

**Fairfax County Federation of Citizens' Associations
Resolution on Secondary Grading and Reporting in FCPS
Approved by the Membership **dd** October 2024**

WHEREAS, properly aligned grading and reporting practices provide essential feedback to students and their families, affect scholarship opportunities, college acceptances, and other post-secondary work, and are central to evaluating the success of FCPS as a system; and

WHEREAS, consistent grading and reporting practices help ensure that FCPS operates as a school system and not simply as a disconnected system of schools; and

WHEREAS, since 2020 individual FCPS schools, departments, and teachers have on an ad hoc basis adopted various grading and reporting practices consistent with the philosophy of Standards-Based Grading (SBG);¹ and

WHEREAS, in the fall of 2023 FCPS' Instructional Services Department convened a Secondary Grading Advisory Committee to conduct a broad review of FCPS secondary grading policy and provide recommendations for revisions; and

WHEREAS, the FCPS School Board has held just two work sessions on the topic of secondary grading policy since the pandemic, and has adopted no endorsement of SBG;² and

WHEREAS, in its work session on August 27, 2024 the School Board declined to adopt the recommendations of the Secondary Grading Advisory Committee and instead directed the Board's Governance Committee consult with staff to develop further recommendations regarding both the philosophical goals of FCPS grading policy and practices which would support those goals; and

WHEREAS, FCPS has not engaged in broad, substantive community discussions with either the public or its teaching staff regarding proposed shifts in grading and reporting practices; and

WHEREAS, FCPS has not engaged any scholarly experts to independently provide a systemic review of the evidence regarding SBG and/or its various practices; and

¹ See, for example, FCPS Instructional Services Department, *Secondary Grading Advisory Committee Final Report: School Year 2023-24*. May 17, 2024.

² While the Board has permitted the use of certain SBG practices—such as the use of a rolling gradebook, more generous opportunities for test retakes, and gradebook category weighting favoring summative work—the Board's only policy change since the pandemic was to mandate the use of a traditional 100-point scale. Many Board members have expressed skepticism of the wisdom in separating work habits from grading, one of the central pillars of SBG.

WHEREAS, FCPS staff updated several grading and reporting practices for the 2024-25 school year with directive language (e.g. “FCPS courses *will use* these uniform grading categories”³),

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Federation:

1. We urge the Governance Committee and School Board to redirect FCPS staff to create a project management plan which will collect and analyze data to assess all recent changes to grading and reporting practices, including those implemented for the 2024-25 school year; and
2. We further suggest that this assessment must contain a clear hypothesis, metrics for success, surveys of both students and teachers, and an analysis of the degree of compliance with each specific directive; and
3. We suggest this assessment should break out data by school and by each new practice, and that these findings should be presented to the public; and
4. We urge the superintendent to contract with external academics with expertise analyzing the effectiveness of grading and reporting to provide FCPS with a systemic review of the evidence regarding best practices in this area, including various SBG-related practices; and
5. We suggest that this external study focus on systems with similar class sizes, demographics, and/or overall number of students as FCPS; and
6. We urge the School Board to refrain from any policy changes and/or formal changes in regulations until the completion of both the internal staff analysis and an external study; and
7. We express our disapproval of FCPS for implementing significant changes to secondary grading and reporting practices without either proof of concept or authentic community engagement; and
8. We urge FCPS to implement any future changes in grading practices through a scalable and adjustable pilot program with continual monitoring to ensure these practices “do no harm” to students’ grade reports; and
9. We reiterate our call for FCPS to implement a decision-making framework⁴ so that future consequential decisions regarding policy and/or or practices are made with full, frank, and transparent deliberation, and in order to minimize problems with implementation.

³ <https://www.fcps.edu/academics/grading-reporting/secondary-school>

⁴ As recommended in the 2013 Virginia Department of Education School Efficiency Review of FCPS.