The last rule change irked many students in the AP program, whose classes had been worth more on the point scale because they are generally acknowledged to be the toughest on campus. With less rigorous honors classes granted equal status, AP students felt they were working harder for nothing.

''You can't compare the intensity of work in an AP course with an honors course,'' said Sheft, whose daughter takes both types of classes at Nova High.

The School Board voted to change things last August at the request of administrators who believed it was the only way to meet revisions in

state law. A new law in 1998 required school districts to avoid any grading structure that didn't give equal weight to community college courses.

Board members think the new rules still meet the constraints of the state law and are fairer to students.

"What we're trying to do . . . is to change what should never have been done in the first place," said board member Carole Andrews.

Andrews and board member Judie Budnick suggested the change after meeting with Nova High parents earlier this month.

EDUCATION WEEK ON THE WEB
American Education's Online Newspaper of Record

June 17, 1998

Read our story, **"As** Protests Wane, Prestigious **School Swaps** Grade **System,"** Aug. **7, 1996.**

Weighted Grades Pose Dilemmas in Some Schools

By Kathleen Kennedy Manzo

Cassie Davis has worked overtime at being the top student in her class at Highland High School in Nunn, Colo. Throughout her academic career, she ticked off graduation requirements a year or two ahead of her classmates and took as many honors and advanced classes as she could find. And, in the final months of school this year, while other seniors eased off the books with the pressure of college admissions behind them, Ms. Davis continued to take classes at the University of Northern Colorado.

Instead of the expected reward for her diligence, though, her aggressive pursuit of academic excellence may have worked against her. Because the weighted grading system at Ms. Davis' school discounts college credits, she dropped to No. 2 in her class and had to settle for being named salutatorian.

"I feel that Cassie's been cheated," her father, Jack Davis, said last week. "They have created a disincentive to pursuing [better academic] opportunities. There shouldn't be any negatives involved in going for the best education."

Weighted-grade policies have posed a dilemma for teachers and administrators for decades, and no more so than at this time of year when commencement closes in and students are pitted against one another in the race for class honors.

Rewarding students with extra points For taking a more challenging course, many educators say, serves not only as an incentive to take those courses but is fair as well. Yet, the practice is rife with inconsistency, often leading to confusion and seeming inequities.

For decades, organizations representing high school principals, guidance counselors, and college admissions officers have been pushing for more uniformity in grading policies.

Officials at the National Association of Secondary School Principals say a national policy would be difficult to formulate, much less gain adherents. For example, the National Honor Society, which the NASSP administers, provides

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little incentive to set a single policy because it requires only that students earn a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale to qualify for membership.

Whatever policy districts use, however, should be applied consistently and fairly for every student, said David Corts, the associate director of the organization's department of student activities.

Scaling Up

Still, an A often means something different from district to district.

Weighted grading can add to the disparity. Generally, weighted-grading policies use a 5.0 scale rather than the traditional 4.0 one. In many schools, for example, students who take the Advanced Placement classes offered by the New York City-based College Board or honors classes earn extra credit that counts toward their GPAs. Higher grade point averages, in turn, can help students get into their preferred colleges and secure scholarships.

Though not universal, the practice of giving extra weight in grading to students who take more difficult classes is widespread. About half the nation's high schools do. Those policies, too, can vary.

"Some schools don't do any weighting, some weight certain courses, and some only weight classes in senior year," said Patricia M. Riordan, the dean of admissions at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., who surveyed nearly 2,200 high school principals on the subject several years ago. "Their policies are all over the gamut," she said. "There were a lot of inequities in terms of grades."

Transcript Travails

Colleges look favorably on students with high GPAs. But often, the numbers can be misleading, according to Joyce Smith, the executive director of the National Association for College Admission Counseling in Alexandria, Va. A student with a 3.5 GPA at a school that doesn't give extra points for a challenging courseload may have taken it easy in lower-level courses, unlike another student with the same grades.

The inconsistency "makes the admissions office work harder to evaluate each student's credentials," Ms. Joyce said. "They have to look beyond the rankings at the students' courses, their involvement in student government or other academic activities, or essays."

For many large institutions, it is not feasible to scrutinize thousands of applications for the deeper meaning in a high school transcript, Ms. Riordan said.

"An admissions office could say that the grading policies are identified on the transcripts," she said. "But that is just lip service. They see a 3.5 and say, a 3.5 is a 3.5."

Rigorous Penalties

With weighted grades, students have the potential to achieve much higher grades, which may add polish to their college applications. That's what students in Carroll County, Md., hoped when they asked the school board to change the district's grading policy to allow the extra credit. The board voted unanimously last month to permit students to opt for weighted or

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nonweighted grades beginning next fall.

"Some students and parents had concerns that they might not be as competitive because other schools weighted the grades hut we didn't," said Gregory C. Eckles, the district's director of secondary schools.

Weighted grades may also provide more incentive for students to push themselves harder academically, some students say. In an unweighted system, a student who knows he can do better in a regular class *may* not take honors classes for fear of getting lower grades.

Andy Howard, who will be a senior at Greenwood Community High School near Indianapolis in the fall, said his GPA has suffered for his decision to take honors English and calculus, which have earned him B's. In his class of 200 students, Mr. Howard is ranked 28th.

"There are a few people above me in rank who haven't taken honors courses, They just don't want to work," he said. "I could easily have gotten A's in regular English."

Valedictory Umbrella

The numbers game has become an increasingly touchy one. Battles with students and parents, which have periodically ended up in court, are causing many schools to stop ranking students or bestowing honorary titles. And weighted-grading systems have occasionally added to the quandary.

At one San Diego high school that applies weighted grades, administrators elected to crowd the 42 graduating students who earned a 4.0 or better under the title valedictorian rather than single one out.

Cassie Davis waged her own bitter fight with school administrators in Colorado to take what she felt was her rightful place on the podium as valedictorian at graduation this month. She failed because her 4.26 GPA was less than one-hundredth of a point behind the victor's.

Although district officials say Ms. Davis was treated fairly, they plan to review the unwritten grading policy as a result of her dispute.

"She chose to attend college pretty much full time, and the other kid surpassed her," said Fred Hase, the superintendent of the 877-student Ault-Highland district near Greeley.

Despite the outcome, Ms. Davis said she would not have altered her path. She has, after all, enough credits to start college in the fall as a sophomore. But her decision to take harder college courses, for which she received no extra credit, added a hit of tarnish to an otherwise gleaming academic record.

"It's not a serious injury, but it makes you feel had that she was not recognized the way she should have been," Jack Davis remarked. "She has already figured out that there is a lot bigger stuff to worry about. But she got a crummy deal."

ON THE WEB

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Read an abstract of the study, "The Case for Weighting Grades and Waiving Classes for Gifted and Talented High School Students," by Dr. Anne Cognard of the National Research Center For Gifted Education and Talent Development.

PHOTOS:

PHOTO: Cassie Davis holds her diploma from Highland High School in Nunn, Colo., where she missed being chosen as the class valedictorian by less than one-hundredth of a grade point. She claims the school's weighted grading system was unfair because it discounted courses she took at the University of Northern Coiorado.
--John Epperson/The Denver Post

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AUG. 7, 1996 EDUCATION WEEK on the WEB

As Protests Wane, Prestigious School Swaps Grade System

By Nicole Richards

A new grade-weighting system for suburban Chicago's prestigious New Trier High School, which initially drew opposition from parents and teachers, will take effect this fall.

The high school, which has a reputation as one of the highest-achieving in the nation, groups students according to academic ability and assigns greater weight to grades for courses in the higher levels.

The new system, unveiled in the spring, will reduce that difference. Officials in the 3,100-student New Trier Township High School District said the change will more fairly represent the achievement of students at all levels.

But at a contentious public hearing in May, parents and teachers at the school said they feared that the proposed grade system would not reward students as much for taking difficult courses.

Superintendent Henry S. Bangser said, however, that the new system still rewards students for achievement in higher-level courses.

Pluses and Minuses

For example, under the old system, an A at the college preparatory level—the school's lowest level—was assigned a number of 4.0 for determining grade-point average. An A for a course in the school's highest level, advanced placement, was worth 7.2.

Under the new system, an A at the college-prep level remains a 4.0, but an advanced-placement A is worth 5.67.

After meeting with parents and teachers to explain the system, the school board approved the changes at its June meeting. In a recent interview, Mr. Bangser noted that students remain free to choose courses in any grade level.

While the *weighting* of *grades* was the major source of contention for many parents, one element of the new system--the addition of pluses and minuses to letter grades--went over well.

After some discussion, however, the board decided not to adopt the grade of A+, Mr. Bangser said. "We decided not to use an A-plus because some board members felt it might create too much competition."

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The Honors Course Dilemma

By William R. Cross

High schools that adjust or weight grades for honors courses are both helping and hurting students who take those honors courses. When honors course grades are adjusted or weighted, students are able to earn grade point averages (GPAs) that are greater than the GPAs that other students can earn. In a 4-point grading system numeric grades for non-honors courses are as follows:

A = 4; B = 3; C = 2; D = l; F = 0.

Frequently, honors courses award numeric grades as follows:

A = 5; B = 4; C = 3; D = 2 or 1; F = 0.

The best GPA that students can attain if they do not take honors courses is 4.0, while those students who take honors courses can earn GPAs greater than 4.0. This automatically establishes two groups of students: those with GPAs above 4.0 and those with GPAs at or below 4.0. By default, students who take honors courses and do well in them are candidates for valedictorian, salutatorian, and the top 5 percent list that is sent to colleges and universities at the end of the junior year. Those who do not take honors courses are not candidates for the above three categories because their GPAs (4.0 maximum) are too low. This separation of students is not necessarily bad and is probably one of the reasons that schools have decided to adjust or weight honors course grades.

There is, however, a down side to this situation. According to the American work ethic, greater effort should result in greater reward while lesser effort should result in lesser reward. Adjusting or weighting honors grades does reward high achievers more than others; however, honors course students competing with their honors course peers are rewarded for doing less and penalized for doing more.

Honors course students who have a GPA greater than 4.0 and who take non-honors courses to gain extra knowledge or skills are penalized for their efforts with a lowering of their GPA. Every non-honors course grade they earn (even an A) lowers their GPA. In contrast, those honors course students who take released time or teachers aide or other pass/fail classes, instead of graded non-honors courses, retain their GPA without reduction and so end up ranked higher than their harder working peers. The reason for this is simple and relates to the predictable nature of averaging.

If a group of numbers is averaged and a new number is then added to the group, the effect of that new number upon the group average is very predictable. If the new number is higher than the current average, the new average will be higher than the current average. If the new number is lower than the current average, the new average will be lower than the current average. If the new number is exactly equal to the current average, the new average will be the same as the current average. This well-known statistical fact is the root cause of the honors course dilemma.

If a student has a GPA greater than 4.0, say 4.2, every additional honors course A that he receives will raise his GPA, because every honors course A has a numeric value of 5, which is higher than his current GPA. Every additional non-honors course A that he receives, however, will lower his GPA because every non-honors course A has a numeric value of 4, which is lower than his current GPA.

If five honors course students are competing with each other for top position in class rank, all take the same number of honors courses, and all are making straight As, the top ranked person will be the student with the fewest non-honors courses while the lowest ranked person will be the student who took the most non-honors courses. The least industrious student becomes valedictorian and the hardest-working student ends up at the bottom of the list of straight-A students.

This inverse relationship of lower GPA for more work is demonstrated on the attached chart. If a school offers 9 honors courses, requires 25 credits for graduation, and allows students to earn up to 34 credits, the best GPA that any student can earn is 4.36. Every normal course that students take in excess of the required 25 credits lowers their GPA, even though they work hard and earn the highest possible grade, an alphabetic grade of A or numeric grade of 4. They are punished within the class ranking procedure for wanting to learn more.

In this example, if a student who wants to rank number 1 in the class takes all 9 honors courses, takes exactly 25 credits worth of classes, and earns an A in every class, he or she will graduate as valedictorian of the class. No one can earn a higher GPA. Any peer who takes more than 25 credits will have a lower GPA.

Blue Ridge School District, in Lakeside, Ariz., discovered this anomaly after weighting honors course grades for several years and took immediate action to correct it. Effective with the fall semester of the 1995–96 school year, all courses (honors and non-honors) will be graded the same: A = 4; B = 3; C = 2; D = 1; F = O. Setnester honor rolls will be constructed using GPAs that are calculated with grades From all graded semester courses, but class rank will be determined from GPAs that are calculated using only sub-

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Course	# of Credits	# of Honors	Course Credit	Alpha Grade	Numeric Grade	Grade Points	Cum. Credits	Cum. Grade	GPA Point
Normal Course	1	-	1	A	4	4	1	4	4.000
Normal Course	2	-	1	A	4	4	2	8	4.000
Normal Course	3	-	1	A	4	4	3	12	4.000
Honors Course	-	1	1	A	5	5	4	17	4.250
Normal Course	4	-	1	A	4	4	5	21	4.200
Normal Course	5	-	1	A	4	4	6	25	4.167
Normal Course	6	-	1	A	4	4	7	29	4.143
Honors Course	-	2	1	A	5	5	8	34	4.250
Normal Course	7	-	1	A	4	4	9	38	4.222
Honors Course	-	3	1	A	5	5	10	43	4.300
Normal Course	8	-	1	A	4	4	11	47	4.273
Normal Course	9	-	1	A	4	4	12	51	4.250
Honors Course	-	4	1	A	5	5	13	56	4.308
Normal Course	10	-	1	A	4	4	14	60	4.286
Honors Course	-	5	1	A	5	5	15	65	4.333
Normal Course	11	-	1	A	4	4	16	69	4.313
Normal Course	12	-	1	A	4	4	17	73	4.294
Honors Course	-	6	1	A	5	5	18	78	4.333
Normal Course	13	-	1	A	4	4	19	82	4.316
Honors Course	-	7	1	A	5	5	20	87	4.350
Normal Course	14	-	1	A	4	4	21	91	4.333
Honors Course	-	8	1	A	5	5	22	96	4.364
Normal Course	15	-	1	A	4	4	23	100	4.348
Honors Course	-	9	1	A	5	5	24	105	4.375
Normal Course	16	-	1	A	4	4	25	109	4.360
Normal Course	17	-	1	A	4	4	26	113	4.346
Normal Course	18	-	1	A	4	4	27	117	4.333
Normal Course	19	-	1	A	4	4	28	121	4.321
Normal Course	20	-	1	A	4	4	29	125	4.310
Normal Course	21	-	1	A	4	4	30	129	4.300
Normal Course	22	-	1	A	4	4	31	133	4.290
Normal Course	23	-	1	A	4	4	32	137	4.281
Normal Course	24	-	1	A	4	4	33	141	4.273
Normal Course	25	-	1	A	4	4	34	145	4.265

jects from these five core areas: English, science, mathematics, social studies, and foreign language. These changes in honors course grading and class rank GPA calculations are consistent with Arizona university admissions policies. All university applicant GPAs are currently recalculated based on a straight 4-point system with no adjusting or weighting of honors course grades. Effective with the university freshman class of 1998, entrance GPAs will be calculated using 16 credits from core subject areas only.

Because this new Blue Ridge policy significantly alters previously published policy, currently enrolled students from the class of 1996 and beyond who earned grades in honors courses prior to the 1995–96 school year will be compensated for their efforts with the following numeric grade adjustment for those previously taken honors courses:

A = 4; B = 4; C = 3; D = 1; F = 0.

Blue Ridge will continue to offer nine honors courses. Students who wish to compete for placement on the top 5 percent list that is sent to colleges and universities must complete three or more honors courses by the end of their junior year. Students who wish to compete for the honorary titles of valedictorian or salutatorian must complete five or more honors courses by the end of the first semester of their senior year. An honors diploma will also be offered, as it has been in the past.

Honors courses will be touted as excellent college preparation, as discriminators for special diplomas, college entrance, and scholarship awards and as great sources of extra challenges, skills, and knowledge. An initial reduction in honors course enrollees is expected as a reaction to the removal of weighted grades; but, over time, enrollments are expected to continue at an acceptable rate as students compete for 5 percent list placement, honorary graduation diplomas and titles, scholarships, and college entrance.

In conclusion, if a school offers honors courses and allows students to earn a GPA that is higher than the highest numerical grade that can be earned in a non-honors course, that school is penalizing honors students who take extra non-honors classes and rewarding honors students who do the minimum work required for graduation. Does any school really want to do that?

E for effort

Our schools grappled with grade-point politics and lost

BY JOHN W. ASHENFELTER

WHAT I'M ABOUT to relate is not a success story by the usual definition. Rather, it's a story about trying to change a school district's grading system—and failing to do so in any sweeping way. It's a lesson in how schools and communities use the political process to influence educational matters. And it offers instruction in how you, as a school executive, need to listen and respond to your constituencies-parents, students, and teachers—even when your personal philosophy might differ from theirs.

Grading systems in high schools are rather like public address systems: Figuring out how to make the best use of them can take endless tinkering and adjusting. In High School District 214 (9-12; enr.: 10,500) in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, we've been making adjustments to our grading system for the past several years, trying to find the most effective approach to assessing student progress. After more than two years of extensive study and debate, we ended up with a grading system remarkably like the one we started out with.

Currently, I am principal of one of the district's six high schools, and I was assistant superintendent for instruction when we launched the process of trying to modify the grading system. In these two roles, I observed and participated in the process and can offer a behind-the-scenes analysis of the philosophical and political struggle that took place. Understanding what we went through might prepare you for what to expect, should you undertake a similar effort in your schools.

John W. Ashenfelter, formerly assistant superintendent for instruction of High School District 214, is principal of one of the district's six high schools, Prospect High School, Mount Prospect. Ill

An evolving history

Up until a decade ago, District 214 used a simple, unweighted grading system. Grades in most courses counted equally in calculating a student's grade-point average (G.P.A.) and rank in class. Although students had to pass health and physical education to graduate, grades for these classes weren't included in calculating G.P.A. or class rank. But an A in a basic-level or special-education class earned a full five points. To ensure that good grades in these low-achieving classes didn't skew class rank figures, teachers were restricted to awarding only limited numbers of A's and B's for these classes.

Teachers of these classes began complaining that the grade quota was treating low-achieving students unfairly and serving as a disincentive for students to work hard in these classes. So in 1979, the school board instituted the new weighted system: A's in basic-level and special education classes got only four points, but the grade quota was lifted.

But then another problem emerged: Our extremely gifted students had little incentive for enrolling in Advanced Placement classes. An A in an A.P. class earned five points, the same as an A in a regular class—even though earning top grades in advanced classes presumably took more effort than in regular classes. So, in 1984, the board expanded the weighted grade system, adding a new six-point A in A.P. classes. This way, a B or a C in an A.P. class would have an equivalent impact on grade point average as an A or a B in a regular class.

Even with the new weighted system, though, some inequities emerged. A student's G.P.A. could suffer, for example, if he took more than the minimum of hour credit-bearing courses per semester required for graduation. Consider two students who took extra courses: one who took four five-point courses and a six-point course, and another who took five five-point courses and a six-point course. If both earned straight A's, the first one's G.P.A. would be 5.20. But the second one essentially would be penalized for his extra work: His G.P.A. would be only 5.17.

To correct this inequity and encourage students to take more courses than the minimum required to graduate, the board adopted the academic achievement point (A.A.P.). For each credit-bearing course a student took beyond the minimum of four per semester needed to graduate, the A.A.P. added one-half honor point per semester to a student's total. In the above example, then, the first student's G.P.A. would be 5.40 and the second student's would be 5.50. Both students would receive an incentive for taking at least one additional course, and the second student would be further rewarded for taking two extra courses.

But that wasn't all: Board members were concerned that departments with few or no Advanced Placement classes might suffer declining enrollments if students chose courses mainly according to the availability of the six-point A. So the board directed administrators to develop specific criteria (other than A.P. designation) for applying the six-point-A status to courses.

Time for surgery

Task groups appointed to add courses to the six-point-A category heard arguments from parents, teachers, administrators, and students. These groups argued that the system itself was flawed. They suggested major surgery, not just first aid, for the grading system.

The matter came to a head during the 1986-87 school year, when two storms were brewing. The first was disagreement over the designation of valedictorians and salutatorians. In the weighted grading system, students with straight-A averages might (and frequently did) have different G.P.A.s. To deal with this problem, district administrators had decided to desig-

nate all straight-A students valedictorians, regardless of their G.P.A.S. Students who'd received all A's and only one B were named salutatorians. Often, we had numerous valedictorians and salutatorians. To add to the confusion, some of the salutatorians had higher G.P.A.S than did some of the valedictorians.

This controversy led to a study of how we designate honors to our highest-achieving graduates. Soliciting the ideas and opinions of students, parents, and teachers, the school board approved a plan to eliminate the designation of valedictorians and salutatorians. We replaced it with a new system, designating Highest Honors to graduates with G.P.A.S of 5.2 or above, High Honors to those with G.P.A.S of from 5 to 5.2, and Honors to those with G.P.A.S of from 4.8 to 5.2.

The second controversy evolved from the complaints of health and physical education teachers, who wanted grades for their classes included in students' G.P.A. calculations. Under our outcome-based philosophy of education, they said, students in health and physical education classes were expected to achieve results as significant as those required by other departments.

The school board responded by appointing a new task force. Its objective: to study the effectiveness of the grading system as a whole and make recommendations for improvements.

Assessing the system

At our first meeting, I was surprised to discover that, philosophically, all the members of the task force opposed the concept of a weighted grading system. I did not believe the majority of our teachers agreed with this position, but I should have known volunteers for the task force would come from the ranks of those who favored change, rather than from those who preferred maintaining the status quo.

The task force initiated a three-pronged evaluation: We conducted a literature search, did a survey of grading systems used by other school districts, and began developing a statement of our "pillar beliefs" about grading. Our goal was to develop recommendations from these three sources that would be compatible with the mission statement, beliefs, and goals recently formulated in District 214's strategic planning process.

The literature search eventually produced a book-sized document, but the information it contained did not provide specific direction for the work of the task force. Similarly, our survey of grading systems in suburban districts was inconclusive: Each school district seemed to base its grading system on local traditions and values.

As for our pillar beliefs, we distilled these to the following three statements, derived from an original list of well over a hundred:

1. A comprehensive evaluation system must include assessment of student effort and involvement, attitude and behavior, growth and development, and cognitive achievement and academic performance.

2. Teachers must assess students according to clearly defined standards and learner outcomes that are communicated to students at the beginning of each unit of instruction.

3. Teachers must assess and inform students of their achievement and performance frequently and regularly.

Our struggle to come up with an appropriate grading system is a lesson in what it takes to be an effective administrator

From these beliefs—and from the district's mission, beliefs, and goals—we formulated our initial recommendations in the fall of 1987. Included in Draft No. 1 were the following recommendations: to provide quarter and semester grades in effort/involvement, attitude/behavior, and cognitive achievement/academic performance; to abandon weighted grades and academic achievement points; and to award credit for health and physical education and include these grades in the G.P.A. calculation.

We submitted the recommendations to teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members for their reactions. Their responses brought the task force face to face with the real world of special-interest groups and school-community politics.

On the whole, teachers, parents, and students opposed changing the system. And clearly, the recommendations had gored several sacred cows. For example, parents and teachers of high-achieving students believed the six-point A encouraged students to take A.P. courses and appropriately rewarded them for their hard work. They did not want the six-point A eliminated.

Round two

We went back to the drawing board. In February 1988, we published Draft No. 2, which included the following recommendations:

- ☐ Let students know at the beginning of each course what factors would be used to determine the student's grade.
- ☐ Award grades for cognitive achievement and academic performance only; report on student progress in other domains in narrative form.
- ☐ Award grades six times a year rather than four.
- ☐ Eliminate the four-point A but retain the six-point A for Advanced Placement classes.
- ☐ Calculate two G.P.A. and rank-in-class figures—one weighted and one not weighted.
- ☐ Require students to take six classes per semester. (This would make it possible to eliminate academic achievement points, which artificially inflated student G.P.A.S.)
- ☐ Include health grades in calculation of G.P.A. and class rank; include physical education grades, but only at one-half the normal value.

When the second draft was published, another round of feedback began. We held faculty coffees, and we surveyed all faculty members for their reaction. Teachers, we learned, supported weighted grades for advanced courses, but they opposed awarding grades more frequently because of the additional work involved. Too, some departments fear the curriculum would have to be altered to adjust to shorter grading periods.

We also surveyed more than 400 students from regular and high-achieving classes on the issue of weighted grades. Students and their parents, like teachers, said it was appropriate and important to award additional "weight" to honors courses.

To ensure any change we might make wouldn't adversely affect our students' college applications, we informally asked a number of college admissions officers for their opinions about the use of weighted and nonweighted G.P.A.s and class ranks. They told us not to worry that they would convert our system into what worked for their admissions process. But they did tell us our students would be better off if we included more honors-level courses, besides the Advanced Placement courses, if we were

going to retain a weighted grading system.

With these responses in hand, the task force made two significant changes in our recommendations: First, we abandoned the six grading periods in favor of quarterly grades, the status quo. Second, we proposed expanding the weighted grading system.

Here's how the task force phrased the revised recommendation:

"Philosophically, we believe that all learning has equal value. Consequently, we support the total abandonment of weighted grades. However, reality tells us that our students must compete for acceptance to colleges and universities and vie for scholarships in a society that places differential credit on learning at increased levels of rigor-"

Our recommendation: to award 5.5-point A's in honors classes, in addition to the six-point A's given in Advanced Placement classes. Any course currently designed as "accelerated would be given the "honors" designation, and departments could petition to name additional courses as honors courses.

As in the earlier draft, we held to the recommendations that the four-point A and academic achievement points be eliminated—and that all students be required to register for a minimum of six and a maximum of seven credit-bearing periods per semester.

Reaching consensus

You can see our dilemma: Although we all philosophically opposed a weighted grading system, we had to come up with a proposal that would allow the school district to reach consensus. We had to reconcile our stance against weighted grades with the position of the majority of students, parents, and teachers in favor of weighted grades.

Indeed, Draft No. 3—with our revised recommendations—had a calming effect on the community. We turned this draft over to the superintendent's council for official review before it would be presented to the school board for consideration. This led to the next controversy.

The council directed the task force chairman to delete the prefatory remarks—regarding our philosophical opposition to weighted grades—from the recommendation to expand the weighted grading system. Members of the task force and the local teacher association vigorously resisted deleting this introduction. It was not the administration's prerogative, they argued, to censor the recommendations of a board-commissioned task force.

Task force members forced the issue by contacting board members directly to complain of the threatened censure- As a result, the superintendent's council included the original form of the recommendation in materials presented to the board in the spring of 1988.

Now it was up to the board to debate the matter—a process that went on through the summer and fall and culminated with two workshops held in November 1988.

The controversy still was not over. In the two weeks between the two November workshops, the task force—buoyed by a sense that the school board might accept sweeping changes—resurrected an earlier draft of its recommendations, which included six grading periods, a nonweighted grading system, and the assessment and reporting of attitude/behavior, effort/involvement, and growth/development in addition to cognitive achievement and academic performance.

The superintendent's council did not favor going back to the earlier recommendations, though. It continued to support quarterly grading periods, a weighted system, and assessment only of cognitive achievement and academic performance.

The school board debated the pros and cons of the two positions at several regular meetings from December 1988 to March 1989, finally approving most of the administrative recommendations. But the board rejected the recommendation to include physical education in the G.P.A. and class rank calculations—partly as the result of pressure from parents of many high-achieving students who didn't want G.P.A. and class rank affected by kids' abilities in physical education.

In addition, the board voted to retain the devalued A for low-achieving classes. But it would be a 4.5-point A, rather than a 4-point A. This change, the board said, provided symmetry with the 5.0, 5.5. and 6.0 points awarded A's in the other tracks. The main reason (surprisingly similar to the reason given nearly a decade earlier): to prevent students who took courses in basic and special education from equaling or surpassing the class ranks of students who took regular courses and earned similar grades.

One final struggle

Even after the board approved the new system, some teachers of elective courses (such as debate and art) raised a concern. They feared that eliminating the academic achievement point would remove an important incentive for students to take their courses. For some students, these teachers said, the possibility of lowering overall grade point averages even a small amount might work as a powerful disincentive.

Listening to this concern, the board made a final modification: Rather than eliminating academic achievement points entirely, students would earn one-half a point for taking an extra credit-bearing course. With this change, the board got no more complaints from teachers about the new system.

Here, in summary, is how the new system works: Students are required to take six classes a semester, including physical education. Physical education does not bear credit, but health does. Students can earn an extra half-point by taking a seventh class. Grades are weighted as follows: 4.5-point A in basic and special-education classes; 5-point A in regular classes; 5.5-point A in honors classes; and 6-point A in Advanced Placement classes. Two G.P.A. and class rank calculations are made—one weighted and one nonweighted—to allow colleges and universities to look at both.

After more than two years of debate, District 214 ended up with a grading system much like the one we had intended to change.

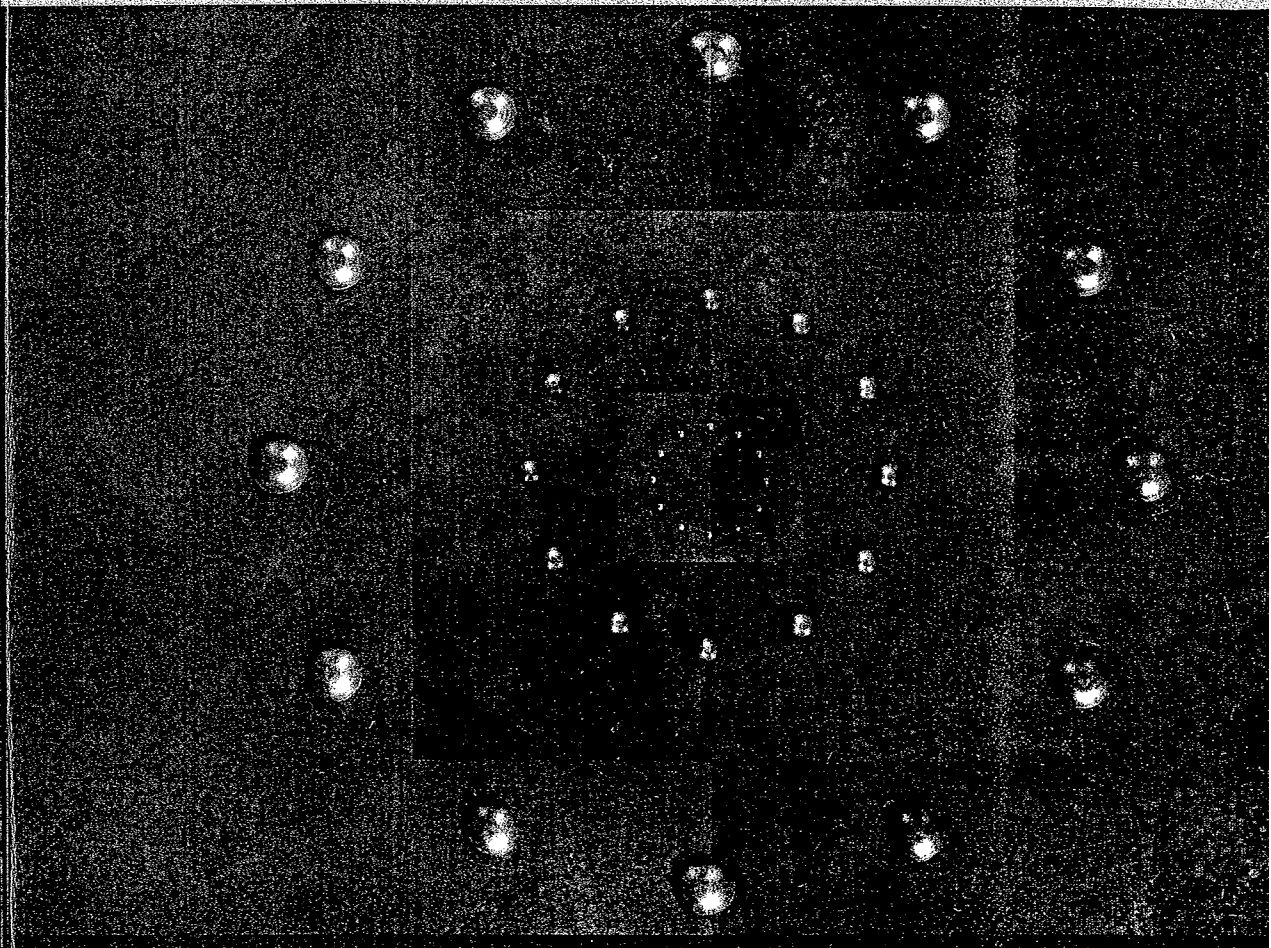
An administrative lesson

Our struggle to come up with an appropriate grading system is a lesson in what it takes to be an effective school administrator. As school executives, you and I must listen to our many constituents—parents. students, and teachers. Even after long debate and extensive consideration of the grading system, the faculty of District 214 did not favor sweeping change, nor did students and their families. We on the task force had to recognize that our opinions were not representative of prevailing school/community sentiment.

The heavy weight of opinion not to eliminate the weighted system—and in fact to expand it—swayed me. In the end, I voted with the majority.

Compromise is necessary in school administration as in almost every aspect of life. I found it's possible, though, to live with the need to meet others halfway, if—as we did with our grading task force—you do your utmost to examine the issue, lay out the facts; and present your viewpoint soundly and persuasively. 79. ■

DEVELOPING GRADING AND REPORTING SYSTEMS FOR STUDENT LEARNING



EXPERTS IN ASSESSMENT

SERIES EDITORS

THOMAS R. GUSKEY AND ROBERT J. MARZANO

Weighted Grades

A common practice in many high schools today is to assign greater weight or credit to the grades earned in courses considered exceptionally challenging than is assigned to regular or genera1 courses (Mitchell, 1994). Honors courses and those designed to prepare students for Advanced Placement (AP) examinations, for example, might be given a weight of five credits while regular or general courses would have a weight of four credits. Other schools simply adjust grading scales so that a *B* in an honors or AP course is considered equivalent to an A in a regular or general course. Some schools make further adjustments by assigning less weight or credit to lower level courses or remedial courses.

The use of weighted grades is typically justified on the grounds of fairness. They are seen as a way to reward or compensate those students who enroll in more challenging courses. Many educators also believe that weighted grades are an enticement to bright students who might choose a less rigorous program of studies unless some form of special recompense or recognition is offered.

Before they choose to use weighted grades, however, educators should address two important questions: "What is their true purpose?" and "How will they be used?" In most schools today, weighted grades are used to differentiate students' performance for the purpose of selection. In determining who will be named on the honor roll, for instance, weighted grades allow students enrolled in challenging courses with lower grades to be eligible, while ensuring the exclusion of students with high grades in only remedial courses. Weighted grades are also a major factor in many high schools when it comes-to naming the valedictorian. Apart from these selection and differentiation functions, however, weighted grades have little utility. We know of no evidence that shows they serve to motivate students to enroll in more challenging courses or dissuade students from enrolling in lower level or remedial courses (see Gilman & Swan, 1989).

Recommendation

As we stressed earlier, students who attain a high level of achievement or performance deserve special recognition. Likewise, students should be encouraged to engage in challenging academic programs, and those who do well should be appropriately distinguished. Honor roll membership and other forms of academic recognition (letters, special commendations, etc.) serve this purpose well. But as we described in Chapter 7, educators need to be clear about the criteria used in conferring such "honors" designation. Specifically, they must decide if the high standards associated with "honors" mean challenging in the absolute sense of specific knowledge and skills or simply chal-

lenging for that particular student. If the former, then weighted grades allow more students in challenging courses to be recognized while making students with disabilities who receive *A*'s and *B*'s in lower level courses ineligible. If the latter, then weighted grades are irrelevant and unnecessary. In either case, however, it is an issue of differentiation and selection. It is not an academic issue.

The use of weighted grades in selecting a valedictorian is another matter altogether. Recall that in Chapter 3 we discussed the dilemmas caused by this process when selection is restricted to a single student. Our recommendation there was to name multiple valedictorians or to follow a process similar to that used in colleges and universities where graduates are distinguished as *magna cum laude* and *summa cum laude*. This provides special recognition for those students who have distinguished themselves academically while eliminating the detrimental effects that stem from the competition among students for that singular distinction.

Keep in mind, too, our discussion of how colleges and universities today look beyond class rank and GPA to the rigor of students' academic programs and the courses they have taken when making decisions about admission and scholarship awards (see Adelman, 1999). While weighted grades help college officials distinguish honors or AP courses in students' transcripts (Lockhart, 1990; Talley & Mohr, 1991), other means of identification can be used. For example, such courses can be specially marked, numbered differently, or highlighted in the transcript. Aside from this labeling function, weighted grades have little relevance.

In essence, the issue of weighted grades comes down to the basic purpose of grading and reporting. If the purpose is to communicate teachers' judgments about students' achievement and performance to parents, to the students themselves, or to others, then it is difficult to justify the use of weighted grades. On the other hand, if the purpose of grading is to select, identify, or group students for certain educational paths, programs, or honors, then weighted grades take on considerable significance. Remember, however, that no single grading method or reporting tool can serve both these purposes well. Our recommendation, therefore, is that educators first address the issue of purpose. Once decisions about purpose are made, questions about weighted grades will be much easier to address and resolve.

Grade Inflation

Another issue that causes great debate among educators is grade inflation. Many argue that more students today receive high grades not because of excellence in achievement or performance but because of new grading schemes and teachers' concerns about students' self-esteem. According to these critics, teachers have relaxed their standards and, as a result, grades have become

MEMORANDUM

To: Keith Lutz

Fr: Mark Feldhausen

Date: . 28 January 2002

Re: Update on Board of Education Initiatives: Board Initiative #3

Board Initiative #3: The board will review and if necessary, develop new or amend existing policies regarding appropriate infusion of technology into the curriculum with the desired results to improve student achievement.

Board Initiative #3 addresses the issue of the Integration of Technology into teaching and learning. The attached documents define "Technology Integration" and make recommendations regarding the establishment of technology standards or expectations that may be added to the Indicators of Effective Teaching, Rule 6200.1. These documents and recommendations were forwarded to Educational Services in December 2002 and are currently being reviewed by the Teacher Evaluation Update Committee.

MEMORANDUM

To: Donna Flood
Director of Staff Development

Fr: Mark Feldhausen
Assistant Superintendent of Technology

Cc: Martha Bruckner
Associate Superintendent of Educational Services

Date: 19 December 2002

Re: Technology Integration and Teacher Evaluation

Attached are the documents that define technology integration and suggest those standards and descriptors that might be added to the District's Indicators of Effective Teaching relative to the effective use of technology. These documents are the result of numerous meetings and work sessions conducted with members of Educational Services, the Technology Division, and the District's Technology Advisory Committee. The latter consists of building administrators, teachers, and community members. Please use these documents as a starting point for your committee's discussion on technology integration and teacher evaluation. Also included are notes taken from these groups.

Itemized List of Attachments:

1. Technology Integration in Teaching and Learning
2. The Indicators of Effective Teaching Using Technology
3. The Indicators of Effective Teaching Using Technology: Evaluation Rubric
4. The Indicators of Effective Teaching Using Technology: Evaluation Instrument
5. Teacher Technology Skills List for Integrating Technology
6. Educational Services Input Session
7. Technology Advisory Input Session

Technology Integration in Teaching and Learning

For more than a decade the Millard Public Schools has been committed to utilizing technology to enhance student learning and to support the effective management of the district. This commitment has been reflected by numerous technology strategieslaction plans found in the District's Strategic Plan, in specific initiatives of the Board of Education, and in community support and advocacy for technology in each school and classroom. Most recently, technology has been a major component of mandatory staff development. Instruction, support, and encouragement have been provided for teachers as they continue to improve and increase their technology skills and work toward the integration of technology into teaching and learning. But, what does it mean to truly integrate technology into teaching and learning and what is the relationship of technology integration to the Indicators of Effective Teaching as defined by the Millard Public Schools?

The process of improving one's technology skills is continuous. The challenge of integrating a teacher's technology skills into the classroom, as a normal part of teaching and learning, is shared by both the district and the teacher. Therein, certain essential conditions must be acknowledged and addressed. These essential conditions include technology accessibility, obsolescence, functionality, technical and instructional support, staff development, content standards, and technology's relationship to the Millard Education Program. While these essential conditions are the responsibility of the Technology Division in cooperation with Educational Services and other District departments, the teacher must learn to plan, manage, instruct, assess, and personally grow using technology.

In addition, articulated definitions providing a common language of understanding and tools that may be used to evaluate the utilization of technology in the classroom are needed. Therefore, the Technology Division recommends the following:

> Technology — Electronic tools used to facilitate teaching and learning that includes but is not limited to desktop computers, laptops, tablets, handhelds, projection systems, DVD/VHS/Laser disk players, overhead projectors, whiteboard display systems, calculators, scanners, printers, digital (video) cameras, etc.
>
> Technology Integration — The effective application of electronic tools, beyond basic operations and concepts, by students to access knowledge, collaborate with peers, engage in higher-order thinking, and to solve meaningful, real-life problems; and by teachers to plan learning experiences, manage resources and the learning environment, provide appropriate instruction, and facilitate the assessment of student learning.

The Millard Public Schools has already identified Indicators of Effective Teaching and included them as a part of the teacher evaluation program. In order to focus on the Integration of Technology into teaching and learning, specific Indicators of Effective Teaching Using Technology have been identified by the Technology Division and are presented in the attached document. It is the recommendation of the Technology Division that these additional indicators be adopted and included **in** the Indicators of Effective Teaching as presented in Board of Education Rule **6200.1.** Finally, two resource documents are also provided: an Evaluation Rubric and an Evaluation checklist[1]

[1]Content for these documents was derived from the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), 2002. National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers: Preparing Teachers to Use Technology.

The Indicators of Effective Teaching Using Technology

Planning (1)

Teachers plan and design effective learning environments and experiences supported by technology for all students.

A. align the use of technology resources with curricular outcomes
B. apply best practices regarding teaching and learning with technology
C. design developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that apply technology-enhanced instructional strategies to support the diverse needs of all learners

Management of the Classroom Environment (2)

Teachers manage technology resources within the context of the learning environment.

A. effectively implement routines and transitions that maximize student learning when using technology
B. match technology tools to appropriate organization of the learning activities

Instruction (3)

Teachers implement the written curriculum by including methods and strategies for applying technology that will maximize student learning.

A. facilitate technology experiences designed to address content standards and student technology standards.
B. use technology to support learner-centered strategies that address the diverse needs of students.
C. apply technology to develop students' higher order thinking skills and multiple intelligences
D. apply technology to develop academic and life skills

Assessment (4)

Teachers apply technology to facilitate a variety of effective assessment and evaluative strategies.

A. evaluate student ability to use technology resources for learning, communication, and productivity as defined by the district's technology enablers.
B. apply technology in the evaluation of student learning of subject matter using a variety of techniques that includes but is not limited to electronic gradebooks, technology-based testing, electronic portfolios, and other student performance task- end products
C. use technology resources to collect and analyze data, interpret results, and communicate findings to improve instructional practice and maximize student learning.

Professional Responsibilities (5)

Teachers use technology to enhance their productivity and professional practices.

A. demonstrate a sound understanding of technology operations and concepts
B. incorporate technology in education as part of one's professional development
C. continually evaluate and reflect on professional practice to make informed decisions regarding the use of technology in support of student learning.
D. apply technology to increase productivity.
E. use technology to communicate and collaborate with peers, parents, and the larger community in order to nurture student learning.
F. model an understanding of the social, ethical, legal and human issues surrounding the use of technology

Ble.

12/19/2002

Indicators of Effective Teaching Using Technology Evaluation Instrument

Indicators	Description of Effective Use of Technology	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Planning	Teachers plan and design effective learning environments and experiences supported by technology for all students			
	A. align the use of technology resources with curricular outcomes			
	B. apply best practices regarding teaching and learning with technology			
	C. design developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that apply technology-enhanced instructional strategies to support the diverse needs of all learners			
Management	Teachers manage technology resources within the context of the learning environment			
	A. effectively implement routines and transitions that maximize student learning when using technology			
	B. match technology tools to appropriate organization of the learning activities			
Instruction	Teachers implement the written curriculum by including methods and strategies for applying technology that will maximize student learning.			
	A. facilitate technology experiences designed to address content standards and student technology standards.			
	B. use technology to support learner centered strategies that address the diverse needs of students			
	C. use technology to develop students' higher order thinking skills and multiple intelligences			
	D. apply technology to develop academic and life skills			
Assessment	Teachers apply technology to facilitate a variety of effective assessment and evaluative strategies			
	A. evaluate student ability to use technology resources for learning, communication, and productivity as defined by the district's technology enablers.			
	B. apply technology in the evaluation of student learning of subject matter using a variety of techniques that includes but is not limited to electronic gradebooks, technology-based testing, electronic portfolios, and other student performance task- end products			
	C. use technology resources to collect and analyze data, interpret results, and communicate findings to improve instructional practice and maximize student learning.			
Professional Responsibilities	Teachers use technology to enhance their productivity and professional practices.			
	A. demonstrate a sound understanding of technology operations and concepts			
	B. incorporate technology in education as part of one's professional development			
	C. continually evaluate and reflect on professional practice to make informed decisions regarding the use of technology in support of student learning.			
	D. apply technology to increase productivity.			
	E. use technology to communicate and collaborate with peers, parents, and the larger community in order to nurture student learning.			
	F. model an understanding of the social, ethical, legal and human issues surrounding the use of technology			

Indicators of Effective Teaching Using Technology
Evaluation Rubric

Assessment	Teachers apply technology to facilitate a variety of effective assessment and evaluative strategies	Assessment strategies consistently incorporate technology as defined by A, B, and C	Assessment strategies periodically incorporate technology utilization as defined by A, B, C	Assessment strategies do not include technology utilization as defined by A, B, C
	A. evaluate student ability to use technology resources for learning, communication, and productivity as defined by the district's technology enablers.			
	B. apply technology in the evaluation of student learning of subject matter using a variety of techniques that includes but is not limited to electronic gradebooks, technology-based testing, electronic portfolios, and other student performance task- end products			
	C. use technology resources to collect and analyze data, interpret results, and communicate findings to improve instructional practice and maximize student learning.			
Professional Responsibilities	Teachers use technology to enhance their productivity and professional practices.	Productivity and professional responsibilities consistently include A, B, C, D, E, F	Productivity and professional responsibilities periodically demonstrates progress in A, B, C, D, E, F	Productivity and professional responsibilities do not address A, B, C, D, E, F
	A. demonstrate a sound understanding of technology operations and concepts			
	B. incorporate technology in education as part of one's professional development			
	C. continually evaluate and reflect on professional practice to make informed decisions regarding the use of technology in support of student learning.			
	D. apply technology to increase productivity.			
	E. use technology to communicate and collaborate with peers, parents, and the larger community in order to nurture student learning.			
	F. model an understanding of the social, ethical, legal and human issues surrounding the use of technology			

Indicators of Effective Teaching Using Technology
Evaluation Rubric

Indicators	Description of Effective Use of Technology	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Planning	Teachers plan and design effective learning environments and experiences supported by technology for all students	Planning consistently reflects appropriate use of technology as defined in A, B, and C	Planning periodically reflects appropriate use of technology as defined in A, B, and C	Planning does not reflect technology use as defined in A, B, and C
	A. align the use of technology resources with curricular outcomes			
	B. apply best practices regarding teaching and learning with technology			
	C. design developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that apply technology-enhanced instructional strategies to support the diverse needs of all learners			
Management	Teachers manage technology resources within the context of the learning environment	Management consistently reflects the appropriate use of technology resources and classroom organization as defined in A & B	Management periodically reflects the appropriate use of technology resources and classroom organization as defined in A & B	Management does not reflects the appropriate use of technology resources and classroom organization as defined in A & B
	A. effectively implement routines and transitions that maximize student learning when using technology			
	B. match technology tools to appropriate organization of the learning activities			
Instruction	Teachers implement the written curriculum by including methods and strategies for applying technology that will maximize student learning.	Instructional activities consistently incorporate the use of technology as defined by A, B, C, D	Instructional activities periodically incorporate the use of technology as defined by A, B, C, D	Instructional activities do not incorporate the use of technology as defined by A, B, C, D
	A. facilitate technology experiences designed to address content standards and student technology standards.			
	B. use technology to support learner-centered strategies that address the diverse needs of students			
	C. apply technology to develop students' higher order thinking skills and multiple intelligences			
	D. apply technology to develop academic and life skills			

Teacher Technology Skills List for Integrating Technology

(Derived from ISTE, 2002)

The effective integration of technology into teaching and learning finds that teachers:

1. assess the availability of technology resources at the school site, plan activities that integrate available resources, and develop a method for obtaining the additional necessary software and hardware to support the specific learning needs of students in the classroom. (1, 3, 5)
2. make appropriate choices about technology systems, resources, and services that are aligned with district and state standards. (1, 2)
3. arrange equitable access to appropriate technology resources that enable students to engage successfully in learning activities across subject/content areas and grade levels. (2, 3, 5)
4. engage in ongoing planning of lesson sequences that effectively integrate technology resources and are consistent with current best practices for integrating the learning of subject matter and student technology standards. (3, 4)
5. plan and implement technology-based learning activities that promote student engagement in analysis, synthesis, interpretation, and creation of original products. (1, 2, 3)
6. plan for, implement, and evaluate the management of student use of technology resources as part of classroom operations and in specialized instructional situations. (1, 2, 3)
7. implement a variety of instructional technology strategies and grouping strategies (e.g., whole group, collaborative, individualized, and learner centered) that include appropriate embedded assessment for meeting the diverse needs of learners. (3, 4)
8. facilitate student access to school and community resources that provide technological and discipline-specific expertise. (3)
9. teach students methods and strategies to assess the validity and reliability of information gathered through technological means. (2, 4)
10. recognize students' talents in the use of technology and provide them with opportunities to share their expertise with their teachers, peers, and others. (3, 5)
11. guide students in applying self- and peer assessment tools to critique student-created technology products and the process used to create those products. (4)
12. facilitate students' use of technology that addresses their social needs and cultural identity and promotes their interaction with the global community. (3, 5)
13. use results from assessment measures (e.g., learner profiles, computer-based testing, electronic portfolios) to improve instructional planning, management, and implementation of learning strategies. (1, 2, 3, 4)
14. use technology tools to collect, analyze, interpret, represent, and communicate data (student performance and other information) for the purposes of instructional planning and school improvement. (4, 5)
15. use technology resources to facilitate communications with parents or guardians of students. (5)
16. identify capabilities and limitations of current and emerging technology resources and assess the potential of these systems and services to address personal, lifelong learning, and workplace needs. (5)
17. participate in technology-based collaboration as part of continual and comprehensive professional growth to stay abreast of new and emerging technology resources that support enhanced learning for PK–12 students. (5)
18. demonstrate and advocate for legal and ethical behaviors among students, colleagues, and community members regarding the use of technology and information. (5)
19. enforce classroom procedures that guide students' safe and healthy use of technology and that comply with legal and professional responsibilities for students needing assistive technologies. (2, 5)
20. advocate for equal access to technology for all students in their schools, communities, and homes. (5)
21. implement procedures consistent with district and school policies that protect the privacy and security of student data and information. (5)

(Numbers in parentheses correspond to Millard Public Schools Indicators of Effective Teaching Using Technology.)

12/19/2002

Ed Services Input Session
December 6,2002

- Wide variety of tools – not latest and greatest
- Tech Integration – goal to be students use technology effectively = implied
    - Focus of document = teacher
    - Not obvious the student role / use
    - Match with indicators of effective teaching needs to be mentioned
    - How is the teacher managing what is going on?

      Kids need to be doing technology, too
- Enablers refer to student
- 2nd page indicator = student behavior
- Flaw in definition = refer to student learning
- Reminder = purpose of document, look for another way to get to the end goals
    - Impressive document = layers of the system, language used to infused evaluation piece. "Masterful"
- Totally overwhelmed!
    - Need to know what those mean, when principals ask for information
    - Paradigm shift = time needed w/teachers, model, work
- Fleshing the document out
    - Starting point
- Last page as a district responsibility
    - Too much going on in classroom
    - Support = strong support within the building
- Artistic side of teaching
- Not shooting holes, need to take people with us as we move down this road.
- Language of differentiation – to move that piece on
    - Formalizing the goal
    - Emphasis normal way we do business
- Keeping the student in technology integration
- Cautionary consideration – scores – prove that the shifts in teaching strategies will still help to reach the testing scores
    - Make sure our end of support is in line - reality!
- Changes and learning – time to practice it and try it – time to understand
- Time
- Baby steps like differentiation; support
    - Start the educational process
- Administrators must have understanding when evaluating teachers
- Perspective of principal evaluating – part of a larger document – 18-20 statements
- Written to serve as a guide
    - What might this mean and how might this be used
- Buildings asking for information the building site teams can use to help with site plans
    - Asking for leadership: what should teachers be doing?
- These items document a vision of what could be

  - None has the expertise to accomplish all of these – building how technology looks for like-minded teachers. Give staff members recognition for what they do and can teach their peers regarding how technology can impact Marzonno, diff., teaching.
- Involvement of technology at the H.S. level
  - Issues, rapid, keeping eye on what is happening, access, availability
- How can we ask taxpayers for more money if we don't have a technology vision – picture?
- In order to move instruction is to raise the bar and bring to the fore front s document such as this.
- Visioning document – white paper process?
  - Assisting only the evaluation process?
- Language, beginning point of discussion / issues
- Reminder – 3rd board goal – infusion to improve student achievement

Technology Integration Input Session
December 10,2003
Session II, Tech Advisory Committee

One of the challenges we have is dealing with helping the district to try to define the tech integration; we are working with Ed Services. Using technology purposefully, staff development, how do we define this and what do we expect in the long term?

Technology and Tech Integration...what are our expectations? Using Indicators of Effective Teaching and roll it into the process of teacher evaluation.

Group One:

- Consider adding, "demonstrate learning through the "creation" of quality products to the student language
- Teachers and administrators would need additional info to clarify the indicators. 'Similar to what we have in the current indicators, give examples of what an indicator might look like in the classroom
- The tech infrastructure (hardware, software, network, staff development) will need to be in place in order for this to work.
- Take out the 3 levels of evaluation (satisfactory, exemplary, unsatisfactory) and model the current system of commendations and recommendations
- Remove the A, B, C indicators from the entire form and focus on the main indicators only
- Tech definition needs to have a statement related to monitoring student learning

Group Two:

- Common expectations defined
- Document (indicator) * integrated
- Some language kept and some language culled (Teacher Evaluation Committee)
- Expectation of community

Group Three:
Definition:

- Demonstrate integration our staff development
- State the use of technology to support the adopted curriculum
- Appropriate instruction: management and instructional (student opportunity?)
- Put teacher's first – it's their responsibility, community (student separate)

Indicators:

- A lot of work for teachers to do (resources needed, commercially produced products that would help teacher share)
- Time to develop / sharing time between staff members
- Management (technology, resources, students)
  Adoption impact
- How this document ties in with the current Effective Teaching Indicators

- Effective teaching = management of the classroom
  - Instruction – implement written curriculum sounds like technology is driving the curriculum
  - Productivity enhance instruction" implement" to professional responsibilities