



LAFAYETTE
PARISH SCHOOL SYSTEM

April 12, 2016

Dear Policy Maker:

We at the Lafayette Parish School Board wish to bring to your attention a glaring inequity in the state's current accountability system for public education. At the present time, the state awards high schools 100, 110, 115, 150, or 160 accountability points for each graduate. A student's level of coursework determines which point value he or she earns. A regular high school diploma earns the school 100 points. Earning a college credit or a Jump Start credential is assigned 110 points, and earning both receives 115 points. Passing an AP exam with a score of 3 or higher or a CLEP exam with a score of 50 or higher earns 150 points, as does an advanced Jump Start credential. Earning both generates 160 points. The points earned by each graduate become part of a school's graduation index calculation and, ultimately, determine 25% of its School Performance Score.

The problem with the current system is that it treats a student who earns an Associate's Degree the same as a student who takes one Dual Enrollment class during high school. To put it another way, the state accountability system treats a student who earns 60+ college credits in exactly the same way as it treats a student who earns 3 college credits.

In Lafayette, at the Early College Academy, students work to graduate with a high school diploma and an Associate's Degree. These students spend a significant portion of their high school careers enrolled in college-level coursework. Last year, all of its 58 graduates earned Associate's Degrees in addition to their high school diplomas. The Early College Academy is directly and negatively impacted by an accountability policy that severely undervalues the Associate's Degree and what it represents in terms of the larger picture of college readiness by the end of high school.

In addition to the glaring injustice of the current policy, it is also fiscally irresponsible. The Lafayette Parish School System supports schools in their efforts to earn top marks for students by subsidizing testing fees. We are currently spending thousands of dollars on CLEP testing fees for Early College Academy students so they can earn the additional 40 points despite the fact that they will likely graduate with an Associate's Degree in May. We must do this in an attempt to compensate for the inequality of the current policy.

We ask that members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Louisiana Department of Education, and the Accountability Commission address this issue as soon as possible.

Yours truly,

Dr. Donald Aguillard, Superintendent
Lafayette Parish School System