

Fairfax County Special Education PTA
2021-2022 Advocacy Priorities
Adopted at September 30, 2021 General Membership Meeting



PTA believes that all children have the right to a quality public education, which allows each child the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. PTA is committed to the belief that all children can learn and that school and family collaboration is essential to successful academic and developmental growth. ¹

Echoing this National PTA charge is Fairfax County SEPTA's mission of: ***Empowering and connecting families, students and educators to ensure students with disabilities develop their full potential as community members.***

Fairfax County SEPTA also believes that we have a responsibility to represent the unique needs of our membership and the local FCPS special education community. To this end, through extensive outreach via surveys, public feedback events and forums, review of our social media platform discussions, collaboration with our active advocacy committee, and direct email and phone communication with members of the community, the Fairfax County SEPTA Executive Board has identified several advocacy priorities that will guide our work to ensure that every FCPS student with a disability can achieve to their highest potential and that the professionals who work with them have the tools and resources to support them accordingly.

The following advocacy priorities will direct our advocacy for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year and beyond:

Local Advocacy Priorities:

- Literacy
 - FCPS is in the process of restructuring its approach to literacy instruction to align with the science of reading. SEPTA believes it is important to ensure that all students, across all settings, are taken into account during this shift, and that evidence-based practices are implemented with fidelity.
- Restraint & Seclusion
 - FCPS is still in the process of instituting practices to replace the use of seclusion and decrease the use of restraint. SEPTA believes that it is critical to continue to monitor this process and provide feedback to ensure the safety of students and staff.
- Covid Pandemic Concerns
 - SEPTA believes it is critical to provide input regarding the impact of FCPS Covid procedures and policies on students with disabilities.
- AIR Comprehensive Special Education Review Study
 - FCPS is currently beginning its second year of this 2-year independent audit. SEPTA believes it is important to provide input and feedback throughout the audit process to ensure that all students and staff across all settings are represented in the audit's findings.
- Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) Reform
 - FCPS' IEE process is biased against families and independent practitioners. SEPTA believes that multiple issues must be addressed including, but not limited to, release of reports to families, ability for practitioners to make recommendations based on student needs without fear of repercussion from FCPS, and pay equity for services rendered.

continued

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- Adapted Curriculum
 - Per community feedback to SEPTA, FCPS has limited support and resources for students accessing the adapted curriculum as well as limited curriculum materials for adaptive curriculum staff. SEPTA believes it is important to identify problems impacting this population and advocate for further support for these students and staff.
- School Year and Extended School Year (ESY) Readiness
 - SEPTA believes it is critical for school staff to be appropriately prepared for incoming student needs prior to the start of school or ESY in order to ensure that all students with disabilities are able to engage in a free appropriate public education (FAPE) beginning on the first day of school.
- Staff Equity and Support
 - SEPTA values the “T” in PTA as vital partners in supporting our children. Like our students, special education staff have unique needs. SEPTA believes it is critical to advocate for special education staff needs so that they may do their jobs effectively and with all necessary resources.
- Accessibility in All Curricula and Materials
 - SEPTA believes FCPS must invest in accessible curricula, supports and resources to provide FAPE for all students including, but not limited to those who are: blind/low-vision, Deaf/hard of hearing, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) users, students with advanced academic needs, as well as those using adaptive curriculum.

State Level Advocacy Priorities that affect our local students:

- Minimizing Large Age-Ranges in Self-Contained Classrooms
 - SEPTA believes it is important to research best practices and provide input/feedback on FCPS’ practice of multi-grade level classrooms. We need to understand the impact these environments have on student achievement and best practice instruction.
- Improved General Education Teacher Training Regarding Accessibility, Literacy, and Instructing Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings
 - SEPTA believes that this is a systemic issue that must be addressed in higher education teacher preparation programs, as well as in teacher licensure requirements.
- IEE Reform
 - Safeguards, as described above, must be addressed at the State level to ensure compliance by FCPS.
- Continued Dyslexia / Literacy Requirements
 - SB1865, ensuring that all students falling below the literacy screener benchmark are given intervention aligned with the science of reading, went into effect July 1, 2021. SEPTA will continue to follow and advocate for additional State legislation impacting literacy requirements.

¹[National PTA Position Statement - The Education of Children with Disabilities](#) (Adopted) Adopted: by the 1996 Board of Directors, Reviewed: by the 2001 Convention Resolutions Committee, Amended: by the 2021 Board of Directors