

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the seventh edition of the **Pursuit of Excellence Newsletter** for 2018. This version will update you 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 in curriculum, including our work in expanding the curriculum materials and resources available to you on our Canvas platform; (3) communication updates; (4) an invitation to CivicTREK; (5) highlights from the Office of Talent Development; and (6) updates from the Office of Specialized Instruction.

As we reflect on the year to date, I am continually struck by how collaborative, insightful, and creative our teachers and administrators are. Their input and feedback have proven invaluable in helping us to guide and inform our curriculum implementation process and to address the strengths and needs of our increasingly diverse student population. Many ACPS educators have joined me and department staff in discussions and focus group sessions, including our ongoing series of school-based teacher talks, our Curriculum and Instruction Advisory Team, and Principal conversations.

These rich and positive input and feedback sessions are helping us to serve our schools even more effectively—forming true collaborative teams responsible for ensuring the success of all our students.

As the pollen continues to cover our cars and windows and the sounds of SOL test-preparation efforts are heard throughout our schools, these phenomena can be seen as reminders that there is a new era emerging within our division. We look forward to your continuing encouragement, insights, and feedback—and we wish you all the very best of success with your students.

Together, we will continue to ensure that *Every Student Succeeds!*

Coming Soon:
Pursuit of Excellence will be sent to you via MailChimp!



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.

Are There Any Updates in Curriculum?

10th Edition of Tips for Teachers

We are very pleased to share with you the tenth edition of our ongoing series "Tips for Teachers." In an effort to address assessment-identified areas of growth for our students, this issue is part one of a two-part issue on *Teaching Literacy Through the Arts*. Please enjoy this latest "Tips" and feel free to share it with your teachers and fellow administrators. All editions are available on the Curriculum website on Canvas (<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/canvas>).

Are There Any Changes in the Curriculum on Canvas?

Curriculum Instructional Specialists have been busy working to add new content to the 3rd and 4th quarter units in Canvas. Some highlights include new fourth quarter units in Grades K-5 for Family Life Education and Health and Physical Fitness. In Fine Arts, check out the new video resources recently added for teaching ceramics in kindergarten. In World Languages, new resources are available in the French 2 curriculum and the German 1 curriculum.

For any questions about curriculum updates, please contact the Instructional Specialist in your content area at 703.619.8020.

Third-Grade Brain Boost!

We are thankful to RunningBrooke for funding a grant that provides third-grade teams with a few fun supplies to bring a little joy and physical movement to reviewing for the SOLs, especially reading word analysis skills. Third-grade teachers received bean bags, scarves, koosh balls, and other fun materials to review SOL skills in a little more interactive manner. Teachers are encouraged to access the word analysis section of the Grade 3 SOL toolkit for brain booster ideas:

<https://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=1693558>.

For further questions, please contact Suzanne Lank via email (suzanne.lank@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703.619.8330.



Translations Are Officially Live!

Thank you to ACPS Translation Services and Office of Communications for providing the progress reports in Spanish, Amharic, and Arabic. These translations for both kindergarten and grades 1-5 progress reports can be found by clicking on: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/progressreports>.

To learn more about ACPS Translation and Interpretation Services, please visit:

<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/translation>.

Grades 3-12 Teachers Invited to CivicTREK!

All teachers in grades 3-12 are invited to apply for *CivicTREK*, which is a year-long professional development experience. *CivicTREK* (*Tackling Real-world Experiences for Knowledge*) is an approach to teaching that engages students in project-based learning experiences, which help build academic skills and knowledge through solving real-world problems in their communities.

Participating teachers will become part of a professional network and earn sixty re-certification points.

Cohort activities include one day of training in the summer, workshops throughout the year, and coaching, reflection, and support.



For further questions, please contact Sarah Whelan via email (sarah.whelan@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703.619.8328.

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"Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality"

- Warren Bennis -

Office of Specialized Instruction

The **Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)** is looking for additional new members. The majority of SEAC members are people with disabilities or parents/family members of children with disabilities. The role of SEAC is to advise the ACPS School Board on matters pertaining to the education of students with disabilities. It is an opportunity to participate in the development of priorities and strategies for meeting the identified needs of children with disabilities. The committee meets on a monthly basis. To apply to SEAC, click on "Apply to School Board Advisory Committee" and scroll down to Special Education Advisory Committee:

<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/domain/1025>.

The **Children's National Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders** has openings in its *Young Child Social and Flexibility Group* (March-July). The group meets at the Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders, 15245 Shady Grove Road, Suite 350, Rockville, MD 20850 on Tuesdays from 3:15 p.m.-4:15 p.m. For more information, please contact Dr. Allison Ratto via email (aratto@childrensnational.org) or at 301.765.5596.

The **Children's National Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders** is also seeking participants for a study on *Executive Functioning*. The study involves the use of MRI Technology. The goal of the research study is to pin point the parts of the brain that are responsible for executive function skills like attention, memory and learning, and to determine the potential of using MRI as a tool to help clinicians personalize treatment. For more information, or to participate, please contact Meredith Powers, Clinical Research Coordinator, CASD via email (mdpowers2@childrensnational.org) or at 301.765.5571.

The **National Federation for the Blind** is offering a Bell Academy (Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning) July 16-27, 2018, in Arlington. This is designed for children, aged 4-14, and will provide concentrated Braille instruction. The program is for children with low-vision, children who have recently lost their vision, children who have been blind from birth, and children who have additional disabilities beyond blindness or low-vision. The program runs for two weeks for about seven hours per day, and will include projects, games and field trips, in addition to Braille instruction. For more information, go to <https://nfb.org/bell-academy-faqs-affiliate/va>. To apply, go to nfb.org/bell-student-application-form. To view events from the 2017 summer program, go to <https://youtu.be/mo-60eYnCOw>.

Office of Talent Development

National Board Certification for Teachers (NBCT)

This year, we are providing our *Information Sessions* earlier in the year so applicants have more time to prepare work within their standards. The mission of NBCT is to advance student learning and achievement. This process is for identifying accomplished teachers. Applicants will work on four components: exam and three portfolio submissions. ACPS supports a two-year time frame to do this and will fund a majority of the cost (\$2,050) for selected candidates in our cohort. **For further questions, please contact Dr. Debra Lane via email (debra.lane@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703.619.8313.**



PLMS: Fast Facts for You

The ACPS Professional Learning Management System (PLMS) is the division's system for housing, managing, and archiving professional learning activities. It is a one-stop shop to inform, register, and provide feedback about professional learning sessions. PLMS can also be a useful tool for building leaders to learn more about the professional learning of their staff. ACPS's use of PLMS continues to grow. For example:

- ACPS has already recorded 45% of the logins that we saw all of last year.
- In April alone, there were over 3,000 more logins than the same time last year.
- Over 1,300 staff members have logged in to PLMS over the last 90 days.
- During just the last month, there were 700 registrations for courses.

To learn more about the PLMS usage of your own site, please log into PLMS (<https://acps.truenorthlogic.com>) and access the staff dashboard in the "administration" tab. **For any questions, please contact Cory Kapelski via email (cory.kapelski@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703.619.8189.**