

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the seventeenth 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) a Mindful Moment activity; (3) introducing a new face within our Department; (4) Family Life Education Course information; and (5) updates on Science Lab Aprons.

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

A Leader is You!

A leader is you, a leader is kind,
A leader is someone who leads from behind.

A leader is you, a leader is wise,
A leader is someone we do not despise.

A leader is you, a leader is great,
A leader is someone we appreciate.

A leader is you, a leader is fun,
A leader is someone we do not shun.

A leader is you, a leader is nice,
A leader is someone who gives good advice.

A leader is you, a leader is weird,
A leader is someone we do not fear.

A leader is you, a leader is me,
A leader is someone who we can believe.

A leader is you, a leader is me,
A leader is someone anyone can be.

- Ivana from Leaders Unite

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Teachers working collaboratively have the opportunity to share instructional strategies, solve problems more creatively, and address varying learning abilities and strategies that are more difficult to attain when working in isolation.

Five Common Attributes of Successful PLCs

1	The collegial and facilitative participation of the principal, who shares leadership—and thus, power and authority—through inviting staff input in the decision making
2	A shared vision that is deployed from staff's commitment to students' learning and that is consistently articulated and referenced for the staff's work
3	Collective learning among staff and application of that learning to solutions that address students' needs
4	The visitation and review of each teacher's classroom behavior by peers as a feedback and assistance activity to support individual and community improvement
5	Physical conditions and human capacities that support such an operation

Benefits to Staff

• Reduces the isolation of teachers
• Increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school and division
• Shared responsibility for the development and success of students
• Learning that promotes new knowledge, beliefs, and sound instructional and classroom practice
• Increase meaning and understanding of the content that teachers teach
• More satisfaction, higher morale, and lower rates of absenteeism
• Increases adaptation of teaching to students' needs
• Commitment to significant and lasting change

Benefits to Students

• Lower rates of absenteeism
• Greater academic gains
• Decrease achievement gaps

**From Romoland School District's Professional Development Model*

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.

Mindful Moment Activity

A central part of mindfulness is living in the present moment. As we learn to become more *mindful* we become more aware of our lives. We learn to make more informed and effective decisions. Practicing mindfulness helps to build our emotional intelligence. It helps us to cultivate positivity.

Try the **Mindful Moment** activity below to ground and center you throughout your day.



S	Stop what you are doing.
T	Take a breath.
O	Observe what you are doing.
P	Proceed with something that will support you in the moment, such as breathing exercises, counting to ten, and focusing your attention to the present moment.

**Submitted by Arnecia Moody, Lead School Social Worker for ACPS*

Family Life Education (FLE) Certification Course

Dates and times for the *Fall/Winter Family Life Education (FLE) Certification Course* have recently been determined. Please help to ensure that anyone who is responsible for teaching this vital content has already taken or is signed up to take this course. In addition to FLE certification, participants will receive *20 re-certification points*. The class will take place at *Minnie Howard (room TBD)* on the following dates and times:

Date (s)	Time (s)
Saturday, December 15	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Monday, December 17	5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Tuesday, December 18	5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, January 12	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Monday, January 14	5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

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

Ten Characters of Highly Effective Learning Environments

1. Encourage students to ask questions.
2. Pay more emphasis on questions.
3. Be open to ideas and stay inspired.
4. Mix up your learning techniques.
5. Your teaching reaches beyond the classroom walls.
6. Personalize your learning.
7. Do away with a clinically based assessment plan.
8. Ensure that students understand your criteria for success.
9. Relearn learning habits.
10. Practice. Practice. Practice.

**From Atmosphere Commercial Interiors - January 25, 2015*

Science Lab Aprons

Recognizing that we are really committed to students enjoying and learning science, rubberized lab aprons were purchased for schools to use in elementary science classrooms. We all know that science is messy because students learn best when they engage in authentic, hands-on investigations. Our goal is that students who use these aprons will understand the importance of their work and begin to see themselves as *true scientists*.



If you have not received or ordered rubberized lab aprons and would like a set for your school, please contact Jennifer Lay via email (jennifer.lay@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703-619-8121. Title I schools, please contact Erica Meili via email (erica.meili@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703-619-8020.

Introducing Mrs. Yomarie Ortiz-Gutierrez!

There is a new face in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction! We would like to welcome Mrs. Yomarie Ortiz-Gutierrez to our team. Yomarie is the new Administrative Assistant for Executive Directors, Dr. Lisa Piehota and Dr. Gerald Mann, Jr.



Before joining ACPS, Yomarie spent nearly a decade in Europe working with the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA). When she is not working, Yomarie serves as a military wife and is also a loving mother to two boys (ages sixteen and nine). She describes her life as *“challenging, exciting, and not without sacrifice. But I love it, and God has been good to us.”* If you have any questions, concerns, or would simply like to say hello, please feel free to email her at yomarie.ortiz-gutierrez@acps.k12.va.us or call 703-619-8305.

Welcome again, Yomarie! We are happy to have you!

You can't use your hand to force the sun to set.

- Nigerian Proverb



Your Feedback is Valued!

Do you have any topics of interest that you want featured in the Pursuit of Excellence? If so, please email [Sahar Wiltshire](mailto:Sahar.Wiltshire). Also, please note, all *Pursuit of Excellence* newsletters are posted on [Canvas](https://www.canvaslms.com). *Please note: You will need your Google Docs log in for accessing these newsletters.