



# Geneseo High School



October 2014

Many people enjoy the consistency and reliability of knowing that some things will never change very much. Then there are others who are always looking to improve or tinker with things; they are never quite satisfied with the status quo. This past June, I joined the District #228 administrative team in a workshop for leaders about change and how to be a part of a change initiative. We began by looking at the different types of

tion to the School Board, if needed, about any changes or revisions in how we do things regarding class rank.

We are at the very early stages of this process and up until this point have been simply creating awareness and introducing the topic for consideration and discussion. I have spoken to the high school BLT, school counselors, the student welfare and advisory committee, the student council, and the GHS teaching staff about the issues I would like to study.

Future plans to get stakeholder feedback include an additional staff meeting for Q & A, use of the District Facebook page to create awareness of the issue and advertise the dates/times of meetings to discuss the issue, a student forum for Q & A, small group meetings with the top five students in each class, a survey of School Board members' opinions about the issue, and another informational article in the Republic. The date for the parent forum is October 8 at 7:00 p.m. in the GHS library. The date for the student forum is October 9th during the ASAP period.



change, and then we were prompted to think about a change initiative that we might like to be involved in. I decided to look at the issue of class rank and the impact it has on our students' behavior, college applications, and graduation recognition.

At this point, I do not have a preferred end result in mind for this change initiative process. My initial goal is to get as much stakeholder feedback as possible about the issue and then work with the GHS Building Leadership Team (BLT) to make a recommenda-

The main behavioral issue when it comes to students and class rank is with the choosing of classes. There are some students who are so concerned with their GPA that they cannot see the larger picture regarding taking rigor-

ous classes to prepare themselves for future challenges. Ideally, the classes that students choose will be the ones that will help them to become college and career ready, classes that they have an interest in and are excited about, or classes that will prepare them for the working world.

Yale University asks high school students to self-reflect upon six questions as they create their four-year plan. Those questions are: Am I taking a well-balanced academic program that will provide me with a good foundation for college? Am I prepared to take college-level math, writing, and science courses? Do I feel challenged by the courses that I am taking? Are my courses among the more rigorous ones available to me at my school? Am I seeking challenge or avoiding it? Overall, is my four-year high school program among the most challenging programs available at my school? Because of the fear of taking a class that might drop their GPA and class rank, many students avoid challenges instead of seeking them out. With no class rank to worry about, hopefully, more students will seek out a more rigorous and challenging schedule. We want students to focus on learning, not on grades.

Many colleges have moved away from strictly using class rank as their main method for determining admission, but there are still a few who use it. A recent study by the National Association for College Admission Counseling found that only 23 percent of the colleges it polled said class rank was of “considerable importance” in their decisions — compared with 42 percent in 1993. When colleges put a high value on class rank for admission purposes, they do not look at the “whole student”, they just look at one factor.

This puts students who are very active in extra-curricular activities, community service, and other types of activities at a disadvantage.

Most prestigious high schools have stopped sharing class rank with colleges. Currently, 40% of American high schools are not reporting class rank. An excellent student might have a GPA of 3.91 and an ACT score of 30 but a rank of 23; this would not have put that student even in the top 10% of the GHS class of 2014. Often it is only hundredths of a point that separate the number ten student from the twentieth ranked student. It is great to be listed in the top ten, but not so great being listed as number eleven or twelve.

There are a number of high schools that have switched from recognizing just a small group of graduating seniors with the Valedictorian/Salutatorian (Val/Sal) system to using the Latin system and recognizing a larger number of students. Instead of just recognizing the top two students and maybe the top ten percent, schools have created an attainment line, and everyone who hits that target gets recognized. For example, all students with a GPA of 3.50 – 3.74 are recognized as “Cum Laude”, those students with a GPA of 3.75 – 3.89 are recognized as “Magna Cum Laude”, and those students with a GPA of 3.90 and up are recognized as Summa Cum Laude.” In the GHS class of 2014, there was one Valedictorian, one Salutatorian, and twenty-two students who were considered to be in the top ten percent. That is a total of twenty-four students who were recognized for their academic achievement. If the Latin system had been used, there would have been twenty-nine students recognized as Cum Laude, sixteen recognized as Magna Cum Laude, and

seventeen recognized as Suma Cum Laude; sixty-two students recognized instead of twenty-four students.

What about the other side? What about the negatives of changing and moving away from publishing class rank and the traditional Val/Sal system? Here are some of the opinions that I have found. The real world has competition; this prepares students for what they will face after high school. Ranking students communicates to students what they should be prepared to handle in their future education; it weeds out those students who are not ready for elite universities. Using the Val/Sal and class rank are traditions, and any change will go against what has always been done. GHS has had a Valedictorian for many years, and this is a tradition that has meaning to many different people. If it is not broken, why try to fix it? Being the Val/Sal is a goal and a motivation for the highest performing students. Many students want to be #1, in the Top 10, or Top 10%.

Additional arguments I have heard regarding retaining the Val/Sal system and class rank include the following thoughts. Many students want and need a goal to push themselves to do their very best, and having a specific goal like being the Val/Sal gives them that target. Some of the most prestigious universities still like having class rank as a means to choose their students. Although there are not a lot of GHS students wanting to get into those elite academic institutions, there are still a few who do, and not having a specific class rank may hurt their chances of being admitted. For those students who are not very good at taking high stakes tests like the ACT and SAT, if class rank is eliminated, the high stakes test may be the only other

thing that a college uses to decide whether or not to admit those students.

### **Student Spotlights:**

- Congratulations to the following students for being recognized as Commended Scholars in the 2015 National Merit Scholarship Program. Those students are: Davis Chenoweth, Kendra Fobert, and Danielle Townsend.
- Genna Wethington placed 3rd in the FFA State Horse Evaluation Reasons contest.
- The Volleyball team helped raise money for the Geneseo Humane Society by helping with a car wash on September 27.
- Monica Lieving was a Moline Dispatch Pacesetter last month.

### **Classroom Happenings:**

- The GHS Key Club is selling handmade leather and coconut shell bracelets, better known as Yuda Bands. The Key Club's goal is to sponsor two Guatemalan students to attend a private school in Guatemala for one year. Beginning on September 29, Key Club will be selling Yuda Bands for \$7 each. The sale of 175 bands will support one student's education for a full year! Our goal is to sell at least 350 bands by October 10. Yuda Bands can be purchased outside of the high school office Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of each week and at lunch everyday from September 29 through October 10.
- HAP students will be "pulling out their own hair" in the name of science. They will be examining their own hair roots and follicles on student-prepared microscopic slides and labeling by applying unit content for the Integumentary System compo-

nents. This is an excellent preparation in microscopy skills and slide prep, especially for those students going into a biomedical or science field. It is naturally interesting, and they are deeply engaged, since it is their own donated tissue.

**From the Guidance Office:** The October Newsletter from the guidance department is posted online. This month's issue contains information about ACT registration, senior scholarships and college applications and admissions, our upcoming event for juniors and their parents to present post-secondary planning information, parent/teacher conferences, and news about our prevention education program. Please take a moment to log on from the counseling link on the high school home page.

**Student Council News:** It's Homecoming Week, and all of the hard work and dedication of the GHS Student Council is paying off. The GHS Student Council has many activities set in place for the 2014 Harvest Homecoming. Some of the Homecoming activities planned are fun dress-up spirit days, elections, and the parade. This year a new twist was implemented for voting; the All-School homecoming election was held on Skyward with an online vote.

The royalty will be announced on Thursday evening, October 2 at the pep rally held at Bob Reade Field, 7:00 p.m. The Annual Homecoming Parade will take place at 3:45 on Friday and will feature many clubs, organizations, fall sport teams, and the Home-

coming Court. Grand Marshall for this year is Mr. Denny Diericx. The Homecoming activities will conclude with the Harvest Homecoming Dance held Saturday, October 4, from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. in the main gym. Coronation will take place at 9:00 p.m.

Tickets for the dance will be sold in the Associate Principal's office Sept. 29-Oct. 2. Advance tickets will be \$8, and tickets sold at the door will be \$10. Over 50 members of the student council have joined committees and have worked hard to make this homecoming a huge success. They invite the entire student body to join in on the many activities.

**New Staff:** Ms. Patricia Graves attended Knox College and later Monmouth College. She received her Masters from Aurora University. Ms. Graves previously taught at Genoa-Kingston High School for the past eight years. Ms. Graves is excited to be closer to family in the area and to be a part of the Geneseo community and the District 228 family.

### **Upcoming Dates of Importance:**

- 10/1 Senior cap & gown & announcements meeting during ASAP
- 10/3 One hour early dismissal
- 10/4 Homecoming dance, 7:30 - 10:30, main gym
- 10/8 Parent forum regarding class rank and student recognition, 7:00 p.m., library
- 10/9 Student of the Quarter ceremony – 7:15 a.m. in GHS auditorium
- 10/9 Student forum regarding class rank and student recognition during ASAP
- 10/10 Q1 ends, grades final on 10/15

- 10/13 No student attendance for Columbus Day
- 10/16 School Board meeting
- 10/17 Fall play (10/17 & 18)
- 10/21 Half day of attendance for District students
- 10/27 Junior Night for Post-Secondary Planning,  
6:00 p.m. in GHS auditorium
- 10/31 Fall recognition ceremony during ASAP
- 10/31 One hour early dismissal

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