

On February 3, 2009, the Rumson-Fair Haven Board of Education adopted a number of proposals regarding GPA. The proposals were a result of months of research, analyzing grade reporting practices of high schools, as well as the evaluation of transcripts by colleges.

What prompted the research?

The research began in response to issues raised by students, parents, faculty and colleges. Students, parents and colleges appeared confused by the 4.5 GPA scale that was in place. The scale made it difficult for students to make comparisons to national statistics provided by the colleges which were based on a 4.0 scale (A=4.0), and as such, students were confused as to their “real” average. Colleges contacted R-FH frequently for clarification of the scale as well. Conversation with faculty, faculty leadership and supervisors supported research to address GPA issues previously raised during R-FH Middle States self evaluation.

How was the research gathered?

In the fall, an initial electronic survey was sent to 18 demographically similar high schools, questioning their GPA scale, the subjects included in the GPA, types of grades reported, and grade weighting. At the same time, an initial electronic college survey was sent to 75 colleges that have visited R-FH, to determine attitudes regarding the current R-FH scale of 4.5. Follow up surveys were sent to 20 competitive high schools considered most similar to R-FH, as well as to the top 20 colleges in applications received from R-FH and the top 20 colleges R-FH students attended in 2008.

What were the results of the High School surveys concerning Physical Education?

The surveys indicated that 88% of the high schools surveyed include Physical Education in the GPA and were comprehensive. In general, GPA's are either Academic (include only core academic courses) or Comprehensive (all graded subjects).

How do other high schools report grades?

Sixteen of 20 high schools use Letter grades. The top of the grade range in half of the high schools surveyed is an A+; the other half end at A. In most of the high schools surveyed, whole letter grades as well as + and – are used. Currently, R-FH uses numeric grades for quarterly report cards and GPA grades (e.g. 3.8) for semester and final grades, as well as transcripts, unlike the alpha or numeric system used by most high schools.

What did the research from the colleges indicate?

The initial research from the colleges indicated some confusion with our 4.5 scale used for grading. Colleges noted that because the scale was not standard, that all grades had to be recalculated to an alpha/ numeric scale that equals a 4.0 scale. In recalculating each student's grades, the colleges believe that the potential for errors and miscalculation exist. They also noted that the current R-FH system is more cumbersome than either letters or numbers.

What did the research tell us regarding weighting?

All high schools surveyed report actual grades earned. While most weight for Honors, Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Enrollment courses, some weight them the same, while others differentiate weight with Honors earning less weight than AP or Dual Enrollment. All high schools, other than R-FH, show weight only in the GPA.

Why is that noteworthy?

R-FH now reports weighted grades, meaning that the grade on the transcript is the grade earned plus 10 points for Honors and AP classes. No other school reports weighted grades as if they were actual.

How do colleges view weighted courses?

Colleges indicate that they expect Honors and AP to carry some weight but many believe that courses which can earn college credit (AP, International Baccalaureate (IB), and Dual Enrollment courses) should be weighted more than Honors courses. About half of the colleges surveyed strip weight to determine an unweighted average, and then use their own calculation to award weight for Honors and AP courses. Some will keep the weighted average for comparison unless it is deemed excessive, but continue to tally Honors and AP/Dual Enrollment courses.

How and when should grades be weighted?

Colleges believe that the weighting of grades should be an end product; a calculation that is noted at the bottom of each year's transcript and is reported as per your grading scale .For example, a 3.8/4.5.

How was this research shared with the community?

Initially, research was summarized and shared with the Education Committee of the Board and with the full Board of Education in December. This was followed with three additional meetings with the Education Committee, a presentation to the Principal's Advisory

Council, and two additional Board of Education meetings. The supervisors were briefed often and teachers were updated in department and faculty meetings.

Proposals made as a result of the Research

What changes were approved regarding Physical Education?

The first proposal was to include Physical Education in the GPA. Beginning in September 2009, final grades in Physical Education will be included in the GPA calculation for all students. Previously, although a grade was earned, it was not used in the GPA calculation.

How will reporting of grades change?

Beginning in September 2009, academic achievement in all courses will be reported as letter grades on report cards and transcripts. Research confirms that the trend in similar high schools is to report grades using letters. Letter grades when banded together in small increments benefit most students. When colleges were asked their preference, most indicated that they prefer letter grades as they have more of a visual impact thus making grade trends more apparent.

How will previous grades appear on the transcript?

For students in the classes of 2010, 2011 and 2012, final grades in course history will be converted to the new letter grade equivalent. We believe that the students' transcripts will be easier to understand if all grades, past and present, are reported in the same way. Since weight was already included in the grade, the new letter grade will be the equivalent of the weighted average.

What is the letter grade scale?

A+	97-100
A	93-96
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	65-66
F	< 65

What GPA scale will we use?

We will use a weighted 4.0 system, where an A=4.0. Although we will be using a 4.0 system, a grade of A+ will earn a 4.33. An A+ (4.33) is a well recognized and acceptable “bonus” available to all students regardless of the level of the courses. Our research with colleges indicates that they still consider this a 4.0 system, and there is no penalty or recalculation, as was the case with our previous GPA scale.

The scale is as follows:

Weighted grade	GPA for calculation
A+	4.33
A	4.0
A-	3.67
B+	3.33

B	3.0
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.0
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.0
F	0

Will actual or weighted grades be displayed?

We acknowledge that the colleges expect actual grades be reported and weight be added in the year end average. We intend to be honest and transparent in grade reporting. At the same time there was some concern by parents of current students about the appearance of year-to-year consistency of grades if grades did not show weight, as had been past practice. In order to present our students in the most favorable light, it was determined for our current students only (classes of 2010, 2011, and 2012) weight would be added to the final grade, as is currently the practice, and the equivalent weighted letter grade would appear on the transcript. GPA points will not be displayed, but will be calculated as a year-end and cumulative average. Since the weight would already be included, no additional weight would be added at the end. An unweighted average will be calculated as well.

How will weight be reported as we move forward?

Beginning with the class of 2013, weight will be added for Honors and AP/SUPA as a year end and cumulative GPA only. Actual grades will be reported. GPA will be calculated in accordance with credits earned in all subjects and shown as at year-end as an overall average, not

individually by course. The weight for Honors classes will be an additional .67. The weight for AP/SUPA will be an additional 1.0

The scale will be as follows:

Actual grade Reported on transcript	GPA for Calculation		
	Level 1	Honors	AP
A+	4.33	5.0	5.33
A	4.0	4.67	5.0
A-	3.67	4.33	4.67
B+	3.33	4.0	4.33
B	3.0	3.67	4.0
B-	2.67	3.33	3.67
C+	2.33	3.0	3.33
C	2.0	2.67	3.0
C-	1.67	2.33	2.67
D+	1.33	2.0	2.33
D	1.0	1.67	2.0
F	0	0	0

**** After examining the Grading and GPA changes made beginning in September of 2009, the Board of Education recently approved a modification to the GPA calculations as proposed by the administration. All current Honors and AP classes as well as those in course history, will earn one additional quality point in the calculation of the GPA, based on final average in the Honors or AP course, when credit is awarded.

The scale will be as follows:

Actual grade Reported on transcript	GPA for Calculation	
	Level 1	Honors/ AP
A+	4.33	5.33

A	4.0	5.0
A-	3.67	4.67
B+	3.33	4.33
B	3.0	4.0
B-	2.67	3.67
C+	2.33	3.33
C	2.0	3.0
C-	1.67	2.67
D+	1.33	2.33
D	1.0	2.0
F	0	0

If GPA is calculated with quality points based on the letter grade earned rather than a specific numeric grade for each subject, won't there be more GPA ties?

Since letter grades band a few numeric grades together per letter, it is possible for students' GPA's to be closer together. But, since we do not rank, there are far less issues raised. For purposes of scholarships or valedictorian, unweighted averages are also available for our calculations. Colleges will expect our profile addresses both weighted and unweighted averages, and grade distribution by subject to assist them in differentiating our students, especially those at the top of the scale.

When will the new "alpha" transcripts be available to view?

We anticipate sending a copy of the new "alpha" transcripts to all rising seniors in August, along with their previous "GPA grade" transcript, so that all rising seniors can see the improvement in appearance and clarity. All other students will view their transcripts shortly after.

