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Mounds View considers scrapping high school class rank

Many districts nationwide have eliminated the number, which doesn't always reflect performance. Students could still elect to have their spot listed on transcripts.

By **NORMAN DRAPER**, Star Tribune

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High school class rank will go by the boards if Mounds View school officials have their way.

The school board will vote Tuesday on whether to scrap class rank, which has been a key performance indicator on every district high school student's transcript for as long as anyone can remember. The proposal, put forward by the district's two high school principals, would go into effect for the upcoming school year, for the Class of 2011. It would still allow students to have their class rank included on transcripts if they chose to do so.

If the board approves the proposal -- as expected -- Mounds View High School in

Arden Hills and Irondale High School in New Brighton will join the ranks of high schools, both nationwide and in Minnesota, that have decided to scrap assigning a numerical rank to indicate class standing.

According to Mounds View Superintendent Dan Hoverman, area districts that have dispensed with class rank include Eden Prairie, Edina, Minnetonka, Wayzata and Bloomington.

Mounds View Principal Julie Wikelius said most parents and students she has spoken with want to ditch class rank.

"Students see it as a source of stress and unhealthy competition," she said. "They feel like class rank in many ways is out of their control."

"It is a trend that is happening nationally and across the metro area," said Irondale principal Scott Gengler. "Schools are thinking about other ways to demonstrate success for students, and class rank isn't at the forefront of the way of doing it anymore. What's happening is schools are trying to find other ways of looking at ways students succeed in class."

Gengler said student angst over class rank

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often comes at "highly competitive" high schools, where high performers are bunched up near the top of their class and strong students might find themselves relatively low in class rank despite marginal differences in grades among the top of students. For instance, said Gengler, a student at his school with a grade point average of 11 (on a 12-point scale), or an A-, could fall to a rank of 91 in the grade, or in the 79th percentile, because so many students have slightly better grades.

"That's the reason so many students seem to have more enthusiasm toward doing away with class rank," Gengler said. "If there are a lot of high-performing students, class rank might not reflect how well they're doing in that high school."

Certainly, colleges and universities look at other criteria besides class rank when making admissions decisions -- grades and difficulty of course load, for instance, and scores on ACT college admission tests, as well as involvement in activities. Gengler said he talked to an admission counselor at the University of Minnesota and noted that on the U website class rank is considered in the admissions process "if available."

"They're already recognizing that class rank

may not be included with every applicant," he said.

Wikelius said that some parents wanted to keep the rank. Officials have accounted for that concern, Gengler said, by allowing students to request that their class rank be included on their transcripts.

But wouldn't that put students who don't include class rank at a disadvantage when it comes to college admission?

"You would hope not," Gengler said.

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