

Dear Parents and Guardians,

During the fall of 2018, a team of stakeholders consisting of teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, and students reviewed Palisades High School's current grading scale and class rank calculation systems. The team determined that it was necessary to create a more equitable system to better represent each student's academic performance. The team reviewed current practices for calculating a student's GPA and class rank, to ensure equity for all students. We also reviewed the current practice and acceptance of outside credits and how they are calculated in a student's GPA and class rank.

The proposed plan was presented at Educational Program & Services on January 9, 2019. Please click on this [link](#) to review the presentation which was also posted on our website as part of the meeting minutes. The highlights of the proposed plan are below my signature at the bottom of this page.

Please note that during the team's review of the GPA and class ranking systems, we researched practices of other high schools along with the practices of universities/colleges. We found high schools vary on their GPA and class rank systems. Some schools use a weighted GPA that extends to a 5.3 or 4.3, while other schools use an unweighted scale with a maximum score of a 4.0.

Palisades High School uses an unweighted GPA while the class rank is weighted and accounts for rigor of schedule. All of this critical academic information is explained to colleges on our Palisades School Profile(*), which accompanies every transcript that is sent to a college on a student's behalf. This profile is created by our Guidance Department, which explains our academic programs and performance as a school. To review the 2018-19 Palisades School Profile, please click [here](#).

We believe these changes will give a more accurate representation of a student's academic performance.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Heffernan, Jr.

Principal and Assistant to the Superintendent

(*) The school profile plays an important part in helping colleges determine each high school's programs, grading, and class ranking system. After speaking with colleges' admission offices, we learned they take into consideration the varying grading systems high schools use and have their own systems to reflect a candidate's academic performance, rigor of schedule taken, standardized assessments (SATs and ACTs), essays, involvement in extracurricular activities, and recommendations. Admissions requirements vary by college or university.

HOW IS A STUDENT'S GPA CALCULATED?

The new GPAs will better differentiate a student's true academic performance as explained below:

- One student earns an average of a 99 (A+); another student earns an average of a 91 (A-); both students currently receive a 4.0 GPA.
- Starting in the 2019-20 school year, the student with the 99 will receive a 4.0 while the student with the 91 will receive a 3.5.
- Differences within grade letter ranges will be more specific to student's academic performance.

NOTE: A majority of the new grading scale mirrors the CollegeBoard's scale. However, we have created a slight modification in the "A" range to further differentiate between A+, A, and A-, which is a similar practice for all grade ranges in the CollegeBoard's model. Please click the [link](#) to see the current GPA scale and the new GPA scale that will be implemented during the 2019-20 school year.

The following is the equation used to calculate a student's overall GPA:

A student earns an A+(4.0) in a 1.0 credit class and an A+(4.0) in a .5 credit course

Equation to calculate GPA ($4.0 \times 1 = 4$, $4.0 \times .5 = 2$; $4 + 2 = 6$; $6 \div 1.5 = 4.0$)

The student's GPA is 4.0

CALCULATION EXPLAINED: 4.0 scaled number for the letter grade earned multiplied by the number of credits assigned to the course. All points are added and then the total number is divided by the total number of credits taken.

HOW DOES THIS CHANGE AFFECT MY STUDENT'S CLASS RANK AND WHAT ARE QUALITY POINTS?

Since the GPA scale will better explain a student's academic performance, the class rank system will better represent the courses the student has taken and the grades received based on the course's rigor.

The following is the equation used to calculate a student's "quality points" for class rank:

A student earns an A+(4.0) in a 1.0 credit class that is weighted an "8"

Equation to calculate GPA ($4.0 \times 1 \times 8 = 32$ quality points)

Student earns 32 quality points for that class

CLASS RANK DETERMINATION EXPLAINED: The total number of “quality points” for courses taken during a student’s academic career starting in ninth grade are added. The total number of quality points is then ranked in order from highest to lowest within their graduating class to determine a student’s class rank.

OTHER IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT THE CHANGES:

- The weight assigned to each class is determined based upon the rigor of a course. Beginning in 2019-20, Advanced Placement courses, Scholar’s Program courses, and Dual Enrollment courses taught at Palisades High School will receive the highest weight of an 8. In an effort to equitably match rigor with weight, the high school department chairs re-calibrated course weights, which are noted in the [2019-20 Curriculum Guide](#). Specifically, please refer to pages 74-75 for a summary chart of the new class weights that will be used in 2019-20. You will notice that some courses have moved to weights of 7 while some higher level electives and technical school programs have moved from weights of 5 to 6 and 7.
- Since the number of “quality points” a student accumulates determines his/her class rank, each student will be limited to maximum of 8.25 credits a year. The 8.25 credits can be attained through a student filling his/her schedule in a given year, which is 8.0 credits and portfolio of .25, which would give this student a total of 8.25 credits/year.
- Students who are taking Online Health, Online Driver’s Ed, and/or Online Financial Literacy will be permitted to exceed the 8.25 max credits per year to fit one of these courses into their schedules.
- Please keep in mind, students can take additional credits (typically college courses taken on college campuses), and these credits may count toward their elective graduation requirements; however, they will not receive GPA or class rank points. If requested, the additional courses will appear on the student’s high school transcript.
- The new GPA and weights for determining class rank will go into effect next year. All grades, weights, and class ranks that are accumulated through the end of the 2018-19 school year DO NOT change.