

Policy 9742 Class Rank/Honors Credits – Class of 2011 and Beyond

Concern:

A concern was raised that current policy 9742 affords a GPA advantage for students enrolled in dual enrollment courses as compared to students taking advanced courses in their high schools.

Committee formed:

A committee was formed made up from a student from each high school, a School Board member, a College Admissions Officer, a parent, several teachers and several school administrators. The committee has met approximately 13 times over the last year discussing the GPA concern and trying to develop possible solutions that would address this concern. The committee discussed a number of options and possible solutions that would correct the advantage for those students enrolled in dual enrollment courses. The materials and examples discussed by the committee were shared with secondary principals for their thoughts and input.

Recommendation made by Committee:

A recommendation by this Committee was made to the Curriculum Instruction Committee on November 21, 2011. The recommendation was to eliminate class rank and recognize student achievement by honor groups (summa cum laude, magna cum laude, and cum laude).

The CIT Committee decided that this item was not ready for action, and that the committee that had addressed this issue would reconvene, considering the new information that was offered in this CIT committee meeting in their discussions.

Questions and issues raised by the CIT Committee:

- **Eliminate Valedictorian, Salutatorian, and Historian titles based on class rank.** The committee revisited and decided that these titles need to remain and class rank should remain. It should be noted that several students serving on this committee were concerned that dropping class rank would take away the competitiveness to do well.
- **How would speakers at the graduation ceremonies be selected if class rank was dropped?** Presently each of the high schools student speakers at graduation: including top members of the class, class officers, and speakers selected by the senior class.
- **Eliminate weighted grades or reduce the weight that they carry, thereby creating a more equitable opportunity for all students instead of just the dual enrollment, honors course students, and AP course students.** The committee felt that the purpose for the weighted additive to these courses was to challenge students to take classes with more rigor and not have lower marks effect their GPA. The committee recognized that the weighted additive was not to used as a boost in the total GPA.

- **Require students to take the AP exam in order to have any weighted credit.** This was discussed by committee members at two separate meetings. The consensus reached was that there are good reasons that some students choose not to take the test. Many students want the experience of the course, but know that they are interested in majoring in that field. It is typical of most colleges to require students to take the courses that are in their major at the institution that they attend and so having the AP credit is not to their benefit. Many colleges only accept a certain number of AP credits and students that have been heavily involved in the AP program cannot take all of their credits with them. Finally, the results of the AP tests would not arrive in time for graduation calculations for seniors and so we would only be able to require that the student sit for the exam rather than that they earn a 3, 4 or 5 on the test.
- **Do not count any credits toward GPA that have not been earned within the school district.** While this could be done, the committee considered an example of the student who as a 9th grader didn't quite realize the importance of academics and earned a GPA of 2.9. In 10th grade, the student realizes that he wants to do better and earns straight As. That student would then have a GPA of about 3.2. If as a junior, that student chose dual enrollment full time and continued through the senior year and did very well in those courses earning a 4.0 for both of those academic years, the GPA that the student would graduate with is still a 3.2. That 3.2 doesn't really reflect what kind of a scholar that student has become, but rather how the student did in 9th and 10th grade.

After considering these scenarios, the committee returned to searching for a mathematical solution.

Material and examples that have been shared and examined with the committee:

The committee reconvened and reviewed information previously discussed. Additional material was looked that was suggested by the CIT Committee.

- Present Policy 9742 (there is a 10% additive added to all dual enrollment courses – 70% or higher
- Students need at least 28 credits to graduate.
- Chart showing the number of AP and Honor courses taught in each of the four high schools
- Chart showing that there is an advantage for students enrolled in dual enrollment courses towards the student's GPA compared to students remaining in their high schools
- Charts showing different numerical examples in an attempt to find equity
- Only grades earned in the District will be used in a student's GPA when determining class rank
- Chart showing the number of opportunities to take advanced courses

- Chart showing the change in GPA using a different weighted additive for advanced courses

Numerical formulas / examples trying to find equity between dual enrollment / district courses:

- 5% additive for all dual enrollment courses
- Dual enrollment courses receiving half credit w/10% additive
- Dual enrollment courses receiving half credit w/5% additive
- Maximum 100% for all courses that receive an additive (10%)
- Maximum 100% for all courses that receive an additive (5%)
- Maximum 100% with no additives

Other options discussed as possible solutions:

- Number of opportunities per building to take advanced courses that receive an additive compared to the number of dual enrollment courses that receive the additive
- Limiting the number of advanced courses with the additive that would go towards GPA. The committee decided that this would not be fair due to the rigor of the advanced courses.
- Discussed having only those grades received by district teachers count towards class rank.
- Discussed the original recommendation presented to the school board for doing away with honors recognition of Valedictorian, Salutatorian and Historian.
- Continue to do what we are doing now and look at sharing scholastic recognition (Valedictorian, Salutatorian, and Historian)

Number of opportunities to take advanced / honors courses:

The committee reviewed the information and determined that if cyber school and distance learning are excluded that the District has an inequitable number of opportunities throughout in its high schools in the availability of advanced courses. Present policy assigns different weighted additives to these advanced courses.

Students that are enrolled in the dual enrollment program take on the average of 5 to 6 classes per semester (10 to 12 for the year) that will receive the 10% additive. Students that elect to remain in their high schools in comparison will only be able to take 4 to 6 advanced courses for the year. This is where the dual enrollment system becomes more advantageous to the student who is enrolled.

Material looked at to make this determination:

- A value was given to honors, AP, and dual enrollment courses – was based upon additive given to the course

- Based upon this information it was clear that there is a disparity in the number of opportunities to take advanced courses depending upon which academic program the student participates in
- Discussed eliminating weighted grades or reduce the weight that these advanced courses carry with them
- Dual enrollment courses are a semester in length
- Credit value for dual enrollment courses can not be changed without changing the number of credits to graduate

The best mathematical solution that can be presented is to change present policy which assigns the additional weighted value for dual enrollment courses from a 10% additive per course to a 5% additive per course reflecting the semester length of the course, but leave the full credit in place so that the students are able to earn the 28 credits required for graduation.

Recommended solutions to resolve this issue by the committee:

- Class of 2012 and Class 2013: Continue to run dual rank
- Class of 2014 and beyond: Change the additive for dual enrollment courses from 10% to 5%

Recommended Motions:

That the Board of School Directors directs administration to continue with the present Policy 9742 for the classes of 2012 and 2013 while also running rank without the dual enrollment additive.

That the Board of School Directors approve on first reading Policy 9741.