

Memorandum

To: Dr. Casey Nye, Superintendent

From: Mike Raether, Senior High School Principal

Date: May 16, 2024

Re: Proposal to move to Weighted Grades

On February 20, 2024, the State of Wisconsin enacted Act 95 designed to guarantee admission to The University of Wisconsin - Madison to any student who at the end of their junior year finished in the top 5% of their class and guarantee admission to the Universities of Wisconsin for any student who finished in the top 10% of their class. Act 95 provides that the 11th grade students "shall be ranked on the basis of academic achievement and the sole criterion for ranking pupils shall be the pupil's grade point average." Wis. Stat. 118.58(2).

As a school system, we have not ranked students for many years, worried about the detrimental effects of ranking students and the inherent competition this practice encourages among the highest scoring students in the system. Instead, D.C. Everest chose years ago to implement a Laude system to recognize students who chose to take the most academic challenging courses within the system. The Laude system afforded all students in the class the opportunity to be recognized for academic achievements, not just those in the top 10%. Unfortunately, our Laude system does not align with the mandated ranking criteria.

Upon reviewing the last four years of data found at the bottom of this memo, our faculty has observed that ranking based solely on GPA yields outcomes that the faculty believe do not clearly communicate the top 5% and 10% because GPA does not factor in rigor of courses chosen. Our concern is that given the impact of ACT 95, students would actively choose not to challenge themselves in more academically rigorous courses in order to maintain a higher GPA. Therefore, a committee of faculty members at the Senior High School would like to propose the following changes to our grading system and implement weighted grades in the near future.

Weighted Grading Proposal

The committee believes that we should use the Laude system as the basis for our new plan. We believe we should recognize more academically rigorous courses with an increased GPA designation. The Laude system would be broken into two categories - Honors/Certification Courses and Advanced Placement (AP)/Dual Enrollment(DE).

The committee has created two methods of adding in rigor to a GPA - the multiplication method and the addition method. The multiplication method would take the traditional GPA assignment and multiply it by a consistent factor throughout. The benefit of the multiplication method is that the impact on the overall GPA is greater the higher the grade is that the student is receiving, effectively working as a sliding scale based on how well the student is doing. The proposed multiplication methods are listed in the chart below:

Multiplication method 1 (1.25 factor)

Grade Designation	Current DCE Scale	Honors/Certification Scale	AP/DE Scale
A	4.0	4.5	5
AB	3.5	3.94	4.38
B	3	3.38	3.75
BC	2.5	2.8	3.13
C	2	2.25	2.5
D	1	1.13	1.25
F	0	0	0

Multiplication method 2 (1.5 factor)

Grade Designation	Current DCE Scale	Honors/Certification Scale	AP/DE Scale
A	4.0	5	6
AB	3.5	4.375	5.25
B	3	3.75	4.5
BC	2.5	3.125	3.75
C	2	2.5	3
D	1	1.25	1.5
F	0	0	0

The second option is known as the addition method. The addition method adds a factor of .5 or .6 to each step in the scale as illustrated below:

Addition method 1 (.5 addition)

Grade Designation	Current DCE Scale	Honors/Certification Scale	AP/DE Scale
A	4.0	4.5	5.0
AB	3.5	4.0	4.5
B	3	3.5	4.0
BC	2.5	3.0	3.5
C	2	2.0	3.0

D	1	1.5	2.0
F	0	0	0

Addition method 2 (.6 addition)

Grade Designation	Current DCE Scale	Honors/Certification Scale	AP/DE Scale
A	4.0	4.6	5.2
AB	3.5	4.1	4.7
B	3	3.6	4.2
BC	2.5	3.1	3.7
C	2	2.6	3.2
D	1	1.6	2.2
F	0	0	0

All four scales were compared to the last few years of student data. All four accomplish the goal of ranking students when factoring in GPA and rigor. In the final conclusion all four would place students more accurately than we currently see by GPA alone. The comparison of the four proposals is listed below:

Four Method Comparison

Grade Designation	<i>Multiplication method 2 (1.25 factor)</i>	<i>Multiplication method 2 (1.5 factor)</i>	<i>Addition method 1 (.5 addition)</i>	<i>Addition method 2 (.6 addition)</i>
A in AP/DE	5	6	5.0	5.2
AB in AP/DE	4.38	5.25	4.5	4.7
A in H/C	4.5	5	4.5	4.6
B in AP/DE	3.75	4.5	4.0	4.2
AB in H/C	3.94	4.375	4.0	4.1
A in REG	4	4	4.0	4
BC in AP/DE	3.13	3.75	3.5	3.7
B in H/C	3.38	3.75	3.5	3.6
AB in Reg	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
BC in H/C	2.8	3.125	3.0	3.1

C in AP/DE	2.5	3	3.0	3.2
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Next Steps

In the Fall, a student committee will be established composed of a cross-section of sophomore students at the Senior High School and a group of students from the Junior High School to review the potential transition to a weighted grading system. Feedback received from those students will be considered and our plan will be adjusted accordingly.

Subsequent to this feedback process, communication will be sent out to families of eighth, ninth, and tenth grade students notifying them of the intention to move to a weighted grading system. Families will be invited to an open house to field comments and questions. This meeting should occur in early October. Following feedback from parents we will make necessary adjustments to our plan and bring it back to the School Board for consideration and approval.

An additional factor to be considered is the timeline for implementation of this proposal. The recommendation put forth by the High School team is to initiate the weighted grading system at the onset of the 2025-2026 academic year. This timeline is advocated to uphold fairness, as the enactment of ACT 95 occurred after students had already finalized their course selections for the 2024-2025 school year. Altering the criteria for academic distinctions subsequent to students' course selection may be perceived as changing the rules in the middle of the game. Furthermore, the proposed timeline allows for stakeholder engagement and feedback collection prior to implementation.

Finally, although all four proposals are being considered, after discussing this information with our high school committee the general consensus at this time is to lean to one of the addition methods. Feedback from students and parents will be crucial in determining the final decision.

Appendix: Comparison of the last 4 years of data based on Ranking

2023-2024

Rank	CGPA (#1)	Laude (#2)	Laude Distinction	ACT Comp (#3)
1	4.0	49	Summa	35
2	4.0	48	Summa	35
3	4.0	38	Summa	34
4	4.0	19	Cum	23
5	4.0	8	-----	27
6	3.994	15	Cum	18
7	3.989	48	Summa	34
8	3.982	16	Cum	31
9	3.980	42	Summa	35
10	3.979	38	Summa	28
11	3.979	32	Magna	26
12	3.977	40	Summa	35
13	3.976	46	Summa	33
14	3.967	48	Summa	35
15	3.967	23	Cum	26
16	3.965	25	Magna	24
17	3.958	11	-----	26
18	3.947	14	-----	22
19	3.946	35	Summa	32
20	3.946	23	Cum	25
21	3.944	35	Summa	30
22	3.944	46	Summa	27
23	3.944	30	Magna	29
24	3.943	47	Summa	31
25	3.94	5	-----	21
26	3.938	50	Summa	n/a
27	3.933	35	Summa	22
28	3.926	28	Magna	22
29	3.926	15	Cum	20
30	3.924	48	Summa	33
31	3.92	21	Cum	23
32	3.92	27	Magna	24
33	3.915	43	Summa	33
34	3.913	19	Cum	33



2022-2023

Rank	CGPA (#1)	Laude (#2)	Laude Distinction	ACT Comp (#3)
1	4.0	47	Summa	35
2	4.0	47	Summa	34
3	4.0	45	Summa	28
4	4.0	36	Summa	32
5	4.0	25	Magna	28
6	4.0	23	Cum	23
7	4.0	20	Cum	23
8	3.989	47	Summa	34
9	3.989	45	Summa	25
10	3.989	36	Summa	30
11	3.989	21	Cum	26
12	3.989	20	Cum	23
13	3.979	31	Magna	28
14	3.979	20	Cum	23
15	3.978	45	Summa	32
16	3.976	15	Cum	26
17	3.969	15	Cum	23
18	3.968	51	Summa	35
19	3.968	49	Summa	34
20	3.968	16	Cum	22
21	3.967	14	---	20
22	3.966	11	---	22
23	3.957	27	Magna	23
24	3.956	18	Cum	24
25	3.956	39	Summa	31
26	3.955	40	Summa	32
27	3.946	28	Magna	30
28	3.939	23	Cum	22
29	3.933	45	Summa	33
30	3.927	30	Cum	26
31	3.924	40	Magna	24
32	3.924	26	Cum	21
33	3.915	45	Summa	31
34	3.912	30	Magna	22

2021-2022

Rank	CGPA (#1)	Laude (#3)	Laude Distinction	ACT Comp (#2)
1	3.99	35	Summa	30
2	3.99	26	Magna	23
3	3.978	50	Summa	33
4	3.978	46	Summa	31
5	3.969	25	Magna	24
7	3.967	30	Magna	29
6	3.967	43	Summa	33
8	3.959	28	Magna	28
10	3.957	22	Cum	19
9	3.957	33	Magna	31
11	3.948	22	Cum	19
12	3.947	23	Cum	20
13	3.946	4	---	23
14	3.946	39	Summa	29
15	3.935	44	Summa	31
16	3.93	19	Cum	22
17	3.922	43	Summa	31
18	3.919	36	Summa	30
19	3.909	22	Cum	19
20	3.904	27	Magna	30
21	3.902	27	Magna	23
22	3.902	48	Summa	28
23	3.898	12	---	28
24	3.894	19	Cum	18
25	3.884	45	Summa	34
26	3.883	25	Magna	27
27	3.883	40	Magna	23
28	3.875	41	Summa	26
29	3.875	21	Cum	24
30	3.872	44	Summa	32
31	3.87	34	Magna	32
32	3.87	26	Cum	21
33	3.864	26	Magna	25
34	3.86	38	Summa	31

2020-2021

Rank	CGPA (#1)	Laude (#3)	Laude Distinction	ACT (#2)
1	4.0	44	Summa	36
2	4.0	39	Summa	35
3	4.0	42/44	Summa	34
4	4.0	50	Summa	33
5	4.0	29	Magna	33
6	4.0	26	Magna	27
7	4.0	29	Magna	26
8	4.0	7/11	---	26
9	4.0	28	Magna	25
10	3.990	28	Summa	27
11	3.989	32	Magna	24
12	3.979	37	Summa	26
13	3.967	30	Magna	28
14	3.967	14	---	28
15	3.935	43/45	Summa	32
16	3.933	33	Magna	34
17	3.924	31	Magna	29
18	3.909	36	Summa	27
19	3.902	39	Summa	29
20	3.895	35/36	Summa	32
21	3.893	34	Magna	25
22	3.893	34	Magna	27
23	3.891	33	Magna	29
24	3.884	51	Summa	27
25	3.883	32	Magna	22
26	3.883	35	Summa	19
27	3.88	50	Summa	33
28	3.875	17	Cum	29
29	3.875	27	Summa	25
30	3.87	36	Summa	25
31	3.087	37	Summa	31
32	3.862	17	Cum	20
33	3.836	31	Magna	25
34	3.83	47	Summa	33