

FAIRGRADE

Mission Statement

... to revise FCPS grading policies so that FCPS students are no longer at a disadvantage in competing for college admissions, merit-based scholarships, and admissions to honors programs...

Presenters:

- *Megan McLaughlin*
- *Marcy Newberger*
- *Sara Pacqué-Margolis*

The content and citations for this presentation were compiled between October 2007 – March 2008

WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM NOW? (demographics)

Increasingly competitive college admissions:

- Greater number of graduating high school seniors
- Higher percentage of high school graduates attending college
- Greater number of college applications per high school senior
- Relatively constant number of freshmen seats available

WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM NOW? (costs)

- ***Over the past 30 years:***
 - College costs increased more rapidly than costs of other goods and services
- ***Over the past 10 years:***
 - > 5 % increase per yr in total costs for private four-year higher education
 - > 6 % increase per yr in total costs for public four-year higher education

HOW DO WE COMPARE?

	2005 SAT READING (AVERAGE)	2005 SAT MATH (AVERAGE)	2005 SAT TOTAL (AVERAGE)	2005 GPA (AVERAGE)
FCPS	549	565	1114	2.91
NATION	508	520	1028	2.98

Standards: Grading Scales and Advanced Course Weighting

GRADING SCALES

Fairfax County Scale

94 - 100	A
90 - 93	B+
84 - 89	B
80 - 83	C+
74 - 79	C
70 - 73	D+
64 - 69	D
Below 64	F

10 point scale

90 - 100	A
80 - 89	B
70 - 79	C
60 - 69	D
Below 60	F

WEIGHTED POINTS FOR HONORS AND AP/IB CLASSES:

Honors Classes (0 extra points / .5 extra points / 1.0 extra point)
AP/IB Classes (.5 extra points / 1.0 extra point)

GRADING POLICIES: IMPACT ON LETTER GRADES AND GPAs for VIRGINIA SCHOOLS

Course	Numeric Score	FAIRFAX	ARLINGTON	FALLS CHURCH	LOUDOUN	PRINCE WILLIAM
MATH Honors	93%	B+	A	A	A	A
ENGLISH AP	90%	B+	A	A-	B+	B+
PHYSICS Honors	99%	A	A	A+	A+	A
US HISTORY AP	83%	C+	B	B	C+	C+
SPANISH	93%	B+	A	A	A	A
Un-weighted GPA		3.40	3.80	3.80	3.58	3.56
Weighted GPA		3.60	4.20	4.20	3.86	4.06
Blue grades indicate 10 pt scale		0.5 AP	1.0 AP	1.0 AP	0.7 AP	0.5 some Honors 1.0 AP

FAIRFAX COUNTY – MONTGOMERY COUNTY GRADING POLICIES IMPACT

Fairfax student				CLASS / SCORE	Montgomery student			
LETTER GRADE	NUMBER GRADE	EXTRA POINT	FINAL GRADE		LETTER GRADE	NUMBER GRADE	EXTRA POINT	FINAL GRADE
B+	3.5		3.5	Math honors 93%	A	4.0	1.0	5.0
B+	3.5		3.5	English honors 90%	A	4.0	1.0	5.0
A	4.0		4.0	Chemistry honors 95%	A	4.0	1.0	5.0
C+	2.5	0.5	3.0	History AP 83%	B	3.0	1.0	4.0
B+	3.5		3.5	Spanish 92%	A	4.0		
GPA: 3.5					GPA: 4.6			

SOURCE: Marcy Newberger

THE WASHINGTON POST

GRADING POLICIES: IMPACT ON LETTER GRADES AND GPAs - NATIONALLY

Course	Numeric Score	FAIRFAX COUNTY	WELLESLEY HS (MA)	PRINCETON HS (NJ)	HM Gunn HS(CA)
MATH Honors	81%	C+	B-	B-	B
ENGLISH	83%	C+	B	B	B
PHYSICS Honors	80%	C+	B-	B-	B
U.S. HISTORY	73%	D+	C	C	C
SPANISH	87%	B	B+	B+	B
Un-weighted GPA		2.40	2.74	2.73	2.80
Weighted GPA		2.40	2.94	3.13	3.20
Blue grades indicate 10 pt scale		0.5 AP	0.5 Honors 1.0 AP	1.0 Honors /AP	1.0 Honors /AP

IMPACT OF FCPS GRADING POLICIES ON ADMISSIONS OFFICE REVIEW OF GPA

- **When GPA is taken directly from transcript:**
 - *FCPS Disadvantage:*
Grades based on 6 point not 10 point scale
 - *FCPS Disadvantage:*
Minimal weight given for advanced coursework

- **When GPA is re-calculated:**
 - *FCPS Disadvantage:*
Only letter grades used; pluses and minuses are dropped. (B+ becomes a B, C+ becomes a C, etc.)
 - *FCPS Disadvantage:*
Weights dropped; lower overall GPA since grading scale is not 10 points.



WHAT DOES IT COST US?

- Admissions to honors programs
- Receipt of merit-based scholarships
- NCAA academic eligibility requirements to play college sports
- Car insurance premium reductions

HONORS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS: VIRGINIA

School	Criteria	School Policy on GPA
Virginia Tech	Minimum 3.5 GPA/1400 SAT/ 31 ACT or Minimum 3.7 GPA/1300 SAT/ 29 ACT	“No exceptions” (Assistant Director of Admissions)
James Madison University	1300 SAT or 30 ACT or Top 10% of class or un-weighted GPA of 3.5	Minimum required to apply (Website recently changed to indicate exceptions may be allowed.)
George Mason University	Honors: strength of record Scholars: 3.7 GPA* /1300 SAT or 29 ACT (Scholars program provides full tuition) *GPA for this year	No exceptions on Scholars Program GPA Minimum requirement
Virginia Commonwealth	Un-weighted GPA 3.5 /1910 SAT	No credit for AP or Honors classes
Christopher Newport	3.5 GPA / 1200 SAT or 27 ACT	Honors council “exercises Discretion in Admittance”
Longwood University	Minimum “recalculated” GPA 3.5* *except under rare conditions	No weight for AP or Honors classes; only core classes considered in GPA
Radford University	Need two: 3.5 GPA or top 20% of class or 1100 SAT / 24 ACT	Admissions based on ratio of GPA and SAT; Varies each year

MERIT-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS - REQUIREMENTS

SCHOOL	CRITERIA	AWARD	ADMISSIONS OFFICE POLICY VIS-À-VIS GPA
Brigham Young University (Utah - private)	SAT >= 1560 and GPA >= 3.67 or SAT >= 1510 and GPA >= 3.78 or SAT >= 1460 and GPA >= 3.89	Four year Full tuition Scholarship	Un-weighted GPA calculated by BYU using Carnegie scale
George Mason University (Virginia - public)	Scholars Program SAT >= 1300 and GPA >= 3.7	Four year Full tuition Scholarship	Director of Scholars Program stated that for 2007 – 2008, there was a GPA minimum requirement with no exceptions
Lynchburg College (Virginia – private)	1100 SAT & 3.50 GPA or 1200 SAT & 3.25 GPA or 1250 SAT & 3.00 GPA	\$12,000 per year \$48,000 over 4 yrs	GPA taken right from the transcript No recalculation
Purdue University (Indiana - public)	Out-of-State SAT >= 1340 or ACT >= 30 and GPA >= 3.8 on 4 pt scale	\$10,000 per year \$40,000 over 4 yrs	GPA taken right from the transcript No recalculation

WHAT DOES IT COST US? A CASE STUDY

Business Week 2006 Ranking

Rank	School	Tuition (2006 – 2007)
■ 1.	Penn	\$32,000
■ 2.	U. VA	\$ 8,000
■ 3.	Notre Dame	\$32,000
■ 4.	MIT	\$32,000
■ 5.	Emory	\$31,000
■ 6.	Michigan	\$30,000
■ 7.	NYU	\$33,000
■ 8.	Brigham Young	\$ 4,000
■ 9.	Texas	\$20,000
■ 10.	Indiana	\$20,000

- James Madison ranked #35
- Virginia and JMU were the only two Virginia state schools in top 50

WHAT DOES IT COST US? A CASE STUDY

University of Virginia: Admissions Trends (30% to 35% out of state/yr)

Academic Year	Freshmen Applicants	Freshmen Applicants Admitted	% Admitted	Average HS GPA (enrolled freshmen)	Enrolled Freshmen with GPA ≥ 3.75 (percent)
2004 - 2005	14,822	5,760	38.9%	4.01	N/A
2005 - 2006	15,657	5,898	37.7%	4.04	83%
2006 - 2007	16,086	6,019	37.4%	4.07	86%
2007 - 2008	17,798	6,273	35.2 %	4.05	85%

WHAT DOES IT COST US? A CASE STUDY

Indiana University/Bloomington - The Kelley School of Business

- **Direct Freshman Admission: Honors Program**
 - ACT \geq 29 or SAT \geq 1270 and
 - **Top 10 percent of high school class or GPA \geq 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale)**

- **IU Merit Scholarship : \$8,000 per year (\$32,000 over four years)**
 - Out-of-state students
 - ACT \geq 29 or SAT \geq 1300 and
 - **Minimum GPA of 3.75**

“...IU does not refigure GPAs for freshman applicants. We accept the GPAs as submitted by high school counselors...” Nov 2007

Jocelyn Bowie, Director of Communications and Recruiting, IU College of Arts and Sciences



LOOKING FORWARD...

Why FCPS Needs to Revise Its Grading Scale

- High School Grades are the most important factor in college admissions

Hawkins & Clinedinst, "State of College Admission," NACAC, 2006

www.nacacnet.org

- The most common GPA scale is the 10 Point Grading Scale

National Center for Education Statistics, "NAEP High School Transcript Study...",
US Department of Education 2005 High School Transcript Study



45 NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS PREDOMINANTLY USE 10 POINT SCALE

- To date, Fairgrade has analyzed data from 45* of the top 100 “Gold Medal” schools** (2007)
 - 33 high schools use the 10 point grading scale
 - 1 high school uses a 6 point grading scale
 - 5 high schools use only numerical grades
 - 6 high schools have no official grading scale

* The 45 schools do not include the 3 Fairfax County Gold Medal schools.

** Gold Medal winner high schools as ranked by *U.S. News and World Reports 2007*



45 Gold Medal Winner Schools

Metropolitan Jurisdictions Represented

- New York
 - (Westchester, Long Island, suburban New Jersey)
- Boston
- Los Angeles
- San Francisco/Silicon Valley
- Washington, DC
- Philadelphia
- Chicago
- Miami/Jacksonville/Palm Beach
- Denver
- Dallas
- Seattle
- Cincinnati
- Tucson

How Does FCPS Highest Ranked Traditional High School Compare With Similar Gold Medal Winner High Schools? (2007)

High School (State)	Gold Medal Ranking	% Going to 4-Year College	Average V/M SAT Score	Weighted GPA 4.0 or higher
Langley HS (VA)	#37	85%	1214	5%
Churchill HS (MD)	#42	93%	1224	36%
HM Gunn HS (CA)	#66	75%	1293	20%
Wellesley HS (MA)	#70	94%	1220	32%
Manhasset HS (NY)	#78	92%	1180	21%
Palos Verdes HS (CA)	#93	80%	1125	30%

SCHOOL DISTRICTS CONVERTING TO TRADITIONAL 10 PT SCALE

(since 2005, illustrative)

- 15 school districts / 10 different states

- Reasons for conversion:
To remove students' disadvantage vis-à-vis:
 - College Admissions
 - Academic/Merit scholarships
 - NCAA Eligibility/Athletic scholarships
 - Car insurance premiums/Good driver discounts

SUPERINTENDENTS' PUBLIC STATEMENTS: REASONS FOR CONVERSION TO 10 POINT SCALE

- “This change helps our students as college admissions officers are generally unconcerned with our grading scale and only whether students earned an A, B, C or D. The change in scale helps our students compete...because many similar districts employ the 90-100 percent A scale.”

Superintendent Axner (Columbus Metro)

- "We thought that by having a more stringent grading scale it was doing our kids a service. We made an assumption that colleges would look at the grading scale. Well, they don't. An A is an A is an A"

Superintendent Wakeley (Chicago Metro)

- “It would level the playing field. What counts as an A for one student and doesn't for another could mean the difference in thousands of dollars in scholarships...We need to be in line with what our neighboring schools are doing...The state's superintendent and the state department of education are looking at it too.”

Scott County Superintendent McCurdy (Mississippi)

LET'S LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD

FCPS should revise its grading policies based on the following empirical evidence:

- FCPS grading policies hurt students applying to colleges and to college honors programs;
- FCPS grading policies cost families money;
- Nationally comparable school districts:
 - Have a 10-point grading scale (e.g., A = 90 - 100)
 - Weight high school honors courses
 - Weight high school AP courses more than FCPS

Adopting a 10-point grading scale and increasing the weight for advanced courses will level the playing field AND raise the bar for students by encouraging them to take more honors and AP courses.

FAIRGRADE PETITION

In light of the compelling data and evidence presented by the parent advocacy group, FAIRGRADE, regarding Fairfax County Public Schools unfair grading policies, we urge you to make the following revisions:

- Adopt a 10 point scale, defined as:
 - 90 - 100 = A = 4.0 pts
 - 80 - 89 = B = 3.0 pts
 - 70 - 79 = C = 2.0 pts
 - 60 - 69 = D = 1.0 pts
 - < 60 = F = 0 pts

- Provide a 0.5 point weight for each Honors classes
- Provide a 1.0 point weight for each AP / IB classes

We believe these changes will encourage FCPS students to take more challenging courses and enable them to better compete for college admissions, honors programs, and merit scholarships.

NEXT STEPS

- Write and mail letters to the Superintendent and School Board
- Sign Fairgrade's petition
- Sign the volunteer sign-up sheet
- Take a copy of the handouts, copy them and distribute them to friends
- E-mail the Superintendent and School Board
- Write "letters to the editor" to the *Washington Post* and to local newspapers
- Contact fairgrade.fcps@gmail.com for more information
- Keep checking www.fairgrade.org (under construction)