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TO: Tuscola High School Students and Families  
FROM: Travis Collins, T.H.S. Principal  
Re: Press Release from Haywood County Schools

**Haywood County Schools – Valedictorian and salutatorian phased out over two-year period to expand recognition to additional high performing graduates**

Under a transition plan designed to recognize additional high performing graduates, Haywood County Schools is phasing out valedictorian and salutatorian recognitions. During the transition 2015-16 graduates and 2016-17 graduates will be eligible to receive recognition as valedictorian or salutatorian. This transition has already taken place in numerous school districts across the state and nation. In Western North Carolina several districts are making similar changes.

The change is governed by School Board Policy 3450 Class Rankings, the administrative regulations for policy 3450 and School Board Policy 3460 Graduation Requirements. Graduates with outstanding academic achievement as indicated in the cumulative grade point average (GPA) will be recognized as Honor Graduates. GPAs of 4.50 and above will be recognized as Summa Cum Laude. GPAs of 4.25-4.999 will be recognized as Magna Cum Laude. GPAs of 4.0-4.249 will be recognized as Cum Laude. Class rank will continue to be included on student transcripts for use by potential colleges, universities and employers.

Graduates will have the opportunity to earn one or more diploma endorsements identifying a particular area of focused study based on criteria established by the State Board of Education. These endorsements include (1) Career Endorsement (2) College Endorsement (3) NC Academic Scholars Endorsement and/or (4) Global Languages Endorsement. A merit sticker will also be awarded to graduates who rank in the top ten percent (10%) of their high school's graduating class and achieve a score on the SAT or ACT which is higher than the previous year's national average.

The expanded recognition was discussed by school administrators and the Board of Education over a period of months during policy committee meetings and Board work sessions. "We have many outstanding graduates attending colleges and universities across the country," said Associate Superintendent Bill Nolte. "It seems appropriate to focus on the 'many' rather than the 'few'.