

Class rank changes recommended

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

A recommendation for changing the way HHS determines class rank for graduating seniors was presented by Principal Susan Ortner at the Tuesday, Feb. 18 school board meeting.

The recommendation rewards students who have challenged themselves by taking at least five courses/10 credits of the recommended college/AP credits in core class areas. A course covers a full year, with one credit hour for each semester.

The reward is ranking those students above those who do not meet the 10-credit minimum. It gives those higher-ranked students an opportunity to earn more college scholarships based on the new class rank rather than the current procedure.

Three criteria are being recommended for the new class rank determination. Superintendent Bret Miles cited the extensive data and review work completed by counselor Summer Maloney and Ortner.

He told the board that the purpose of this recommendation isn't to close off options; it's just a place to start discussion.

First, in the class rank recommendations: Students who have taken a minimum of five courses/10 credits in upper level core curriculum areas (including English, math including trigonometry/advanced math, science including physics, and social science) will be ranked above students who do not meet the 10-credit minimum.

Secondly, students who meet this requirement must also have a minimum unweighted GPA of 3.5. This is also the National Honor Society minimum GPA.

The third bullet point of the recommendation is that students who meet the 10-credit requirement and have between a 3.25 and 3.49 GPA will be ranked immediately below the students with 10 credits who also have 3.5 or higher GPAs.

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All other students will fall in place after that, regardless of upper level credits or not.

Returning to a weighted grade system is not part of Ortner's recommendation. The last class at HHS to use a weighted grade scale was the Class of 2008.

In the weighted grade setting, for college/AP credit classes, students received a 5.0 for an A, 4.0 for a B, 3.0 for a C and 2.0 for a D. This compares to the regular scale of 4.0 for an A, 3.0 for a B, 2.0 for a C and 1.0 for a D.

Reviewing considerable data, Ortner said it is still the recommendation to maintain the practice that has been used since the Class of 2009, where grades are not weighted.

Explaining why weighted grades aren't recommended, Ortner said the new criteria they're looking at for class ranking takes care of the concern related to students being eligible for more scholarship money based on class rank.

She added that feedback from many colleges indicates they convert weighted grades back to unweighted grades to compare students.

Ortner also pointed out that they don't want to "split hairs" based on hundredths of a point because one student has one more credit than another.

Maloney provided information detailing GPA (both weighted and unweighted), number of college/AP credits completed and class rank for the previous six graduating classes and the current senior class through first semester.

She showed the original class ranks, as well as calculations for weighted ranks and weighted ranks with those taking a minimum of 10 credits ranked first. The board noted appreciation for

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the clear data and asked for one more column citing unweighted ranks with those taking a minimum of 10 credits ranked first, to show what the proposed criteria would do to class ranks.

Ortner explained that Maloney also talked with admissions counselors at six Colorado colleges and three out-of-state schools. Additionally, Maloney reviewed information from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education related to changes to Colorado's college admissions standards policy. Those recommendations are still in the review process. They've not been decided nor has an implementation timeline been determined.

Through this study of local data, Miles said they did find that there's enough information that says the school district should be looking in to revising class ranking procedures.

Red Cross recognizes student effort

Eight HHS students in Chuck Hurst's leadership class were recognized for their assistance to the Red Cross following the September flooding in Colorado.

Red Cross coordinators Carol Brom of Sterling and Cathy Starkebaum of Haxtun attended last week's board meeting to present certificates of appreciation to the local students.

Members of the leadership class who were recognized included Zach Churchwell, Anastasia Conklin, Federica Detomas, Kelsey Kramer, Kayla Marshall, Xander Nelson, Morgan Philips and Wendy Payan.

Brom expressed her appreciation for the group of students from Holyoke, Haxtun, Peetz and Merino who were instrumental in the joint project to help Red Cross clients in recovery from the flood.

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The students from the four schools put together 54 grocery-size bags of activities and supplies. Some were taken to the Recovery Center on the Front Range, while a few were kept for the northeast region in case they're needed in the future.

Brom and Starkebaum told the school board members that they just wanted them to have an understanding of how the local students reached out beyond their own community.

Other business

In other business at the Feb. 18 meeting, the Re-1J board:

—accepted coaching resignations from Luke Thomas, head HS track, and Kia Kassman, assistant HS track, for the 2014 season.

—hired Michaela Worley as head HS girls' golf coach and Amanda Skinner as assistant HS girls'/boys' track coach for the 2014 spring seasons.

—looked at a 2014-15 draft calendar, noting that Miles will present a proposed calendar at the March 4 board meeting.

—ratified the closing of school Wednesday, Feb. 5 due to inclement weather.

—held a 50-minute executive session at the close of the meeting to review principal evaluations.

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