



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Friday, December 19, 2008

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FAIRGRADE Press Statement - FCPS Report: An Investigation of the Grading Policy

Fairfax County, VA – Friday, December 19, 2008 -- “Since Thanksgiving, the FAIRGRADE leadership team has dedicated over 60 hours editing FCPS drafts and submitting our suggestions to FCPS administrators for inclusion in the final report about the FCPS Grading Policy. In our comments, FAIRGRADE repeatedly asked FCPS to clearly identify the negative impacts of the current grading policy, as demonstrated by the data.

Because FAIRGRADE was sufficiently troubled by the December 12th FCPS draft, we asked FCPS to remove the names of FAIRGRADE’s leadership team from the FCPS report. We do not know the extent to which FCPS subsequently changed its draft report, because FCPS will not provide FAIRGRADE with the copy that was sent to Superintendent Dale earlier this week. Thus, FAIRGRADE’s comments are based on the December 12th FCPS draft report.

Despite FAIRGRADE’s concerns that the December 12th FCPS draft report **understates** the magnitude of the negative impacts of FCPS grading policies, we believe that the research gathered over the last eight months overwhelmingly supports FAIRGRADE’s original findings that:

- 1.) The existing FCPS grading policy disadvantages students for admissions, merit scholarships and honors program placement,
- 2.) FCPS provides less weights for advanced courses than most comparable school districts,
- 3.) A majority of colleges surveyed do not recalculate GPAs,
- 4.) Nationwide, high school grading policies are trending towards the use of a 10-point scale with pluses, minuses, and extra weighting for advanced courses, and
- 5.) It still remains to be seen what evidence supports current FCPS grading policy.

FAIRGRADE will issue its own Executive Summary of the research findings for the School Board’s consideration in early January. We will also post on our website the data, analyses and background research literature requested by FAIRGRADE, but not included by FCPS in its final report.

According to FCPS officials, the January 8th regular School Board meeting agenda will include the grading policy issue, and the public can sign up in advance to speak about the FCPS report and the FCPS grading policy. On January 12th, Superintendent Dale is expected to present his recommendations at the School Board work session and it’s possible the School Board may vote on Dale’s recommendation(s) at the January 22nd regular School Board Meeting. FAIRGRADE will continue to update parents, the public and the media about this important issue.”

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