



## Fairfax County Special Education PTA School Board Election Questionnaire

### About us:

#### **Our Mission:**

***Empowering and connecting families, students and educators to ensure students with disabilities develop their full potential as individuals and community members.***

- Fairfax County SEPTA is a county-wide PTA that covers all special education, special needs and disabled students in Fairfax County. We are made up of parents, caregivers, educators and professionals dedicated to advocating for the needs of students with disabilities.
- Fairfax County SEPTA offers the following branches of service to our Special Needs Community: Advocacy, Community & Support, improved Access to Information, Programming, and Awards & Recognition.
- Fairfax County SEPTA is dedicated to positive collaboration with FCPS and other disability advocacy groups as we work to achieve our mission.
- Fairfax County SEPTA is a member of the Fairfax County Council of PTAs as well as the VA State PTA and National PTA

### About this Questionnaire:

We thank you for completing this short survey regarding your view on ways the FCPS School Board can ensure that Special Education students in FCPS receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).

All candidates are receiving this questionnaire on August 1, 2017. We kindly request that you submit your responses to [info@FairfaxCountySEPTA.org](mailto:info@FairfaxCountySEPTA.org) no later than August 11, 2017. We will publish all received responses on April 18, 2017. If you decline to respond, we will note that on our website and communications. We will also be encouraging Fairfax County SEPTA membership to vote in the special election on August 29, 2017.

### Michael Owens' Responses

1. What is your view of how the budget process should be undertaken this year in terms of transparency to stakeholder group members while various options are developed, analyzed, and selected? In light of the fact that Fairfax County has the greatest shortage of special education teachers in the Commonwealth, will there be a focused consideration of chronic teacher shortages in Special Education and will you include parent groups in this discussion?

I strongly believe that transparency and cooperation are a crucial component of many of the FCPS School Board interactions. As an educator, trained facilitator, and non-partisan member of the School Board I hope to be able to assist in that end. One of my top priorities for FCPS is to address teacher hiring and salary issues, which have become increasingly dysfunctional over the years. We need more highly qualified teachers, including those with Special Education endorsements.



2. Given the complexity of serving an extremely diverse population of students with disabilities who require special services, will you be an at large board member with a special concern for these needs?

In my current professional role as a User Design and Usability Consultant I have researched and advocated for accessibility in website and web application design. As an educator and a former FCPS teacher, I know that appropriate differentiated instruction is crucial to student success. Serving all of the students in our community and ensuring that they have the opportunities to succeed will be a special concern.

3. What personal experiences do you have with educational accommodations, whether 504 Plans, ADA provisions or Individual Educational Plans required under IDEA? Are you familiar with the Supreme Court's Endrew F. decision? How should the school board assess its impact in terms of the amount and quality of Special Services that FCPS will provide next year?

As a former FCPS teacher, I have attended IEP meetings and been responsible for implementing accommodations in my classroom. While it has now been explicitly stated that it is our legal obligation to provide robust Special Education services—it was always our moral obligation. That has not changed.

4. What else should we know about you before voting?

In addition to being a current FCPS mom, I am also the president of the PTA and have volunteered with everything from teacher lunches to directing student plays. I have a strong investment in FCPS and a deep commitment to improving education for all of our children.