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***FAIRGRADE Denounces FCPS Superintendent Jack Dale’s Recommendation Says Dale’s Recommendation Ignores the Research Evidence in FCPS’ Report***

**Fairfax County, VA – Friday, January 2, 2009—** FAIRGRADE today denounced Superintendent Jack Dale’s recommendation that the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) School Board vote only to change weights for advanced courses but not change the grading scale itself.

“Dr. Dale’s recommendation to keep the existing grading scale ignores the substantive research contained in the FCPS report regarding high school grades and college admissions. Multiple research studies cited in the report demonstrate that high school grades are the **most** important factor in college admissions. Keeping the existing grading scale creates a very real disadvantage for a large majority of FCPS students. This is simply unacceptable,” said FAIRGRADE President and former Georgetown Admissions Officer Megan McLaughlin.

“Colleges do not base their evaluation of a school district’s academic rigor on the grading scale. Rather, they use objective standards including four-year college attendance rates for high school graduates, mean SAT scores, and AP/IB class participation and performance - all areas in which FCPS students excel nationally. So Jack Dale’s assertion that only changing the weights enables FCPS to maintain high academic standards is factually untrue,” said FAIRGRADE Co-founder Sara Pacqué-Margolis

“What is, perhaps, equally unbelievable about Dale’s recommendation is that it completely ignores the research evidence contained in FCPS’s own report which demonstrates higher standards actually reduce graduation rates for minorities, particularly Blacks and Hispanics (Betts & Grogger),” said FAIRGRADE Co-founder & Vice President Marcy Newberger.

“How could our Superintendent completely disregard the needs of these students in his recommendation to the School Board when FCPS’ own statistics show that FCPS Black and Hispanic students are three to five times less likely to graduate from high school in four years when compared to FCPS White or Asian students?” said Newberger.

FAIRGRADE said Dale’s linguistic manipulation is an attempt to divert attention from the overwhelming body of research evidence buried in the FCPS report that, in fact, demonstrates the need to change **BOTH** the grading scale and the weights for advanced courses including:

**Distribution of Grade Point Averages:**

- Across all SAT groupings in the analysis, the percent of non-FCPS students with weighted GPAs of 4.0 or higher was 4-1/2 to 6 times greater than for FCPS students.
- Across all SAT groupings in the analysis, the percent of non-FCPS students with unweighted GPAs of A minus or higher were 1-1/2 times to 2 times greater than for FCPS students.

### **College Survey and Literature Review:**

- The annual National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC) survey shows high school grades are the most important factor used for college admissions.
- The FCPS report shows that 55% of the colleges do NOT recalculate students' GPAs.
- The 6-, 7- and 8-point grading scales are the least common grading scales seen by the FCPS college survey respondents.
- 89% of the FCPS college survey respondents compare applicants to all other students in the applicant pool.
- 3.5 GPA was the most commonly reported minimum GPA used by colleges for use in merit scholarship awards and honors program placement.
- The FCPS report demonstrates the predominate scale used across the US is the 10-point scale, often with pluses and minuses.
- 75 out of 79 school districts in 12 different states have adopted the 10-point grading scale within recent years.
- Both the federal government and The College Board use a 10-point grading scale, sometimes with pluses and minuses, in the absence of information from schools for data gathering and program purposes.

FAIRGRADE says that Dale's disregard of the research contained throughout the report is alarming. "From the beginning, FCPS assured the public that policy decisions would be based on the data contained in the report. For the Superintendent of the nation's 13<sup>th</sup> largest school district to ignore the research and make this kind of recommendation is disturbing," said FAIRGRADE Co-founder & Vice President Louise Epstein.

"FCPS produced a 120-page report that demonstrates page after page how FCPS students GPAs are depressed and how a majority of schools don't, in fact, take our grading policy into account for some admissions, honors program and scholarships decisions. If Jack Dale won't tell the School Board the full, factual story, FAIRGRADE will before they vote on this important issue January 22<sup>nd</sup>," said FAIRGRADE Campaign Manager Catherine Lorenze.

The full FCPS Grading Policy Investigation Report can be viewed at:

[http://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/0/39ceb62d5a0b1726872574d3005d63d7/\\$FILE/GradingPolicyInvestigationReport.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/0/39ceb62d5a0b1726872574d3005d63d7/$FILE/GradingPolicyInvestigationReport.pdf)

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