

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the twenty-third 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) practicing gratitude this holiday season; (3) ways to beat holiday stress; and (4) updates from the Office of Talent Development.

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



Building Highly Functioning Teams

What are the **benefits** of teams?

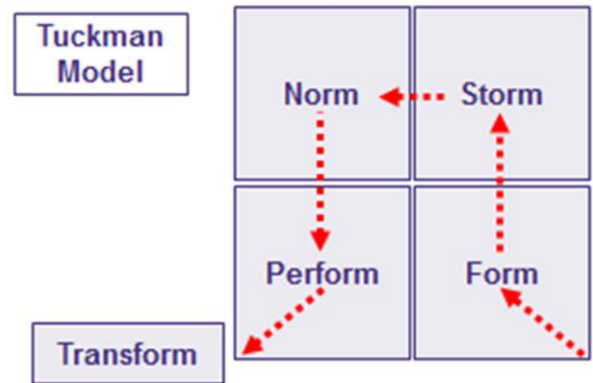
- Shared Responsibility
- Motivation
- Flexibility
- Delegation
- Ownership
- Proactive Approach
- Skill Development



Effective Teamwork

- Rare and Powerful
- Gives Us Competitive Advantage
- Requires Courage, Discipline, Emotional Energy, and Persistence

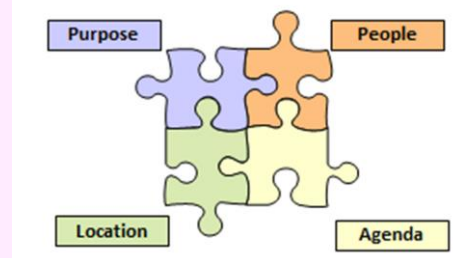
Stages of Team Development



With these effective teams - now we need to have **effective meetings**. Here are some ways to ensure meetings are effective:

- Schedule in advance
- Start on time
- Work through an agenda
- Identify tasks, action items, follow-up needs
- Conclude with review:
What exactly have we decided here today?
- End on time

Productive Meetings



*From EverydayLeadership.org - Leadership and Management Course (Session 1.6) March 2011

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.

Practice Gratitude This Holiday Season

The holiday season is a time for giving. Practicing gratitude is a proven method for increasing happiness and boosting feelings of positivity and joy. Reflecting on the **positive experiences, feelings, and relationships in your life** can bring you greater comfort and reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Practicing gratitude gives us an opportunity to **focus on what we have** instead of what we don't have. A **gratitude journal** is an excellent way to acknowledge the things that brighten your life and help **you turn your focus away from your negative thoughts** and feelings. During the winter break, consider keeping a gratitude journal. **Just write down a few things you are grateful for** throughout your day or the people you appreciate. You can do this during the holiday or every day. During the holiday season:

- When you **find yourself stressed or angry**, immediately **think of one thing on your list you are grateful for**.
- When your **anxiety is high**, **thinking about something positive in your life** can help you relax and aid you in getting a good night sleep.

Boosting your feelings of optimism, joy, enthusiasm, and other positive emotions will increase your happiness. Create a **cycle of kindness and gratitude** by expressing gratitude to someone every day.

**Submitted by Arnecia Moody, Lead School Social Worker and Adapted from the Kaiser Permanente Health and Happiness and Kidshealth*



Beat the Holiday Sweets!

The **winter holiday season** is too often associated with overeating and limited exercise. Not exactly a great formula to keep off those dreaded extra holiday pounds. Thoughtful celebration with friends and family should be able to offer **daily habits that can support an active and healthy lifestyle**. Experts at **Active.com** suggest three tips (below) for staying healthy during the holiday months:

#1: Pack the Cupboards with Good Stuff

Beat yourself to the punch of being hungry and reaching for an easy packaged food that gives you little benefit. Stock up on healthy snacks you can grab in a pinch to satiate yourself until the next full meal.



#2: Stay on Schedule with your Exercise

Just like you would any other meeting or appointment, schedule a time to go on that run, hit the pool or gym, or head out on your bike. The holiday season becomes very busy for everyone, and formally scheduling a time to be active is a great way to treat yourself right.

#3: Learn to Say No!

From the grocery store sample booth, to the office party, to the neighbor's holiday celebration, you are going to be offered MANY sweet treats that are not going to do you any favors. If done politely, there is no problem with passing on these kind offers.



For more information, please contact Michael Humphreys via email (michael.humphreys@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703-619-8020.

Updates from the Office of Talent Development

Learning Forward Coaching Academy Cohort 4

The Office of Talent Development just finished the **third cohort of the Coaching Academy with over 50 participants** learning more about coaching, leading teams, managing change, facilitating, and engaging in conversations to focus our work on student achievement. Ms. Ann Delephant from *Learning Forward* will once again lead our **next Coaching Cohort starting in January**. The academy is eight days long and is spread over the entire semester.

Meeting Dates:
Jan 29 - 30, 2019
February 12 - 13, 2019
March 19 - 20, 2019
June 5 - 6, 2019

If you are interested in participating in the next Coaching Academy, please check with your building administrator and sign up on [PLMS](#) using course number 15296.

Learning Forward PLC Implementation

From January 30, 2019, to February 1, 2019, Dr. Deborah Childs-Bowen will return to ACPS to support our schools in **strengthening the implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs)**. Dr. Childs-Bowen will focus her time at the middle school level spending half a day supporting teams, team leaders, or administrators.

We are asking all middle school administrators to indicate your preferred date(s) on the following: [doodle poll](#) (<https://doodle.com/poll/ymcpp6xdene5mgdr>)

These visits can be used to observe teams meeting, discuss planning, or to problem solve with stakeholders. Please be thinking of how Dr. Childs-Bowen can best support your school while she is there.

For more information, please contact Dr. Debra Lane via email (debra.lane@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703-619-8313.



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 ACPS Google ID to access these newsletters.