

The Board of Education strongly supports academic excellence in our high schools. In recognition of high academic achievement, this policy will designate the selection of honor students as well as Valedictorian, Salutatorian, and Vocational Honor Student at the end of the first semester of the senior year beginning with the 2008-2009 school year.

Class rankings are one method of measuring academic performance. The board also recognizes other means of evaluating student achievement, including grade point average, courses completed, rigorousness of curriculum, results of tests and assessments, and recommendation letters.

High school principals shall provide for the compilation of class rankings to be listed on student transcripts and may make class rank information available periodically to students and their parents or guardians and to other institutions at the request of the student or the student's parent or guardian. While high school principals may designate a valedictorian and salutatorian, the board encourages principals, with input from teachers, parents and students, to develop alternative or additional means of recognizing academic achievement.

Principals shall ensure that class ranking is computed in a fair and consistent manner as provided in State Board of Education Policy GCS-L-004. The superintendent and principal shall ensure that students and parents receive adequate notice as to how class rank is calculated and shall provide written procedures on how students with equal grades, or grades that may be perceived as equal, will be treated. Nothing in this policy provides a student with any legal entitlement to a particular class rank or title. Although the student grievance procedure provided in policy 1740/4010, Student and Parent Grievance Procedure, may be utilized to resolve disputes formally, the board encourages parents, students and principals to reach a resolution informally on any matters related to class rank.

A. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

1. Students meeting the requirements for the North Carolina Scholars Program with a cumulative weighted numeric average GPA of 4.0 or greater will graduate "With Superior Honors."
2. Students with a cumulative weighted numeric average ranging from 3.5 to 3.99 will graduate "With Honors." These students do not have to be NC Scholars.
3. Weighted GPAs will be used to designate junior marshals. Each high school will determine the number needed. Junior Marshalls will be determined at the end of the first semester of the junior year.

B METHOD OF SELECTION

The Valedictorian, Salutatorian and Vocational Honor Student shall be selected according to the following criteria.

The Valedictorian shall be the student who has obtained the highest weighted grade point average. The Salutatorian shall be the student who has obtained the second highest weighted grade point average.

The Vocational Honor Student shall have completed four (4) Career Technical Education (CTE) credits with one being an upper level or advanced course. The student will have the highest GPA, but must have a minimum cumulative un-weighted GPA of 3.0.

1. The final semester grades beginning with the 9th grade year and terminating on the last school day of the 1st semester of the 12th grade year will be used to determine students' cumulative averages.

2. The principal or his/her designee shall calculate grades according to the State Reporting System Program. If a student has reason to believe that there is a discrepancy between his/her computation and that of the principal, it is the student's responsibility to request validation of the computation. Class ranking will be calculated at the end of each semester and during the first ten days of school each year.

3. The cumulative average will be computed to four places to the right of the decimal.

4. Students transferring to a Cherokee County high school from a school where numeric grades are given will have those grades converted to letter grades as follows:

(a) Grade point average calculations are based upon standardization of academic course levels, weighting of course grades, and grading scales.

(b) Academic course levels and associated weights are defined as follows:

- a. Standard courses – Course content, pace and academic rigor follow standards specified by the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCoS). Standard courses provide credit toward a high school diploma and require the end-of-course test for those courses identified as such in the NC accountability program. Quality points for the GPA calculation are assigned according to the standard 4.0 scale and receive no additional quality points.
- b. Honors courses - Course content, pace and academic rigor place high expectations on the student, demanding greater independence and responsibility. Such courses are more challenging than standard level courses and are distinguished by a difference in the depth and scope of work required to address the NCSCoS. These courses provide credit toward a high school diploma and require the end-of-course test for those courses identified as such in the NC accountability program. An honors review process shall be followed, as outlined in the latest edition of the North Carolina Honors Course Implementation Guide. The state course weighting system awards the equivalent of one (1) quality point to the grade earned in Honors courses. Effective with the freshman class of 2015-16, the weighting for Honors courses shall be one-half (.5) of a quality point.
- c. Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate (AP/IB) courses - Course content, pace and academic rigor are considered college-level as determined by the College Board or the International Baccalaureate (IB) program and are designed to enable students to earn high scores on the AP or IB test, potentially leading to college credit. These courses provide credit toward a high school

diploma and require an EOC in cases where the AP/IB course is the first course taken by a student in a subject where an EOC is required by the NC accountability program. The state weighting system awards the equivalent of two (2) quality points to the grade earned in an AP/IB course. Effective with the freshman class of 2015-16, the weight for AP/IB courses shall be one (1) quality point.

- d. College courses (“dual enrollment”) - Course content, pace and academic rigor are, by definition, college-level for these courses. College courses, which may be delivered by a community college, public university or private college or university, provide credit toward a high school diploma and may satisfy a graduation requirement or provide an elective course credit. The state weighting system adds the equivalent of one (1) quality point to the grade earned in community college courses included on the most recent Comprehensive Articulation Agreement Transfer List, and for courses taught at four-year universities and colleges.
 - e. Beginning with the 2014-15 school year, the superintendent shall provide opportunities for students in grades 9 through 12 to earn course credit by demonstrating mastery of course material without first completing the regular period of classroom instruction in the course. Students in grades 6 through 8 may earn credit by demonstrated mastery for high school courses offered in middle school. To earn credit by demonstrated mastery, students must demonstrate a deep understanding of the content standards and application of knowledge through a multi-phase assessment, in accordance with standards established by the State Board of Education and any additional standards established by the superintendent.
- (c) Courses eligible for weights include higher-level high school courses that fall into one of the following categories:
- a. Honors sections of standard-level academic courses, including NC Virtual Public School courses and other on-line courses, that are in accordance with the philosophy, rubric, procedures, guidelines, and standards for curriculum, instruction, and assessment as described in the North Carolina Honors Course Implementation Guide. Such courses are assigned additional quality points in accordance with section 3.1.2 above; it is not necessary to offer a standard level of a course to offer an honors level.
 - b. Pre-calculus, non-AP/IB calculus, mathematics courses beyond the level of calculus, and world language courses beyond the second-year level are considered inherently advanced and are assigned Honors-level weighting in accordance with section 3.1.2 above.
 - c. Arts education courses meeting the standards for proficient and advanced dance, music, theatre arts, and visual arts are assigned Honors-level weighting in accordance with section 3.1.2 above.
 - d. Project Lead the Way courses approved for college credit are assigned college-

level weighting in accordance with section 3.1.4 above.

5. Students eligible for Valedictorian, Salutatorian or Vocational Honors must complete four consecutive semesters with that graduating class, at that high school, by the time of graduation.
6. The Valedictorian, Salutatorian, and Vocational Honors student will be invited to speak at graduation.
7. Should two or more students considered for Valedictorian, Salutatorian, or Vocational Honors have the same weighted grade point average, then the following tie-breaker process will be employed.
 - a. The student with the highest number of credits earned in grades 9-12 shall be selected as Valedictorian or Salutatorian.
 - b. If there are an equal number of credits earned, then the student with the highest composite ACT score shall be selected. If one or more students completed more than one ACT, the highest composite test score will be counted.
 - c. If a tie still exists, the honor will be shared by the two students.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-47, -81, -276, -288; 116-11(10a); State Board of Education Policy GCS-L-004

Cross References: Parental Involvement (policy 1310/4002), Student and Parent Grievance Procedure (policy 1740/4010), Goals and Objectives of the Educational Program (policy 3000), Recognizing Excellence (policy 3440), Policy 3420 Student Promotion and Accountability, Policy 3460, Graduation Requirements.

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