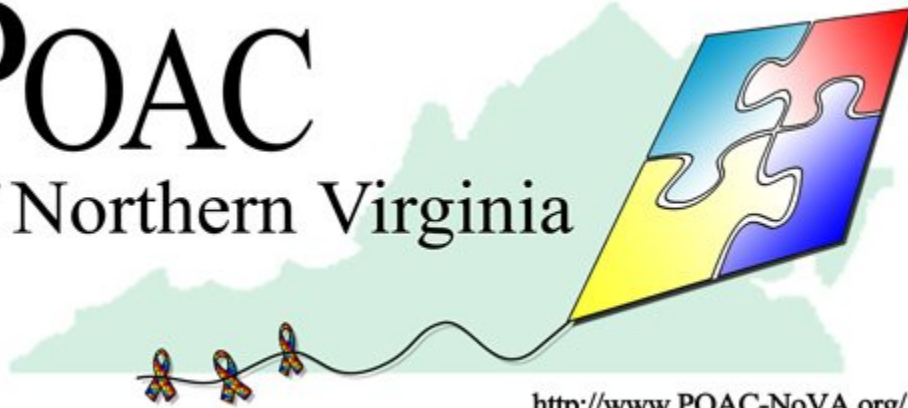


POAC of Northern Virginia



Parents of Autistic Children of Northern Virginia (POAC-NoVa) School Board Candidate Survey

First of all, thank you for the commitment you are making to our children as a candidate for the Fairfax County School Board. We work regularly with School Board members on those issues which affect our children and the quality of their education. We hope that you will be able to join us at our October 20 “Meet the Candidates” membership meeting and we look forward to working with you.

Please answer each of the following questions with responses of three simple sentences or less. A summary of candidate responses will be distributed to our members and others as part of our effort to educate the community about the growing number of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the various policy proposals related to this problem.

POAC-NoVa does not endorse candidates and nothing in this survey or the subsequent summary document should be considered an endorsement of any candidate.

Again, thank you for making this commitment to serve the public and our children.

James Lafferty
Chairman
Legislative Committee

Please respond to each of the following questions with a statement of no more than three simple sentences. You may use a separate page and number the responses if you choose.

Please e-mail your responses to jameslafferty@usa.net no later than October 1, 2007.

If you have questions about this survey, please contact James Lafferty at (703) 931-2324 or jameslafferty@usa.net.

Our questions are the following:

1. Experts estimate that by 2010 the number of students in the Fairfax County Public School System with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) will have nearly doubled. Currently, a child with ASD is born every 20 minutes in America. What three steps do you favor taking immediately to deal with this epidemic of autism in our schools?

- a) Begin now to develop a long-term plan as to how the school system will logistically accommodate that number of autistic children.
- b) Begin to develop a staff training program that provides existing proven methods and looks to new research for new techniques to provide teachers with a full tool of techniques
- c) Increase IA pay for those trained to teach autistic children

2. Do you support the need to reduce classroom to coach ratios? If not, then why not? Do you support the need for coach support for children with autism who are in the non-categorical classes?

I support using objective and, as far as possible, quantitative data to determine the number of coaches required for the specific children being served. Some children will require more attention and some teachers will require more support from the coach and consequently, that coach cannot serve as many classrooms while more experienced teachers may not have as great a need for coaching. I also believe that we need to support the children

in our schools whether their needs fall into a category or label and I believe that the schools intervene too late in many special needs situations, causing a greater cost due to the academic opportunity lost.

3. Do you support the addition of \$200,000 every year for the next five years to strengthen training programs for teachers/instructional assistants/other support staff in the area of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Verbal Behavior (VB)?

Yes

4. Parents of children with autism complain about the inconsistency and uneven quality of the education their children receive in Fairfax County schools. Do you support the need for better oversight of school autism staff by the coaches in the area of IEP implementation and data collection? Why or why not?

Any school system of this size will have some inconsistencies in the quality of the instruction; however, there is little excuse for having inconsistencies in types of service, types of instruction, procedures in place to implement an IEP and means to measure success. I believe that before there can be better oversight, there must be defined roles and responsibilities with respect to implementing the IEP process. There also needs to be real measurements to determine how well the IEP is being implemented and how well the student is progressing and until those are in place, the coaches oversight is as qualitative and vague as most IEPs.

5. Do you support the expansion of summer services for elementary school children that requires funding of \$1.1 million? If not, what policies would you propose so that children with autism receive services to ensure sustained progress during summer breaks?

Yes in the short term and in the long term, I support developing a holistic program that is not a piecemeal approach of jury-rigging existing programs in place, starting at the entry into the system and carrying the student through elementary school, middle school and on into high school with “off ramps” available for children that may no longer need services at different points in their academic careers. Since continuity and minimal change are critical elements for these children, FCPS’s new program of putting summer

school in the base school should be leveraged to provide continuity of service.

6. Historically, curriculum decisions have been made by the school district. Do you support the need to involve parents in decisions regarding curriculum selection and curriculum modification for children with autism?

Absolutely. This should be both at the division-wide level and at the individual child's level.