

# PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the fourteenth edition of the *Pursuit of Excellence Newsletter* for 2018. This version will update you on 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) ways teachers can provide students with effective feedback; (3) welcoming our new Planetarium Teacher; (4) updates from the Office of Specialized Instruction; and (5) Family Life Education news.

Thank you for your continued support! Have a wonderful week!

### Giving Students Effective Feedback

The most effective learning happens when students are aiming for some understanding or skills, usually called a learning target, and are participating in a formative learning process based on three questions:

- Where am I going?
- Where am I now?
- Where to next?



Effective feedback helps students with all three questions by helping them:

- See exactly what it is they are trying to learn;
- Understand where they are currently; and
- See what their next step in learning should be and get the information they need to take that step.

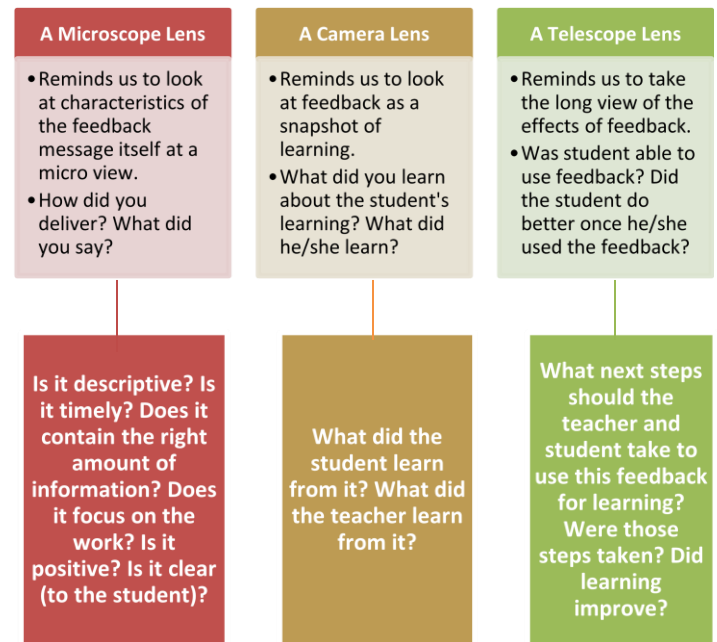
Even if a teacher does not provide any feedback, students use some sort of information to take next steps in learning.

#### First of all, what is feedback?

Feedback is information about a student's learning that helps the student take the next steps in the learning process.

Research has shown that feedback is the most important or nearly the most important variable affecting the amount and quality of student learning. Teachers can make it a routine part of their teaching repertoire.

In order to produce elaborated feedback and use it to help students improve their learning, let's examine feedback from *three points of view*.



#### The Micro View: Choices and Recommendations About the Feedback Message and Delivery:

Aspects of Feedback	Your Choices	Recommendations
<b>Focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the Work</li> <li>• On the Process</li> <li>• On the Student</li> </ul>	Focus on the work and the process - do NOT focus on the student
<b>Function</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptive</li> <li>• Evaluative</li> </ul>	Describe students' work
<b>Valence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive</li> <li>• Negative</li> </ul>	Positive - Tone should imply the student is an active learner
<b>Clarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear to Student</li> <li>• Unclear</li> </ul>	Clear of course...and check for understanding
<b>Mode</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral</li> <li>• Written</li> <li>• Demonstration</li> </ul>	Written (for students who can read)
<b>Audience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual</li> <li>• Small Group</li> <li>• Large Group</li> </ul>	Individual

Next issue will highlight the other views of feedback.

\*By Susan Brookhart

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.

## The Planetarium Says Hello to a New Teacher



Since 1985, the Planetarium at T.C. Williams High School has been welcoming students to learn about our celestial neighbors. Students from preschool have come to learn about how the Sun creates shadows, while older students discover the reason Earth has seasons and examine Kepler's laws of planetary motion. In addition to ACPS students, students from private schools, community groups, and other organizations in Alexandria visit the Planetarium.

We are excited to announce that ACPS has hired a new full-time Planetarium Teacher, Dr. Melissa Hamilton! The ACPS vision for the Planetarium is one that respects and expands its role in the schools and community to instill and foster a love for space science. We hope that having a full-time Planetarium Teacher will increase access to this amazing resource.



Students visiting the Planetarium engage in exploration that encourages the natural curiosity about space while dispelling misconceptions that often linger due to the challenge of investigating astronomical concepts in the classroom. The Planetarium Teacher works directly with teachers with the goal of developing new programs to meet a larger, more diverse set of learners that will see how space relates to various aspects of their lives. The Planetarium is well equipped to support academic instruction and the collaborative work with teachers' results in the development of updated academic experiences that support the ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan and the Virginia Science Standards of Learning in grades pre-K-12.



ACPS teachers who wish to bring a group of students must fill out an online request form (<http://goo.gl/7D6NMV>). Teachers are also encouraged to email [Dr. Melissa Hamilton](mailto:Dr.MelissaHamilton@acps.k12.va.us) to meet and plan the field trip lesson ahead of the trip. It is allowable to use Title I funds to take field trips to the Planetarium.

Principals should email [Natalie Mitchell](mailto:NatalieMitchell@acps.k12.va.us), Director of Title I Programs and School Improvement, or [Erica Meili](mailto:EricaMeili@acps.k12.va.us), Science Instructional Specialist for Title I Schools, for more information. With the hope of becoming an even larger part of the Alexandria City community, free community shows for all ages are planned starting in the second quarter. These shows will require reservations through the [ACPS Planetarium website](http://www.acps.k12.va.us/planetarium). Questions about the Planetarium can be emailed to [planetarium@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:planetarium@acps.k12.va.us).

## The Office of Specialized Instruction

The Parent Resource Center (PRC) offers a wide variety of support programs and workshops for parents in ACPS. While their primary focus is programs for parents of students with disabilities, there are a variety of topics that support all parents. Below, you will find links for the upcoming school-year workshop brochure (in different languages). Please share with your families.

**Amharic:** <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L0kjmFE6Q-SyJm46e5gciOWzDkzmazRN/view?usp=sharing>

**Arabic:**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Yyd7xaYZUSOI9OhU5fh5wDuTMliTcD3/view?usp=sharing>

**English:**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fFCjGVc3rCMAVhRhRbyqEo-vyVPxXXaL/view?usp=sharing>

**Spanish:** [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lm-rkXncjuYm\\_1fQ42So4Hgliu0yLQhg/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lm-rkXncjuYm_1fQ42So4Hgliu0yLQhg/view?usp=sharing)

If you have any questions, please contact Theresa Werner via email ([theresa.werner@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:theresa.werner@acps.k12.va.us)) or at 703-619-8247.

## Family Life Education News

As we look to ensure that ALL of our students receive Family Life Education (FLE) lessons, we are requesting your assistance in this process. The linked form below asks you to designate teachers that will deliver this vital content during the 2018-2019 school-year. Upon completion, this information will allow us to better support these teachers instructionally. Please populate the Google Doc by November 1, 2018. Thank you very much in advance.

Linked form can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Hub0Hj-z1jAcnh6xPTYk9lSeCjMtqyJ4C1ZlQCFk78A/edit?usp=sharing>

If you have any questions, please contact Michael Humphreys via email ([michael.humphreys@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:michael.humphreys@acps.k12.va.us)) or at 703-619-8020.

