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*The Fairfax County Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) requests that Fairfax County Public Schools address the outcome inequalities between students with disabilities and their peers as documented in the Academic Performance Update provided at the School Board Work Session on October 16, 2017. SEPTA believes that the development of specific and measurable plans to improve outcomes for students with disabilities is necessary due to the inequity of performance and the individualized nature of special education and we stand ready to support FCPS in this effort. To that end, we recommend that the Strategic Plan be updated to offer detailed activities and initiatives specifically designed to address these inequities.*

*SEPTA has a growing concern for the special education teachers and staff supporting our students in special education. The reality of a high turnover rate and increasing caseloads is a serious issue and, with regard to turnover rate, a drastic discrepancy from the tenure of general education teachers. SEPTA would like to see specific initiatives be put in place to support the hiring and retention of highly qualified teachers and staff to support students in special education and to ensure that the 400 recently-hired FCPS special education teachers have targeted skill training and support to perform sufficiently in the highly individualized atmosphere of special education. We believe it is imperative to address the overwhelming caseloads for Special Services Support Staff, including Assistive Technology which reports having a caseload of over 100 students and 5-6 schools per specialist.*

*SEPTA believes that metrics beyond graduation rates and SOL pass rates are needed to accurately measure successful performance for students in special education. Unfortunately, there is currently no other publicly available means to determine student success. SEPTA believes that all children in FCPS would benefit from a notion of success measured in a more holistic approach to include data collection of: social-emotional growth, life skills, positive behavior changes and other academic criteria beyond SOL pass rates. Without a clear understanding of what it means to be*



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*a successful special education student, FCPS cannot accurately evaluate and make decisions regarding the efficacy of special education programs.*

*As budget deliberations begin for the 2018-2019 Budget Cycle with a stated focus on taking a specific look into the Special Education Budget, it is our concern that decisions will be made without consideration of efforts that would address the clear and pressing achievement gap between special education students and their peers. As the Strategic Plan is used to help prioritize during budget deliberations, Fairfax County Special Education PTA recommends that the FCPS School Board and FCPS Leadership Team revise the Strategic Plan Update to reflect a commitment to eliminating the achievement gap for FCPS Special Education Students. It is our recommendation that the FCPS School Board and the FCPS Leadership Team adopt activities and initiatives to eliminate the achievement gap and that they be prioritized during budget deliberations.*