

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the sixth 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) ACPS' Teaching and Learning Framework; (3) notes to principals; and (4) updates from the Office of Talent Development. As I read *"The Innovator's Mindset: Empower Learning, Unleash Talent, and Lead a Culture of Creativity"* by George Couros (2015), I found the following mantra most fascinating, inspiring, and engaging. Please enjoy!

Moving Forward: An Innovation Educator

I am an educator. I am an innovator.

I am an innovative educator and I will continue to ask, "What is best for learners?" With this empathetic approach, I will create and design learning experiences.

I believe that my abilities, intelligence, and talents can be developed, leading to the creation of new and better ideas.

I recognize that there are obstacles in education, but, as an innovator, I will focus on what is possible today and where I can push to lead towards tomorrow.

I will utilize the tools that are available to me today, and I will continue to search for new and better ways to grow, develop, and share my thinking, while creating and connecting my learning.

I focus not only on where I can improve, but where I am already strong, and I look to develop those strengths in myself and in others.

I build upon what I already know, but I do not limit myself. I'm open to and willing to embrace new learning, while continuously asking questions that help me move forward.

I question thinking, challenge ideas, and do not accept, "This is the way we have always done it" as an acceptable answer for our students or myself.

I model the learning and leadership I seek in others. I take risks, try new things to develop, and explore new opportunities. I ask others to take risks in their learning, and I openly model that I'm willing to do the same.

I believe that isolation is the enemy of innovation, and I will learn from others to create better learning opportunities for others and myself.

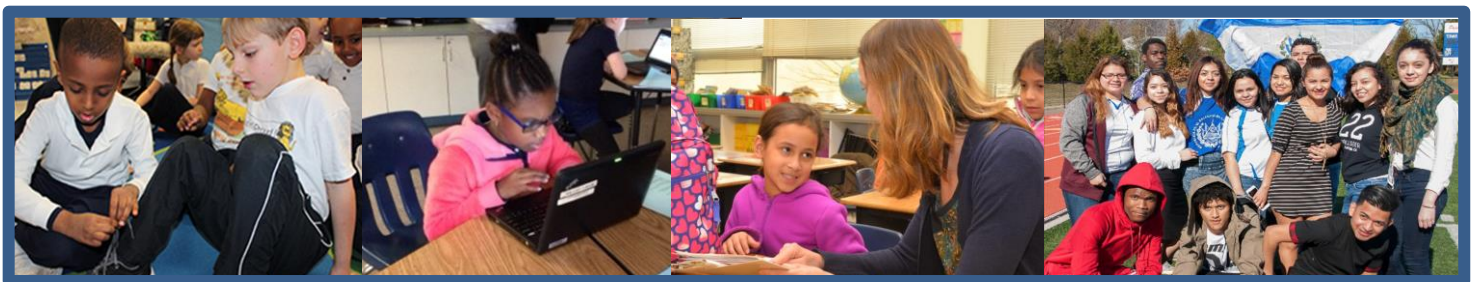
I connect with others both locally and globally to tap into ideas from all people and spaces. I will use those ideas, along with my professional judgment, to adapt the ideas to meet the needs of the learners in my community.

I believe in my voice and experiences, as well as the voice and experiences of others, as they are important for moving education forward.

I share because the learning I create and the experiences I have help others. I share to push my own thinking and to make an impact on learners, both young and old, all over the world.

I listen and learn from different perspectives because I know we are much better together than we could ever be alone. I can learn from anyone and any situation.

I actively reflect on my learning because I know looking back is crucial to moving forward.



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.

Assess

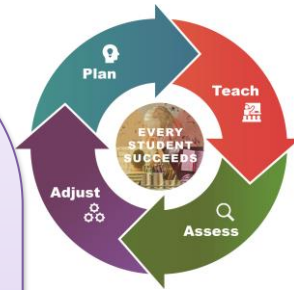
When a teacher is effective, he or she:

1. Addresses required **Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs)** as the foundation for their assessment and lesson design.
2. Uses a combination of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment tasks to monitor and evaluate student progress in **meeting or exceeding** standards.
3. **Uses multiple assessment practices** to monitor and evaluate students' mastery of the skills and content taught in their courses. Examples of acceptable assessment tools include but are not limited to the following:
 - Culminating projects
 - Performance assessment tasks (e.g., academic prompts)
 - Constructed-response test and quiz items
 - Selected-response test and quiz items
 - Student self-assessments (e.g., using rubrics for self-monitoring)
 - Peer response group feedback
 - Daily criterion-based assessment feedback (teacher-to-student)
4. **Provides daily formative assessment feedback** to ensure that students understand what they are learning and why they are learning it.
5. Creates and provides students with **scoring rubrics and exemplars** of acceptable student work in advance of major projects and related performance-based assessment tasks.
6. Permits students to **revisit and review their work** (e.g., performance assessment tasks, tests, quizzes, essays, research reports, etc.) in all instances where it is clear that additional study, effort, and time will produce improved performance and achievement.
7. Revisits with students the learner's work if, in the teacher's professional judgment, **progress and effort** are being made to meet or exceed standards as delineated by the course syllabus or outline.
8. Awards a final grade for reassessment performance that reflects the student's degree of mastery of identified **course standards and task-specific performance indicators**.

Adjust

When a teacher is effective, he or she:

1. Differentiates the teaching-learning process to ensure student mastery of the ACPS core curriculum, including addressing students' **varying readiness levels, interests, and learner profiles**.
2. Adjusts the teaching and learning process based upon **diagnostic and formative assessment results**.
3. **Uses a range of differentiation strategies for English Learners** based on WIDA results. Strategies for EL students include—but are not limited to:
 - **Activating Prior Knowledge and Building Background**
 - **Comprehensible Input**
 - **Interactive Discourse and Cooperative Learning**
 - **Explicit Instruction of Language**
 - **Scaffolding**
 - **Cultural Competence Strategies**
 - **Metacognition**
4. **Differentiates instruction for** Special Education students to include a range of IEP-related strategies and interventions. However, some universal or general strategies are also especially effective in working with all SPED students:
 - **Addressing IEP-Identified Accommodations**
 - **Station Learning**
 - **Parallel Teaching**
 - **Alternative Teaching**
 - **Specially Designed Instruction**
5. Promotes **rigor and engagement** for all learners by using a range of strategies:
 - **Higher-Level Questions and Follow-Up Probes**
 - **Socratic Seminars, Debates, and Related Discourse Strategies**
 - **Options for Independent Inquiry and Small Group Discussion and Text Analysis**
6. Uses the following instructional practices involving adjustment of content, process, and product to allow for advanced student work within a unit or subject area:
 - **Independent Research Projects**
 - **Simulations**
 - **Scenarios and Case Studies**



The ACPS Teaching and Learning Framework

Last newsletter covered the first two: Plan and Teach. Now, we focus on the next two: Assess and Adjust.

Notes to All Principals

Ways to Excitedly Engage Students in Physical Movement

We are beginning to explore ways of optimizing daily recess at each elementary school, making it a place where all students can safely and excitedly engage in physical movement. In order to better understand what is needed at each school to achieve a more efficient midday break, we are asking a favor from you to fill out a short recess survey (created by *Playworks*). Please distribute this short survey for completion to the person in your building who is best positioned to answer a few questions regarding recess spaces, procedures, etc.: <https://www.recesslab.org/checkup/>

Guidance on Outside Recess

Studies reveal that outside time is critical to the healthy development of our students. Therefore, building leaders should be trying to get students outside for recess as often as possible. The Iowa Department of Public Health has created an index for both warm and cold temperature guidance related to outdoor activity (link below). Use this chart to determine when it is appropriate to send students outside, and when they should be held inside: <http://www.cuphd.org/documents/wellness/weatherwatch.pdf>

For questions or concerns on any of these matters, please contact Health/PE/FLE Instructional Specialist, Mike Humphries, at 703.619.8020.

Happy Poetry Month!

You are cordially invited to attend the upcoming **2018 ACPS Poetry Ceremony on April 25, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.** The Ceremony will be held at T.C. Williams - Minnie Howard Campus (3801 W. Braddock Rd., Alexandria, VA).

At the request of our T.C.W. students, this year we extended the contest to secondary schools and will have a significantly upgraded anthology, which was published by the T.C.W. Labyrinth Staff.

Each school is represented at the ceremony with an overall winner who is invited to read. In addition, a few additional students who won division grade-level awards were extended invitations to attend.

Award-winning poets were asked to arrive at 5:30 p.m. for a reception as well as to provide them with time to practice reading their poems.

We look forward to celebrating all of our talented students!

For more information, please contact Elementary Literacy Instructional Specialist, Suzanne Lank, at 703.619.8330.

LEADERSHIP

A TRUE LEADER HAS THE CONFIDENCE TO STAND ALONE, THE COURAGE TO MAKE TOUGH DECISIONS, AND THE COMPASSION TO LISTEN TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS. HE DOES NOT SET OUT TO BE A LEADER, BUT BECOMES ONE BY THE EQUALITY OF HIS ACTIONS AND THE INTEGRITY OF HIS INTENT.

—Douglas MacArthur

News from Talent Development Office

Environmental Leadership for Virginia Principals

July 11-13, 2018

Virginia school leaders and VSELA members are invited to join the Chesapeake Bay Foundation for an enriching three-day experience on the Bay!

Participants will learn how the integration of environmental education and implementation of Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) empowers staff and engages students as they meet curricular objectives in several content areas. We will participate in hands-on learning investigations that will form the basis for discussions on incorporating a successful environmental education program at your school. Opportunities for networking with other school leaders from around the state will be built in to provide time for you to share ideas, including green school initiatives.

- **Length & Location:** 3 days/2 nights at CBF's Port Isabel Environmental Education Center.
- **Cost:** There is no fee for this course thanks to the support of the Henry L. and Grace Doherty Charitable Foundation, Inc
- **Questions:** Contact Cindy Duncan CDuncan@cbf.org
- **To Register:** Register online | Register by mail/fax

For more information, please visit:

http://chesapeake.cbf.org/site/Calendar?id=100983&view=Detail&_ga=2.92099929.2198801.1520874282-2112566810.1516829628.

For additional questions, please contact Talent Development Director, Debra Lane, at 703.619.8313.