



# Skaneateles Central School District

*Excellence in Education*

**To:** SCSD Board of Education  
**From:** Ken Slentz, Superintendent  
**Date:** 17 March, 2015

**Re:** Weighting of high school courses and academic ranking of SCSD students

**Purpose of Recommendation:** To provide the Board with an opportunity to further discuss the current system of weighting and ranking at SCSD and to consider action on changes to the system in line with District mission and goals as well as with contemporary research.

**Background of Recommendation:** In the spring of 2014, the high school administration and counseling department met with faculty and the School Improvement Team (SIT) to discuss the possibility of moving in a different direction relative to the weighting and ranking system currently in place. Subsequent meetings with faculty, high school PTC, community, and SIT took place through the fall and winter of 2014 with a discussion item being presented to the Board in February, 2015. During the course of the meetings, administration and counselors presented different models for consideration and utilized questions asked by faculty members, Board members, parents and students to further research the value of each model. As an important component of the research, school districts around New York State were contacted to see how they currently function relative to weighting and ranking and why they have their respective current policies in place. While there remains a variety of policy choices amongst school districts, there are a cadre of similar districts to SCSD that have moved away from weighting and a very large number who have discontinued ranking. Further, data provided by college admissions advisors demonstrates that the value of weighted classes is no longer a consideration by colleges and universities in most cases and that it is the rigor of a student's course selection and their achievement in those courses that makes the difference when being considered for admission. Lastly, counselors contacted colleges and universities to affirm what our peer districts and college admissions advisors were claiming. These findings and supporting research for this project can be found in attachment A.

**A. Decisions to be made:**

1. Should the District discontinue the current course weighting system effective July 1, 2015 and implement a new system wherein no courses are weighted and all student Grade Point Averages are recalculated based on this system?
2. Should the District discontinue the current course ranking system effective July 1,

2015 and implement a system wherein rank of students is no longer calculated and used for academic recognition?

**B. Recommendation:**

1. Administration recommends that the Board act to discontinue additional weighting of current courses such that all SCSD courses are weighted at 1.0 effective July 1, 2015.
2. Administration recommends that the Board act to discontinue the ranking of students for academic recognition effective July 1, 2015 with the following provisos:
  - i. Valedictorian and Salutatorian status will remain for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school year.
  - ii. An ad hoc committee will be established consisting of parents, students, alumni, faculty, staff, and administration to develop a criterion-based recognition system that will be recommended to the Superintendent for review with the Board by fall, 2015.

**C. Rationale –**

1. Research via college admissions counselors and the colleges and universities on the value of weighting no longer supports the continuation of our current weighting practice.
2. Peer District practices under a system of no weighting have had a positive impact on school culture as well as student course selection.
3. Policy decisions at the State level (the 4+1 Graduation Pathways Model) as well as contemporary research on the value and impact of exposure to music, art, foreign language and career and technical education requires the District to provide and encourage greater access to high rigor courses across the content areas for all students.
4. SCSD supports healthy competition amongst our student body, but believes that competing to attain recognition as measured by a criterion-based system is much healthier than a system in which students are ranked and attain recognition as measured against one another.

**D. Timeline –**

1. If the recommendations are accepted, administration and counselors will immediately begin communication with students, parents and community about the resulting changes. Administration and counseling will also begin the process to establish an ad hoc committee which will be charged with the development of a criterion-based recognition system by fall, 2015.