



# FAIRLEAD ACADEMY

## Guiding Students to Success

Know the learner and the learning,  
expecting excellence in both.

Accept no excuses, educating ALL  
with rigor, relevance, respect, and  
positive relationships.

*—SMCPS Mission Statement*



## WHAT IS A FAIRLEAD?

A “fairlead” is a nautical device used to guide a line, rope, or cable around an object or out of the way, thus enabling the sailor to pilot the craft. The Fairlead Academy does much the same by taking struggling students and guiding them through any challenging years of high school – helping them avoid obstacles that they may have encountered in their home high school.

## WHY DO SOME STUDENTS NEED FAIRLEAD ACADEMY?

It all rests with a student’s freshman year in high school. Data shows that students who struggle and are retained for one year increase in likelihood of becoming dropouts by 40 to 50 percent. A second retention increases this risk by 90 percent (Darling-Hammond & Falk, 1997).

Being held back twice makes dropping out a virtual certainty. Retention disproportionately affects minority and economically disadvantaged students (Guide from the U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

The focus on ninth & tenth grade reflects a growing awareness among educators nationwide that these are make-or-break years. A solid start in the freshman year is essential. This is why St. Mary’s County Public Schools (SMCPS) has created this guided pathway to high school success. Well-documented research outlines three main elements of successful alternative programs for struggling students: organizational, instructional, and interpersonal. These are the founding principles of the Fairlead Academy.



## WHAT WILL A 9TH GRADE FAIRLEAD STUDENT’S DAY LOOK LIKE?

Teaching will be differentiated to students’ particular areas of need and interest. Each student will be coached through the curriculum at their most appropriate pace. A typical 9th grade schedule would look like this:

### SUBJECTS

45 Minutes Algebra I CM &  
45 Minutes Algebra I Seminar

90 Minutes English 9/90

45 Minutes  
U.S. History

45 Minutes  
Earth Space Science

45 Minutes Foundations of  
Technology (Grade 9)

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Technology rich instructional environment including SMART technologies
- Field trips to link classroom learning to career & college readiness.



Tenth grade students attend Fairlead Academy for 4-5 periods a day for their core academic subjects along with 2-3 classes at their home high school or the Tech Center in order to fulfill other graduation requirements.

# WHAT ARE THE KEY FEATURES OF FAIRLEAD ACADEMY?

## Organization

A low student-teacher ratio and concentration of resources on a small target population

Student participation in the decision-making process of the school

Staff in-services on communication strategies with at-risk students

A climate supportive of and tailored to individual needs and abilities

## Instruction

Cooperative learning and peer tutoring

Integrated curriculum that provides a framework to allow students to succeed in a variety of ways

A wide variety of curriculum materials other than traditional textbooks and commercial educational materials

Accelerated learning to gain grade-level skills equivalent to their peers'

Active interdisciplinary projects that link school work to life experiences

Differentiated instruction based on individual students' needs

## Interpersonal

Development of students' self esteem and positive attitudes about school through adult relationships

Increased opportunity for informal interactions with adults

Development of a sense of community within Fairlead Academy to foster student identification with school

Cooperative learning for culturally diverse populations

Parent and community participation in the educational program

Emphasis on tying classroom learning to college & career goals

# OTHER KEY BENEFITS OF THE FAIRLEAD ACADEMY

## Targeted Field Trips

Students will travel on field trips as incentives for excellent attendance and dedicated learning. These experiences will extend classroom instruction and expose students to the alternate employment opportunities and experiences beyond the traditional classroom.

Focus is placed on career and college readiness for every student.



## HSA, MISA, & PARCC Preparation

A key feature of the Fairlead Academy program is to prepare students for the rigorous High School Assessments (HSA) in Government, MISA (Maryland Integrated Science Assessment), along with PARCC assessments for English 10 and Algebra I. Students will prepare for and take the Algebra PARCC assessment in 9th grade. The PARCC English 10 and Government HSA will be prepared for and taken in the 10th grade.

## WHAT CRITERIA DETERMINES ELIGIBILITY?

- Students will be referred into the program by administrators, parents, counselors, teachers
- A minimum of moderate to good attendance
- Students performing at or below the grade level in reading and mathematics
- Students with significant disruptive behaviors will not be candidates for the program
- Fairlead Academy personnel will review applications and make final selections
- Parents and students must commit to the program and sign a contract

**P**ersevere**R**esponsible**I**ntegrity**D**eductive**E**arnest

## WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE?

Students wishing to enroll in the program will complete an application and submit this to the Fairlead Academy. Each application will be reviewed by an admissions team comprised of educators, administrators, and local stakeholders who will, in turn, make recommendations to the academy for accepting students into the program. Candidates will be evaluated based on their past academic performance, dedication to learning, and their desire to be successful in their high school career.

## OUR PLEDGE TO THE FAIRLEAD STUDENT

To teach a child you must know a child. The Fairlead Academy staff will know their students well. This means that we teach the whole child by recognizing that many struggling students have distractors that must be addressed before academic pursuits can become their focus. Interpersonal components that develop students' confidence and self-esteem included in the program. Here at Fairlead Academy focus is placed on every student making a personal connection between education and their future career or college goals.

Constant monitoring of student progress and an active coaching and mentoring model carries students through their first years of high school. Our goal is to have ALL students earn seven high school credits at the end of each year at Fair lead Academy. This will set students on the road to career and college success.

*For more information,  
please contact:*

MR. BEEJAY DOTHARD  
Academic Dean  
[bjdothard@smcps.org](mailto:bjdothard@smcps.org)  
or

MS. SARA COOPER  
School Counselor  
[sccooper@smcps.org](mailto:sccooper@smcps.org)

301-863-4090  
<http://schools.smcps.org/fairlead>



### Board of Education of St. Mary's County

Mrs. Karin M. Bailey, Chairman  
Mrs. Cathy Allen, Vice Chairman

Mr. James J. Davis

Mrs. Mary M. Washington

Mrs. Rita Weaver

Ms. Roma A. Kankaria, Student Member

Dr. J. Scott Smith, Secretary-Treasurer