

FAIRGRADE EMAILS
Between School Board Member Brad Center
& Louise Epstein – 2009

THE ISSUE:

At the McLean Citizens Association debate on 9.27.11 Fairfax County Public Schools School Board Chair Jane Strauss claimed that she led the FAIRGRADE initiative in the community, and with her colleagues, until the final vote on Jan. 22, 2009. In the same debate, School Board candidate and FAIRGRADE Co-founder Louise Epstein stated it was School Board member Brad Center who worked with FAIRGRADE – not Jane Strauss.

Recently, Center misled the media in an apparent effort to aid his vulnerable colleague, telling Patch.com that he only had “a couple of conversations” with FAIRGRADE. In fact, over 24 emails and conversations took place between Brad Center and FAIRGRADE – 16 of these emails written by Brad Center and directed to Louise Epstein.

Based upon these newly released FAIRGRADE emails, Strauss and Center both appear to be misleading the public for political gain.

EMAIL 1: Date: 1.13.09 at 10:55:24pm - Louise Epstein summarizes her dinner meeting with Brad Center for the FAIRGRADE team. Epstein writes that Center stated Janie never believed anything was wrong with FCPS grading policies and she is finally coming on board for re-election reasons.

From: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>
Subject: **Debrief on Meeting with Brad Center - do not forward to anyone**
Date: January 13, 2009 10:55:24 PM EST
To: Megan McLaughlin <macfiveva@gmail.com>, Catherine Lorenze <Clorenze@verizon.net>, marcy newberger <fairgrade.fcps@gmail.com>, Sara Schneider <FairgradeNews@aol.com>

I am writing an unusually blunt email about my dinner with Brad. Please do not forward this to anyone. If you would like a sanitized version to forward, I'll write a sanitized version.

Brad is going to do for us what Janie should have done. He does not plan to run for reelection in 2011, and said that allows him to do what he thinks is right. He asked me to ship him a spreadsheet or table quickly that provided about five of the most logical possibilities, and the pros and cons of each. He will use that document to try and get 7 firm votes for a new scale. He does not think this is possible before January 22nd. He

realizes that the staff won't act quickly, and expects us to be more responsive so he can be proactive and start the process long before staff give the School Board their second report. In other words, now.

I want to send the spreadsheet ONLY to Brad, then let him decide how to use it. If we send it to every Board member, they'll realize that Brad is shopping Fairgrade's proposals. I realize that this means not sending the spreadsheet to even Kaye and Tina, and it pains me not to send it to Kaye. I can ask a former School Board member who I really trust completely (as does SLEEP) whether he thinks that this is a sound strategy, but my guess based on past comments is that he'll tell me to stick with Brad.

I believe that we can trust Brad much more than we can trust Janie. **As Brad put it, Janie never believed there was anything wrong with FCPS grading policies. She hopped on board because she wants to run for School Board again in 2011. If Dranesville parents stopped sending her emails and she thought she could get away with it, her support for changing grading policies would disappear. That's what Brad said, not me.**

Brad's strongly in favor of pluses and minuses, and would have grave reservations about a new scale without them. He is very flexible on where the pluses and minuses should start. He's not sure if it makes sense to have an A+. He would prefer to have a D- but he's not wedded to that either – i.e., he doesn't mind the 10/10/10/6 scale too much, if that gets more votes. Perhaps to test me, he started by asking how I felt about a 9/10/10/10 scale (A- = 91, B- = 81, etc.) I told him that was weird, but better than what we have now. I'm guessing that Raney likes this 9/10/10/10. Brad also believes that quality points should vary with the pluses and minuses, but is flexible about exactly how much. His own example had 3.7 for an A, and 3.35 for a B+. However, he said that was just because this was the scale at American University when he was there, and 3.7 and 3.3 were fine too.

Brad didn't know why Dale was opposed to changing the scale, but he said that after last Thursday's meeting Dale saw the handwriting on the wall. He also said that Stu is convinced that all or almost all teachers will adjust their grading rubrics to make sure that they don't give more As if the scale changes. He thinks that Stu, Tessie and Kathy Smith are likely to vote against changing the scale, although miracles could happen. Stu is telling everyone that it won't make a difference to change the scale, because teachers will adjust completely. Dale made similar arguments.

Louise

EMAIL 2: Date: 1.14.09 at 8:01pm - Center informs Louise he'll shop options and scenarios around to certain School Board members.

On 1/14/09 8:01 PM, "Center, Brad (School Board Member)" <Brad.Center@FCPS.EDU> wrote:

Louise:

I could live with anything here except Option 4 for the reasons we discussed last night. If I had my choice I would go with either Option 2A or 2D or either of the Option 5 scenarios but that is just me I am a little weird so I picked you most off-beat scenarios. I will start shopping these around over the weekend with certain Board members. I will let you know if sales are good.

Brad Center
Fairfax County School Board
Lee District

From: Louise Epstein [mailto:lepstein@cox.net]
Sent: Wed 1/14/2009 6:09 PM
To: Center, Brad (School Board Member)
Subject: Tables with sample scales

Dear Brad,

Thanks again for meeting last night. I've put together the information you requested, showing various scale options:

1. Option 1 is the most standard version of a 10 point scale with pluses and minuses.
2. Option 2 is a somewhat unusual version of a 10 point scale with pluses and minuses, which is designed so that a FCPS student will still need a 94 to get an A, an 84 to get a B, etc.
3. Option 3 is the 10 point scale without pluses or minuses.
4. Option 4 does not have a chart, because it assumes pure numeric grades

with no letter grades.

5. Option 5 is a 9/9/9/9 scale. I have never seen a 9/9/9/9 scale, and neither has Megan, who worked for 7 years in college admissions. But I thought you might want something other than a 10 point scale to work with.

For purposes of options 1, 2, 3, and 5, FCPS may want to consider using the implementation method recently adopted in Unionville/Chadds Ford, where students receive numeric grades on their quarterly report cards. These numeric grades are averaged at the end of a course to determine a final numeric grade, which is converted into a letter grade under their version of a 10 point scale. I will forward to you separately the document describing that school district's procedures.

I understand that you will be trying to survey each School Board member to see which of these options he or she prefers, if any. FAIRGRADE met today, to discuss what we should be doing between now and January 22nd. We'd like to make sure that we coordinate with you on future communications with the other Board members. Please call me at 703-917-7960 (home) or 703-967-5575 (cell), so that we can discuss these issues.

Cheers,
Louise

EMAIL 3: Date: 1.14.09 at 8:06 pm - Center advises FAIRGRADE to focus just on grading scale charts as the next step towards getting support for the motion.

On 1/14/09 8:06 PM, "Center, Brad (School Board Member)" <Brad.Center@FCPS.EDU> wrote:

I would hold off for just now. Let's focus on the charts right now. Also I noticed in the power point a slide that identified getting committee input via a survey and as someone in the middle of all the community outreach on SLEEP I think this would only delay us in getting this done and I don't want to put that idea in anyone's head right now.

Brad Center
Fairfax County School Board
Lee District

From: Louise Epstein [<mailto:lepstein@cox.net>]
Sent: Wed 1/14/2009 7:20 PM
To: Center, Brad (School Board Member)
Subject: Unionville-Chadds Ford presentation on implementing new 10 point scale with pluses and minuses

Brad,

Attached is a powerpoint presentation on how another school district decided to implement its change to a 10 point scale with pluses and minuses.

Do you think it would be OK to forward this to all the other School Board members?

Thanks,
Louise

EMAIL 4: Date: 1.15.09 at 06:55:16 pm - Center clarifies Option 3 to Option 4 per Louise's request

From: Brad Center <Brad.Center@fcps.edu>
Date: Thu, 15 Jan 2009 06:55:16 -0500
To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>
Subject: Re: Did you mean Option 3?

Yep I meant option 3.
Brad Center
Fairfax County School Board

Sent from my BlackBerry Wireless Handheld

From: Louise Epstein
To: Center, Brad (School Board Member)
Sent: Wed Jan 14 23:59:39 2009
Subject: Did you mean Option 3?

Brad,

I'm assuming that your fingers slipped when you were typing. I thought you didn't like Option 3, the 10 point without pluses and minuses? Option 4 is the numeric grade option, with no letter grades.

Also, by the time I read your email, Megan had already emailed Liz Bradsher a copy of the Chadds Ford powerpoint. Megan is going to ask Liz not to mention the powerpoint to anyone else right now, without mentioning your name. I've asked the others not to send the powerpoint to anyone else for now.

Finally, we've been getting emails from parents who are very unhappy about not weighting honors courses retroactively. Then someone forwarded to us an email that Dale had sent her, saying that FCPS will be considering whether it can weight honors courses retroactively starting with the 09-10 report cards.

You probably can guess that retroactive weighting of honors courses would make a ton of 9th, 10th, and 11th grade parents very happy. As you know, most kids take largely honors (and not many AP or IB) courses before junior year.

Louise

P.S. Do you want to send me your personal email address? Some FCPS administrators read other people's emails sent to their FCPS email accounts. (Former TJ principal Lodal used to read some of her teachers' emails, for example, which is why they started giving parents their home email address in a few cases.)

EMAIL 5: Date: 1.15.09 at 10:41:42 pm - Center sends his personal email address at Louise's request

From: Brad Center <Brad.Center@fcps.edu>
Date: Thu, 15 Jan 2009 10:41:42 -0500
To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>
Subject: Re: Did you mean Option 3?

fourcenters@cox.net

Brad Center
Fairfax County School Board

Sent from my BlackBerry Wireless Handheld

EMAIL 6: Date: 1.16:09 at 14:37:04 pm - Center tells Louise to call him the next day - provides home phone number.

From: Brad Center <fourcenters@cox.net>
Date: Fri, 16 Jan 2009 14:37:04 -0500
To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>
Subject: RE: Coordinating

Call me anytime tomorrow at home 703-██████████. Also let me see Jim's email.

Brad

-----Original Message-----

From: Louise Epstein [<mailto:lepstein@cox.net>]
Sent: Friday, January 16, 2009 12:27 PM
To: Brad Center
Subject: Coordinating

Brad,

When would be a convenient time for me to call you about coordinating efforts? I don't want FAIRGRADE to create problems for you as you shop the scale options. On the other hand, there's a lot going on and it's likely that FAIRGRADE will want to issue more press releases, etc. soon. Especially given Raney's new constituent email.

Louise
703-917-7960 (home)
703-967-5575 (cell)

EMAIL 7: Date: 1.16.09 at 18:04:14 pm - Center asks for the FAIRGRADE 10 point scale. Says he'll talk to Phil, Dan, Moon, Kaye and Liz - no mention of Jane Strauss.

From: Brad Center <fourcenters@cox.net>

Date: Fri, 16 Jan 2009 18:04:14 -0500

To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>

Subject: RE: Can we talk sooner?

Send me the 10 point scale that you will post on the web site as soon as possible. Will be getting to Phil, Dan and Mr. Moon Saturday. Will talk to Kaye and Liz on Sunday and. As far as Jim is concerned I will have to think about the best way and person to move him. I will let your group talk to Tina. If all are amenable then there are enough votes to define the parameters for a basic 10 point scale.

-----Original Message-----

From: Louise Epstein [<mailto:lepstein@cox.net>]

Sent: Friday, January 16, 2009 3:47 PM

To: Brad Center

Subject: Can we talk sooner?

FAIRGRADE is a group of individuals who act independently to some extent. Megan has been on the phone asking people to get the School Board to vote for a motion on January 22nd that changes to a 10-point scale in principle, with the stated goal of ironing out the details such as pluses and minuses later. Ditto for some of the other FAIRGRADE core volunteers/leaders. They are chomping at the bit to issue another press release etc. ASAP.

Louise

703-917-7960 (home)

703-967-5575 (cell)

EMAIL 8: Date: 1.16.09 at 18:07:17 - Louise Epstein sends summary of her phone conversation with Center. In this call, Center advised FAIRGRADE not to talk to Jane Strauss, Stu Gibson, Tessie Wilson or Kathy Smith.

From: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>

Date: Fri, 16 Jan 2009 18:07:17 -0400

To: Megan McLaughlin <macfiveva@gmail.com>, Megan McLaughlin <fairgrade.fcps@gmail.com>, Catherine Lorenze <Clorenze@verizon.net>, Sara Schneider <MEMSofVA@aol.com>, Todd Gaziano <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Brad's Request to Us - please do not forward this email to anyone

Brad called. He understands that there may be some side communications between us and various other members of the School Board on issues. He thinks this is not going to have much impact at this point, because on other issues the School Board members basically stop listening to the public at the stage in the process and just negotiate with each other, or at least that's how it's worked in the past.

Assuming there are side conversations with board members, his message was "do no harm." Every board member has his or her hot buttons, and it would be desirable not to accidentally get them angry about something trivial without realizing it. (For example, Janie and Kathy always think staff is right, and bridle if anyone suggests that Dale or staff ever did anything wrong. Raney cares about theoretical precision and couldn't care less what's normal. Etc.)

He strongly recommended that we NOT speak to Stu Gibson (especially), Janie Strauss, Kathy Smith or Tessie. **He says that especially with Stu and Janie, anything we say can will be used to galvanize their opposition.** I realize Janie is publicly in support, but behind the scenes she may be developing her poison pill motion for a 10 point without pluses and minuses. He does expect Stu or Tessie to vote for a 10 point with pluses and minuses no matter what they hear, he thinks Kathy will vote for a 10 point with pluses and minuses only to save her political neck, and ditto for Janie. If we have any further conversations with them, keep them side-tracked on trivial or ancillary issues where they can do little or no harm.

Brad's second suggestion was that we need to start delivering a VERY consistent message about what type of scale we support. Until this past Tuesday, Brad didn't know that Fairgrade supported pluses and minuses. That tells us that either School Board members never received our press releases (Dale can intercept them) or else they never bothered to read them.

Brad thought it was a good idea to put something on our web site and otherwise alert our supporters about exactly what we meant by a 10-point scale with pluses and minuses. I went through the various iterations of 10 point scales with him, and he felt most comfortable with one that: (1) eliminated the A+; (2) kept in the D-; (3) used some

standard quality point measure for pluses and minuses, either 0.3 or 0.33. On the breaks for the A-, B-, C- and D-, he sort of likes having an A- equal a 90-93, because it makes it easier for him to argue that we aren't lowering standards. But he could live with the normal A- = 90-92. The fact that something was normal would matter more to some than to other board members (e.g., not to Raney at all).

Brad will be shopping the scale options starting tonight with Phil, Ilryong, and Dan. He'll touch base with Kaye and Tina, to keep them in the loop. He didn't know where Liz stood on this issue, but also planned to call her. He was hoping that Stu did not call him to argue for an hour on the phone. **And while he realizes that it's important for people to get Janie to commit to 10 point WITH PLUSES AND MINUSES, he was wary of contacting her because of concerns that she'll what he says to galvanize Stu, Tessie and Kathy.**

Brad was surprised that Raney was sending emails to people asking them exactly what scale, etc. they preferred. Surprised is an understatement.

In general, Brad said that anything we said to Kaye probably would be passed on to Tina, because the two of them are very friendly. It may be a good idea for one of us to make sure Kaye and Tina are comfortable with the pluses and minuses, etc.

On honors weighting, Brad thought most of the Board members would agree to that already, but it wouldn't hurt for Todd to ask Moon about retroactive honors weighting when they meet.

TODD — Brad said that it would be helpful if we could get him a menu of scale motions by Sunday. He suggested that I call him on Sunday to find out how his efforts to find 7 votes for one variation were going. There's a procedural rule or practice in the School Board where any amendments to motions have to be submitted to the FCPS clerk 3 business days before the meeting. **If Janie is going to submit a lousy motion on scale that she drafts with Dale, then Brad needs to provide information about his scale motion amendment to the clerk by Monday.**

EMAIL 9: Date: 1.16.09 at 18:43:47 pm - Center thanks Louise for providing info on FAIRGRADE positions.

From: Brad Center <fourcenters@cox.net>
Date: Fri, 16 Jan 2009 18:43:47 -0500
To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>
Subject: RE: Scale to be posted on web

thanks.

-----Original Message-----

From: Louise Epstein [<mailto:lepstein@cox.net>]
Sent: Friday, January 16, 2009 6:14 PM
To: Brad Center
Subject: Scale to be posted on web

I've spoken to Megan, and I'm sure the others would also feel very comfortable with the 10 point scale that I've attached given past conversations. I'll let you know ASAP if something unexpected happens, but this is 99% likely to be on our web site.

If you need to have the A start at 94 instead of at 93, etc., we can live with that. But we think it's very unusual, and there's value to using something standard.

Louise

EMAIL 10: Date: 1.16.09 at 18:45:50 pm - Center informs Louise even his personal email account is subject to FOIA and *"don't put anything you don't want to see in Washington Post."*

From: Brad Center <fourcenters@cox.net>
Date: Fri, 16 Jan 2009 18:45:50 -0500
To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>
Subject: RE: Scale to be posted on web

P.S. -- Just an FYI all School Board related email even if it comes from my personal account is subject to a FOIA. I have no issue working with constituents in the way in which we are doing but wanted you to know as well. Don't say anything you don't want to see in the Washington Post.

Brad

EMAIL 11: Date: 1.16.09 at 21:02:57 pm - Megan McLaughlin sends summary of her phone conversation with Center. In this call, Center reiterated his concerns to Megan about Janie Strauss.

From: Megan McLaughlin <macfiveva@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, 16 Jan 2009 21:02:57 -0500

To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>

Cc: Sara Schneider <FairgradeNews@aol.com>, Megan McLaughlin <fairgrade.fcps@gmail.com>, Catherine Lorenze <Clorenze@verizon.net>

Subject: FYI-MM's conversation with Brad

Hi LE,

I had sent Brad a copy of my email to Janie, Liz, Tina, Kaye and Phil and asked him to tell me if there was anything to be concerned about.

He told me to call him to discuss and essentially he reiterated his concerns about Janie but said NOT to worry about my email. He said that the SBd is in "bunker mode" and no longer influenced much by the outside world.

While I appreciated his overall approach, I am concerned that he is uncertain if he can get the "timeline parameters" set within the Bd motion AND he seems convinced that all of his colleagues are going to BOW DOWN to Dale's suggestion that his staff research different grading scale options and bring them back.

I said that I am fine with this "charade" so long as the "time limits" exist so that Dale and Co can't punt on it and say that there is NOT enough time for proper implementation, teacher training, software conversions, etc.

Again, Brad and I had a very nice conversation...He's a Philly boy so he likes my UPenn roots...I just hope that the SBd doesn't give Dale a way to weasel out on this. **He did reiterate that it's the SBd who sets policy, and if Dale drags his feet, they'll move fwd w/o his input...if he rounds up 7 strong votes :)**

BTW-Let's make sure to get your FG 10 Pt Scale prep'd for an email blast and website posting. I told CL that I'd draft some innocuous language so that the SBd doesn't get their feathers ruffled.

Hope your husband had a nice b-day!

Megan

EMAIL 12: Date: 1.17.09 at 13:04:04 pm - Center informs Louise that Liz Bradsher emailed him info about D bracket.

From: Brad Center <fourcenters@cox.net>
Date: Sat, 17 Jan 2009 13:04:04 -0500
To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>
Subject: RE: Liz Bradsher prefers a tight D bracket

Yep:

She emailed me a similar thought about 20 minutes ago.

-----Original Message-----

From: Louise Epstein [<mailto:lepstein@cox.net>]
Sent: Saturday, January 17, 2009 12:31 PM
To: Brad Center
Subject: Liz Bradsher prefers a tight D bracket

Brad, FYI.

Louise

On Sat, Jan 17, 2009 at 6:07 AM, Bradsher, Elizabeth T. (School Board Member) <Elizabeth.Bradsher@fcps.edu> wrote:

Megan,

I would see us using a scale where an F is a 64 and below, I think the votes would be there to pass that. I believe Stu would vote for that and if so you would get that block of votes. It also demonstrates a desire on the part of the SB to maintain a the same or similar pass/fail numerical grade which if changed may be controversial on the part of several School Board members and defer a decision on type of scale. (Just my thoughts.)

Liz

EMAIL 13: Date: 1.17.09 at 14:54:46 pm - Center informs Louise he wants to secure commitment for overall 10 point scale. Doesn't want to get into A+ or F debate.

From: Brad Center <fourcenters@cox.net>
Date: Sat, 17 Jan 2009 14:54:46 -0500
To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>
Subject: RE: One FAIRGRADE parent wants an A+

Two points:

1. For now I don't want to get into the A+ debate or the "F" debate (60 versus 64). Our fundamental goal is to get a majority to commit to a overall 10 point scale
2. School Board members should/must look beyond the impact to one parent or student. That is not to say, that her child's grades and placement are unimportant but rather what is best for the whole set of children. Hopefully she can see past the direct impact on her child to the bigger picture. I am not saying an A+ is out of the picture but is part of a bigger picture.

Brad

-----Original Message-----

From: Louise Epstein [<mailto:lepstein@cox.net>]
Sent: Saturday, January 17, 2009 2:28 PM
To: Brad Center
Subject: One FAIRGRADE parent wants an A+

Brad

In my rush to get back to you yesterday with the "best scale," I spoke only to Megan and Catherine about deleting the A+. My assumption was that I would be the most enthusiastic proponent of an A+, and if I didn't care then nobody else would.

When I told the other FAIRGRADE officers, one was furious. Her son really should have been admitted to TJ, but he wasn't. Her view was that the A+ was one of the few ways for base high school students to show that they really are head and shoulders above their classmates. **She also argued that we might lose Ilryong's vote if we didn't have an A+.** Given how angry she is, she might even contact school board members to encourage them to push for an A+ in the scale.

As we discussed, I see the arguments for and against an A+, and don't have a preference. However, I did want you to know about another argument for an A+, coming from a base high school parent.

Louise

EMAIL 14: Date: 1.17.09 at 19:42:25 pm - Center informs Louise Tina Hone's father just died and she may not make the final vote.

From: Brad Center <fourcenters@cox.net>

Date: Sat, 17 Jan 2009 19:42:25 -0500

To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>

Subject: RE: One FAIRGRADE parent wants an A+

Louise:

Some sad news -- Tina's father passed away. I believe she was very close to him. She will not be at the meeting on the 22nd -- I believe you understand the meaning of that.

Brad

EMAIL 15: Date: 1.18.10 at 1:26:16pm - Louise Epstein sends an email to FAIRGRADE team summarizing her phone call with Brad Center where Brad stated that on the grading scale issue, FAIRGRADE could not count on Janie or Jim Raney but they both might ultimately vote for it.

From: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>

Date: January 18, 2009 1:26:16 PM EST

To: Todd Gaziano <todd.gaziano@[REDACTED]> Sara Schneider <FairgradeNews@aol.com>, Catherine Lorenze <Clorenze@verizon.net>, Megan McLaughlin <macfiveva@gmail.com>, <fairgrade.fcps@gmail.com>

Subject: Brad's not ready yet - do not forward this email

All – please do not forward this to anyone.

I just called Brad. Brad is a man of few words, whether on the phone or in emails. He has a lot on his plate besides grading policies. His phone conversations with me last for at most 5 minutes, and it's clear that he likes it that way. My goal is to make sure that he continues to want to help us, and doesn't get irritated at us for bothering him unnecessarily. For that reason, I do not ask lots of questions about details that I otherwise would like to know.

Brad said that given the holidays, he or Phil NE (who may offer the amendment for us in lieu of Brad) can probably provide the amendment language to the clerk as late as Wednesday morning. But before submitting an amendment, Brad needs to see what the main motion is. Brad will be asking Dan to provide Brad with an advance copy of the main motion, which likely will be drafted by staff. Brad isn't sure whether Janie's part of the staff motion, or whether she'll have her own amendment.

In terms of the conceptual outlines of the motion, Brad wants to give the staff a fixed deadline by which date they must come back to the Board with information on the pros and cons of the options. He wants to make sure that the motion requires pluses and minuses, without getting to the specifics about a D- or A+. He would like to nail down the notion of the 0.3 adjustment for pluses and minuses, in terms of quality points.

Until Brad hears from Kaye, Ilryong and Dan, Brad does not know what the scale motion can include without losing a vote. He knows for sure that the scale motion cannot include a D-, or else we will lose Liz Bradsher's vote right now. She is willing to reconsider if staff comes back and convinces her otherwise, but I'm pretty sure that staff want to keep the D bracket so that it starts at 64 unless they've changed their tune in the last month. So in the end, we may be trying to convince Tina, Kaye and others to agree to a D bracket that starts with 64, if we want this to pass.

Here are the Board's procedural rules. As long as there are 9 or more voting members there, they have a quorum and can vote on something. If there are only 11 voting members present, the motion will carry with 6 votes. The student doesn't have a vote, just the adults.

Tina will be out of town on Thursday, so we only need six votes now. Brad seems to be counting on: Phil; Dan; Liz; Ilryong; and Kaye. But so far, he has not heard back from Dan, Ilryong or Kaye. Brad's concern about Kaye is that she may be induced to oppose any motion that doesn't nail more things down, in which case we could lose Kaye's vote to retain Liz's vote, or vice-versa, and end up with only five votes for his amendment. And six or more votes for the staff motion, whatever it says. (I'm sure it will give the staff tons of leeway.)

On the remaining board members, **Brad's assumption is that on scale, we cannot count on Janie or Jim Raney, although they may ultimately vote with us.** He does not want to give them any advance notice of what he's doing. Brad is even more averse to talking with Stu, Kathy Smith or Tessie on this issue before Thursday, since they've been pretty clear in the past about not wanting to change the scale. (In Kathy's case, she'll just vote for whatever Dale suggests.)

We did not discuss the weighting motions at all, because I felt like Brad was anxious to keep this phone call short.

In sum, Brad seems to feel strongly that we cannot tie down too much in the January 22nd motion on scale, because we risk losing our six votes on a detail. I'll check in with him again tomorrow, and hopefully he will have heard back from Dan (especially), Ilryong, and Kaye.

Louise

On 1/18/09 11:42 AM, "Todd Gaziano" <[REDACTED]> wrote:

- > Attached please find my INITIAL draft scale motions for Brad to consider. I'd
- > like an opportunity to make any modifications myself before you transmit them
- > to Brad. They are pretty self explanatory, but I'd like to point out the
- > following here:
- >
- > 1. By separate email, I asked whether they will/should apply to all grades
- > K-12, 1-12, or 5-12.
- > 2. I have provided options for the D-/F issue. Perhaps you will want to
- > provide both options to Brad.
- > 3. I have also bracketed options for the A+ issue. Perhaps you will want to
- > offer that to Brad or not. I can revise the motions either way.

- > 4. I do not need any credit from anyone. If you need to say anything, you
- > can say a parent volunteer drafted them and you all helped revise them.
- > 5. I may not have captured their style accurately. I have no pride of
- > authorship. I'd be happy to help revise them tonight after Brad responds to
- > them, or to let him do that himself.
- > 6. I leave it to Louise and the rest of you whether you want to share them
- > with Brad when you talk to him soon, or whether you want to wait until after
- > you talk to him and then send him only the 1-2 that fit his direction.
- >
- > Please send any suggestions or comments to everyone if you wish.
- >
- > Todd
- >

EMAIL 16: Date: 1.18.09 at 6:51pm - Center informs Louise he's working with Dan Storck on a motion and says Ilyong Moon is MIA.

-----Original Message-----

From: Brad Center [<mailto:fourcenters@cox.net>]

Sent: Sunday, January 18, 2009 6:51 PM

To: 'Louise Epstein'

Subject: RE: How Jim Raney's Email Is Distorting Parent Perceptions of Plus/Minus Issue

Working with Dan now. Discussing the main motion and possible amendment. Dan agreed with my analysis. So it looks as if Dan, Phil, Liz all agreed with the basic structure. Ilyong and Kaye are MIA.

-----Original Message-----

From: Louise Epstein [<mailto:lepstein@cox.net>]

Sent: Sunday, January 18, 2009 3:42 PM

To: Brad Center

Subject: How Jim Raney's Email Is Distorting Parent Perceptions of Plus/Minus Issue

Brad,

It appears that because Jim Raney's letter assumed that an A+ would be a 4.0, an A would be only a 3.75, etc. this parent reacted by saying do not have pluses and minuses. I believe that if Jim Raney's letter had more normal quality points associated with the pluses and minuses, parents would be more likely to support a 10 point scale with pluses and minuses.

Louise

EMAIL 17: Date: 1.18.09 at 20:36:14 pm - Center says Moon is in agreement.

From: Brad Center <fourcenters@cox.net>

Date: Sun, 18 Jan 2009 20:36:14 -0500

To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>

Subject: RE: How Jim Raney's Email Is Distorting Parent Perceptions of Plus/Minus Issue

Mr. Moon in agreement as well. Coming together slowly.

EMAIL 18: Date: 1.18.09 at 21:26:03 pm - Center advises FAIRGRADE should call SB member Kaye Kory and states Dan Storck will make the main motion specifying a 10 point system with pluses and minuses.

From: Brad Center <fourcenters@cox.net>
Date: Sun, 18 Jan 2009 21:26:03 -0500
To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>
Subject: RE: Thanks so much

Calling Kaye would be helpful. Let her know that seem to be moving along well. **Dan will be working to make the main motion one that includes wording specifying a 10 point system with pluses and minuses.** The motion is not legal in the ordinary sense of things so no legal eyes needed. We also are putting a date certain -- probably March 19th for the report/recommendation from the Superintendent to come back to us.

-----Original Message-----

From: Louise Epstein [<mailto:lepstein@cox.net>]
Sent: Sunday, January 18, 2009 8:42 PM
To: Brad Center
Subject: Thanks so much

Let me know if you think any of us should call Kaye, or do anything else.

Would you like a second set of eyes on the motions? We have several lawyers in the group.

Louise

EMAIL 19: Date: 1.19.09 at 15.24:08 pm - Center walks through who is on board with the FAIRGRADE motion. Says in bullet 3 he does not know either way if Janie is supportive of the motion or not.

From: Brad Center <fourcenters@cox.net>
Date: Mon, 19 Jan 2009 15:24:08 -0500
To: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>
Subject: RE: Kaye will not be at Thursday's meeting

Well let's walk through it:

1. Members who support the position we have discussed: Brad, Ilryong, Phil, Dan, Liz (5)
2. Members Who Probably (bit not definitely) Do Not Support it include: Stu, Tessie, Kathy (3)
3. **Don't Know Either Way: Janie and Jim (2)**
4. Absent: Kaye and Tina -- two of your supporters (2) --
5. For a total of 12
6. **Dan is planning to speak to Janie today and I guess I had better call Jim. Oh the fun never ends.**

Brad

-----Original Message-----

From: Louise Epstein [<mailto:lepstein@cox.net>]
Sent: Monday, January 19, 2009 3:01 PM
To: Brad Center
Subject: Kaye will not be at Thursday's meeting

Brad,

I just heard that Kaye will be out of town on a 4-day leadership training conference this week, and will not be at the January 22nd meeting. Do we still have a majority?

Louise

EMAIL 20: Date: 1.19.09 at 7:34:12 pm - Louise Epstein sends an email to FAIRGRADE team summarizing phone conversation with Brad. Email states that Ilryong Moon called Brad to say he would support the tweaked motion but that he wanted Janie to make the motion so she could get the credit.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>

Date: January 19, 2009 7:34:12 PM EST

To: Megan McLaughlin <macfiveva@gmail.com>, marcy newberger <fairgrade.fcps@gmail.com>, Catherine Lorenze <Clorenze@verizon.net>, Sara Schneider <FairgradeNews@aol.com>, Todd Gaziano <todd.gaziano@heritage.org>

Subject: Latest Brad Update - please do not forward

Called Brad again, and here's where we are. This is based on his discussion on the phone. I have not seen the actual motion.

First, we will have no more than 10 voting School Board members in attendance on Thursday. Tina and Kaye both will be out of town. The School Board rules do not permit proxies, so we need six out of ten votes.

We will have one LONG motion on Thursday, with three parts. One part weights AP/IB retroactively, starting ASAP. The second part weights honors, with the possibility of honors being weighted retroactively if that is possible. The third is the scale motion. This mean that the 10 board members who will show up on Thursday will have to vote yes to all three, or no to all three parts. **Brad thinks we still have 6 yes votes, assuming that Dan Storck's conversation with Janie checks out. (see below)**

The original motion language came from Dale. Dan/Brad began tweaking it. **Ilryong called Brad to say that he would support the tweaked motion, but that he wanted Janie to make the motion so she could get the credit.** (And, I gather, Ilryong wants to second.) **Of course, Ilryong was assuming that Janie would support the tweaked motion. Dan is calling Janie tonight to confirm that she will.** Meanwhile, Brad is calling Raney to see if he will.

The scale portion of the motion does not force Dale to only look at 10 point scales. Instead, it says Dale should find scales that "align more closely with grading scales used around the country." Brad and Dan changed the motion so that it specified that these options would include a "10 point scale with pluses and minuses." They added a March 19th deadline for Dale to get back to the Board with this information. Brad thinks Dale is unlikely to recommend a bunch of nutty scales, because Board members will check in with Dale periodically to make sure that staff is on the right track. **Brad thinks that there are probably 8 votes for some version of a 10**

point scale (Brad, Dan, Phil, Liz, Kaye, Ilryong, Tina, Janie), and four probable nays (Stu, Tessie, Kathy Smith, and possibly Raney). Unless this ratio changes, staff won't want to spend 2 months lobbying for something the 8 board members people won't accept.

The minority (D-) may put this plan at risk. I regret ever raising the issue (sorry, Todd, nothing against you). The only way that we get 6+ votes on Thursday is if the vague scale motion doesn't preclude the School Board from voting later on to adopt a 10/10/10/6 scale. If Stu thinks too hard about this issue, Brad is concerned that Stu will try and deep six the motion by arguing that we need to specifically determine what happens to the 60-63 range. If that happened, we'd almost definitely get nothing.

FCCPTA president Michele thinks the School Board should be forced to decide on the 60-63 (D-) issue on Thursday. She believes a 60-63 should be a D or D-, not an F. She was trying to persuade the Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee (MSAOC), the Mt. Vernon Council, FAIRGRADE and the FCCPTA to issue a joint press release before Thursday saying that unless the motion turned 60-63 into a passing grade, then the School Board should not pass the weighting increases either. Fortunately, the MSAOC (Ralph Cooper) told Michele that the MSAOC's decided not to take a position on FAIRGRADE. Michele said that if the MSAOC wasn't interested, then the FCCPTA wouldn't issue the press release by itself or just with the Mt. Vernon Council. Let's just hope the MSAOC doesn't change its mind.

EMAIL 21: Date: 1.21.09 at 9:28 am After days of dealing with Center on the whip count and motion, Center informs Louise that Jane Strauss will propose the amendment changes on the night of the vote.

On 1/21/09 9:28 AM, "Brad Center" <fourcenters@cox.net> wrote:

Louise:

As it turned out the changes will come in an amendment from Janie. I am jammed at work today so I will not have time talk but **Janie's amendment (I helped with the wording and it is almost exactly what I wanted) should get everything you want done.**

Brad

---- Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net> wrote:

Brad,

FCPS posted the grading policy motion on the web site, and it appears

to be the original version, without the changes you suggested. Does this mean that you'll be offering the revised motion as an amendment on Thursday?

You already have focused on the changes needed for scale. In addition to the changes you discussed, wouldn't it be better to just ask Dale to describe the options and not make a recommendation?

Also, the motion on honors is arguably drafted to preclude the possibility of retroactive weighting, after staff decide what courses qualify as honors.

Once staff decides which courses are honors, there is no reason not to weight them retroactively. Do you think the language could be revised to somehow lock in or at least more clearly leave open the possibility of weighting honors classes retroactively?

Thanks,
Louise
917-7960

Subject: (1/22/08): Agenda Item: 4.01 Review of Grading Regulations

FYI. This motion is posted on BoardDocs.

BoardDocs Agenda Item: 4.01 Review of Grading Regulations--Approve increasing the grade point weight from 0.5 to 1.0 for all .

<<http://www.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/0/1B144ABB70EB6BD68725753F0065D47A?OpenDocument>>

FAIRGRADE EMAILS REFUTING JANE STRAUSS' CLAIMS OF "EARLY INVOLVEMENT" 2008 - 2009

EMAIL 22: 9.9.08 AT 10:53PM – FAIRGRADE Co-founder Sara Pacque-Margolis expresses frustration about Jane Struass' lack of involvement in the issue satating, *"I am on a singular mission within Dranesville for citizens to go on the offensive with Janie Strauss. She's sugar and spice and making me ill - ... has Janie Strauss ever attended a FAIRGRADE presentation? I don't think she has."*

On Tue, Sep 9, 2008 at 10:53 PM, <SPacqueMargolis@aol.com> wrote:

Megan,

I am newly convinced that I simply must keep writing and hammering home the messages. I don't care if I make a total pain of myself. I have nothing to lose except the fight, itself. I will also send you a letter to the editor that I sent last Friday to the McLean Connection, because I think I forgot to copy you. I am planning to send a version of it to the Post...

In addition, I am on a singular mission within Dranesville for citizens to go on the offensive with Janie Strauss. She's sugar and spice and making me ill.

The danger is that I am writing late at night and so making errors - not good. I need to be a bit more cautious.

ONE QUESTION - **TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE, HAS JANIE STRAUSS EVER ATTENDED A FAIRGRADE PRESENTATION? I DON'T THINK SHE HAS,** BUT DRANESVILLE CITIZENS ARE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT SHE IS FULLY VERSED IN THE DATA AND SUPPORTS US. HA!

In a message dated 9/9/2008 10:43:32 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, macfiveva@gmail.com writes:
You did a great job with this email Sara :)

Let's hope a number of them are paying attention!!!

Megan

EMAIL 23: 9.16.08 at 9:12:02am - WUSA Channel 9 Reporter Peggy Fox is asked by FAIRGRADE to confirm if Strauss mentioned in a recent TV interview if she supported FAIRGRADE. Fox replies: *"Jane said she is 'not opposed' to changing the grading policy. Not the same thing as saying she 'supports.'"*

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Fox, Peggy" <PFOX@wusa9.com>
Date: September 16, 2008 9:12:02 AM EDT
To: 'Catherine Lorenze' <clorenze@verizon.net>
Subject: RE: FCPS School Board info

Jane said she is "not opposed" to changing the grading policy. Not the same thing as saying she "supports". Thanks for you help.

Peggy Fox
WUSA 9 Reporter
202 895-5508 o
202 487-5691 c

Local Moms, Join Our Site!
<http://dc.momslikeme.com/members/homepage.aspx>

From: Catherine Lorenze [mailto:clorenze@verizon.net]
Sent: Tuesday, September 16, 2008 8:47 AM
To: Fox, Peggy
Subject: FCPS School Board info

Hi Peggy -

I'm forwarding this bit of info to you re: Jane Strauss.

Can you confirm for me that she actually said she support grading policy changes? Did she clarify in her interview to you as to whether she and the FCPS School Board support making those changes themselves - and/or did she mention a deferment to the state of VA?

We appreciate your efforts to include FAIRGRADE in your story on Friday. I didn't get to tell you myself on Sunday as I had to run to a soccer game for Chloe.

Anyway, when I see you next - could I get your impressions of what Jane said.

Thanks,

Catherine

From: Louise Epstein <lepstein@cox.net>
Date: September 15, 2008 11:14:27 PM EDT
To: McLaughlin Family <macfiveva@gmail.com>, Catherine Lorenze <CLorenze@verizon.net>
Cc: <Marcypie@aol.com>, Sara Schneider <FairgradeNews@aol.com>
Subject: School Board work session - comments about Fairgrade

One of the SLEEP co-founders called to let me know that Fairgrade came up at a school board session on linkage. Barbara Hunter was there, and some School Board members (including Janie Strauss and Brad Center) seemed perturbed by the FCCPTA resolutions on Gatehouse 2 and perhaps also Fairgrade, and Janie made a comment about how FCPS needed to provide more accurate information to the FCCPTA. Janie also commented that some parents assumed that FCPS should just rely on Fairgrade research.

Tina Hone reportedly responded that parents were getting impatient with the FCPS approach of seemingly stalling, etc.

Louise

EMAIL 23: 9.16.08 at 9:14:38am - WUSA Channel 9 Reporter Peggy Fox also states: "She and the other board members I spoke to, Jim Raney and Daniel Storck, said they wanted to wait for their own staff study before making decisions."

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Fox, Peggy" <PFOX@wusa9.com>
Date: September 16, 2008 9:14:38 AM EDT
To: 'Catherine Lorenze' <clorenze@verizon.net>
Subject: RE: FCPS School Board info

She and the other board members I spoke to, Jim Raney and Daniel Storck, said they wanted to wait for their own staff study before making any decisions.

Peggy Fox
WUSA 9 Reporter
202 895-5508 o
202 487-5691 c

EMAIL 24: 10.17.08 at 9:07pm – FAIRGRADE's Director of Communications Catherine Lorenze sends an email to a Langley HS PTSA member thanking the LHS community for their support at a FAIRGRADE presentation and states, "I found it very interesting that in her remarks to Langley parents last night, Janie Strauss failed to mention where she personally stands on the issue. She had the perfect opportunity to demonstrate strong leadership on behalf of her constituents – tell us all where she stands – and she did not do so."

Begin forwarded message:

From: Catherine Lorenze <CLorenze@verizon.net>

Date: October 17, 2008 9:07:16 PM EDT

To: jhofgard@aol.com

Cc: Marcypie@aol.com, TNL583@aol.com, fairgrade.fcps@gmail.com, FairgradeNews@aol.com, juliemariotti@hotmail.com, lepstein@cox.net, macfiveva@gmail.com, OdySemper@aol.com, andrea4@cox.net

Subject: Re: tonight at Langley

Hi Insun -

The Langley parents did a fabulous job last night! **Thank you to you all.**

I think the fact that FCPS officials chose to attend (this is almost a first!) is a testament that FCPS knows the power of parent influence in McLean.

As the campaign manager for FAIRGRADE, I found it VERY interesting that in her remarks to Langley parents last night, Janie Strauss failed to mention where she personally stands on the issue.

She had the perfect opportunity to demonstrate strong leadership on behalf of her constituents - tell us all where she stands - and she did not do so.

McLean is her district and her hometown. Most importantly - McLean is where the FG movement began. And still, Janie chose not to tell parents where she stands on the grading policies issue.

Parents are looking for strong leadership on this issue and **the McLean parent community should hold Janie accountable and ask her to lead this effort for grading policy change and to lobby fellow school board members on behalf of FAIRGRADE's proposed changes. As a school board member, she is elected by the public to represent her constituents interests first.**

The PTAs/PTOs of Dranesville might consider requesting that she take the lead on this issue within the school board.

Sincerely,

Catherine Lorenze

On Oct 17, 2008, at 3:54 PM, jhofgard@aol.com wrote:
Ladies,

I want to send a huge thank you for a job well done at last night's presentation. Your positive message was well received and I personally cannot thank you enough for all that you are doing on behalf all of our children. We are extremely fortunate to have dedicated individuals like yourselves who give so selflessly to our community. It's been an honor to watch you all in action.

I was very encouraged by the message from Dr. Pat Murphy, it appears your efforts are coming to fruition. Please keep up the great work and let me know if I can assist in any way.

Insun

Authorized by Friends of Louise Epstein.