

Class of 2025 Student Report

2021-2022 MMRHS School Year

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Overview

The data below is the product of student organized and conducted research. We collected it in two different phases. Phase One focused on quantitative data: on May 18th the Freshman class gathered in the cafeteria and we briefed them on the survey content, where the information would be going, and how it would hopefully be used. Then, we lead them through a survey, which inquired the following questions:

- If you are earning honors distinction which classes are you earning it in?
- How engaging are each of your classes?
- Do you understand how your grades work around proficiency-based rubrics?
- Do you go off of number or word grades more?
- What is your racial/ethnic background? (Choose all that apply.)
- What is your gender identity? (we have structured this question to be consistent with our data for comparison purposes - we realize that there are many more choices and invite you to self-describe if the choices offered do not apply to you.)
- Do you have any of the following? (IEP, 504, free lunch, etc.)
- Is there anything else you want to share anonymously?

Phase Two focused on qualitative data. We collected the data on the following Thursday (May 26). Select Freshman facilitated discussions in all 11 advisories. 9th and 10th grade teachers were in the room, but only took notes and observed. The discussions followed (but were not restricted by) these questions:

- How do you feel about classroom dynamics? Relationships/communication with students? Teachers?
- Do you feel comfortable asking questions in class? Whole group? Small group? Individually with teachers? Why or why not?
- How would you describe your stress levels?
- Do your classes satisfy your academic needs, are they challenging?
- What has gone well?
- What do you think honors work should look like/involve?
- Do your teachers communicate what proficiency-based learning is?

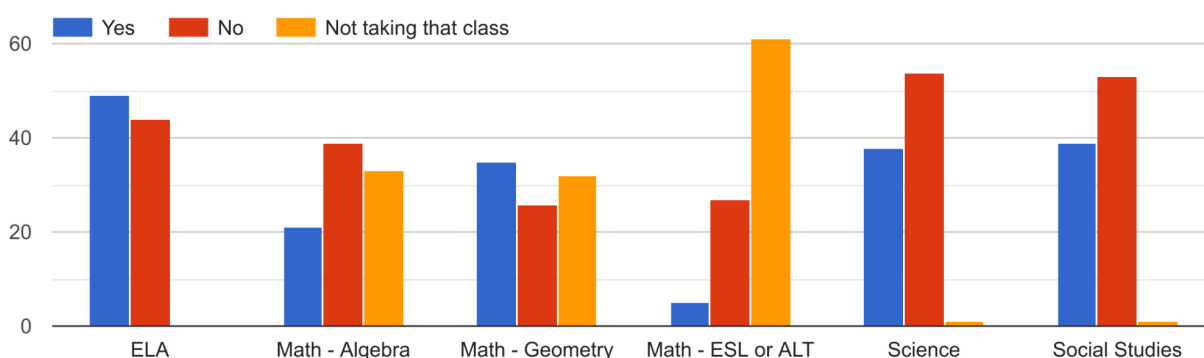
Survey and Numerical Data

Data as of 6/13/2022: Total 9th Grade Responses: 91 (137 total freshman students)

Percentage of freshman class that took the survey: **66%**

This is data collected from both the student conducted survey mentioned above (Freshman Proficiency/Deleveling Survey) and a separate survey sent to students by the administration (Student Survey June 2022).

14. Are you earning honors distinction as of 3rd quarter in your core classes?



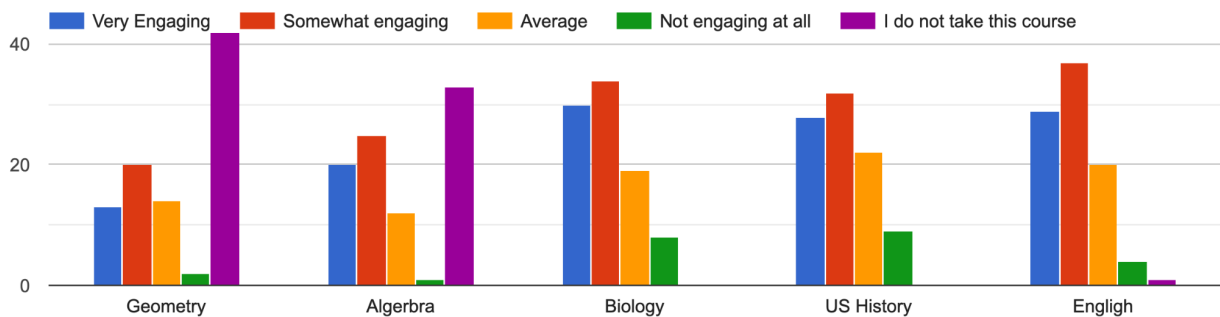
Honors Distinction per Class (based on graph above from *Student Survey June 2022*)

Class	Number of students earning honors distinction	Number of students not earning honors distinction	Percentage earning honors distinction
Math - Geometry	34	26	57%
Math - Algebra	21	39	35%
Math - ESL or ALT	5	27	16%
English	48	44	53%
US History	38	53	42%
Biology	37	54	41%

Honors Distinction Data (collected from *Freshman Proficiency/Deleveling Survey* with 91 responses)

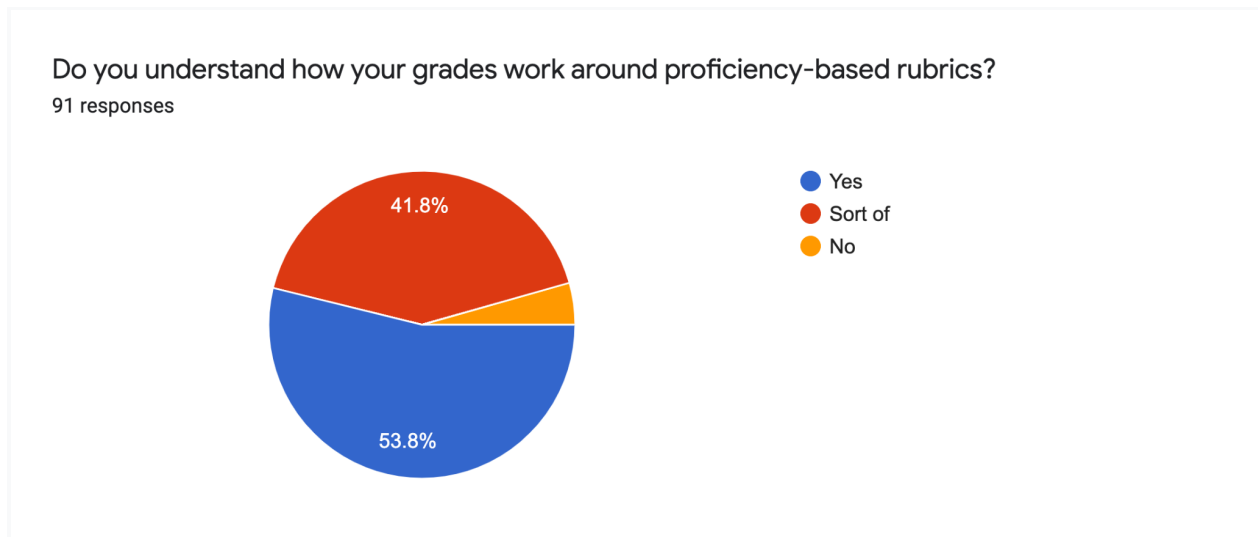
Number and Specific question	Percentage
25 out of 91 students are not earning any Honors Distinction	27%
66 out of 91 students are earning Honors Distinction in at least one class	73%
26 out of 91 students are earning honors distinction in a singular class - 26 out of the 66 students earning honors distinction earn it in a singular class	29% 39%
15 out of 91 students are earning Honors Distinction in all four core classes (English, Geometry/Algebra, Biology, USH9)	16%

How engaging are each of your classes?



Engagement: (As explained to students before the survey was taken.) This question was aimed at discovering how academically engaged students are within their various classes. We told students that by “engagement” we were aiming to find out if their classes were appropriately challenging and satisfied what they wanted/needed from school.

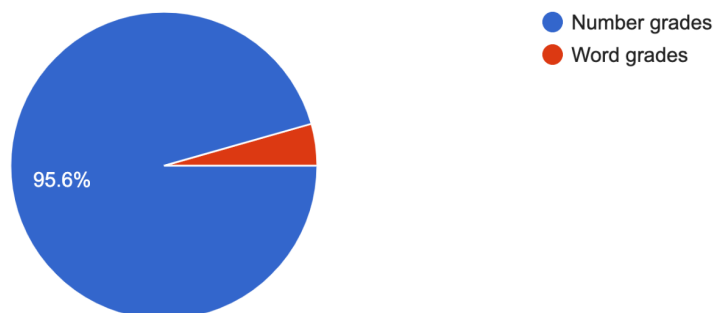
Relationship between Honors Distinction and Engagement	Percentage
Out of 66 students who earned Honors Distinction in at least one class this year, 8 found the majority of their classes to be “very engaging”	13%
Out of 91 responses, 18 students found the majority of their classes to be “somewhat engaging”	20%
Out of the 18 students that found the majority of their classes to be “somewhat engaging”, 6 of those students were earning Honors Distinction in more than one class	33%
Out of the 18 students that found the majority of their classes to be “somewhat engaging”, 12 of those students were either earning Honors Distinction in a singular class or not at all	67%



Proficiency Grading: Close to half of the students who participated in the survey do not fully understand what they are being graded on. If students are unacquainted with the way their work is being assessed they cannot grow or develop academically.

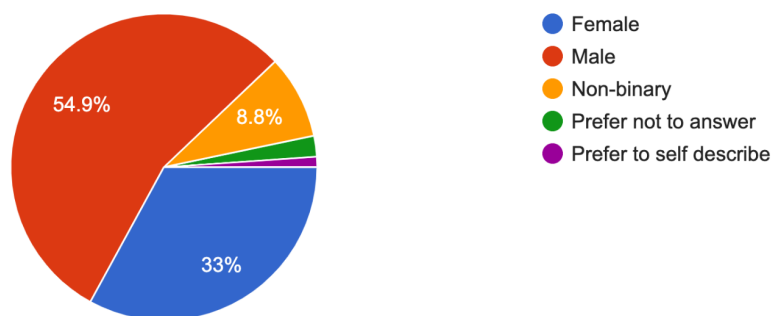
Do you go off of number or word grades more?

91 responses



What is your gender identity? (we have structured this question to be consistent with our data for comparison purposes - we realize that there are ma...cribe if the choices offered do not apply to you.)

91 responses



Identification for Survey Members	Percentage
Students that are of White or European Ancestry	79%
Students that Identified as Female	33%
Students that Identified as Male	55%
Students that Identified as Non-Binary	12%
Students who have a 504	9%
Students who have an IEP	12%

Quality of Class/Class Dynamics

Comfort Levels in Class

In response to the question “Do you feel comfortable asking questions in class?”, students claimed that, overall, they don’t feel judged by their peers. However, they sometimes do by their teachers. Students find that it’s hard to ask questions when they expect to get the answer wrong, and when they feel that a wrong answer won’t be acceptable. They feel rushed to understand and they feel shut down when they aren’t keeping up with the rest of the class or with the teacher.

Class Productivity

Teachers seem to struggle with class management, and understandably so. Teachers must handle 20+ students, all with different rates of learning and levels of interest. This is no easy task for anyone, and it creates an inefficient and stressful learning environment. “I prefer smaller groups because people just mess around in big groups,” one student claimed. “It feels like teachers aren’t teaching because of the big crazy group.”

Student Relationship with Work

Some students claim that their classes are moving too slowly, that they just end up doing work for the students around them. In fact, it is not uncommon at all for students to be passing only because of help from their peers. More bluntly, students pass because they cheat. Photos of worksheets get passed around every day, and teachers who think their students are largely understanding the subject don’t realize that their students are only passing because they aren’t turning in their own work. If they can’t bring themselves to enable cheating, stronger students end up taking their own time during study hall and advisory and class and even at home to teach their friends things that they should be learning in class, but that teachers can’t sacrifice time for.

While students claim that “it’s easier to get work done in a small group [because] you can work faster,” many students say that they feel rushed in classes, and “prefer a smaller group because [they] feel left behind if there’s a bigger group.” It may feel to some students like “their teachers are teaching down,” but to others, it feels like the class is moving too quickly. Relative to the academically excelling people around them, many students feel forgotten or neglected, feel that they are so far behind that asking a question about something will only be embarrassing.

Enjoyment Levels

Based on much of the feedback we gathered, students don’t feel engaged in class. They don’t enjoy their classes and they don’t feel fulfilled by them. When teachers are excited to teach, it transfers to the students. Hands-on learning works best for most people; students do not like computer work. In some classes, all students do is watch a video and fill out a worksheet, even though they prefer discussion with classmates: “I don’t pick up material if I have no chance to talk about it with peers,” one student claimed. Classes that students were once engaged in are no longer interesting, and people are “falling through the cracks” in some.

At the end of the survey, we left an option for students to add anything that they wanted to mention. This is what one student said: “Kids shouldn’t be getting anxious thinking about waking up and going to school. I think teachers should work with the students on creating an environment where students feel proud of their learning. From speaking with many students, most of them are not proud of themselves and they lack motivation to get work done because instead of teachers congratulating them for the work they have done they focus on the work we got wrong which makes us embarrassed and makes us feel not good enough. For me this really took away my love for learning. I now sit in class counting down the hours until I get to go home. And I know that sounds very typical, but so many students don’t want to feel like this anymore.”

Proficiency Based Learning/Rubrics

Proficiency-based learning has been interpreted as an opportunity to move away from stigmas surrounding number grades and to allow everyone the ability to strive for excellence. These concepts have been integrated in a way that has caused many students confusion and left them asking what proficiency-based learning and rubrics are for.

According to the data, 95.6% of the students in the freshman class ignore proficiency-based rubrics when trying to find their grade, and instead rely on PowerSchool for a number grade. For students who do use proficiency-based rubrics, there seemed to be a consensus that proficiency-based grading was too inconsistent and confusing: what do each of the words actually mean, and how do they translate to number grades? How is a 94 different from a 95 in the excelling category? Having such a large margin of numbers within each proficiency category causes students to feel confused as to how their grade is translated. One student mentioned that, in the past, number grades in the nineties were very common for them. Now, with the new terms, excelling students (number grades that range from 90-100) must be getting everything correct and be going “above and beyond the assignment” according to rubrics. “For many students, in order to get excelling, it’s really hard- if you get something wrong you can’t get excelling- it’s automatically proficient. Not only does this make the students feel bad about themselves, but proficiency-based rubrics make some students feel like they are treated as younger than they actually are.”

In order for the students to be less confused, there needs to be a decision on what system MMRHS is choosing to go forward with. Working on a proficiency-based scale while still having number grades is unfair to students and causes immense frustration and stress. If MMRHS is looking to adapt to a proficiency-based grading system, no numbers can be used at all, or the system does not work.

Students are struggling to find consistency between classes with proficiency-based rubrics and how they work; they feel that there is not enough consistency with the grading policies in general. In the students’ eyes, they want more specific feedback and rubrics, so they can better understand where they fall on the proficiency scale. Finally, results from discussions with the freshman student body proved that there is a large consensus around the idea that proficiency-based learning has been successful in English and social studies classes, as the idea is to fully understand the material and build skills for writing and drive each student to excellence. A 94 versus a 95 in an English paper is not that different, whereas, in math and sciences, where information is more quantitative, a 94 versus a 95 can be much larger. Students feel that proficiency-based learning has been less successful in math and science classes. When feedback is given that needs to be so specific in classes such as math and science, numbers are important. In order for things to run smoothly next year, a proposed idea would be to have the math and sciences stay in number grades and for the English and social studies departments to fully adapt a proficiency-based scale, doing away with all numbers.

Deleveling

The goal of deleveling is to ensure that students are being adequately challenged across the board. It is to make sure that all students have the opportunity to be in classes with teachers who have high expectations so that all students can become proficient and have the opportunity to excel. It is also meant to get rid of the stigma of being labeled a "Standard" or "CP" student, as it's believed that these labels cause students to underestimate themselves and have low self-esteem. In an ideal world, this transition would make the ability to earn honors distinction more accessible to all students while still maintaining the same amount of academic rigor the Monument curriculum has offered in past years. We need to work together to make this happen.

One of the main problems that students mentioned with honors distinction was that it was almost always out-of-class assignments. The goal of deleveling was to make work available to all students. Making all honors work out of class assignments doesn't really achieve that. Many students have difficult at-home situations that make it even harder for them to earn honors distinction. There was a general consensus among the students that if more honors distinction work was in class more students would engage in it. One student explained, "I didn't do honors distinction- if there's a test I am taking and there's an HD problem on the test, I will try to do it." Having the work in class pushes more people to try out honors assignments and challenge themselves. One time that honors distinction worked extremely well was when a class was going into independent work and two different worksheets were offered; one being a standard CP assignment, and the other being a different more challenging honors assignment. The students were able to work simultaneously while being challenged at different levels. A similar model for teaching a de leveled class would look like this: starting with the entire class together and teaching everyone to have a basic understanding of the subject, and then splitting into two smaller groups, one starting to work on the assignment, and the other diving into the specificities of the subject and later beginning a more challenging assignment. Students would be in control of which group they worked with and would be able to change if they felt uncomfortable.

The thing we want to stress the most is that the majority of the time honors work feels too much like busy work and does not offer enough challenge or intrigue. Sometimes the work is hard but tedious, other times work feels pointless. Many students want and need to be challenged in their academic classes. Honors distinction should be a way for students to dive deeper into the work that is being taught. One student said, "Striving for honors should be doing *better* on an assignment rather than doing *more* work." The amount of rigor that was offered in classes this year was insufficient and did not prepare students for upcoming AP courses. Towards the end of the year, many teachers stopped providing honors work all together. Some teachers said that they were doing this as a "favor" to students but it may be a disservice. Honors assignments and projects are necessary for students to be prepared for harder classes in years to come

We need make sure the quality of education and the culture of classes is improved rather than harmed by deleveling and proficiency-based learning. Watching students and teachers leave because of this new system is demoralizing

and erodes confidence in the education that Monument is providing. The reputation of our school is at risk if we cannot ensure deleveling and proficiency-based learning are implemented successfully. We are at risk of becoming a district in which families who can afford to opt into private school will do so and families who cannot will choose to live in a different school district or choose into another school. Monument is an amazing school with brilliant and hard-working teachers. There is such a positive culture among students and faculty, and a diverse student body. We cannot lose our school's reputation for excellence. All of these changes were made with the best of intentions but we have to make sure we are achieving what we set out to achieve and that we are doing so without losing what has made Monument great for so long.

Direct Quotes from Students

Collected during Phase Two

- “I feel like this system is failing the students who are trying to get an advanced academic experience”
- “I know a lot of people are interested in transferring to other schools or private schools. We need to build and fix our structure to show the value attending monuments brings.”
- (Do you feel comfortable asking questions in class?) “It depends on the class- in math, I don’t feel comfortable- I feel rushed to understand- it’s hard to have conversations. Bio or english, it’s easier because everyone is discussing the same sort of things. In math, you feel shut down if you don’t understand what’s going on. I feel having a connection with the teacher makes it better.”
- “I think that sometimes in the classes where we are trying to learn a lot more quickly- it can be hard because we are going too quickly. If a class is going too fast it feels rushed- it can be tricky if you have a question you don’t want to necessarily answer.”
- “You can be failing a class and still get honors distinction, how does that make sense? Striving for honors should be doing *better* on an assignment rather than doing *more* work.”
- “In the past years, when we have done grades, excelling has to be perfect. In the past, I have been able to get nineties and not get everything correct. In order to get excelling, it’s really hard- if you get something wrong you can’t get excelling- it’s automatically proficient.”
- “I’m ok with asking questions. If I need help with something and want to get better at something, I think its good for me to talk to my teacher to further get better.”
- “Just as long as I am graded fairly and given the option to succeed where I have failed I will be happy with that system”
- “I think that the lack of honors/AP classes, and putting everyone into one class is a good thing. I enjoy being in a class with all sorts of people.”
- “High school just isn’t fun and I think it should be. Kids shouldn’t be getting anxiety thinking about waking up and going to school. I think teachers should work with the students on creating an environment where students feel proud of their learning. From speaking with many students, most of them are not proud of themselves and they lack motivation to get work done because instead of teachers congratulating them for the work they have done. They focus on the work we got wrong which makes us embarrassed and makes us feel not good enough. For me this really took away my love for learning. I now sit in class counting down the hours until I get to go home. And I know that sounds very typical, but so many students don’t want to feel like this anymore. Despite us being older and in high school we should still be able to have fun. And there can be a way to get work done with also making sure kids are not struggling!”
- “Honors distinction should not be additional work, it should only be an alternative, more challenging option.”

Conclusion

We wish to begin this conclusion with an acknowledgment. The teachers of this year's freshman class, the "9th grade team," have worked so hard. They have been there, as best as they were able, for every student. They have spent countless hours in meetings, discussing, brainstorming, and striving to make this year work as best they could. These teachers are phenomenal, brilliant, and dedicated to our students. We want to draw the reader's perspective back to what this data is trying to accomplish: making next year's academics better across the board, not targeting specific subjects or teachers for what did not go well and any faults that occurred this year. The teachers have worked so hard to try and cultivate success for the students and we wish we had more time and resources to call attention to and acknowledge this. We thank the teachers for their support in the collection of this data and the completion of this report. Without them, we would have been unable to carry out the assembly, survey, and advisory discussions. They have taken what was given to them and the time they were provided and made the best of the situation. This data is extremely harsh and discouraging at points, and we appreciate the teachers willingness to help us and improve the school experience.

The information above is the direct reflection of the 2021-2022 school year for the freshman class. The data shows how the students have felt about the system changes and the school year overall. The question is: "Where do we go from here?" How can the administration, the teachers, and, at some level, the students, make sure that the following 3 years are ones that reflect the rigorous academic potential that Monument has and can deliver for each and every student.

As students, we cannot know how proficiencies will be most efficiently taught. It is not up to us to decide the ways that the teachers will run their classes. We suggest that the 9th and 10th grade teachers partake, at the very least, in some sort of training this summer to be more readily prepared for next year. We wish to remind the administration that the schools who successfully carry out proficiencies spent much more time, in many cases a couple of years, training their teachers before even rolling out the system. We also suggest that if the administration is planning on continuing this for the foreseeable future that the younger grades start it as well. If students have spent their whole academic lives judging their success by their numerical grade they will not judge said success by anything else if, as it now is, their number grade is still available in PowerSchool. Starting in the younger grades, where the brain is much more malleable, students could actually grow up judging their work based on a proficiency scale. They would be thinking in terms of those proficiencies, not just translating them into their numerical counterpart.

This system is meant to make challenging material and classes more accessible to any student that may wish to experience them. But we must not let this goal distract from the very real need of the students who *require* the academic challenge that honors classes once provided. Honors work cannot be an extra worksheet or non-class related research project. When a student achieves honors distinction, it has to mean that they partook in work and learning that was more in-depth than that of the average class. It means that the actual material, not the amount of work or the way the work looks/is presented, is richer and more complex than what is being taught to

non-honors distinction earning students. To deny students who crave more challenge the opportunity to be challenged is to take away an academic right. Students who aspire to go to schools with highly competitive atmospheres will not be fully prepared if this is how we continue. Removing honors classes does not mean that there are no longer “honors students” in the school that need to be taught and challenged. Students who want more challenge in the freshman class observe that teachers are teaching down in their curriculums. The whole concept is called “de-leveling.” But we shouldn’t aim to bring students into the middle of the academic scale if they are fully adept to do more and excel in an environment with more challenge and rigor. We should try to guide all of our students to a higher academic standing; it should be called “leveling-up.” How can we expect the students who want to succeed and achieve excellence to do so if they are no longer partaking in rigorous course content? The students who dedicate everything to school and academics cannot be forgotten as we try to support students who are not as academically inclined or engaged.

Of course, students who are not as academically inclined are equally important and deserve the opportunities that this system was designed to provide them with. We cannot teach a class that's overwhelmingly difficult and expect all students to meet a level they are not all academically adept to succeed in. Students who would've thrived in an CP level class are now feeling overshadowed by high-achieving students. It is a simple fact that people learn at different paces and in different ways. Placing all students together can leave some feeling inadequate. This makes students discouraged and almost recreates the structure that we are trying to break away from. The classes that are painfully boring to the students who want more challenge, the classes that are “teaching down,” are accompanied by classes that are “teaching up.” In these classes, students who feel left behind are struggling, often failing (or close to failing) at least one quarter and possibly the entire year. Here students are trying to get by but cannot meet the workload or work requirement that they need to. This leads to unhealthy school habits and students who are struggling rely on the excelling students for homework, answering questions from the teachers, and sending pictures of completed worksheets. It is discouraging to be in a classroom with people who seemingly can effortlessly comprehend the subjects that are more challenging for you to pick up.

A de-leveled class cannot be catered to the most academically engaged but cannot, on the other hand, favor the students who are academically struggling. It must be balanced, offering the “honors” opportunity to everyone without making it easy enough that it can be achieved without much work. Maybe this is not possible to do without some form of leveling inside the classroom, which defeats the original purpose in the first place.

We cannot forget what really matters. We cannot sacrifice the students and their educational needs, for the ability to call Monument a de-leveled school. The students of the freshman class do not have the time to wait 5 years for a “fully functioning” proficiency system. We have three years left and we need Monument to provide us with the education we require at the beginning of the next school year, it cannot be put off any longer. There is a general feeling among the freshmen that we are being “tested on”, and we feel as if our needs are being put second to the success of this program and the potential reputation of Monument. As students who crave challenge, it is scary to feel like we wasted a year of highschool. All four of us want to get into

the best possible schools available to support our future plans and we all want to feel prepared for that atmosphere. We need highschool to get us where we want to go.