

Class Rank Proposal- Class of 2025 and beyond

Why Change?

In recent years, there has been a trend away from class ranking. Locally, Millard, Papillion-LaVista, and Lincoln Public Schools have all phased out the use of class rank, and some WHS teachers have voiced concerns about the impact of class rank on student mental health. Nationally, the National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC) reports fewer than 50 percent of high schools currently rank students. Additionally, while many college admission decision factors such as grades, strength of curriculum, and college entrance test scores have remained very consistent over the years, one exception is the decreased importance of class rank (2019 State of College Admissions Report, NACAC) .

Because of this trend away from class ranking, Westside Community Schools surveyed students, staff, and parents of Westside High School students about class rank. Results indicated that it was important for the District to have a way to recognize academic excellence, without forcing students to compete against each other. Stakeholders also wanted students to be able to explore courses of interest without a penalty to class rank. A high-level overview of the responses are included in this table, and more detailed responses are included [in this document](#).

Survey Results (February 2020)

	Teachers	Students	Parents
Indicated a desire to keep class rank as is	16%	30%	28%
Indicated a desire for some form or recognition	84%	80%	90%
Moving away from class rank would be beneficial	61%	43%	39%
Moving away from class rank would be harmful	13%	24%	21%
(Open ended) Benefits of Class Rank	Motivation, Accounts for Rigorous Coursework, Recognition, Scholarships, Standing	Motivation; Pride; College acceptance and scholarships; Standing; Course selection guidance; Illustration of hard work	Motivation, Standing; Rewards difficult courses; College acceptance and scholarships; Hard work
(Open ended) Drawbacks of Class Rank	Student anxiety and stress; Course interest and selection mismatch; Compares students to each other instead of a standard; Competition; Inequity; Parental pressure; Variance with class achievement or school size	Discouraging; Competition/comparisons; Pressure/Stress; Devalues some courses and exploring; Relative rigor of class	Pressure/stress on students; Competition between students; Decreased value for arts, trades, academics; Complicated; Equity issue; Strong achievement throughout building makes it difficult to be in top %

The Latin System

Westside Community Schools is committed to recognizing the academic success of our students. Beginning with the class of 2025, we will recognize students' academic success using a Latin, or "laude" system of recognition. The Latin system has established criteria for each level of success, and is used at many colleges and universities. With this system, students will work toward a personal goal of academic achievement, rather than competing for classmates in a traditional class ranking system. Westside's Latin system paired with a weighted grade scale encourages students to pursue course offerings that match student interest and are rigorous in nature.

Recognition Criteria:

Summa Cum Laude "with the highest honor": To graduate summa cum laude, a student must achieve a 4.25 or higher GPA based on a 4.0 weighted scale (below). This is the highest level of school recognition.

Magna Cum Laude "with high honor": To graduate magna cum laude, a student must achieve at least 4.0 and less than a 4.25 GPA based on a 4.0 weighted scale (below).

Cum Laude "with honor": To graduate cum laude, a student must achieve at least a 3.75 and less than a 4.25 GPA based on a 4.0 weighted scale (see below).

Recognition at the graduation ceremony will be based on the student's cumulative GPA at the end of the first seven semesters of high school. Recognition at the graduation ceremony will include notation in the graduation program, an additional way to recognize student academic achievement. Any rounding in GPA calculations would be made to the hundredths place. The Latin system encompasses requirements of the commended diploma, and the commended diploma would be retired.

Who is eligible?

Students must earn credit in a minimum of five mark-point earning courses each semester of high school. Any appeals for special circumstances must be made to the building principal.

Courses that are NOT eligible for mark points:

- Academic Support and Intervention courses (AL, ACP, Study Center, EL, Algebra Lab, etc.)
- Pass/Fail/Enrichment courses
- Independent Study courses
- Any Group 1 course
- Rule 18 or Level 3 School courses
- Homeschool transfer credit courses

Transfer Credits

- High School courses taken at the middle school level appear on the transcript to indicate the course has been taken in 8th grade. The course will have an (8) next to the course name, and will earn no credit toward high school graduation and will be marked as "Pass". This is most likely to happen in math and world language. The course will not count toward cumulative high school GPA or Latin system honors.
- Transfer credits from an accredited high school will be evaluated on an individual student basis. The transfer credit will be assigned the weight of the closest counterpart at Westside High School. Consistent with current practice, final decisions on transfer credit will be made by the district.

Weighting of Grades

Additional course weight is assigned to Group 4 (Honors) and Group 5 (Advanced Placement) courses. Both Group 4 and Group 5 courses are considered to be more rigorous in nature. Additional weight is assigned to Group 4 and Group 5 courses to encourage students to take more rigorous coursework by minimizing risk of lowering the GPA and by providing an incentive to maximize the cumulative GPA.

The table below outlines the mark points assigned based on student performance in Group 1- 5 courses at Westside High School.

	A+	A	B+	B	C+	C	D+	D	F
Group 5	5	5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	0
Group 4	4.5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	0
Group 2-3	4	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	0
Group 1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

GPA Calculation Examples

GPA Example 1 - "Honors" Grade 9 Student				
Course	Grade	Credits	Mark Points Per Credit	Total MP Earned
Honors English 1	A	4	4.5	18
Biology	A	5	4.0	20
Honors Geometry	A	5	4.5	22.5
Global Geography	A	4	4.0	16
Spanish 2	A	5	4.0	20
Information Technology	A	4	4.0	16
Sports Skills	A	3	4.0	12
Theater 1	A	4	4.0	16
		34		140.5
140.5 Mark Points Divided by 34 Credits = 4.13 GPA				

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GPA Example 2 - “Honors” and “AP” Junior Student				
Course	Grade	Credits	Mark Points Per Credit	Total MP Earned
AP Lang & Comp	A	4	5.0	20
AP Physics I	A	5	5.0	25
PreCalculus	A	5	4.0	20
AP US History	A	4	5.0	20
Spanish 4H	A	5	4.5	22.5
Marketing I	A	4	4.0	16
AP Psychology	A	4	5.0	20
		31		143.5
143.5 Mark Points Divided by 34 Credits = 4.62 GPA				

Class Rank and Latin System Comparisons

We looked at traditional student rankings from the 2019-20 school year to determine how students would fare in the Latin System.

Generally, more students meet Magna Cum Laude and Summa Cum Laude status as juniors and seniors, as that is when students tend to take more Group 4 and Group 5 coursework.

The Class of 2020 (seven semesters of class calculations)

Using data from the end of the seventh semester of school, 46 students from the class of 2020 were in the top 10%. Of those 46 students, 40 reached Summa Cum Laude status with this model, and the other 6 reached Magna Cum Laude Status. The highest weighted GPA for the class of 2020 would have been a 4.54 and was earned by the student who was ranked #1.

The Class of 2020 had 68 additional students in the top 25%. Of those 68 students, 3 would have earned Summa Cum Laude status, 36 would have earned Magna Cum Laude Status, and 28 would have earned Cum Laude status. An additional 22 students who were outside of the top 25% earned Cum Laude status, as their GPA was between a 3.75 and 4.0

	No Recognition	Cum Laude	Magna Cum Laude	Summa Cum Laude	Total
Top 10%	0	0	6	40	46
Top 25%	1	28	36	3	68
Other 75%	345	22	0	0	367

The Class of 2023 (one semester of class calculations)

Using data from the end of the first semester of high school, fewer students earn Summa Cum Laude status as 9th graders because they are not taking the same number of Group 4 and Group 5 classes.

	No Recognition	Cum Laude	Magna Cum Laude	Summa Cum Laude	Total
Top 10%	0	1	42	7	50
Top 25%	5	42	28	0	75
Other 75%	339	23	3	0	365

Potential Changes to Group 4 and Group 5 courses

With weighted grades, to ensure equity, clear criteria for Group 4 and Group 5 courses must be maintained. This is particularly important as we consider transfer credits and comparisons between area schools.

These courses are currently categorized as a group 5, and may need to be recategorized as a group 4:

- Advanced Accounting Honors
- PreCalculus Honors
- Publication Editing Honors

These courses are currently categorized as a group 4, and may need to be recategorized as a group 5:

- AP Physics I
- AP Microeconomics
- AP Human Geography

These courses are currently categorized as a group 4, and may need to be recategorized as a group 3 OR include Honors in the course name:

- Beginning Accounting
- Entrepreneurship
- IT Fundamentals
- Architecture 2
- Film and Lit Appreciation
- Humanities
- Young Adult Literature
- Interiors
- Digital Art
- Certified Nursing Assistant
- Sports Medicine
- PreCalculus
- Probability and Statistics/ Discrete Math
- Magazine (Craze)
- NewsMagazine (Lance)
- Sports Journalism
- Warrior Television
- Westside Wired

- Yearbook (The Shield)
- Concert Jazz Band
- Varsity Show Choir
- Chamber Orchestra
- Physiology/Zoology
- Latin 3
- Spanish for Native Speakers 1-4
- UNMC and Zoo Academies

There are also several courses categorized as Group 1 or Group 2 that are “core” classes, or classes that all students are expected to take. These classes should also be evaluated to determine if a different course grouping is appropriate.

Group 1 courses that could be evaluated to be Group 2 (or Group 3)

- Freshman Choir
- Pottery 1
- Show Choir Instrumental Accompanist
- Current Events

Group 2 courses that could be evaluated for Group 3 status

- AP Computer Science Principles (this should actually be group 5)
- A number of courses in ET, FCS, and HPE, Art
- Photojournalism
- Concert Choir

(service learning next page)

Service Learning Hours - Proposal Effective for the Class of 2021 and beyond

Over the past several years, concerns have been raised about equity issues surrounding the 80 hour service learning requirement. Some students are unable to complete the hours due to transportation, home needs, or work requirements. Students who do not complete service learning hours by graduation are often in more than one at-risk category, and there are a handful of students annually who do not graduate due to service hour completion alone.

In February of 2020, teachers, parents, and students were surveyed about the service learning requirement for graduation, at the same time they were asked about class rank. Results from this survey were mixed. Overall themes included:

- Of the students and parents who answered the survey, more than 80% had at least 1/2 of the service learning requirement complete at the time of taking the survey
- All stakeholder groups indicated giving back to the community was an important aspect of service learning
- Common suggestions for improving service hours: Access to service opportunities, opportunities at school, easing the paperwork process, easing what counts for service, eliminating the hour deduction for turning in hours late
- Between 1/3 and 1/2 believed the service learning requirement should remain the same
- 10 to 15 percent of stakeholders were opposed to modifying the service learning requirement

More detailed responses can be found in the [second half of this document](#).

After the survey was administered, the conditions around COVID-19 in the spring and summer of 2020 posed additional questions (equity, safety, time) around the service learning graduation requirement.

It is proposed that effective for the class of 2021, a two-pronged change is made to the service learning requirement.

1. The service learning requirement for a regular or commended diploma will be removed from graduation requirements, effective immediately. The removal of the requirement is based on equity considerations as well as considerations about public health, in addition to administrative challenges at the high school and logistical challenges for students and families.
2. The school will continue to accept and document service learning hours for students, and students will be recognized at a silver (60+ service hours over the course of the first seven semesters of high school) or gold (100+ service hours over the course of the first seven semesters of high school) level. These service hours will need to be completed with a non profit organization. Hours completed for helping a teacher, elderly relative, etc., will not count toward this optional recognition. The academic counselor would be responsible for documentation of hours.

We believe that soft skills that are practiced in service learning activities (communicating with adults, problem solving, time management) will be addressed through additional emphasis on Work-Based Learning, workplace credentials, etc. in upcoming years.