

# GPA at Weston High School

## *A Discussion*

Weston Middle School Principal's Coffee  
November 9, 2018

# Beginning the conversation

- *Challenge Success* and student well-being
- Overview of the official high school record and GPAs
- Why consider the change?
- Implications of a change in GPA reporting
- Rollout over time

Re-examine what's  
in the best interest  
of students.

Eliminating weighted GPA is consistent with one of the the strategic objectives in the 2018-19 Weston High School School Improvement Plan:

*Strengthen educational practices to promote intellectual stretch, engaged learning, equitable access, and excellence for every student, every day.*

# Transcripts

Transcripts represent the official high school record for students. They include:

- Demographic information
- Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Courses taken by grade (identifies level if not college prep)
- Final grades (in-progress grades only in current year)
- Credits (by course, year, discipline)
- Attendance



**Weston High School**  
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Tel: (781) 796-5800, Fax: (781) 796-5829  
School CEEB Code: 222366

**Student, Sample**  
1 Main St, Weston, MA 02493

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**Transcript**

<b>Cumulative GPA (Weighted):</b> 3.34	<b>Student #:</b> 15000
<b>Cumulative GPA (Unweighted):</b> 3.36	<b>Current Grade:</b> 12
	<b>Birthdate:</b> 01/01/1997
	<b>Counselor:</b> Richard Escobar

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**Courses Taken 2011-2012 Grade 09**

Course	Final	Credit
English 9	B	5.00
Honors World History: Medieval-Early Modern	C	5.00
Geometry	B	5.00
Introductory Physics, Lab	B-	5.00
Spanish: Intermediate I	B	5.00
Photography I	A	2.00
Research and Technology	B	0.50
Creative Cooking	B	2.00
Independent Study- Creative Writing	P	1.00
Grade 9 Health A	A-	0.50
Grade 9 Health B	A-	0.50
Physical Education 9	B	2.00
<b>Total Credits:</b>		<b>33.50</b>

**Courses Taken 2013-2014 Grade 11**

Course	Final	Credit
American Literature	A-	5.00
AP U.S. History	B+	5.00
Precalculus Part I	B+	5.00
Chemistry, Lab	A-	5.00
Spanish: Intermediate Honors	A-	5.00
Clay Studio	A	2.00
Photography III	A	2.00
Clay Studio II	A	2.00
Guidance Seminar 11	P	0.50
Junior Health	A	1.00
Physical Education 11	A	2.00
<b>Total Credits:</b>		<b>34.50</b>

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**Courses Taken 2012-2013 Grade 10**

Course	Final	Credit
English 10	B+	5.00
Speech	B+	1.00
Grade 10 - Modern World History	B+	5.00
Algebra II	B	5.00
Biology, Lab	A-	5.00
Spanish: Intermediate II	B	5.00
Photography II	A	2.00
Art I	A	2.00
Career Exploration Seminar	A	0.50
Grade 10 Health	A	1.00
Physical Education 10	A	2.00
<b>Total Credits:</b>		<b>33.50</b>

**Courses Taken 2014-2015 Grade 12**

Course	Final	Credit
Shakespeare: Opening the Text		
U.S. Government		
Race, Class & Gender		
Precalculus Part II w/Statistics		
DNA Science and Biotechnology		
AP Spanish		
Film Literacy		
Senior Internship		
Guidance Seminar 12		
Physical Education 12		

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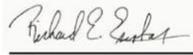
High School Credit Summary		Attendance	
Department	Credits Earned	Calendar	Days Absent
English	16.00	14-15 Weston High School	0.00
History	15.00	13-14 Weston High School	3.0
Mathematics	15.00	12-13 Weston High School	6.0
Multi-disciplinary	2.50	11-12 Weston High School	2.0
PE/Wellness	13.00		
Performing/Visual Arts	10.00		
Science	15.00		
World Languages	15.00		
<b>Total</b>	<b>101.50</b>		

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**Codes for courses in which a standard letter grade is not earned:**

P = Pass	M = Medical
I = Incomplete	N = Minimum attendance requirements not met
W = Withdrawal	

Please see the Curriculum Notes for descriptions of courses and levels.



Richard E. Escobar  
Guidance Counselor Signature

Date Generated: 10/28/2014



# Grade Point Average (GPA)

Weston High School currently calculates both a weighted academic GPA and an overall unweighted GPA for students once they have completed four semesters at the high school. The first official GPA is calculated at the end of sophomore year. The GPA is cumulative, meaning that it includes all years of a student's WHS experience.

## **GPA Calculation**

Values are assigned to the letter grades earned for each course, multiplied by the credits for the course, and then averaged with the values of the other courses.

# Weighted GPA

## **Weighted GPA**

Includes **only academic subjects** that earn 5.0 credits (full year) or 2.5 credits (semester).<sup>\*</sup> The value of an honors grade is 0.7 higher than CP and an AP grade is 1.0 higher than CP. *For example, a “B” in CP is valued at 3.0, Honors at 3.7 and AP at 4.0.*

<sup>\*</sup> AP Music Theory is 4.0 credits but is also included.

## **Unweighted GPA**

Includes **all courses** with letter grades. The value of all letter grades is equivalent to the CP value. *For example, a “B” is valued at 3.0 whether a CP, Honors or AP grade.*

# The weighted GPA scale

	<b>AP</b>	<b>Honors</b>	<b>CP</b>
<b>A</b>	5.0	4.7	4.0
<b>A-</b>	4.7	4.4	3.7
<b>B+</b>	4.3	4.0	3.3
<b>B</b>	4.0	3.7	3.0
<b>B-</b>	3.7	3.4	2.7
<b>C+</b>	3.3	3.0	2.3
<b>C</b>	3.0	2.7	2.0
<b>C-</b>	2.7	2.4	1.7
<b>D+</b>	2.3	2.0	1.3
<b>D</b>	2.0	1.7	1.0
<b>D-</b>	1.7	1.4	0.7
<b>F</b>	0	0	0

Students attending Weston High for at least four semesters have their GPAs computed five times:

1. at the end of sophomore year
2. at the midpoint of junior year  
(with first semester grades)
3. at the end of junior year
4. at the midpoint of senior year
5. upon graduation

# Relative position in class sent to colleges

In order to provide colleges context around where students fall within a class, we currently provide GPA distribution charts for both weighted and unweighted GPA ranges. This would change to providing only the unweighted GPA distribution chart.

# Why consider the change?

**1**

Students will be able to take courses of interest to them without worrying about lowering their GPA.

**2**

Students will take courses at an appropriate level of challenge.

**3**

As a community, we will value all students equally – literally.

# Taking the “right” courses

## **With Weighted GPA**

- Students with weighted GPAs above a 4.0 choose not to take a College Prep course because it will lower their GPA, even if they want to take the course for content. *Examples: Economics, Engineering, Anatomy & Physiology.*

# Taking the “right” courses

## **With Weighted GPA**

- Students enroll in honors or AP courses in which they know they may struggle, justifying it by saying, “At least I will get a GPA boost.” Often they resort to tutors and spend excessive hours only to be disappointed with the final grade and a lower GPA. *Example: A student earning a C in an Honors course (2.7) would have been better served in GPA by earning a B+ in a CP course (3.3).*

Such circumstances often lead to unnecessary stress for a student due to misplacement. In addition, the lower letter grade appears on the transcript.

# Taking the “right” courses

## **Without Weighted GPA**

- Students will be free to take any course of interest to them, without feeling that they are lowering their GPA.
- Students will find success in the appropriate level of challenge.
- Students will continue to take appropriately placed advanced courses.
- We will continue to offer challenging courses at all levels.

# Valuing all students

## **With Weighted GPA**

- We are telling students that they are quantitatively of less value to the school community by being in a College Prep course. *Students often express they they are only “CP kids” and feel that they are not as important to the school as their peers taking Honors and AP courses.*

## **Without Weighted GPA**

- The school community will be telling students that they ALL matter, recognizing that students who work hard to succeed in College Prep courses are just as important as those in Honors or AP courses.

# Weighted GPAs are not consistent

## 1

Because there is no standard way of calculating GPA and there are almost as many ways of calculating GPA as there are high schools, **the majority of colleges recalculate GPA on an unweighted college prep scale.**

## 2

Colleges stress that the primary academic factors considered are contained on the transcript itself, specifically the **courses taken, strength of the courses, and grades earned.**

# Top college admissions factors

**According to the NACAC 2017 State of College Admission report, the top four factors in admissions decisions for first-time college students are the following:**

	<i>considerable importance</i>	<i>moderate importance</i>	<i>combined top importance</i>
Grades in all courses <i>[academic &amp; elective]</i>	77.1%	13.8%	90.9%
Grades in college prep <i>[academic]</i> classes	76.9%	12.5%	89.4%
Strength of curriculum <i>[the student's courses]</i>	51.8%	35.3%	87.1%
SAT or ACT scores	54.3%	27.9%	82.2%

# Impact on admissions if no weighted GPA?

**This question was posed to a number of highly selective colleges and universities, as well as several regional schools that WHS students have traditionally attended. Consistent themes from nearly 40 respondents included:**

- There would be no negative impact to eliminating a weighted GPA, in large part because of the vast variance of systems used by high schools.
- Colleges focus on the academic information on the transcript – **courses taken, levels of courses, and grades** – instead of the numerical GPA.
- Students are evaluated in the context of their own high school, taking into account course offerings, **knowledge of the school**, etc.

# In the colleges' words:

## **University of Michigan**

*The University of Michigan recalculates every GPA of an applicant applying to Michigan using an unweighted 4.0 GPA.*

## **Massachusetts Institute of Technology**

*Please don't be overly concerned about if your school has weighted or unweighted GPAs. With our holistic admissions process, we're much more interested in how an applicant "fits" with our culture than if they were No. 1 in their school or how they size up to applicants from other schools. We use the context of the school to assess applicants.*

# In the colleges' words:

## **Cornell University**

*We do not have a preference as to whether a school chooses weighted or unweighted GPA's. We look at how the applicant has challenged themselves within the academic rigor offered at their institution. We look at this information in conjunction with the applicant's test scores, recommendation letters, service to community, and their writing samples...*

## **Dartmouth College**

*...you should make the decision based on what's best for students in their day to day academic lives – you can remove any anticipated impact on college outcomes from your consideration.*

# A majority of colleges recalculate GPA

In a survey of representatives visiting Wayland High School last year, almost  $\frac{2}{3}$  of colleges recalculate GPA on an unweighted scale based on transcript grades.

*Weston is currently having all college representatives visiting the school complete the same survey and is finding similar results.*

# Implications of a change in GPA reporting

## **Naviance**

The Naviance program used by Weston High School includes comprehensive career- and college-related resources to both students and school counselors. GPA is used to help students estimate their relative possibility of college acceptance.

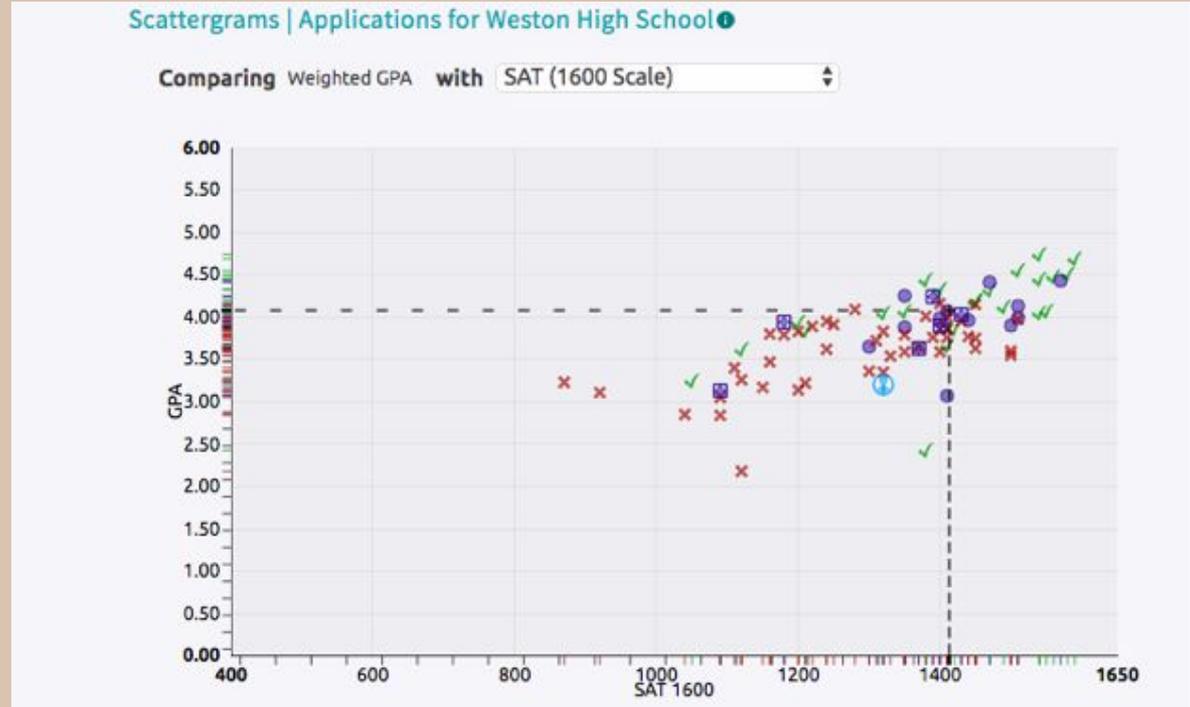
## **Other uses of GPA**

Weston High School does not rank students, something for which some schools use a weighted GPA.

National Honor Society at Weston High School currently uses either weighted or unweighted GPA for eligibility.

# The Naviance scattergram

The scattergram plots the results of five years of Weston admissions outcomes, using two data points: GPA and standardized test scores. Currently the GPA scale is weighted. **Students see their personal plot, using either SAT or ACT scores.**



# Impact on the scattergram as a tool

Counselors believe that the helpfulness of the scattergrams can be maintained without using weighted GPAs.

- The scattergrams can be changed to display unweighted GPA historical data. *(Both GPAs are currently stored in Naviance.)*
- Naviance offers a “strength of program” feature to enhance the scattergrams. *We will capture current data for “historical” use in the future.*
- The second data point – test scores (SAT or ACT) – are an important “partner” in the comparisons. While not all students are consistent, test scores generally correlate with weighted GPA. *(We are currently doing a data analysis of the correlation.)*

# National Honor Society eligibility

The current GPA cutoff to receive **an invitation to apply** to NHS is 3.7, **either** weighted **or** unweighted. **51%** of the Class of 2019 met this mark.

If the GPA cutoff were 3.7 and **only** unweighted GPA was considered, **35%** of the Class of 2019 would meet this mark.

*Weston's current percentage of students eligible for NHS is higher than most other schools. Criteria is reviewed and modified periodically, and is likely to change to be more selective **whether or not there is a change in GPA reporting.***

# Rollout over time

## **Current WHS Students**

There will be no change in reporting for current high school students. Both weighted and unweighted GPAs will be reported on transcripts. *This means that Honors and AP courses taken with the knowledge of a GPA “bump” are not changed retroactively.*

## **Future Classes**

Beginning with the Class after any change goes into effect, only an unweighted GPA will be reported on transcripts. *This allows students to make course selections with the knowledge that there is no GPA “bump” for Honors and AP courses.*

# Questions & Discussion

