
Weighted GPA Proposal

— Process and Recommendations —

Current scenario

- WHS students earn a “Weighted” and “Unweighted” GPA, which are both reported on their transcripts
- Weighted = “Courses in the five academic majors and honors-level elective courses” on a 5.0 scale (H/AP courses get 1.0 extra GPA point in the calculation)
- Unweighted = “Both academic majors and all elective courses” on a 4.0 scale (all courses are counted equally regardless of level)
- Salutatorian and Valedictorian are determined by weighted GPA at the end of seven semesters. Honor Roll and High Honor Roll are both based on unweighted GPA

Why are we concerned about WGPA?

- Persistent concerns around stress and anxiety resulting from competitiveness among WHS students.
- Students may avoid college-level electives for fear of impacting their Weighted GPAs.
 - “Many students play the numbers game with their GPAs, and would rather take a free period than try an unweighted course perhaps in the arts or creative writing...” (Quote from parent survey, 2017)
 - “I definitely think that removing weighted GPA would increase participation in [college] elective classes just because there’s no reason not to. In the past, there was, ‘I don’t want to take a college elective course because it would lower my GPA,’ but with the weighted GPA removed there definitely would be [more participation].” (Quote from student, 2018)

Concerns about WGPA, continued

- With more colleges recalculating student GPAs, our students' WGPA figure is arbitrary and/or misleading.
- Increasing number of “electives” at WHS (Business, Computer Science, Innovation, Forensics, Anatomy, Fine Arts, Attic Archaeology, etc.) -- what is an *elective* anymore, and what should count towards WGPA?
- Students who never take an honors or AP class are disadvantaged by this measure, creating an inequitable system.
- Similar concerns are so pervasive that area districts are doing away with WGPA, or staying Unweighted-only (Lexington, Belmont, Brookline, Lincoln-Sudbury).

Valedictorian/Salutatorian...

Career GPA	Career Rank	E/W
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4.9560	1	
4.9370	2	
4.9200	3	
4.8600	4	
4.8380	5	
4.8340	6	
4.7930	7	
4.7760	8	
4.7740	9	
4.7670	10	

Process

- This issue has been a concern of previous administrations dating back 15 years.
- The 2016-17 School Council researched this issue and drafted a recommendation to drop WGPA.
- As part of this research, in February 2017 WHS hosted a summit of area schools who have done away with WGPA and who are contemplating this change.
- Consultation with Dr. Stein and Dr. Unobskey.
- Marybeth Sacramone, Director of Guidance, ran an extensive survey of colleges regarding their admissions practices and attitudes about WGPA.
- Discussed issue with department leaders and all faculty.
- Presentation to School Committee.

The Bottom Line

Weighted GPA...

- Is counter to our mission (“Risk-taking is safeguarded....”).
- May prevent students from making good choices about their academic interests, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Needlessly exacerbates a culture of competition and stress.
- Is a misleading or inaccurate measurement of student achievement.
- Creates inequities among students.

Proposal

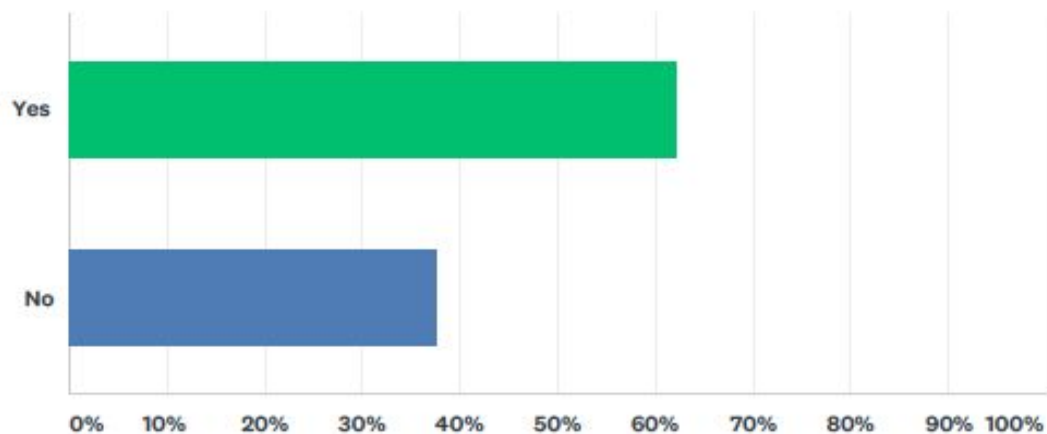
Do away with Weighted GPA starting with the Class of 2022 (incoming 9th graders). All current WHS students will continue to have both Weighted and Unweighted GPAs calculated.

Survey of Colleges

- 109 colleges responded to the survey between July 2017 and present
- Colleges surveyed are those that our students consistently apply to
- Results show:
 - The majority of colleges are re-calculating GPA as part of their admissions process
 - Our students will not be disadvantaged during the admissions process by this change.

Q3 When reviewing applicants, do you recalculate the GPA(s) into your own system?

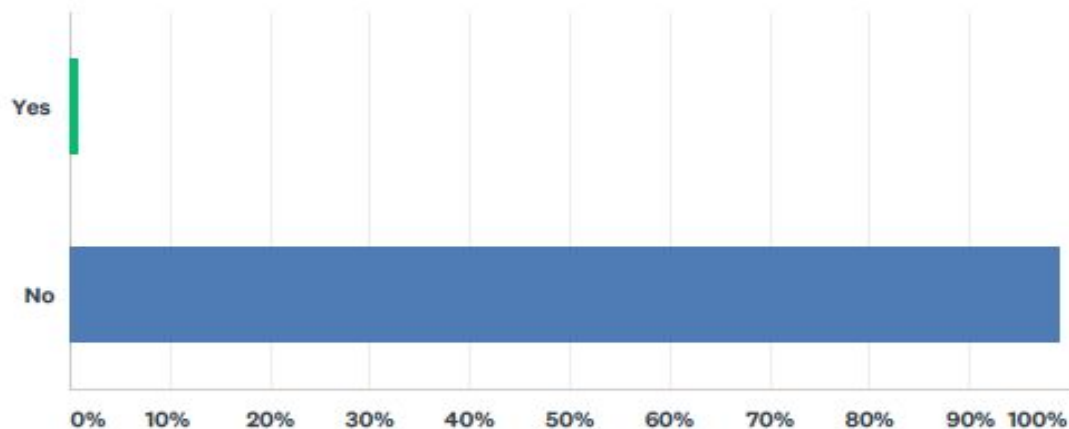
Answered: 109 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	62.39%	68
No	37.61%	41
TOTAL		109

Q5 If our school did not report a Weighted GPA on our transcript, but College/Honors/AP levels are clearly stated on the transcript, would this hurt the chances of our students' acceptance in any way?

Answered: 109 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	0.92%	1
No	99.08%	108
TOTAL		109

Summary from the Colleges

- The admissions process is comprehensive; GPA is only one factor.
- As colleges determine “rigor,” the transcript matters most. The level of each course will still appear on the WHS transcript.

Testimonials

Dan Richards, Principal, Belmont High School:

“We have found that eliminating the weighted GPA has not impacted students in any way. Colleges have been clear it does not matter what our system is, they have their own. As far as any other impact, we have not experienced any.”

Laura Lasa, Principal, Lexington High School, 2012-2017:

What has changed is the culture of our school -- less comparing and “cut-throat atmosphere”:

- Helps students and families to refocus on academics -- what they want and need
- LHS stood by their mission encouraging students to reach for what they want without an emphasis on labels -- makes sense to kids and parents
- Parents and admissions have not questioned it in the last three years
- One less thing that students and parents need to compare each other to