PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the fifteenth 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) more ways teachers can provide students with effective feedback; (3) CivicTREK 2018 updates; (4) information regarding Data Literacy; and (5) Five Habits of Effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

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

Supporting Classroom Walk-Throughs

As we are visiting schools, many are describing their commitment to classroom visits. The research supports efforts underway in ACPS to conduct instructional walk-throughs as a way to continually support teaching and learning. Here are a few big ideas within *Conducting the Classroom Walk-Through* (WASCD, LLC., 2018) to continually guide this process.

Five Keys to Effective Walk-Throughs

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Step 1	**Develop and use a common language for quality instruction.** Work with faculty to identify key descriptors for the quality components of instruction and assessment.
Step 2	**Establish clear and consistent expectations for the administrators' presence in classrooms and communicate these to your staff members and school community.** The principal is the instructional steward of the school and must model the expectations for the rest of the staff. Throughout the school-year, visit every teacher's classroom and conduct multiple walk-through observations of the teachers you are evaluating.
Step 3	**Schedule informal walk-through observations as you would any other important item on your calendar.** Establish a daily 30-minute commitment to being a visible presence in classrooms. Make the walk-through a part of the daily and weekly calendar, and incorporate it into your leadership team's routine.
Step 4	**Use walk-throughs to promote dialogue with teachers.** Use those coaching and feedback skills! The conversation that happens after the walkthrough is key to ensuring your walk-throughs will result in changes in classroom practice.
Step 5	**Share anecdotal feedback from walk-throughs with your faculty.** Anecdotal feedback, collected by the entire administrative team, forms an agenda for faculty meetings, staff development, or instructional council meetings.

Giving Students Effective Feedback

Last week, you were given a glimpse into the **micro** view. Now, this issue will be covering the second view - **snapshot**. To recap, feedback is information about a student's learning that helps the student take the next steps in the learning process.

The Snapshot View: Feedback as an Episode of Learning

A Camera Lens — What did the student learn from it? What did the teacher learn from it?
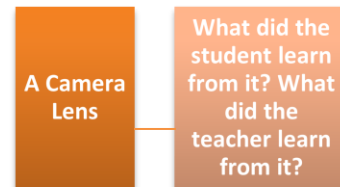
The best way to make feedback a snapshot of learning is to engage in dialogue with the student. When possible, make this routine feedback and learning conversations with your students. You may be surprised with how much you learn!

Once you are aware of the characteristics of effective feedback, try to substitute conversations with students that exhibit these characteristics for some of your ordinary interactions. Observe the principle, "work smarter, not harder."

Suggestions for Ensuring Feedback Results for Both Teachers and Students	
To help teachers learn about student thinking by giving feedback on student work	**To help students learn from feedback on their work**
Give feedback on assignments where students had to use thinking processes.	Communicate the learning goals and success criteria before students begin work, and revisit them often during the work.
Try to infer the understandings and thought processes students must have used in order to produce the work they did.	Make sure the feedback you give refers to these learning goals and criteria.
Relate these understandings about student thinking to the learning goals they are trying to achieve.	Provide opportunities for students to process feedback comments they receive (by having them ask questions or explain what it means).
Make this next change in thinking the centerpiece of your feedback comments or next instructional moves for that student.	Give students an opportunity to use the feedback to improve.

Next issue will highlight the final view of feedback - long view.

*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.

2018 CivicTREK Initiative: UPDATE

How do we make learning authentic? How do we develop the characteristics of the **Profile of a Graduate** in our students? Participants in the **ACPS CivicTREK** initiative collaboratively explored those questions at our second professional learning session on October 10, 2018. Teachers in the cohort are building competency in the implementation of **project-based and service-learning strategies** aligned with academic goals.

In the October 10th workshop, CivicTREK teachers:

- **Identified** essential best-practice elements of "authentic learning" and began to outline their own high-quality projects with students;

- **Selected** their own content-specific Standards of Learning and other academic learning goals as the framework for lesson plans associated with their projects;

- **Reviewed and implemented** selected appropriate Profile of a Virginia Graduate-requisite "Five C's", integrating skill development in [Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Citizenship](#) into their project planning (please see the [CivicTREK Five C's tool](#));

- **Considered** strategies for assessing student academic and skill development success through the process of project implementation;

- **Reviewed** a rich selection of collected and custom-created resources that they can access and use with students in the coming months; and

- **Continued** to build their professional learning community through protocol-guided conversations, mentor-led coaching, and peer-review opportunities.

Teachers left the session excited and ready to work with their students. We will continue to share their progress with you. As always, we welcome your further questions about the program, and invite you to demonstrate your support for these outstanding CivicTREK educators within your school. Please feel free to join us at our next workshop on January 9, 2019.

Images: Teachers presenting their ideas and receiving feedback using a protocol.

If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Whelan via email (sarah.whelan@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703-619-8328.

Data Literacy

In an effort to continually support schools in the area of data literacy, we are asking schools to: a) **share** template(s) being used to collect and analyze data to make instructional decisions.

In addition, please b) **review** the data sources listed below and **send** any additional data sources your team is using during data analysis. Below you will find a list of some data sources being used:

Data Sources		
ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 (WIDA)	ACPS Curriculum Performance Tasks and Alternative Assessment (required for specific grades and subjects)	Benchmark Assessments (Q1 and Q2 only)
Fountas and Pinnell (F&P)	Imagine Math (IM) grades 30 Algebra 1, required fall only, available to assess two more times per year)	Math Diagnostic Assessment (MDA) (grades 1 and 2 beginning of the year only)
Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)	Reading Inventory (RI)	Standards of Learning (SOLs)
Student Data by Question (SOL SDBQ)	Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) (KG Fall only)	Writing Benchmark (WIDA)

Email or send via Google Docs your templates by Friday, November 2, 2018 to sahar.wiltshire@acps.k12.va.us.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Terri H. Mozingo via email (terri.mozingo@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703-619-8185.

Five Habits of Effective Professional Learning Communities

According to Stephen R. Covey (author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*), habits are "the intersection of knowledge, skills, and desire." They emerge from a deep understanding of what to do (knowledge), how to do it (skills), and why it must be done (desire). Habits serve educators as signposts of progress toward achieving their desires. Please see table below for the five habits.

1	PLC members are accountable.
2	PLC members make effective use of important skill sets.
3	PLC members focus on developing and maintaining good relationships.
4	PLC members focus on and connect learning and doing.
5	PLC members operate according to a strong sense of purpose, driven by the passion they have about achieving that purpose.

*To continue reading more, please click on the article from [Learning Forward](#).

For more information, please contact [Dr. Debra Lane](#).