

OPINION

LUNCH FOOD PRODUCTS

Don't force students into throwing away fruit

Free school lunches have been a resource for Branham and other public schools in California since the beginning of COVID, providing lunch to about six million students across the state. At Branham, an average of 575 students take advantage of this resource, according to the kitchen lead **Oscar Celaya**. The program provides a meal for students at brunch and lunch, requiring a fruit in addition to their meal at lunch, which is in accordance with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) regulations. However, many students choose not to eat the

Editorial
The opinion of the Bear Witness editors

fruit they are being handed and instead throw them away or leave them in the cafeteria. For reference, 187 fruits were left on the condiment cart outside The Kitchen on September 20, meaning a minimum of 19.77% students decided not to eat their fruits that day. This is a usual occurrence.

While the cafeteria cleans and reuses the fruit, there is only so much time before the fruit may go bad. Since they still have to order the fruits and put them out each day, this is not only an inefficient use of money but also of the food itself. Despite this, the school still needs to order and put out more than enough fruits for the students so each student that wants one can have one. However, with the variety of fruits provided for students, there are more than enough left over in addition to the ones put on the condiments carts. Leaving this food out

and causing it all to go through the washing process each day deteriorates the fruit, which compared to leaving it refrigerated is ineffective. Since students cannot be forced to eat the fruit, having the requirement be instead optional would reduce food waste because it would allow the fruits to remain refrigerated and preserved for longer, and wouldn't require the school to order as much each week. This change would lead to a more efficient cafeteria and reduce the amount of fruit that gets thrown away on campus.

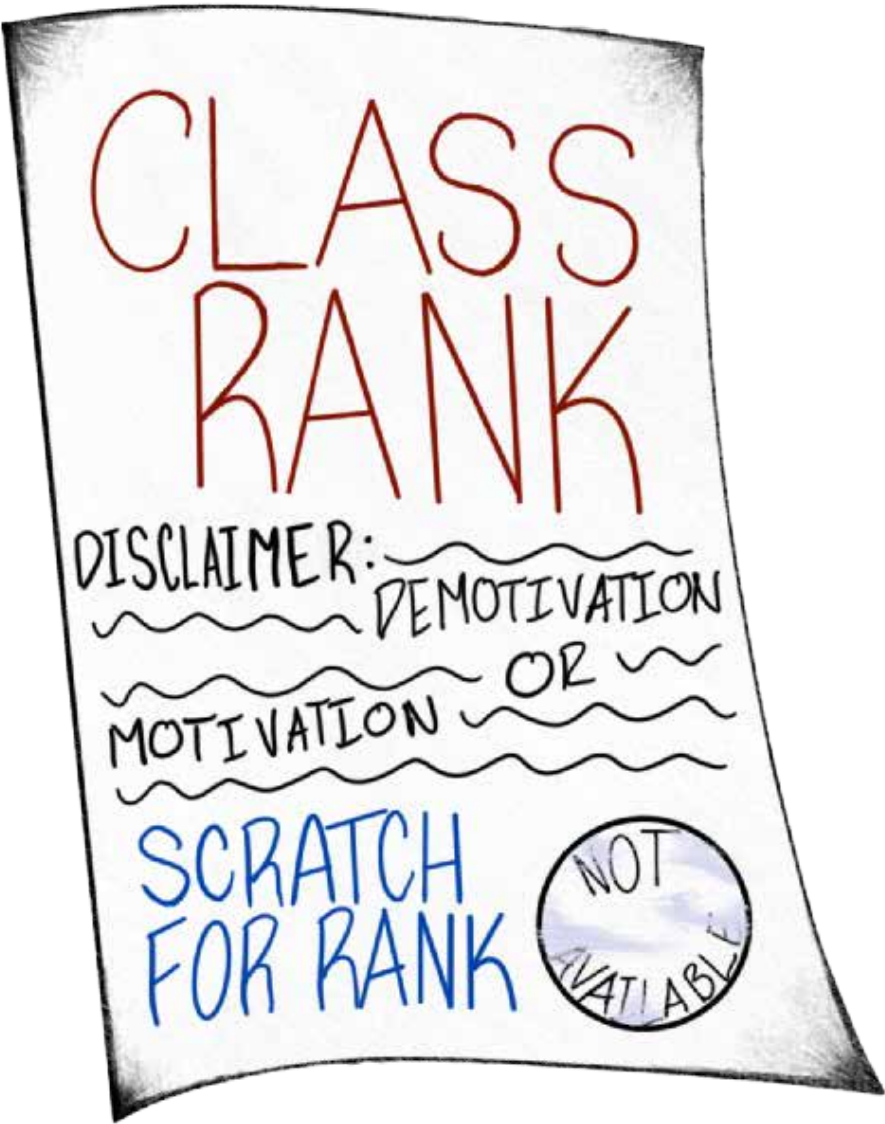
CLASS RANK

KNOWING OUR PLACE

Even with class rankings gone, many would still like to see where they stand academically

ALAN SCHAEFFER
Sports Editor

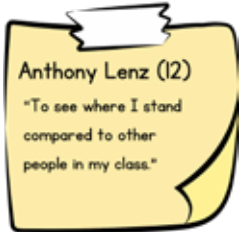
According to Plutarch's "Caesar," the future Roman emperor was crossing the Alps when he came across a small Barbarian village. His men laughed at the thought of the village having competitive elections and struggles for power. To this, Caesar replied, "I would rather be first here than second at Rome." In a world where college admissions are becoming more and more competitive, high schools nationwide are reconsidering the necessity of class rank and whether it may have an impact on student's mental health. According to U.S. News and World Reports, about half of all U.S. high schools still use class rank. Branham is not one of them. Last year, the district stopped reporting class rank on students' transcripts but still had them on file. This year, they have completely done away with it, and neither teachers nor counselors can view class rank. A 2021 study from the Journal of Student Research finds that the effect is not so definitive. According to the study, which surveyed a collection of juniors at a Texas high school, although lower-ranking participants were demotivated by their standings, many others credited it for holding them accountable and motivating them to succeed further. But removing class rank isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. The study shows that the effect class rank has on students' mental health has more to do with their personality. Those who prioritized their grades were more likely to be stressed out by their class rank but may also see it as a motivator to keep or improve their ranking. On the other hand, those who were less concerned with the status of their grades were not as stressed over their ranking, but it also didn't motivate them to improve their standing. While certainly done with good intentions, a Bear Witness survey of 293 students found that 80% of respondents would be interested in knowing their class rank if offered the option to view. As a measurement of student achievement, class rank is being held in less value than it used to be. With many schools already test-blind or test-optional, fewer schools are taking class rank into much consideration either. According to U.S. News and World Report, only 37% of colleges nationwide consider class rank to be "very important" or "important" when it comes to admissions decisions.



Reese Gardner/Bear Witness

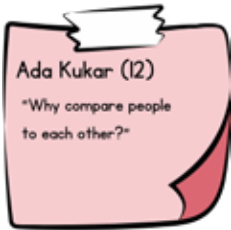
Since it's not a major factor in college acceptance, Branham shouldn't feel a need to report class rank on transcripts. But that doesn't mean it shouldn't be available. The simple solution is for class rank to be available to students upon request. If a student feels that seeing their class rank might motivate them to work harder and fight for a top percentage, then they should be able to. On the other hand, if a student has no interest in seeing where they stand in relation to other classmates or thinks knowledge of

their ranking would only demotivate them, it should not be publicly available for them. Caesar shows us that ranking has always been a key motivator for some. Although just a number, first place is something that naturally competitive humans always seek to achieve. By showing students their rankings upon request, Branham has the opportunity to encourage students to reach further and achieve higher, while forgoing the pitfalls of stress and possible demotivation of the student body.



CASE FOR CLASS RANKING

Motivation and Accountability: Research indicates that class rank can motivate some students to excel academically by providing a clear measure of their standing compared to peers. It can create healthy competition and encourage students to work harder to improve their rankings. **College admissions:** While less influential than before, class rank can still be a factor in college admissions for some institutions. A higher rank may enhance a student's chances of acceptance at colleges that consider it important. **Student choice:** Offering class rank on request allows students to make an informed decision. Those who find it motivating can access their rank, while those who prefer not to see it can choose not to.



CASE AGAINST CLASS RANKING

Mental health: Class rank can negatively impact students' mental health, especially for those who prioritize grades. It can lead to stress, anxiety, and self-esteem issues, particularly for students lower in the ranking. **Demotivation:** While class rank motivates some, it can demotivate others who may feel discouraged by lower rankings. This demotivation may be particularly pronounced among students who are less grade-focused. **Declining importance:** Class rank's significance in college admissions is decreasing. Fewer colleges consider it important, which reduces its relevance as a measurement of student achievement. — Alan Schaeffer

BITE-SIZED OPINIONS Minor problems, minor solutions



Problem: The desks are so small that students often hit their water bottles off on accident. It's embarrassing when the metal clanks on the ground and the class is silent.
Solution: Make everyone put their water bottles on the floor to minimize sound and maximize space.
— Lauren Gernale



Problem: I frequently trip over people's water bottles on the floor, and it makes a big clacking sound which hurts my foot and ears.
Solution: Make water bottles that have an auto piloting system so that they can avoid me and others. Also, make sure it has a silent mode so that it doesn't make the loud noise.
— Jiyeon Choi



Problem: Sometimes I get really hungry in class and I just can't focus.
Solution: Have a Branham food delivery system where you can order food from restaurants close to Branham and it gets delivered to you in whatever class you are in. Blu-ber Eats.
— Makayla Wu



Problem: I wish there was a better way to control the lunch line crowd.
Solution: Split the lunch periods into two, like most large campuses have done. Upperclassmen can go first because they're more likely hungrier.
— Francisco Pham



Problem: The classrooms are always at the wrong temperature. It's always either too hot or too cold.
Solution: Give every student control of the air-conditioning system. Every request will battle it out with the others until the optimal temperature is reached.
— Supriya Khandelwal



Problem: I have so much stuff to do — study for tests, homework, college apps, prepare for the SAT. It feels like I have no time for myself.
Solution: Create a National Rest Day where everyone is required to just focus on themselves and not have to do anything but recharge for 24 hours.
— Lia Choi