

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Parent Advocates & Teachers Unite to Form "Fairfax Education Coalition - FEC"
Coalition Focused on Improving Community Engagement with FCPS

Fairfax County, VA – Wednesday, January 20, 2010 – Leaders from respected and influential parent advocacy groups announced today they have officially joined forces with Fairfax County teachers and community members to form the "Fairfax Education Coalition" – a new coalition that will use its collective influence to advocate for improved accountability, transparency and community participation in the Fairfax County Public Schools' decision-making process.

Coalition group members include representatives from: The Fairfax Coalition of Advocates for Public Schools (FairfaxCAPS), the Fairfax County Association for the Gifted (FCAG), The Fairfax County Federation of Teachers (FCFT), The Fairfax Education Association (FEA), FAIRGRADE, SLEEP, and Zero Tolerance Reform.

"FEC members are really excited about this new partnership between parents and teachers. Although we represent different interests and constituencies, we share many common interests and positions," said current FEC President Megan McLaughlin who also serves as President for FAIRGRADE. "Primarily, we're sharing information, pooling resources and exchanging valuable viewpoints for improving our public schools and the educational process. And in addition, we hope to serve as a resource for our overworked and understaffed School Board members," McLaughlin said.

FEC's main goals are to monitor and report on the actions of the FCPS administration and School Board and increase public awareness. FEC members rotate responsibilities in covering School Board work sessions and regular meetings, taking detailed notes and sharing information with fellow FEC members, the public and the media.

FEC Vice President and long time parent advocate Walt Carlson said FEC is already up and running. "We've launched our website at www.fairfaxeducationcoalition.org. We'll be posting our notes from FCPS School Board meetings on important issues like the FY 2011 budget as well as valuable research data FEC members are collecting on countywide class size comparisons, FCPS program cost considerations, staffing ratios and others." Carlson added, "We hope to fulfill a need for parents and the media who want to stay current with specific issues affecting FCPS but who may not have the time or ability to attend the many FCPS meetings where these issues are discussed."

Although FEC is relatively new, McLaughlin said the organization has gotten off to an active start. FEC members recently participated in discussions with School Board members for improving community relations. And several FEC members were recently interviewed by Channel 7 WJLA news regarding Superintendent Dale's proposed FY2011 budget. The Connection newspaper also recently cited classroom size data provided by another FEC member for a recent story on current FCPS class sizes.

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