



To: Our District 127 families
From: Tracey Landry, Director of Curriculum and Instruction
RE: Publishing class rank and naming valedictorian and salutatorian
Date: October 22, 2015

Class Rank

The graduates of the Grayslake Community High Schools are well-rounded and prepared for life after high school. With over 90% of our students attending a two or four-year college immediately after graduation, we want to make sure they have every competitive advantage during the application process. After conversations with Grayslake staff, students, and community members, as well as admissions counselors representing our state colleges and universities, we are implementing a new practice of allowing students to choose whether or not to publish class rank on their student transcripts beginning this year.

We have found the inclusion of class rank information hurts the vast majority of our students when vying for entry into colleges and universities. Because our students strive for excellence, taking honors and Advanced Placement courses that bring weighted grades, many students earn more than a 4.0 on our 4.0 scale. The result is that hard-working students with good grades are finding themselves lower on the class rank list than their achievements would suggest. As an example, a student with a 4.0 Grade Point Average would currently be ranked between 54th and 61st in his or her class. Furthermore, because most other schools have already eliminated this information from the transcript, a District 127 college applicant equal in every other way to a student from another school, might be removed from consideration because of the class rank data. This is because most colleges do not require the information for admittance, but will consider it if made available.

In addition to expanding student acceptance into the college of their choice, removing class rank from a transcript can also increase the number of District 127 students awarded scholarships. Eliminating class rank allows our students to stand on their merits when competing for monies and recognition with students from other schools which don't publish class rank.

In nearly every case, class rank is no longer required to gain entry into college. Grade Point Average, course load, extra-curricular activities, test scores, and application materials are all that is needed. As such, all students, including those currently racing to be top ranked in the class, already have the resumé they need to get into competitive schools without the limiting class rank data. And, if there is a school or application that requires a class rank, we can still generate the information for individual students, but will not otherwise default to publishing it on the transcript.

Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Because we will no longer publish class rank, we will also stop the associated practice of naming a valedictorian and salutatorian among the students of a graduating class beginning with the incoming Class of 2020. Valedictorian and salutatorian will be named for the graduating Classes of 2016-2019.



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Considerations for Current Students

We believe strongly that all students benefit from this change in practice. However, we recognize that current students may have enrolled in courses under the premise that class rank would be measured and published. As such, we are offering only current students the opportunity to decide to have class rank published on their transcript. If you need this information included on the transcript please return the enclosed form to the indicated office. Except for the transcripts of students who submit this form, none will include class rank data.

The students of District 127 are an amazing and talented group of young scholars. We are excited to let their accomplishments better shine with this change in practice. Thank you for your support as we make the transition. Information will also be shared with the incoming Class of 2020 at the eighth grade night in January at each building.

Enclosed you will find a frequently asked questions page. Please feel free to contact me with additional questions by emailing tlandry@d127.org or calling 847-986-3443.



Frequently Asked Questions

Staff and community members on the Teaching and Learning Strategic Planning Committee met to develop a list of frequently asked questions about the decision to remove class rank from the transcript and the future elimination of valedictorian and salutatorian. Lengthier explanations are included in the enclosed letter.

1. What is the primary reason for removing class rank from the transcripts?

The information is optional for enrollment in nearly all colleges and universities. As such, most area schools have already eliminated class rank from their transcripts, putting our students at a disadvantage when competing with those from other schools who don't have that data point included in their admission package. In addition, weighted courses like honors and AP have made class rank a deceptive measure. A student earning all A's in a college preparatory track of courses is much further down the class rank list than one would expect.

2. What if a student needs or wants class rank to fill out a scholarship, college or job application?

Class ranking can be obtained from a student's counselor if needed for an application process.

3. Will this impact my student's ability to get into college?

Any impact would likely be positive, making acceptance to competitive schools more attainable.

4. How will this impact college scholarships?

Unless the scholarship requires class rank on the application form, in which case a student can get the necessary information from his or her counselor, omitting that information will prove more helpful than not when competing for a scholarship. When competing with candidates from schools that do not publish a rank order of their students, including class rank data is at best neutral for our students, and at worst, hurts their chances.

5. Are other schools also eliminating class rank?

Yes, most area schools have already made this decision, or are considering it. In fact, only one other school in our new athletic conference still maintains class rank on the transcript.

6. Will a valedictorian and salutatorian still be named?

Because we have made it an option for currently enrolled students to "opt-in" to class rank, valedictorian and salutatorian will be named for currently enrolled classes. We will eliminate these titles beginning with the incoming Class of 2020.

7. With no valedictorian and salutatorian in future years, how will the graduation speaker be selected?

A student speaker will be selected following an audition process. This model has already been in place at Grayslake North for several years.



8. *How do I make my student's transcript stand out?*

A student's grade point average and course enrollments are what is most important on a student transcript. Contact your student's school counselor to discuss the best course enrollments for your son or daughter.

9. *Will honor roll still exist?*

Yes, because grade point average is still calculated, honor roll will continue in its current form.

10. *Since class rank will no longer be published, are you considering any other ways to acknowledge student excellence?*

Yes, we are in the process of developing additional ways to honor our students' academic achievements. Building and district administrators as well as members of our strategic planning committee are in discussions about how best to honor academic excellence.

11. *If I choose to include class rank now, can it be eliminated it later?*

We ask that parents commit to including it or not including it at this time. While it can be added or removed on a case-by-case basis by contacting your counselor or registrar, we are confident that our students benefit from keeping this information off the transcript.

12. *What if my student already applied to a college with the old transcript?*

If you would like to resend a transcript, just ask your counselor.

13. *Will it look strange to colleges if some Grayslake transcripts include class rank and some do not?*

We have updated our school profile sheet, which is sent with every transcript, to indicate that we have eliminated class rank as of November 2015 and that during the transition already submitted transcripts will have class rank while newly submitted ones will not. This should eliminate any questions from schools receiving transcripts.