

What happened to the Valedictorian and who is going to speak at graduation?

As we get close to graduating the Class of 2018, we have had to address this question a couple of times. We thought there might be more parents with the same question, so we will share our answer to this question with the full population to keep everyone informed. Nevertheless, to answer the question about Valedictorian, let's step back a few years.

In 2013-14, the school established a Laude committee, which was tasked at creating a Laude system with an implementation plan. It required the committee to also come up with a plan to sunset the honors diploma, class rank and the designation of a Valedictorian. The committee was made up of representatives from every subject area, including counselors and administrators. In the end, the committee put forth a proposal, which outlined the Laude system, created an implementation plan, and addressed the sun setting of class rank, the honors diploma and Valedictorian designation. This plan was presented to and adopted by School Board in the spring of 2014.

When changing over to the Laude system, committee members, as well as members of the School Board, were very adamant that such a plan not change any process or expectations for current students. This meant, through the Class of 2017, traditional elements must be maintained. Below you will see the plan that was put in place and adopted by the School Board. The Class of 2018 is the first class where full implementation takes place. Starting from their first semester of their freshmen year, students in the Class of 2018 were told about the Laude system and the elimination of the Valedictorian designation.

Laude System Implementation Plan

Graduation Class	2015	2016 & 2017	2018
Valedictorian	Determined by GPA & ACT	Determined by GPA & ACT	No Valedictorian
Laude	No	Recognized on diploma & graduation program	Recognized on diploma, graduation program, and with cord
Class Rank	Yes	Yes	No
Honors Diploma	Yes	Yes	No

Given this background, we now want to share how this relates to the graduation ceremony. In the past, during the graduation ceremony there was a student speaker who was the designated Valedictorian. During the creation of the Laude system, it was recognized that starting with the Class of 2018, there would not be a Valedictorian and so this meant no designated student speaker. Given this, the committee considered two options. The first option was to eliminate the student speaker altogether and just have the Class President address the class. The second option was keep a student speaker and

come up with a selection process. The second option was chosen, using the same process that is used to select the faculty speaker. That is, the senior class advisors seek nominations from all seniors. This is done through email, providing seniors a form to write a name of a classmate or even themselves for the speaking opportunity. Once names are gathered, the list of students is sent out to all seniors and they are asked to select the classmate they want to deliver the class speech. Advisors do not eliminate any nominations unless a student, due to them requesting it, does not want to do the speech.

As we have communicated to the families that have asked about this, we realize this change in process involves a change in tradition, which can be hard. While we like to boast Central as an innovator, when it comes to the Laude system and the movement away from a Valedictorian and a class speaker selected on GPA, Central is not the leader in this area and has joined many of our neighboring districts who have already moved away from the more traditional approach. Four years ago, when the Class of 2018 first entered Central, this topic was most likely not on the forefront of parents and students thoughts, but now that we are approaching the pivotal point in their high school career, we wanted to take the opportunity to remind parents and students of this process that started over four years ago.