

Report – Results of Weighted Grades/Transcript-Profile/Scheduling Committee

**Goal: *Improve our profile to help our students be more competitive in the “marketplace” of college admissions. “Power of the Profile”***

***Changes to Southern Lehigh High School Profile***

**Paper Profile:**

- Add a description of Emerging Health/Engineering
- Add HS Scholars Program and a description
- Add a description of Spanish Immersion
- College Matriculation – last 4 graduating classes
- Note activities/clubs that are selective rather than open to anyone
- Add SAT Writing Average
- Note the AP classes not offered for past 1, 2, or 3 years (this would include current year)
- Add number of National Merit – Finalist/semifinalist/commended
- Add a note that Honors and AP have prerequisites in paper profile – List the prerequisites with the course description in the on-line profile.
- Add A+ to grading scale on transcripts and profile. Still a 4.0 but differentiates 97-100 from 93-96) Currently, we do have D+, C+, B+. A = 93-100 = 4.0.
- Note website address for website profile location – remember that the profile is in our Course of Studies booklet so this info may be beneficial to more people than just colleges

**Website Profile** – committee sees value in continuing to keep the paper profile no longer than a single double-sided page. Committee recommends adding a website profile that includes information in addition to the paper profile. This profile will be updated on a yearly basis.

- Includes all information contained on paper profile
- List courses, prerequisites and descriptions for all courses.
- AP Scores – Numbers of students taking courses/numbers taking tests and percentage of students achieving scores of 3,4,and 5
- Add future Keystone results
- Add special awards by school and students. Start by utilizing the criteria used for EOY awards ceremony
- Add GPA distribution for how a single class performed from 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade
- Explore ways to market our profile better
- **Note that there is a plan to include this as a “real world” project for Webpage Design class – The class will design initial page and will maintain in future years.**

## ***Changes to Southern Lehigh High School Transcripts***

**Goal: *Improve our transcripts to help our students be more competitive in the “marketplace” of college admissions. “Power of the Transcript”***

- Add explanation of how courses are weighted: This includes AP (1.0) and Honors (.5) and recommendation to weight Level II Science (.5)
- Add A+ to grading scale on transcripts and profile.
- Add the 12<sup>th</sup> grade schedule to the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade schedules.
- SAT scores reported if student requests
- No change to current reporting of weighted and un-weighted Class Rank - some schools (Lebanon Valley - top 30% 4-year award) use class rank to award some scholarships. This applies to SL students and applies to other colleges.
- Add if students passed/failed graduation project
- Add Keystone scores as they become available
- Spanish Immersion – list years the student participated
- Math Acceleration – list how/when student was accelerated

### ***Other Recommendations***

#### **AP Courses:**

- Keep current test structure. Do not require students to take test.
  - Not appropriate for some courses
    - Ex. Courses in which students know they will not receive credit because they are taking for the experience and it will be their college major (AP Physics)
  - Cost prohibitive for district
- Students should be permitted to take AP provided they meet the prerequisites
  - If student struggles – ok because the experience may help to prepare them for college
  - Course rigor **does need** to be maintained for AP
- Review and Revise process to prepare students for AP Courses
  - AP teachers **will continue** to meet with students prior to end of school year
  - AP teachers **will continue** to issue syllabi, summer reading, textbooks etc.
  - AP students **will continue** to receive and sign a contract indicating that they have until June 30 to change their course selection out of AP
  - **Implement** creating a panel of students for each AP course to discuss expectations for the course and answer questions from a student perspective
- Add AP World History
- Review and revise prerequisites in AP and Honors courses in order to better place students.
- Consider adding additional Honors Level courses (ex: Honors English 12 for the 11/12 school year) to allow for students who: take AP because they want a course more rigorous than CP but didn't really want AP or take CP because they don't want AP but would be better served in an honors level course.

### Dual Enrollment Courses:

- Weighting of DE courses not resolved
- Offering dual credit for DE courses not resolved
  - Ex. Offering “core” credit at HS at same time that student also receives credit from college
  - Currently, we report grades for DE courses taught at Southern Lehigh by SL teachers but report a P/F for on-line DE courses that students take during study halls at SL or for courses taken away from SL at a college or university (DeSales, Penn State etc.)

### Guidance Department Proposal

- **The committee is very cognizant of the current economic situation. The members are aware that adding this position for the 2011/12 school year is not feasible. However, the committee agreed it was important to note the request for possible future consideration.**
  - Increase guidance staff to include a dedicated college/career counselor – this person will have direct contact with students and parents
- Hold an annual meeting with counselor, one teacher (same for 4 years) the parents and student to select courses and discuss college goals. **Students with a GIEP do have this opportunity.** If teachers cannot participate, include parents in the course selection/college process meetings. Idea is good however time constraints are a concern. Currently, have about 350-375 students/counselor

### Communication/Preparation

- Overall, there needs to be better communication regarding the college admissions process
- Parents and students need to have a better understanding – there is a need for more communication, more accurate communication, and a reduction in misperceptions
- Move college essay writing to junior year instead of senior year. Complete the essay by end of junior year for students who need the essay early. Some students will need additional instruction in August/September of senior year.
- Incorporate how to prepare for a college interview

### Weighting of Grades

- The committee recommends one change to grade weight.
  - Add a weight of .5 to all Level II Science Courses ( Bio II, Chem II, Physics II)
- Retain grade weighting. Retain reporting both the weighted and un-weighted GPA on transcripts.
  - Concerns regarding removal of weighting of courses
    - Students should receive this extrinsic reward for taking a more rigorous course
    - Rewards for grade weighting seem to be more internal (high school) than external (colleges)
    - Acknowledge the top 10 students during graduation. May take some pressure off the need to be among the top 2
    - Research indicated that the colleges recalculate GPA's or look at the un-weighted GPA. Colleges can manipulate these numbers and know that weighting of grades is common practice in HS. According to the NACAC (National Association For College Admission Counseling) report (page 6) colleges are most interested in: 1. Grades earned by students 2. the “strength of schedule” interpreted to mean the types/differentiation of courses offered and thus taken by students (i.e. Applied Biology vs. Biology I vs. Honors Biology I vs. AP Biology) and 3. admission test scores

- **“Although overall GPA serves as an indicator of a student’s academic success in high school, strength of curriculum – and particular grades in college prep courses – are better indicators of a student’s likelihood of succeeding in college.”**
  - Students may decide to take “easier” courses and “play it safe” to boost their GPA. There may still be a “game” but now it is different. Taking an easier course will insure a higher grade which may cause an overall downturn in the rigor currently expected at Southern Lehigh. May foster a culture of “mediocrity.” May cause reduction in number of students taking Honors or AP courses which could create a negative perception of SL.
  - Taking away weighting might cause an “elitist group” taking these courses because fewer students will take. They may only take if they are sure of getting an A. Students should, instead, be encouraged to take some risks.
  - Some committee members believe that it is a small number of students who pressure themselves into taking weighted courses in favor of an elective and that we “need to look at the needs of all students.”
  - There is a need to communicate better with students and parents regarding the real expectations of colleges
- Concerns regarding weighting of courses
  - The “culture” at the HS needs to be addressed. How do we change a culture that promotes unhealthy competition and cheating?
  - Causes students to take courses that are inappropriate because they value the weight over taking courses that are right for them?
  - Committee recommended reviewing and revising prerequisites and course descriptions to better communicate the expectations of the Honors and AP courses
  - Perhaps some of the cheating is due to too much in one day. There may be a possible connection/solution in making changes to HS schedule

### **Class Rank**

- Retain current procedure for reporting Class Rank
  - Class rank is reported as weighted and un-weighted on transcripts
  - Class rank is sometimes used to determine scholarship opportunities
    - Could we harm more than help students by removing class rank?

### **Scheduling**

- Semester Course Response
  - 18 responses
    - 6 teachers – 40-45 minutes/day for one semester
    - 5 teachers – 50-60 minutes/day for one semester
    - 7 Health/PE teachers
      - Current PE schedule 9-12<sup>th</sup> required 4x/week for 1 semester
      - Some want 40-45 min/day for a year, some every other day for a year
      - Current Health schedule – 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> 4x/week for 1 semester
      - Some want Health to be every day for a semester
      - All suggestions increase the amount of time for PE/Health
- Full Year Course Response
  - 43 responses
    - 40-45 minutes/day for one year (16 teachers)

- 40-45 min/day for one year (2 teachers) consider the 25 minute blocks we saw at USC (Upper St Clair) and a request to add additional lab time
    - 50-60 min/day (12 teachers)
    - 80-90 min/day (10 teachers) with 1 saying AP should meet all year
    - 80-90 minutes every other day M-Th (for example M & W, or T and Th) and with all classes for 40-50 minutes on Friday – (1 teacher)
    - 30 minute increments – can be combined like USC – (3 teachers)
    - Longer period semester block – difficult for art classes in current schedule
  - Ideas for Alternative Schedules
    - 15 responses
      - Get rid of homeroom, start with first period. If a homeroom is needed, do at the end of day. Will help athletes miss less class time, many leave early for events. Have first few classes 60 minutes and last few shorter, or have different times for alternating days.
      - period length increases to 45 minutes, all AP classes have 2 double periods per cycle, non-academic sciences drop double period per cycle, honors sciences & level II sciences increase to 2 double periods per cycle
      - It would be helpful for ESL monitored students to have a study hall built into their schedule. This will allow time for the ESL teacher to give extra help in content subjects and/or for students to receive help from the resource room.
      - If we stick with current schedule, I suggest a "0" period that could be offered at 7:15-7:55. (This would also serve as a students homeroom for attendance) This could be a flexible period for specialized courses not necessarily meeting everyday, but perhaps MWF or specific day letters. It could also be used for most semester courses. It could also be beneficial for certain type courses like band (for practice where everyone could attend instead of having some people miss for conflicting courses on certain days), Health, an alternative PE course, and online computer or language courses that need a face to face meeting every once in a while for testing, etc. (Kind of like a recitation in college) Teachers who teach during this period could have a flexible schedule. Students could get some courses out of the way allowing more time in their daily "regular" schedule. This may also allow some students to get 2-3 mini courses (like Health, PE, etc that are .2 credits) in within a school year outside of the regular school day. If we go to a hybrid schedule, it should allow for longer class times on some days for some types of classes, but include some shorter 40 minutes classes too so that we fit the need of other courses.
      - Extending periods by 10 or 20 minutes beyond their current duration would allow more time for hands-on and authentic learning.
      - Try to have 50 to 60 minute schedules that meet every day. Also, attempt to keep the time at the end of the day that is used very effectively for tutoring, test make-ups, and parent meetings.
      - Extend the class time to 50-70 minutes and reduce the number of classes a day for the students. Teachers could increase the rigor and relevance and students will have less to concentrate on retaining and work completion.
      - MATH MUST MEET EVERYDAY ALL YEAR!!!!
      - increase the class periods to 50 minutes eliminate homeroom, adding 5 extra minutes to first period to do announcements, attendance, etc. KEEP A LINEAR SCHEDULE
      - A semi block schedule where certain classes meet for 90 min each day for a semester and others meet for 45 min every other day.
      - 90 minute blocks, with room for 45 "minis" were appropriate i.e. Math classes, language classes, and electives.
      - 90 Minute blocks
      - 90-minute blocks every day for a semester.
      - Offering courses in increments of 30 minutes may work to give some courses longer class time (science and phys ed for examples) and allow for a short time (30 minutes) for make up work, getting extra help, etc. It would seem that the schedule could be made more flexible.
      - some form of a modified block schedule that can accommodate each subject. Right now, science creates difficulties in scheduling because it needs a Block/Lab Period once a week. If we modified the schedule, we could meet the needs of the students more fully. I also believe students NEED study halls.
  - Ideas for alternative Graduation Credits
    - 8 responses
      - Driver's Ed should not be a graduation requirement. Health should change from .8 to .5 credits and the Humanities/Language credit should be increased from 1 to 2. Perhaps we could offer students .1 or .2 credits for participating in a sport (? - I'm not sure this is OK, but an idea) This would cut down the size of PE classes and again free up athletes schedules. Students who drop from a sport for some reason could pick up the "0" period PE course.
      - 4 and 4 math and science – 2 teachers
      - 4 English, 4 Math, 4 Social Studies, 4 Science. Eliminate PE requirement for athletes who have received a varsity letter
      - 4 for all core courses(math, science, English, social studies). Keep Health, Dr Ed, PE, and require one music/art course in addition to the current 1 humanities requirement.

- As a parent, I do NOT think every student needs 4 science or math credits. I do believe every student needs a TRUE humanity credit of art, music, theater or dance. The state requires TWO. Foreign Language should be in its own category, as IT IS NOT A HUMANITY as outlined by the Arts and Humanities State Standards!
- Do not change the number, but allow for more flexibility especially in the senior year. Allow students to select appropriate course that reflect their academic needs.
- I question why driver's ed is a requirement - many schools do not even offer it. Perhaps students who play varsity sports would not need PE credit.
- More in Humanities! Less in Health and PE

