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November 14, 2013

To: School Board Members

From: Billy Haun, Assistant Superintendent

Subject: Reporting Rank

Recommendation 1: Albemarle County Public Schools will no longer report decile rank beginning with the 2014 – 2015 school year.

Some board members requested a plan that would allow students to have an option for reporting rank. After careful consideration, that option is not included as part of this recommendation. College and University Admission officials have said that they can work with either practice we choose – report or not report rank. They have expressed concerns about “mixed” reporting because it may cause admission officers to create assumptions about students who do not report rank after students from the same high school did report rank.

The following practice will be documented in the Program of Studies.

Weighted Grades

GPA will be calculated by dividing the total grade points received by the total number of credits attempted. As part of the school profile, each high school will report class size and the highest and lowest GPA in the class. Class rank will only be reported for special circumstances: military academies, honors programs, scholarship opportunities and to recognize honor graduates at the end of the senior year.

Rationale for recommendation:

Research on college admissions and more specifically, reporting decile rank, from College Board and the National Association for College Admission Counseling was analyzed. Anecdotal evidence was also gathered from interviews with college admission officers from the following colleges and universities.

- Instate
 - James Madison University
 - University of Richmond
 - University of Virginia
 - Virginia Tech
 - Washington and Lee University
 - William and Mary College

- Out of State
 - Clemson University
 - Cornell University
 - Lehigh University
 - Northwestern University
 - Princeton University
 - Stanford University
 - United States Military Academy, West Point

- In the past two decades, class rank has become less important in college admissions. In its most recent survey of which factors are of considerable importance in admission decisions, college admissions offices reported to NASCA class rank has declined from 42 percent in 1993 to 19 percent in 2011. More than half of all high schools no longer report student rankings to colleges.

- Rigor is the most important factor in college admissions decisions. A student's grades in college-preparatory class compared to the high school's program of studies. Admission readers review each individual transcript looking for academic success in honors, dual enrollment, AP and IB courses.

- Transcripts with weighted GPAs differ across school districts. Due to the tremendous differences, many colleges and universities "reweight" transcripts using their own proprietary formula.

- SAT and ACT scores are important at many colleges. These scores provide schools to compare students from across the country.

- Colleges and universities, particularly the high selective schools are trying to take a more holistic view of applicants. They are placing an increased emphasis on applicants' extracurricular activities and elective courses. These are "value added" to the applications.

- Most schools that do not report individual rank, do report student GPA, class size, and the highest and lowest GPA in the class. Admission officers need a context to compare students from the same school.

- Admission officers monitor cohorts of students from specific schools as a way to predict potential success.

- There are other factors that influence admission decisions: legacies, special skill sets, diversity, geography (racial or ethnic background), politics
- ACPS will continue to report class rank for special circumstances: military academies, honors programs, scholarship opportunities and recognize honor graduates at the end of the senior year.

Recommendation 2: For the remainder of the 2013 – 2014 school year, there should be no change from current practice; schools should continue to report decile rank.

Rationale for recommendation:

This recommendation is based on anecdotal information gathered from our school counselors, the staff members who are the most closely connected to the seniors who are now in the process of applying to college. Further information was also gathered from college admission officers.

- Going into this school year, students and parents were aware of the current practice and procedures of reporting rank and this option does not deviate from board-approved practice and procedure.
- **Updated 11/14/2013:** To date, our high schools have sent out **1199** transcripts, **which represents 356 individual students** who are applying for early admissions or common application. **Transcripts have been sent to at least 136 different colleges/universities. The current senior class for ACPS has 956 students.**
- School counseling directors feel to change practice now would be unfair to the early admission applicants or students who are submitting the common application. This group represents students from several deciles who have now provided rank information to college and university admission offices.
- College and University Admission officials have expressed concerns about “mixed” reporting because it may cause admission officers to create assumptions about students who do not report rank after students from the same high school did report rank.