

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MAHOMET-SEYMOUR COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO.3  
Mahomet, Illinois**

Agenda Item No.: 11.B.4.  
Date: November 16, 2020  
Presented by: Chad Benedict and Colleen Schultz

**ACTION**

**TOPIC:**

Changes in the Academic Recognition Program at Mahomet-Seymour High School  
Proposed Board Policy 6:335, reflecting those changes

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Dr. Schultz brought proposed Board Policy 6:335 to the August 17, 2020 Board of Education meeting. At that time, Mr. Benedict had already begun discussions with the MSHS staff about moving away from class rank, a dialog that commenced prior to the COVID 19 pandemic.

After discussion on August 17, 2020, the decision was made to table proposed Board Policy 6:335 to the November 16, 2020 Board of Education meeting, allowing time for Mr. Benedict and his staff to further pursue changes in Academic Recognition that were needed due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Mr. Benedict and Mr. Bailey hosted a virtual meeting for MSHS parents on November 10, 2020 to answer questions and respond to comments about these changes.

Mr. Benedict, Mr. Lybarger, Dr. Schultz and the Division Chairs at MSHS have worked very hard in conducting research about other Illinois high schools' policies, as well as college entrance requirements, and have dedicated much time to engage in collaborative and problem-solving discussions. A conversation originally focused on eliminating class rank evolved into how best help and support our students through the pandemic as their academic records were impacted. All are to be commended—thank you for your work!

The presentation and proposed Board Policy 6:335 reflect that work and those changes.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION:**

The Superintendent recommends the Board approves Board Policy 6:335 and the changes to the Academic Recognition Program at Mahomet-Seymour High School.

## **Proposed Board Policy 6:330**

### **Instruction**

#### **Achievement and Awards**

##### **Grade Point Average and Honors**

The Superintendent and High School Principal shall maintain a uniform process at the high school to calculate, on at least a yearly basis, each student's grade point average as well as a system of Honors for each class. Students will not be ranked. Criteria for Honors will be absolute and not comparative.

##### **Awards and Honors**

The Superintendent and High School Principal shall maintain a uniform process for presenting awards and honors for outstanding scholarship, achievement, and/or distinguished service in school activities in such a way as to minimize bias and promote fairness.

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This policy will go into effect starting with the class of 2022.

With this policy vote, the Board approves an exception for the classes of 2022 and 2023 permitting the criteria for Honors to include both absolute and comparative standards.

For the class of 2025 and after, the criteria for each level of honors will be announced before the first day of class of students' freshman year. The criteria will not change during students' typical four year high school duration except with a change approved by the Board.

# Mahomet-Seymour High School

## Academic Recognition Plan

### Overview

Prior to the pandemic during the 2019-2020 school year, MSHS administration and division heads began researching the possibility of removing class rank for the class of 2025 and all successive classes. After researching the topic, a proposal was written. The goal of this proposal was to recognize a student's mastery/understanding of content as opposed to relative academic standing among peers.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted students in many ways. One of the challenges is how to maintain an equitable system of class rank. Per the guidelines of the Illinois State Board of Education, the Spring semester of the 2019-2020 school year saw students receive either a pass or a fail as a grade for their classes. Since MSHS uses a weighted grading system to determine GPA and class rank, students who took weighted classes did not receive the "points" that contribute to GPA, thus affecting their overall class rank.

Given the circumstances of the situation and previous work done during the 2019-2020 school year, consideration should be made to make a more equitable recognition plan for current, and future, MSHS students.

#### Graduating Classes

2021 - No Changes - current Recognition Plan will be used

2022 - Modified Honors Recognition

2023 - Modified Honors Recognition

2024 - Honors Recognition and all successive classes

## Thoughts to Consider about Class Rank

- ⇒ Students experience unnecessary stress.
- ⇒ Use of class rank by college and university admissions departments has dropped significantly.
- ⇒ College and career readiness is different for every student. Elimination of class rank would give students the freedom to take courses based on their interests without the worry of GPA impacting class rank.
- ⇒ Class rank would be tracked for scholarship purposes only. Individual rank would be released on a case by case basis.

## Modified Honors Recognition System - Class of 2022 and 2023

*The Modified Honors System is a blend of the previous recognition plan and the proposed new one starting with the class of 2024.*

### ⇒ Honors

Students whose Cumulative GPA is 3.9 to 4.34 or places them in the 21% - 30% of their class

### ⇒ High Honors

Students whose Cumulative GPA is 4.35 to 4.74 or places them in the top 11% - 20% of their class

### ⇒ Highest Honors

Students whose Cumulative GPA is 4.75 or higher or places them in the to 10% of their class

⇒ Qualifying students would have colored chords to wear during the graduation ceremony.

## Honors Recognition System - Class of 2024 and all successive classes

*The Honors System would recognize students for the cumulative GPA.*

### ⇒ Honors

Students whose Cumulative GPA is 3.9 to 4.34

### ⇒ High Honors

Students whose Cumulative GPA is 4.35 to 4.74

### ⇒ Highest Honors

Students whose Cumulative GPA is 4.75 or higher

⇒ Qualifying students would have colored chords to wear during the graduation ceremony.

## Commencement Speeches

- ⇒ A committee made up of administration, counselors, and speech teachers will solicit nominations for students wishing to give a commencement speech.
- ⇒ Students send in a speech outline and summary for the committee to review. Finalists are selected by the committee.
- ⇒ Finalists present their speech to the committee and Commencement Speakers are chosen from the group of Finalists. A rubric will be used that parallels rubrics used in speech class.