



Fairfax County Special Education PTA
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Special Education Funding, Services, and Training

Whereas the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), originally passed in 1975 under the title “Education for All Handicapped Children Act” and amended in 1997 and 2004, pledged to school districts nationwide that the federal government would provide 40% of the extra cost of special education; that pledge has gone perpetually unfulfilled, as the federal government currently provides funding for less than 15% of the extra cost of special education; the ability of local school districts to provide appropriate services to the nearly 7 million children who qualify for special education services across the country is dependent on IDEA funding; and

Whereas the extra cost of special education includes services provided by occupational (OT) and physical therapists (PT), speech-language pathologists (SLP), assistive technology specialists (AT), paraprofessionals, school counselors, social workers and psychologists; the ability of these related service providers (RSP) to provide appropriate services to their students is heavily dependent on both their caseload and their workload; there are nationwide staffing shortages across RSP disciplines; and

Whereas the percentage of students enrolled nationwide in public school receiving special education services has increased from 8.3% in 1976 to 13.7% in 2017-2018; the largest increase in identification is within the eligibility categories of Autism, Developmental Delay, Other Health Impairment (OHI), and Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD); there are marginalized and under-supported populations within the disability community that are routinely underidentified and/or are not provided appropriate supports and services; and

Whereas the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities demonstrates that students with disabilities do not have consistent access to curricula and services that result in more than a *de minimis* education; the 2017 Supreme Court case *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* decision states that “every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives”; standardized tests that measure achievement are often inaccurate measures of the capabilities of students with disabilities;

Whereas Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines are a tool used in the implementation of Universal Design for Learning, a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people that is evidence-based on scientific insights into how humans learn and addresses systemic barriers that result in inequitable learning opportunities and outcomes; UDL is included in the 2016

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the 2018 (re-authorization of the Perkins Act) Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act;

Therefore, be it

Resolved, That Fairfax County SEPTA urges the United States Congress to pass legislation to provide full federal funding of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act in order to support students with disabilities' ability to reach their full potential and become an independent member of society; and be it further,

Resolved, That Fairfax County SEPTA acknowledges the important role that related service providers have in providing a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities and strongly urges funding for staffing levels determined by a workload analysis approach to support the identification of and service quality for students with disabilities, along with improved staff retention; and be it further,

Resolved, That Fairfax County SEPTA urges Fairfax County Public Schools to provide annual training for all teachers in UDL Guidelines to provide multiple means of Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression such that the needs of all students are recognized, including marginalized and under-supported populations within the disability community such as but not limited to those with complex communication needs, sensory integration disorder, twice-exceptionality, visual impairment, etc; to refer these students to the Local Screening Committee (LSC); to provide annual training for all members of the special education team in the assessment and identification of the range of disabilities in students; and to advocate that teacher certification programs include mandatory curricula addressing strategies for meaningful inclusion and instruction of special education students through the use of UDL Guidelines; and be it further,

Resolved, That Fairfax County SEPTA encourages all local units and community members to participate in their state-mandated Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), the Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities (ACSD), and to advocate for fidelity of implementation in all special education services and programs.

Resolved, That Fairfax County SEPTA encourages all stakeholders in the educational system to presume the competence of students with disabilities by supporting and providing access to appropriately challenging curricula for all students; to include classroom instruction about disability history and people with disabilities within existing inclusive curricula; to support and advocate for school systems to implement professional development to train all teachers (general education, special education, and specialists such as music/art/physical education,etc.) in supporting the needs of their special education students - whether those needs be related to fine/gross motor skills, communication, assistive technology, twice-exceptionality, etc; to support the development of standardized tests and universal screeners that are normed to include students with disabilities who access these assessments using the accommodations deemed necessary by their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) teams.

Adopted at the January 19, 2021 Fairfax County SEPTA General Membership Meeting