Laude System vs. Class Rank

Little Wolf Jr/Sr High School

Class Rank - What is it?

- Class rank is a statistic that is derived by comparing students' GPAs to the thousandth of a point. *Ex: 3.338 > 3.335*
- Class rank is usually referred to by percent or percentile. *Ex: "In the top 10%", "In the top 25%", "In the top 50%"*
- LWHS currently reports class rank on student transcripts.

Class Rank as a Statistic

- Class rank could be a very valid statistic *IF* every student took the same set of classes with the same set of teachers.
- The validity of using class rank to compare students among various school districts is nonexistent.

Impact on Students

- For some students, the pressure for a high class rank can result in:
  - Avoidance of challenging classes.
  - Excessive competition with classmates.
  - Unwillingness to take academic and intellectual risks.
  - Loss of scholarship, due to rank in class.
  - Parental pressure to “dumb down” in order to get scholarships e.g., AES scholarship

Where is the top?

- In a small school it is very difficult to be in the top 15% of your class.
  - Average class size: 62
  - Average number of students in top 15%: 9
- In a high achieving class, this can mean high GPA cut-off for top 15%.
- Relatively small differences in GPAs can result in relatively large differences in class rank.

Why consider dropping class rank?

- The validity of class rank as a statistic is extremely questionable.
- The pressure for class rank may have negative effects on student behavior.
- Stress caused by class rank is not under school's control.
- Class rank may even hurt students for college admissions.
- Class rank is NOT is as important as class choice for most university admissions due to grade inflation.

Reduced Use of Class Rank

- Not reporting class rank is becoming more common:

Whitefish Bay	Verona	Fennimore
Madison West	Marshall	Wilmot Union HS
Waunakee	Neenah	Shorewood
Edgewood	Kimberly	Kiel
Plymouth	Middleton	Wisconsin Dells
Amery	Rice Lake	East Troy
Richland Center	Badger High School	Elkhorn

National Trend

- Reporting class rank is not actually “standard” practice across the nation.
- According to the *National Association for College Admission Counseling*, 55% of high schools do not report rank.

Effect on College Admissions

- While class rank is only one element of college admissions, without it the other elements increase in importance:
  - Rigor of courses taken.
  - Strength of grades in relation to rigor.
  - College admissions test scores (ACT/SAT).
  - Activities
  - Recommendations
  - Essays
- School districts that eliminated class rank have found that more of their students were admitted to competitive and highly selective colleges.

Laude System - What is it?

- A tiered system that recognizes students for the rigor of their academic program as well as their success in the program:
  - Summa Cum Laude: Highest Honor
  - Magna Cum Laude: Great Honor
  - Cum Laude: Honor

Laude System - What is it?

- Score derived from multiplying cumulative GPA by number of honor points earned from courses taken.
- System that motivates students to challenge themselves academically.
- System to give control to students through honor point attainment rather than rankings.

Laude System

What does it look like at LWHS?

Courses that earn honors points:

- KSCADE – College Credit Course(s) 1
- Youth Options Course(s).....1
- AP Courses 1.5
- CAPP English 101.....1
- English 11 AS (Grade B or better of FVTC scale)... 0.5
- Written Communication AS (Grade B or better of FVTC scale)..... 0.5
- AP US History..... 1.5
- Psychology AS (Grade B or better of FVTC scale)....1
- Economics 1
- Physics.....1
- Advanced Physics 1
- Human Biology.....1
- Biology 2 1
- AP Calculus 1.5
- Pre Calc/Trigonometry 1
- Statistics.....1
- Animal Science TC 1
- Microsoft Applications TC.....1
- Animation & Game Design 1
- Accounting 1 1
- Accounting 2 1
- Spanish 3 1
- Spanish 4 1
- Senior Art (3+ Art credits & 2+ years Art Team).....1
- Music (Band and/or Chorus—3+years and 1st on Class A Solo & Ensemble).....1
- Music Composition.....1

Honors Points	G.P.A. 4.0	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.4
25	100	97.5	95	92.5	90	87.5	85
24	96	93.6	91.2	88.8	86.4	84	81.6
23	92	89.7	87.4	85.1	82.8	80.5	78.2
22	88	85.8	83.6	81.4	79.2	77	74.8
21	84	81.9	79.8	77.7	75.6	73.5	71.4
20	80	78	76	74	72	70	68
19	76	74.1	72.2	70.3	68.4	66.5	64.6
18	72	70.2	68.4	66.6	64.8	63	61.2
17	68	66.3	64.6	62.9	61.2	59.5	57.8
16	64	62.4	60.8	59.2	57.6	56	54.4
15	60	58.5	57	55.5	54	52.5	51
14	56	54.6	53.2	51.8	50.4	49	47.6
13	52	50.7	49.4	48.1	46.8	45.5	44.2
12	48	46.8	45.6	44.4	43.2	42	40.8
11	44	42.9	41.8	40.7	39.6	38.5	37.4
10	40	39	38	37	36	35	34
9	36	35.1	34.2				

Summa Cum Laude
76.01+ Laude Points

Magna Cum Laude
56.01 – 76 Laude Points

Cum Laude
34 – 56 Laude Points

Example Laude Calculation

- Student took 11 courses with honor points.
  - 1 class worth 1.5 honor points.
  - 6 classes worth 1 honor points.
  - 4 classes worth 0.5 honor points.
  - GPA of 3.825
- Laude Score = Honor Points x GPA
  - Laude Score: 9.5 x 3.825 = 36.3375
- Graduate Cum Laude (with Honor)

Student Examples

Student 1

- GPA: 3.225
- Laude Classes: 13 worth 14 honor points.
- Laude Score: 45.15

Student 2

- GPA: 4.0
- Laude Classes: 6 worth 8 honor points.
- Laude Score: 32

- Cum Laude (with Honor)

- No Honors

Benefits of Laude System

- Emphasizes student competition against other schools' students, <u>not</u> LWHS students.
- Removes risk of taking the most rigorous courses for fear of class rank impact.
- Reduces mathematical GPA game among students.
- Doesn't penalize our students with GPAs but only moderate class rank on college applications.
- Motivates students to challenge themselves academically.

Opinions on Class Rank

- "Class rank is the worst statistic in education."

  --Ken O'Connor, Educational Consultant

- "Class rank encourages cutthroat competition, cheating and choosing classes based on GPA rather than on interest, not to mention directly pitting students against one another. Abolishing class rank sends the message that schools are interested in students as individuals rather than as compared to their classmates."

  --Alexandra Robbins, in The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids (2006)