

# STATEMENT

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Fairfax County Parents Association (FCPA)

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## Learning Loss Continues Despite Spending Increases; Time to Change Direction

(Fairfax, VA)-- —Last week Virginia released the standardized test (“SOL”) score data and results from last year, showing significant learning loss across the Commonwealth. **More than half of 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders failed, or almost failed, their reading exams** this past year. The data also shows that “pass rates for every elementary and middle school grade are behind 2018-2019,” a fact largely attributed to the harmful effects of school closures.

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) immediately put out a press release responding to that data celebrating that FCPS schools and students “remain steady.” Remaining steady where “steady” means continuing to fail most students, is nothing to celebrate.

FCPS has consistently watered-down academic rigor over the past decade and repeatedly disregarded warnings from parents over extended school closures. Notably these results include the results of efforts by FCPS during the pandemic to urge many students not to take the SOL exams so that their likely failing scores would not drag down the overall SOL statistics.

The FCPS budget has grown by over 122 percent since 2000 to \$3.5 billion per year—**the budget outpacing enrollment increases by a factor of five times**. The massive budget supports a bloated administrative bureaucracy rather than funding and keeping great teachers. This is a school system that uses a vague system of “growth measures” to **inflate** raw scores on SOLs to give the *impression* that students are more proficient in their exam results than they are, while at the same time benefiting from a highly-educated population that can supplement their children’s education, helping increase some scores that bring up the average while leaving many students behind.

Remaining “steady” in a county where the standards have dropped isn’t good enough. **Parents in Fairfax County again plead with FCPS to cease prioritizing things that have no impact on student outcomes.** FCPS needs to drop every pet political project and focus their mass resources on improving student outcomes, i.e., ***educating our students***. Clearly what they have been doing is not working. It’s time to ***change direction***.

We owe it to our **students in all economic classes and all diverse backgrounds** to stop fiddling while Rome burns. It’s time for the school board and school system to stop always insisting everything is fine and start acknowledging that something needs to be done ***differently*** to stop the slide. **We must change direction**. “Remain steady” isn’t a plan for a once great and mighty \$3.5 billion school system that is now failing in its mission to educate children.

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*Fairfax County Parents Association (FCPA) is a volunteer-led, non-partisan, grassroots coalition of thousands of parents that seeks to ensure students are the first priority in Fairfax County Public Schools. The group’s participants include parents from all areas of Fairfax County who come from across the political spectrum, cultural backgrounds, and economic strata. The group advocates for student-focused, student-prioritized implementation of education and education policies in Fairfax County. The FCPA will work to support teachers and staff of the school system to aid their efforts to educate our children.*