

# PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the eighteenth 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 Snack activity; (3) information for anyone curious about ESSA; (4) Differentiated Instruction for all learners; and (5) contact information for the new Curriculum and Instruction Team Coordinators.

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

### Carol Dweck on Fine-Tuning the Growth Mindset

In an article in *The Atlantic*, Christine Gross-Loh reports on an interview with Carol Dweck (Stanford University) about Dweck's concern that some teachers and parents are implementing what she calls a "false growth mindset."

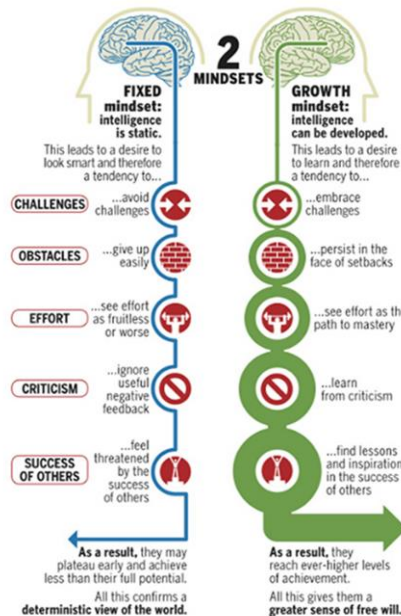


### Some excerpts:

"Nobody has a growth mindset in everything all the time," says Dweck. "Everyone is a mixture of fixed and growth mindsets. You could have a predominant growth mindset in an area but there can still be things that trigger you into a fixed mindset trait. Something really challenging and outside your comfort zone can trigger it, or, if you encounter someone who is much better than you at something you pride yourself on, you can think, 'Oh, that person has ability, not me.' So I think we all, students and adults, have to look for our fixed-mindset triggers and understand when we are falling into that mindset."

### 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.



Teachers can get discouraged when a student isn't learning and believe the student's failure is a reflection on their teaching ability (adopting a fixed mindset about themselves). At moments like this, they might be tempted to conclude the student has a fixed mindset rather than seeing it as their challenge to change the student's mindset as well as their own.

Some parents and teachers try to buck up struggling students with comments like, "Wow, you tried really hard!" – which is a misunderstanding of the praise-effort mantra. When adults do this, it turns praising effort into a consolation prize and can be interpreted by children as a statement that the adult doesn't believe they can do any better.

**"It's not just effort, but strategy,"** says Dweck. **"Students need to know that if they're stuck, they don't need just effort. You don't want them redoubling their efforts with the same ineffective strategies. You want them to know when to ask for help and when to use resources that are available. All of this is part of the process that needs to be taught and tied to learning."**

When students fail, teachers and parents should say things like, "Okay, what is this teaching us? Where should we go next?" With praise, focus on the process that led to success – hard work, good strategies, effective use of resources. "Be matter-of-fact," advises Dweck, "with not too strong or too passive a reaction... Effective teachers who actually have classrooms full of children with a growth mindset are always supporting children's learning strategies and showing how strategies created that success."

*\*This has been Part 1 of Carol Dweck's view of the Growth Mindset. Next issue will cover Part 2 so please stay tuned.*

"How Praise Became a Consolation Prize" by Christine Gross-Loh in *The Atlantic*, December 16, 2016, <http://theatlantic.com/2hFqJc>

## Reach for a Snack: A Moment of Calm Awareness

### A Mindful S.N.A.C.K.

The next time you're feeling stressed out, overwhelmed, or unsure, reach for a moment of calm awareness: a mindfulness SNACK. Here's how to do it:

### S N A C K

**Stop Notice Accept Curious Kindness**

**S**  
Just stop whatever you're doing. (Stopping, by definition, requires us to begin again. We can always begin again.)

**N**  
What is happening within and around you?

**A**  
This is a tricky one. Whatever it is you're struggling with (time, kids, sleepiness, frustration) acknowledge it for what it is, without judgment.

**C**  
Ground yourself with questions about your experience and environment: What am I feeling? What do I need right now?

**K**  
Respond to yourself and others (mistakes and all) with kindness and observe how that helps things get back on track.

By Carla Naumburg, PhD ([carlanaumburg.com](http://carlanaumburg.com))

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

## Are you Curious about ESSA?

The *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* has opened the door for educators, parents, and students to be leaders in fulfilling the promise of a great public school for every student. ESSA requires that states, districts, and schools engage stakeholders in plans that ensure success for all students. ESSA also stipulates that plans be based on needs assessments.

### Where do we start?

The first step is determining whether students and educators at your school have everything they need to succeed. Let's start that conversation with an "Opportunity Checklist." This data will inform the development of your goals, plan, and action. There is a role for all of us as we shape policies that affect students and making school decisions under the *Every Student Succeeds Act*.

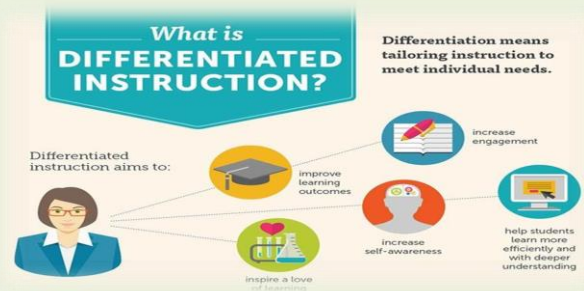
### Your voice matters!

To hear more about ESSA and how it affects our ACPS community, please join John T. Riley, Senior Policy Analyst, Education Policy and Practice with National Education Association, at George Washington Middle School Media Center on Thursday, November 29, 2018, from 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Debra Lane via email ([debra.lane@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:debra.lane@acps.k12.va.us)) or at 703-619-8313.

## Differentiated Instruction for All Learners

How can we reach, teach, and motivate every student? How do we meet students where they are and take them where they need to go? Advanced learners, struggling students, and students from varied backgrounds and cultures can all benefit from differentiated instruction. Differentiated Instruction is the key to meeting the diverse needs of all learners.



### What is Differentiated Instruction?

Carol Tomlinson (2005), a leading expert in this field, defines differentiation not as a strategy, but as a commitment to a philosophy based on the premise that students learn best when their teachers accommodate the differences in their readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. Simply put, to differentiate instruction is to take full advantage of every student's ability to learn.

Teachers can easily differentiate by:

- Content - **What** are students learning?
- Process - **How** will you deliver instruction based on **how** students learn?
- Product - End **result** of student learning (evidence of learning).

This month, try one of the strategies featured in the [TAG Teacher Toolkit](#) with your students. These resources can be used with all learners! For more information, please contact [Tiana Dominick](#) at 703-619-8020.

\*The **NEW Try D.I. Series** will feature new tips, fun facts, resources, concepts and strategies each month from different ACPS instructional departments. These are designed to give you relevant and current ideas that can help as you plan to differentiate your lessons. Enjoy!

## Curriculum and Instruction Teaming Design

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\*Effective July 1, 2018

## 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).

\*Please note: all *Pursuit of Excellence* newsletters are posted on [Canvas](#). Log in with your Google Docs ID to access these newsletters.