

New SOL testing policy is unfair

As the school year finishes up, students are seen stressing about SOLs and finals as studying becomes overwhelming. This year, a new policy was introduced that would combine SOLs and finals. The policy acts as an incentive for students to pass their state tests. A week before SOL testing began, Fairfax County Public Schools announced a new policy: SOLs would now count as final test grades for those taking non honors classes. For a number of reasons, many find this new policy unfair. Teachers and students, have complained about it. To start off, several students who take honors classes were discontent with the fact that they didn't have this opportunity, and rightfully so. Honors classes are set up differently than standard classes. Often, the information that is taught in the class varies from general education to honors. The finals for the honors classes might also be more difficult. Even though the grading policy still gives honor classes a boost in points in their final, it is not the same. It is not fair that students who put in just as much work effort into their studies do not have the same opportunities. Honors students

should receive these incentives as well.

The grading scale that is used to determine the grade that a student

has on a final based on their SOL grade is completely arbitrary, too.

To pass an SOL, a student would need to get 52 percent of the questions right. For a regular test administered by a teacher, that

would equate to an F. On the other hand, if someone gets a 400 on the

SOL, meaning that they got 52 percent of questions right, they get a

C for the final exam.

It is not right that someone who would have failed the exam had it

been graded normally can get a decent and passing grade

Another issue

is that the SOL is not the best indicator of the knowledge a student

has. Teachers design tests, including the final, based on what they

have taught. The SOL is completely objective. Sometimes, the questions

asked can be on outdated information that teachers haven't taught.

The timing of the announcement also bothered many teachers.

They are

upset about the fact that the county only told teachers right before

SOLs began. Some teachers say that had they known that most students

would be using their SOL grade as their final, they would have decreased how much worth that the final has towards their grade.

"The final test is worth 20 percent in my class," said biology teacher

Caroline Gergel. "Had I known that an F on the SOL would

equate to a C

for their final test grade, then I would have made the final worth way

less.”

The late announcement was unfair to students, too. Most were interested in just passing the SOL, so they would have studied more

for it had they known that their score could determine whether or not

they would take the final.

While some are unhappy, students who were worried that they wouldn't

do as well on the final exam are elated about this news. But although

it makes some people happy and improves their grades, the new policy

isn't right and should either be modified.