



South Harrison Community School Corporation Valedictorian and Graduation Honors Policy

Policy Statement

The South Harrison Community School Corporation believes that it is our responsibility to develop talent rather than to select it. The term “valedictorian” comes from the Latin, *vale dicere*, which means “to say farewell”. Ironically, it has nothing to do with achievement. However, the connotation (and ultimately the denotation) of the term valedictorian has come to be attached to the highest level of academic achievement. The purposes of this policy is to recognize academic achievement and to establish a process for naming a valedictorian, or group of valedictorians, for any graduating class of a South Harrison high school in such a way that it celebrates those who have reached an established goal or academic distinction, rather than to create a norm-referenced process whereby students find themselves in competition with one another rather than with the concepts and ideas for which they have been asked to learn.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2009

Students will be recognized at graduation for having met the established unique requirements for graduating cum laude, magna cum laude, or summa cum laude. Students who graduate with a GPA of 3.5 or higher will be recognized as having graduated with distinction according to the criteria listed below. The final transcript will carry the designation of cum laude, magna cum laude, or summa cum laude along with the term “valedictorian” or “co-valedictorian” if that honor is so justly earned.

Cum Laude – “with praise” – This recognition is for students graduating with a GPA of ≥ 3.5 and < 3.75 . Students will be recognized with a white honor chord to be worn during graduation ceremonies.

Magna Cum Laude – “with great praise” – This recognition is for students graduating with a GPA of ≥ 3.75 and < 4.0 . Students graduating magna cum laude will be recognized with a green honor chord to be worn during graduation ceremonies.

Summa Cum Laude – “with highest praise” or “with highest honor” – This recognition is for students graduating with a GPA of ≥ 4.0 . Students graduating summa cum laude will be recognized with a yellow/gold honor chord to be worn during graduation ceremonies.

For the classes of 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012:

A valedictorian and salutarian will be selected using the traditional process of selecting the student with the highest GPA for valedictorian and the second highest GPA for salutarian. In case of a statistical tie, there will be co-valedictorians but no salutarian. In case of a statistical tie for salutarian, there will be co-salutarions along with the single named valedictorian.

A welcome address will be given by a member of the graduating class. The welcome address will be given by a graduating student who graduated with a GPA of at least 3.5. Students interested in giving the welcome address will give their speeches to a screening panel made up of at least three judges from outside of the school district and a student body representative.

For the classes of 2013 and beyond:

In addition to the cum laude, magna cum laude, and summa cum laude recognitions given above the valedictorian(s) and salutarian (if necessary) will be recognized using the following criteria: Valedictorian: All students graduating summa cum laude, and thus with a GPA of 4.0 or higher, will be considered a valedictorian or co-valedictorian at graduation ceremonies. Additionally, the term “valedictorian” will be placed on the transcript if there is only one who meets this criteria or the term “co-valedictorian” will be placed on the transcript if there is more than one who meets this criteria. Valedictorians or co-valedictorians will be recognized with a medal, sash, or in a similar

fashion during the ceremony. Two addresses will be given during the graduation ceremony in addition to the welcome address.

One address will be given by the valedictorian. In the case of more than one, one co-valedictorian will give an address and that speaker will be selected by all of the valedictorians. In case of a tie, a screening panel made up of at least three judges from outside of the school district will decide.

A second graduation address will be given by a student graduating magna cum laude or summa cum laude. Any student with a GPA of 3.75 or higher will have the opportunity to speak to a panel of at least three judges from outside of the school district. This panel will decide the student who will give the second graduation address. The second graduation address must be given by a student who is not giving any other address during the graduation ceremony. Should the selected student be a co-valedictorian, the speech will be labeled a “co-valedictorian address”; otherwise, it will be labeled as a “graduation address”. During the ceremony, this speech will proceed the address given by the valedictorian or a co-valedictorian.

Should no student graduate summa cum laude (i.e. with a GPA of 4.0 or higher), the student with the highest GPA will be considered the valedictorian and the student with the second highest GPA will be considered the salutatorian. Both will be invited to give an address at the graduation ceremony with the “salutatorian address” going first followed by the “valedictorian address”. Should one or both of these students choose not to speak, a speaker will be selected using the criteria described above from a pool of candidates with a GPA of 3.75 or higher (see proceeding paragraph). Should there be no interested students in this category, the criteria will continue to be lowered by quarter percentage point intervals until a speaker (or pair of speakers) is found.

Should only one student graduate with a GPA of 4.0 or higher (i.e. “summa cum laude”), the student with the second highest GPA will be named salutatorian with all other procedures for the graduation ceremony as described above applying.

The goal of this policy is to create a clear understanding that the standards for determining valedictorians, co-valedictorians, and salutatorians should be chosen based on criteria and established goals.

Approved by the Board of School Trustees – May 5, 2009