

CORNWALL

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



*Striving for
Excellence
Every Day*

Cornwall Central High School

Examining Class Rank

May 11th, 2020

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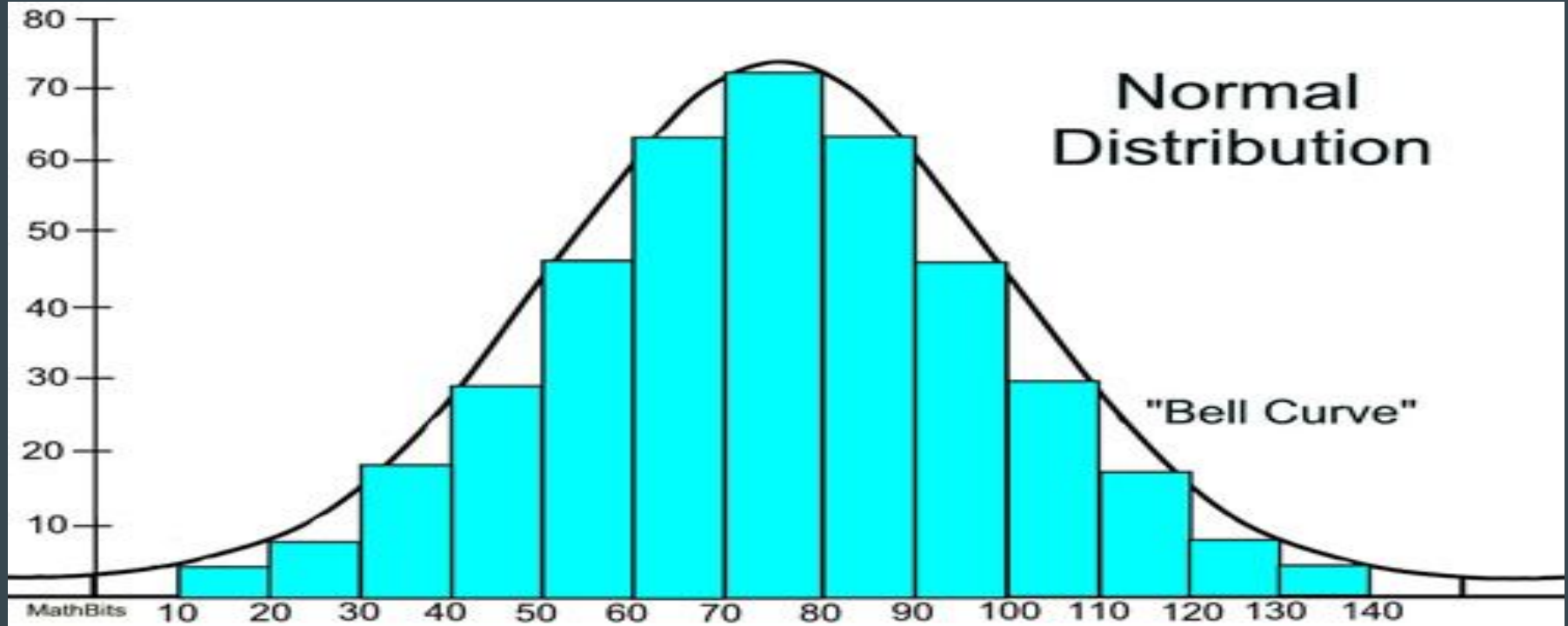
Essential Questions

- 1) Are we helping or hurting our students by ranking them?
- 2) How do colleges and universities weigh rank in their decision making towards admissions and scholarships?
- 3) What is the student perspective on class rank?
- 4) What is the teacher perspective on class rank?
- 5) What do other high schools in the United States and regionally do in terms of ranking students?
- 6) What are the alternatives to class rank?

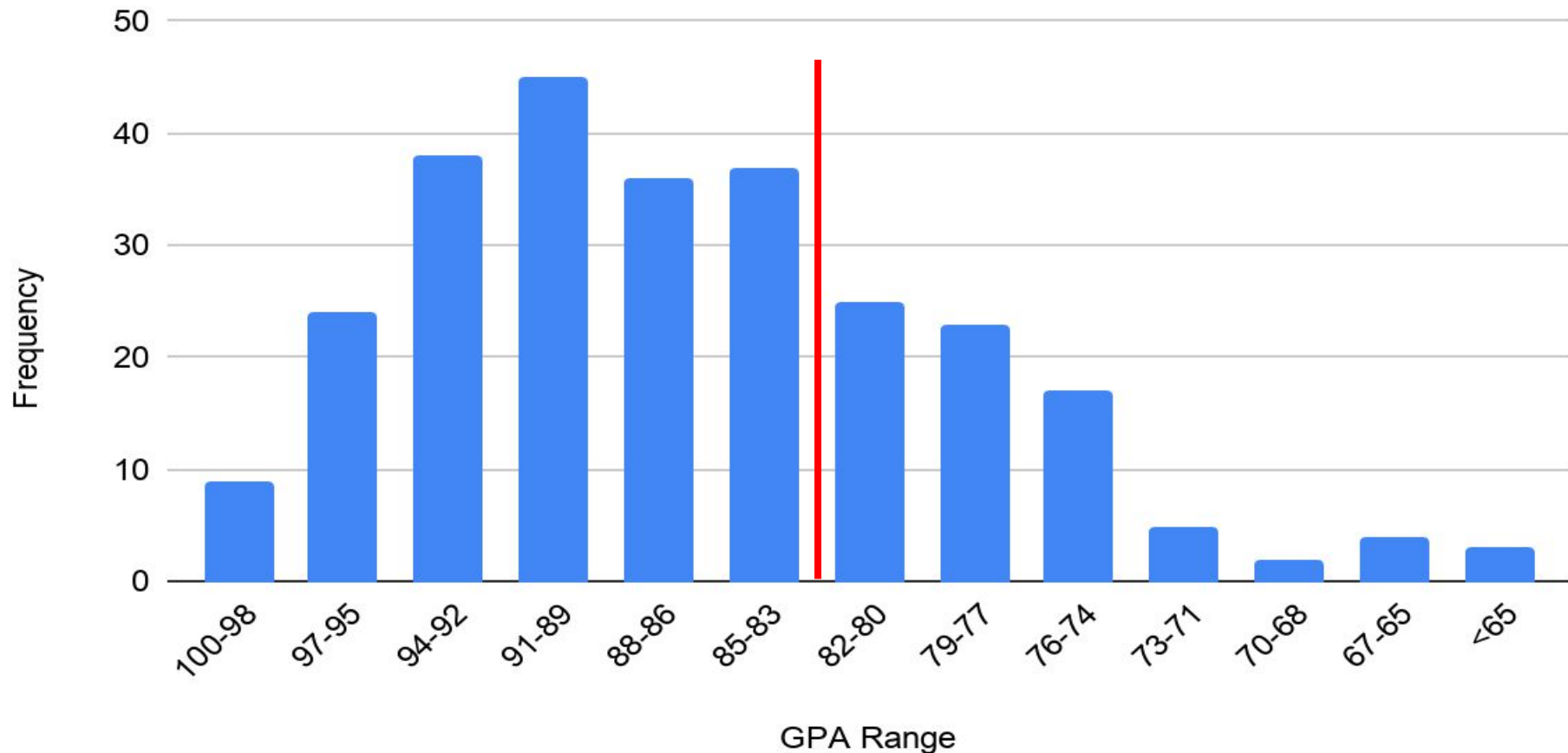
TABLE 8. PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGES ATTRIBUTING “CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE” TO FACTORS IN ADMISSION DECISIONS: FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN, FALL 2007 TO FALL 2018

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Grades in College Prep Courses	80%	75%	87%	83%	84%	82%	82%	79%	—	77%	71	73
Grades in All Courses	52	52	46	46	52	50	52	60	—	77	81	75
Strength of Curriculum	64	62	71	66	68	65	64	60	—	52	51	62
Admission Test Scores	59	54	58	59	59	56	58	56	—	54	52	46
Essay or Writing Sample	26	27	26	27	25	20	22	22	—	19	17	23
Class Rank	23	19	16	22	19	13	15	14	—	9	9	9
Counselor Recommendation	21	20	17	19	19	16	16	17	—	15	11	15

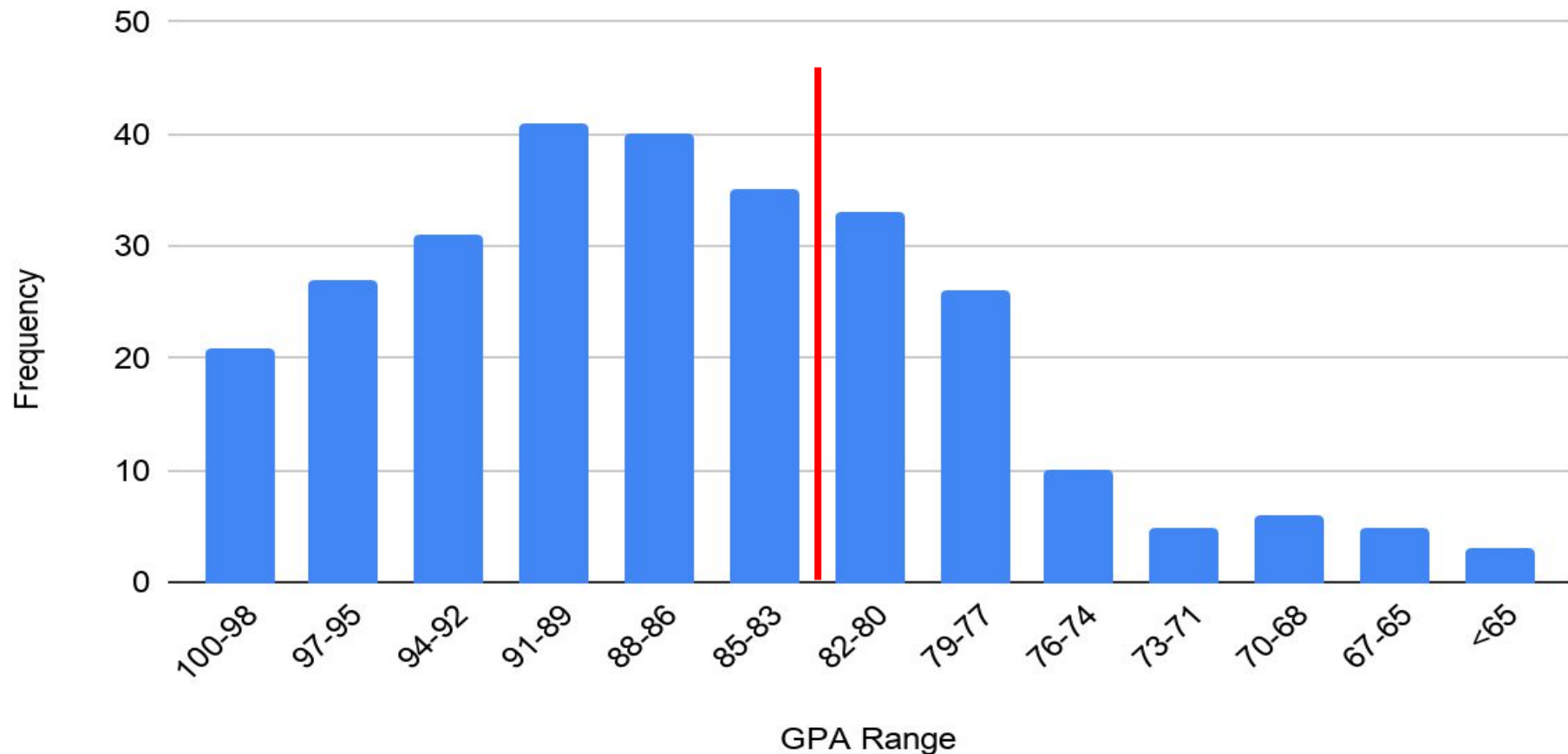
A Normal Distribution - Acceptable to Use Percentages



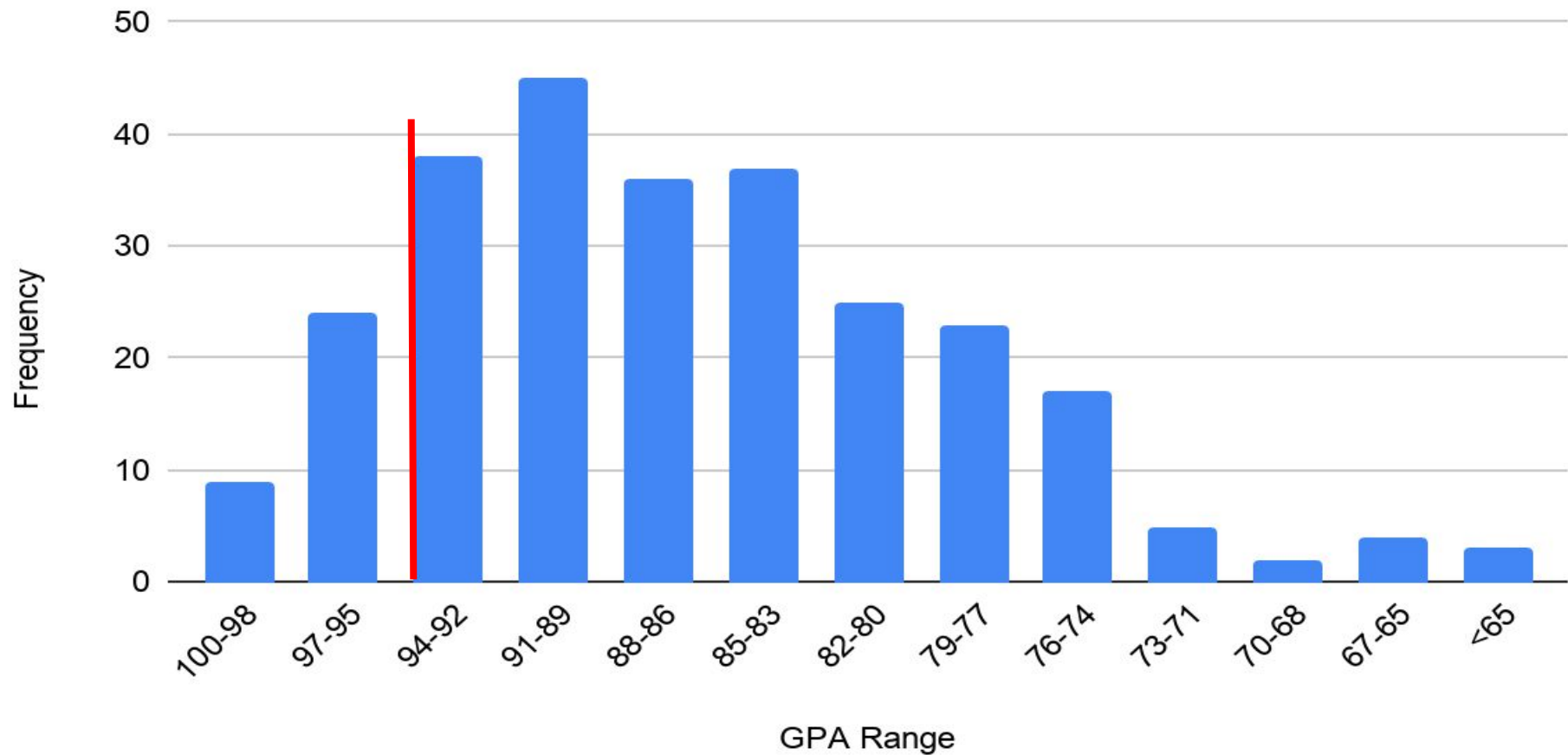
Frequency vs. GPA Range Class of 2020



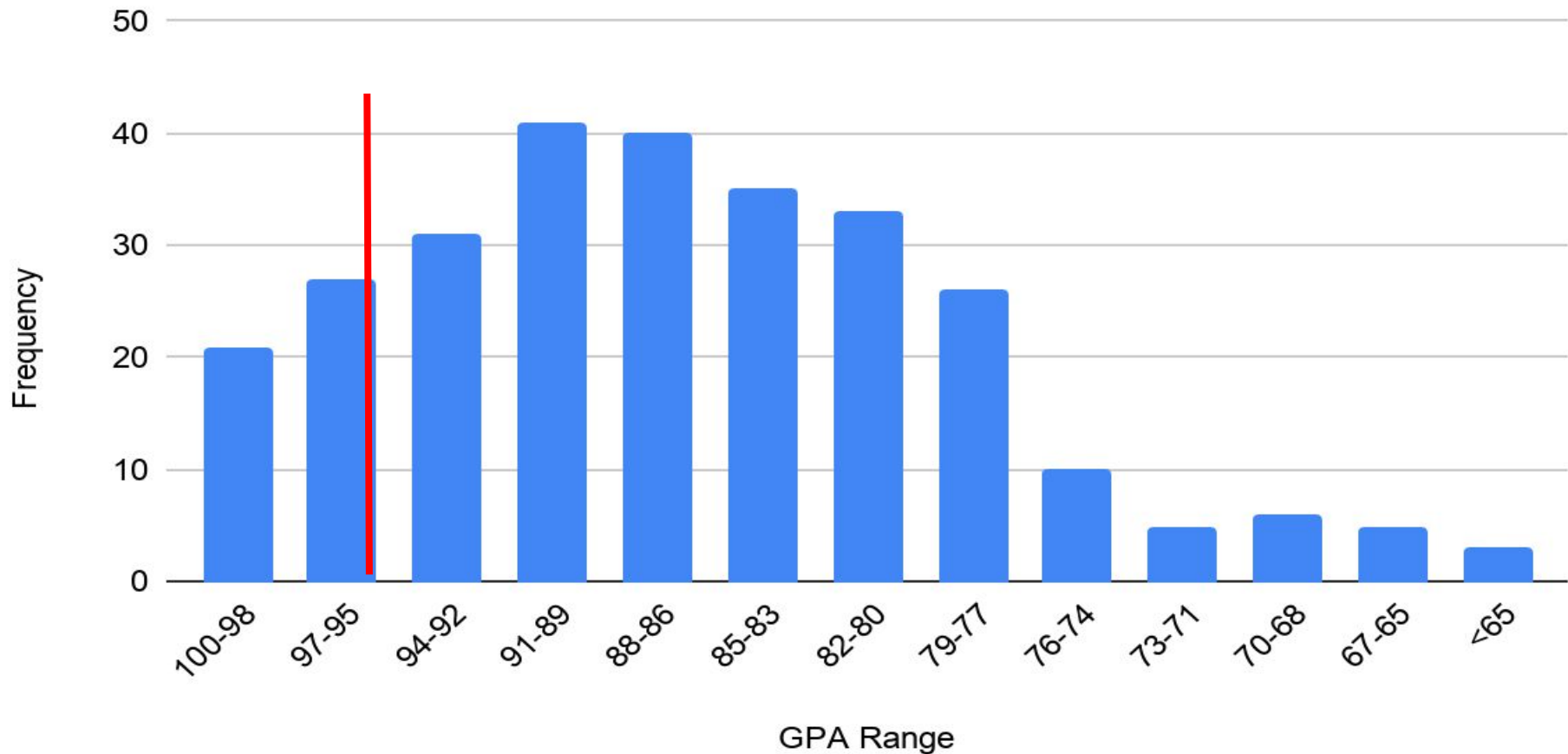
Frequency vs. GPA Range Class of 2021



Frequency vs. GPA Range Class of 2020



Frequency vs. GPA Range Class of 2021



Historical Trends

Class Of	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number in Class	281	274	271	271	274	293
# of students with a 90 GPA or higher/%	119 42%	102 37%	119 44%	123 45%	104 38%	119 41%
Top 10% GPA threshold	96.3	95.66	96.4	97.0	95.2	97.3
# of students with a 98 GPA or higher	11	7	8	17	11	21

Possible Concerns

- Students who earn excellent GPA's by taking competitive courses may not be in our top 10% as that can only be offered to a handful of students.
- Students who have a GPA could share that whole point GPA with many other students, but fractions of a point separate them from each other. This also causes some students to be in the top ten or not, top ten percent or not, etc.
- Students that present an excellent GPA are also at the same time presenting a rank that does not support that excellent GPA. For example, students who have a 90 GPA may be displaying a rank that is in the triple digits.

Student Perspective

- Students feel that there is a “cut-throat” nature to the rank system
- Students have reported that class rank causes anxiety and stress
- Students have also reported that students will often “game” the system by taking classes that can yield them a more favorable GPA depending on classes they take to get ahead, rather than take the courses they would enjoy and benefit from
- Students have reported that they feel like when they are helping a peer that is close in rank to them, they are inevitably hurting themselves. They sometimes watch their peers fail.

Student Perspective Continued

Academically	College/Career	Social/Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gaming the system. Students will try to pick classes that help their GPA ->Rank instead of classes they will enjoy or benefit from	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students believe rank is all important to their collegiate success and admission to college rather than their course rigor. This misconception aims students towards classes that may be “easier”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When rank is given out, students look at each other differently, figuring out who is ahead and how they can “bump” them out of their spot. Stress and anxiety. Your value as a student being associated with a number

Eva Davet - current Junior at CCHS - Physics story

Josh Sandler - current Junior at CCHS - 3 Domains of Student's World in High School

Teacher Perspective - Current Observations

In my 10 advanced classes it is a frequent conversations among students when the class ranks are released, and it is a conversation that only serves to make most of the students insecure and anxious. I don't like that students discuss it with one another as it breeds unhealthy competition. And having spoken with students who are vying for the top spots, they have been frank about the fact that knowing their rank in 10th grade made them feel an immense pressure to maintain their standing at whatever cost.

I've seen anxiety, sadness, disappointment, and kids getting down on themselves from both my anxious high performing students who feel that "they didn't do good enough", or my lower level students who see that they're near the bottom of the class and then feel bad about themselves or their abilities.

In my observations, many kids care more about percentage points than content and personal achievement. I think ranking pits kids against each other rather than pushing for personal best.

Students use it to compare themselves to others. It is more often used in a negative way.

Students mostly dislike class rank as it is a poor representation of their intelligence. Others dislike its competitive nature. Universally students have mentioned it's impact on their stress.

Teacher Perspective - If We Moved Away From Rank

It will alleviate the intense pressure these students feel to maintain their standing. It will discourage unhealthy competition among peers and hopefully it will engender of love of learning rather than reducing classes to grades.

More focus on learning rather than getting the grade. Students tend to focus on grades and not learn the material. I've noticed higher incidents of cheating because of that.

The point highlighted about helping their fellow classmates rise to the top instead of beating them out to the top is the most positive thing I can see about this. Helping your fellow classmate knowing that it only impacts in a kind and caring way rather than a punitive way is so strong in building the character of these students.

Students should be working together and not avoiding helping each other just for the purposes of class rank. Also, it is so hard to compare school to school so 30th in Cornwall might be better than 10th somewhere else but 30 looks way worse than 10.

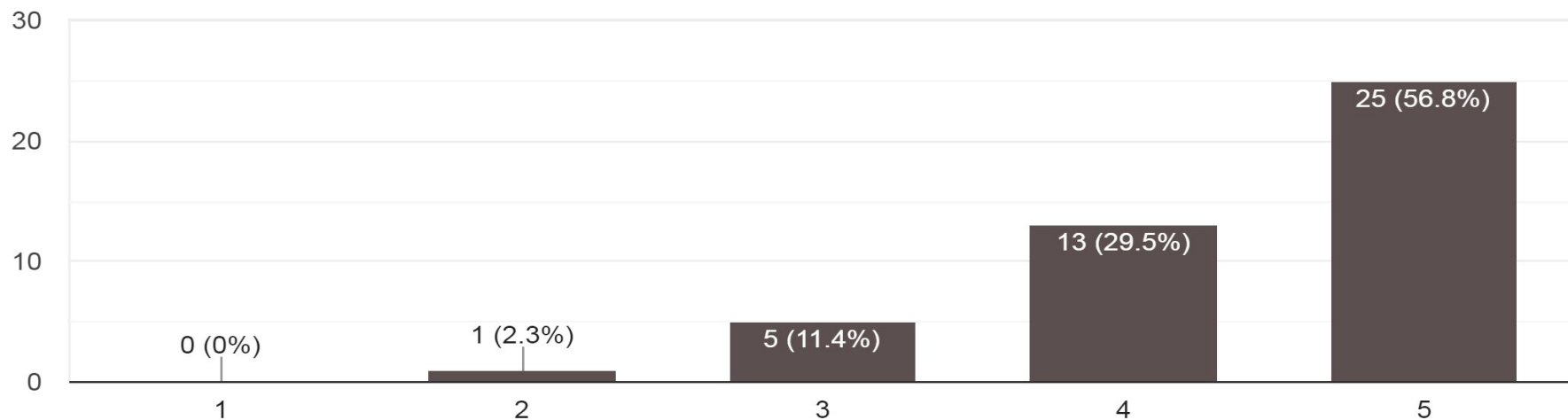
As stated in the presentation, colleges are no longer seeing the value in ranking such as this. This will allow students and parents to explore other ways of building character and credentials on a college app. or resume.

Students might actually find something they enjoy. Increase in internal motivation

Teacher Perspective

On a scale of 1-5, 1 being more negative and 5 being more positive, I feel that WITHOUT class rank the academic environment would be:

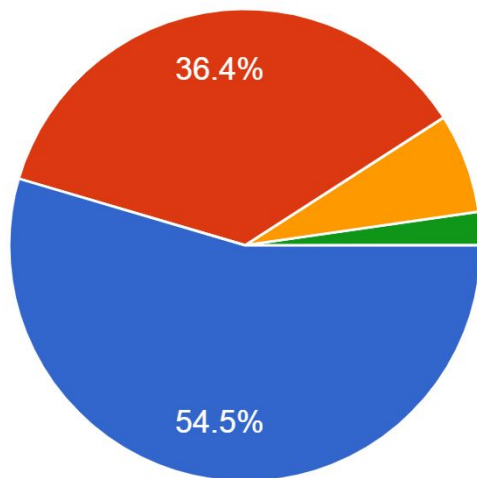
44 responses



Teacher Perspective

How in favor are you in moving away from class ranking?

44 responses



- Extremely in favor
- In favor
- Neutral
- Not in favor
- Extremely not in favor

Admissions Point of View

“How high schools determine class rank varies greatly, so there is little ability to apply it uniformly. Additionally, we see a rapidly increasing amount of school districts that do not choose to share class rank in class information with colleges and universities.”

-Michael McKeon, Director of Undergraduate Admissions, SUNY Albany

“The GPA and the courses the student takes are more important. We don’t compare by rank of the student. At the end of the day, it’s about who they are. The rank is just a number that can be interpreted in many ways.”

-Yale Admissions Officer

The Statistics on Rank in the United States

More than half of high schools in the United States do not rank

Most small private and competitive high schools have done away with it because they feel it penalizes many excellent students who are squeezed out of the top 10 percent of the class and then overlooked by elite colleges.

Due to the tremendous differences in curricula and grading standards at different high schools, many admission officers (especially at selective private colleges) have begun to discount the accuracy and importance of class rank as a factor in evaluating students.

What Do Other Schools Do?

60% of high schools in the United States do not rank their students.

Schools that do not rank students often use a tiered system to recognize students.

Williamsville - Western New York - Eliminated class rank in 2017. Class of 2021 will be the first without rank.

Harrison High School - Westchester - Eliminated rank in 2008 due to the statistical insignificance in the difference of ranked students. Uses the Latin Honors tiered system.

Nanuet High School - Rockland - Eliminated class rank and uses a decile system to report on transcripts.

Proposal

Eliminate rank, however, keep traditional customs such as Valedictorian/Salutatorian.

Develop a tiered system in which students only compete with themselves to get into that tier. The tiered system can replicate collegiate Latin Honors For example:

Cum Laude - 92 - 94.99

Magna Cum Laude - 95 - 97.99

Summa Cum Laude - 98 +

Student feedback on this proposal - Eva and Josh

SEL Perspective

- Rather than students fighting over singular spots in a rank system, students have nobody but themselves to knock them out of a tier. So competition to get to the highest level exists, but now is in a more supportive environment.
- Students would help “bring up” their peers to their tier or encourage them to strive harder.
- Students do not need to feel the anxiety and pressure that ranking causes them.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if my child needs their rank for a scholarship or applying to a service academy?

Rank can still be computed behind the scenes in our data management system and can be provided to anyone who needed it as a requirement

What about scholarships? How will they be eligible if some require a “top ten” or a top percentile requirement?

Again, rank can still be provided for these scholarships and be sent directly to the organization if needed. Percentiles, deciles, etc. can also still be provided

Frequently Asked Questions

What will happen to Valedictorian/Salutatorian? Celebrating the Top Ten in the class?

Traditional recognitions can still occur as exact GPA and rank can be computed behind the scenes. If the school would like to make a local decision on celebrating high achieving students they may choose to do so as well.

Timely Entry Point

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the norms of how we operate academically have now been changed dramatically.

Grading policies are different - quarters are weighted differently now

Technology challenges

Economic changes

Family illness

Next steps

If we decided to move in this direction, we would need to determine the following:

- ❑ If we are removing rank, what system are we using? - Recommendation is to use the Latin Honors System - GPA ranges can be discussed.
- ❑ What traditions are we keeping? Valedictorian/Salutatorian? Top ten? - Recommendation is to keep Valedictorian and Salutatorian only - Top ten example
- ❑ Phase in plan - Current Juniors do know their rank, however, we can introduce this tier system and allow students to have the designations on their transcript and award them color cords at graduation.
- ❑ Phase in plan - Current Sophomores do not know their rank so we can fully introduce the tier system to this group and each group from here on out.

Links/Resources

[The Case for Abolishing Rank - Washington Post](#)

[Do Colleges Care About Rank? - Not Really](#)

[Stepping out of Rank](#)