

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

A Message from Dr. Terri H. Mozingo, Chief Academic Officer

Welcome to the third edition of the *Pursuit of Excellence Newsletter* for 2018. This edition will keep you updated about the latest developments in a variety of key areas including: (1) trends, focus areas, and high-priority projects involving the Department of Curriculum and Instruction; (2) updates from the Office of Curriculum Design and Instructional Services; (3) updates from the Office of Specialized Instruction; and (4) updates from the Office of Talent Development.

While reading the *Importance of Leadership in High-Performing Schools (Curriculum and Leadership Journal)*, I thought that you might be interested in the summary of key findings. The article clearly illustrates that there is a growing body of evidence that school leadership has an impact on student outcomes second only to the influence of teachers in the classroom. The article indicates that nearly 60% of a school's impact on student achievement is attributable to leadership and teacher effectiveness, with principals accounting for 25% of a school's total impact on achievement. Also, while effective teachers have a profound effect on student outcomes, this effect soon fades when the student moves on to another teacher, unless the new teacher is equally effective.

Finally, four characteristics are listed below that were shared by high performing leaders. (1) The biggest contributors to their success were: setting vision and direction; supporting the development of staff; and ensuring effective management systems and processes; (2) The major motivator for doing their work was the desire to make a difference; (3) Their focus is more on instructional leadership and developing teachers than on traditional school management, although this was important; and (4) The most important skill of an effective leader was to coach others and support their development, and overcome their biggest challenges by improving teaching and the curriculum.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 A Message From Dr. Mozingo
- 2 Updates from Curriculum Design and Instructional Services Office
- 2 Updates from Specialized Instruction Office
- 3 Updates from Talent Development Office

What High-Performing Leaders Do and the Personal Attributes They Display to be Effective

Build a shared vision and sense of purpose	Set high performance expectations
Role-model the behavior and practices they desire	Design and manage the teaching and learning program
Establish effective teams and distribute leadership among school staff	Understand and develop people
Protect teachers from issues that distract them from their work	Establish school routines and norms of behavior
Monitor performance	Connect the school to parents and the community
Recognize and reward achievement	Focus on student achievement and put children ahead of personal or political interests
Are resilient, persistent and adaptable	Develop deep understanding of people and context
Take risks and challenge accepted beliefs and behavior	Are self-aware, lifelong learners, optimistic, and enthusiastic

ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan Goals

1. **Academic Excellence and Educational Equity:** Every child will be academically successful and prepared for college, work and life.
2. **Family and Community Engagement:** ACPS will partner with families and the community in the education of Alexandria's youth.
3. **An Exemplary Staff:** ACPS will recruit, develop, support, and retain a staff that is best for Alexandria's students.
4. **Facilities and the Learning Environment:** ACPS will provide optimal and equitable learning environments.
5. **Health and Wellness:** ACPS will provide access and support that enables students to be healthy and ready to learn.
6. **Effective and Efficient Operations:** ACPS will be efficient, effective, and transparent in its business operations.

Office of Curriculum Design and Instructional Services

8th Edition of Tips for Teachers

We are extremely pleased with the very positive feedback you and your staff have given us about our ongoing series of "Tips for Teachers." Our 8th edition deals with a process called "Design Thinking." As you will discover, this is a problem-solving and decision-making approach that educators can use in a variety of settings. Although it began in the realm of business and engineering, Design Thinking is useful in all content areas. It emphasizes students' cognitive and emotional reaction to an issue or problem (i.e., empathy) and takes them into an additional four-stage process: (1) articulating the problem (i.e., define); (2) brainstorming potential solutions (i.e., ideate); (3) designing alternative solutions (i.e., prototype); and (4) engaging in a continuous improvement process (i.e., test). We hope that you enjoy this latest edition, and that you will share it with your teachers and administrators. All editions are available on the Curriculum website on Canvas (<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/canvas>).

2018 RunningBrooke ACPS Grant Application Winners

ACPS is proud to announce that our partner, RunningBrooke, has just announced their Move2Learn Grant recipients. RunningBrooke will grant \$108,749.00 to 25 Alexandria teachers and nonprofit partners who collectively serve more than 7,000 at-risk children. Spring 2018's partners include several division-wide initiatives including the *Bicycling in the Schools (BITS) Program*, the *ACPS Swimming Program*, the *James K. Polk's Circus Club Program*, and *William Ramsay's Books and Brain Booster Ideas Program*.

Annual Science Fair

Congratulations to the students in grades 7-12 from Jefferson-Houston School, Francis C. Hammond Middle School, and George Washington Middle School for participating in the annual science fair. The students started working on their science fair projects in September and researched topics related to Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM). Every STEM field was represented in the 255 projects. This year students found exoplanets, developed bioplastics, designed portable wheelchair ramps, and studied the effects of rising global temperatures on plants. Thank you to over 60 STEM community professionals and over 30 ACPS teachers who volunteered as judges.

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The role of a
GREAT LEADER
is not to give
greatness to
human beings, but
to help them extract
the greatness
they already have
inside them.

- J. Buchan

Office of Specialized Instruction

The Office of Specialized Instruction Canvas Page is now open for business. This Canvas page allows staff to easily access special education instructional and compliance resources in one place. Special Education Teachers have access to information and resources related to Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) and effective strategies to help close the achievement gap for students with disabilities. General Education Teachers can find resources on common characteristics of students with disabilities, as well as access ideas on how to differentiate for ACPS diverse learners. Teachers can also access a variety of resources related to co-teaching practices, procedural guidance for developing IEPs and other information regarding compliance with special education regulations.

Thank You to all ACPS School Counselors!

February 5th-9th was designated by the American School Counselor Association as *National School Counseling Week*. This year's theme is "School Counselors: Helping Students Reach for the Stars." If you haven't had a chance, please take a moment to thank a school counselor.



Coaching Academy 2 Begins in ACPS

Forty engaged ACPS employees from the Departments of Student Services, Accountability, Curriculum & Instruction, and various schools, have taken the learner role to understanding how Coaching can be interweaved in our work with students, colleagues and community. This group will participate in 8 days of learning about Coaching between January and June. They will earn a certificate from Learning Forward in Coaching. The first two days of the Coaching Academy covered the following themes:

- **Establish** and describe a framework for coaching.
- **Assess** the stages of community in your teams and consider the need for creating high relational trust in your schools and departments.
- **Identify** and discuss the characteristics of effective coaches.
- **Discuss** the ten roles of coaches.
- **Establish** learning teams that will reflect upon the tools and strategies that are modeled and consider how to use and apply them.
- **Learn** with and from one another.

The Academy also covered the attributes of collegiality, building teams and trust, and understanding what brings about dysfunction in teams. For One of the most important themes was working on trust. Some research about trust was shared below:

10 Ways to Build Trust Within Your Community

One thing we know for sure – high levels of trust are necessary for high levels of performance! The research findings of Megan Tschannen-Moran clearly support this assertion. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- 1. Make relationships a priority.** We are in the people business and relationships are everything. Treat them as such. Susan Scott reinforces this concept in her book, *Fierce Conversations*, when she says, “The conversation is the relationship.”
- 2. Show personal regard.** Invest time in personally knowing others . . . their hopes, fears, and dreams, what they care deeply about. It can be as simple as speaking to someone about her grandchildren, acknowledging the college from which someone has graduated, or asking about a sick child. It might also include knowing that I love chocolate, giving me a pat on the back for a job well done, asking my opinion about something important to the school, or dropping me a note of appreciation for being a masterful educator.
- 3. Make daily deposits.** Relational trust is built on a day-to-day basis. It’s the small things that make a BIG difference. Find authentic ways to make deposits into my emotional bank account every day.
- 4. Be a committed listener.** Offer full presence to others. Listen twice as much as you speak as suggested by the fact that we have two ears and one mouth. It is a gift that people are hungry for.
- 5. Keep your promises.** When you say you will do something, do it without fail. This demonstrates your trustworthiness and integrity that opens the door for even greater trust in the relationship.
- 6. Use reflective feedback.** The language we use is a signal of trust in the relationship. Choosing to offer feedback that is reflective in nature, delivers the message AND enhances the relationship. It clarifies, acknowledges the value potential, and promotes the thinking of the receiver as one considers additional possibilities and options for future action.
- 7. Promote thinking rather than advice giving.** David Rock’s book, *Quiet Leadership*, asserts that the best way to improve the performance of another is to improve his thinking. Asking reflective questions over telling mediates the thinking of the other person, creating new hardwiring that substitutes short-term solutions for long-term capacity building.
- 8. Articulate expectations and standards.** Be clear about what you expect with regard to performance. What are the drop-dead essentials for working in your school or district? In what ways do you communicate these essentials to those who are most affected?
- 9. Trust others.** As ironic as this may seem, increasing our own trust of others, can build trust. Presume positive intent by believing that they “can do!”
- 10. Celebrate successes.** Say “thank you” on a regular basis to individuals as well as the collective group. We all “crave” recognition and want to know that we are doing something worthwhile and doing it well.

Our next Coaching Academy 2 session is February 12 and 13. We plan to host a Coaching Academy 3 in Fall 2018. For questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Debra Lane via email (debra.lane@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703.619.8313.

