

From: The Grading Scale Committee

Subject: **Grading Scale Recommendation**

To: The Maggie L. Walker Governor's School Advisory Council

Goal 3 of the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School (MLWGS) Strategic Plan includes the following initiative: "Study the grading scale and grade weighting of all MLWGS courses (i.e., Honors, Dual-enrollment, and AP) as it pertains to incentivizing students and develop a recommendation to the planning committee, superintendents, and Board." In response to this initiative, the MLWGS School Advisory Council (SAC) was asked to look at whether Maggie Walker should move from a 7-point grading system to a 10-point system for non-AP/dual enrollment classes. The Council put together a committee comprised of faculty and parent representatives to evaluate the current grading scale and other grading scale options, and then make a recommendation regarding adoption. Over the course of the past nine months, the committee took the following steps in the course of our evaluation:

- We first examined why we should even consider changing our current grading scale. We determined that there have been sufficient concerns raised by a variety of individuals that warrant reevaluating our current grading scale. These concerns revolve around the belief that we may be doing our students a disservice by not using the same type of grading scale as "peer" schools. Similarly, questions have been raised if we are disadvantaging our students with college admissions, scholarship opportunities, honors programs, special dormitories, and even discounted car insurance rates. Furthermore, there were concerns raised that our current 7-point scale exacerbates already high levels of student stress.
- Next, we looked at what Maggie Walker's feeder school districts were doing and discovered that the vast majority of them have already adopted, or are in the process of switching to a 10-point grading scale. These include Richmond, Chesterfield, Henrico, and Powhatan. Additionally, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology as well as Fairfax County have also moved to a 10-point scale.
- The Committee also examined national trends and discovered that many states are moving to a 10-point grading scale. For example, North Carolina has recently mandated all public schools switch to a standard 10-point scale. Many schools across the country have already adopted a 10-point scale, which is based on the College Board's grading scale used by most colleges.
- We also met with Maggie Walker's Guidance Counselors on multiple occasions. Initially, we asked them to contact several universities and colleges to see what impact, if any, it would have on their perception of Maggie Walker if we switched to a 10-point scale. Penny Deck and Rachel Loving contacted several universities (UVA, JMU and Colgate) and all of them replied that a grade scale change would not affect how they perceive Maggie Walker applicants. They also received some feedback that our current grading scale is somewhat confusing because we actually have two scales—a 7-point scale for Honors, Plus and Regular classes and a 10-point scale for AP, Dual and University courses.
- The Committee then met with a representative sample of nine faculty members to get their input regarding switching to a 10-point scale. The majority were in favor of making the switch, with the caveat that the academics remain rigorous and that it's clear to students/parents that grades won't necessarily go up. Several said they found the current system with two grading scales to be somewhat confusing. Additionally, one of the faculty members who was a former college admissions officer stated she believed our current 7-point scale was detrimental to our graduates.
- The Grading Scale Committee then administered a survey about grading scales which was sent to all MLWGS faculty and administrators, as well as to parent representatives (from SAC and PTSA)

and student representatives (on SAC). The results clearly indicated that the vast majority of respondents were in favor of switching to a 10-point scale. However, the respondents were fairly equally divided as to what the 10-point scale should look like with approximately half of them preferring an A+/A/A- scale and the other half preferring an A+/A scale.

- The committee then requested the MLWGS guidance office get a representative sample set of recent graduates' gpa's and compute what their gpa's would be using the two proposed new 10 point scales. It turns out that all students—whether they were excellent, average or struggling, would have had their gpa's actually lowered if we adopted the A+/A/A- scale. On the other hand, students' gpa's would remain relatively the same or have a slight uptick if the A+/A scale was adopted.
- The committee also discovered another benefit of adopting a 10-point scale is that it would help struggling students. Each year, there are a handful of MLWGS students who don't get a MLWGS diploma primarily due to the fact they cannot pass either Physics or Trigonometry. Currently, under the 7-point scale, students need at least a 70% to pass with a "D," whereas under a 10-point scale, 60% would be a passing grade.
- The committee also considered the fact that all of the classes students take at Maggie Walker are taught at the honors level, yet unlike our feeder schools, MLWGS students receive no additional grade weighting for taking these honors level classes.

After taking all of the above information into consideration, the Grading Scale Committee strongly recommends that MLWGS adopt a 10-point scale beginning in the 2017-2018 school year. We believe the grades should not be retroactive. We recommend the following scale be adopted:

Letter grade	Range	GPA for Honors, Plus & Regular	GPA for AP, Dual & University
A+	97-100	4.5	5.5
A	90-96	4.0	5.0
B+	86-89	3.5	4.5
B	80-85	3.0	4.0
C+	76-79	2.5	3.5
C	70-75	2.0	3.0
D+	66-69	1.5	2.5
D	60-65	1.0	2.0
F	Below 60	0	0

The Grading Scale Committee also recommends that if this grading scale is not adopted, then we should keep our existing grading scale.

Respectfully submitted,

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