

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the twenty-fourth edition of the Pursuit of Excellence Newsletter for 2018-2019. 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) Updates within AVID; (3) Engaging Students Through the Arts; and (4) Reducing Adverse Childhood Experiences.

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

AVID Updates: Recipe for Success - Three Ingredients for Student Owned Notes Across the Content Areas

Connecting Modes of Writing and the Focused Note-Taking Process

Getting students to be able to **access information, determine the importance, and take ownership of their note-taking process** is key to developing independent student thinkers. Being thoughtful by **examining text type, note-taking structures, and ways to interact with notes** will reinforce student practice with: **processing new information and learning, reinforcing and clarifying thinking about content, connecting thinking, and combining ideas to develop new understanding, and summarizing content.**

Part 1 - Modes of Writing: (*sometimes noted as text organization when we read)

Teaching students to **examine a piece of text and determine the text organization or writing mode the author chose to use** is key to HOW to find the most important details, or essential information.

- **Descriptive:** Descriptions allow the reader to “see” the person, place, thing, event, or idea through the use of illustrative details, which will enable the writer a wide range of artistic freedom.
- **Narrative:** The primary purpose of narrative writing is to tell a story or give narration by providing the details of what is happening in the order that it is happening. This can be fiction or non-fiction.
- **Expository:** Expository writing “exposes” information by explaining, defining, describing, or clarifying logically or sequentially.
- **Argumentative:** The main purpose of argumentative writing is to persuade or to argue a point to influence the reader’s actions or thoughts.

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.

Part 2 - Focused Note-taking Formats - Part 2:

1. **Take Notes - Create the Notes.** Select a note-taking format, set up the note, page, record the essential question(s), and take notes based on an information source (lecture, book, website, article, video, etc.), selecting, paraphrasing, and arranging information.
2. **Process - Think About the Notes.** Revise notes by underlining, highlighting, circling, chunking, questioning, adding, deleting - to identify, select, sort, organize, and classify main ideas and details. Evaluate the relative importance of information.
3. **Connect Thinking - Think Beyond the Notes.** Analyze the notes using inquiry to make connections and deepen content knowledge by asking questions and adding your thinking to create greater understanding, identify gaps or points of confusion, and connect your new learning to what you already know.
4. **Summarize and Reflect.** Think about the notes as a whole. Pull together the most important aspects of your notes and your thinking about them to craft a summary that captures the meaning and importance of the content and reflects on how the learning helps you meet the note-taking objective.
5. **Apply Learning - Use the Notes.** Save and revisit your notes as a resource or learning tool to help you apply or demonstrate what you have learned.

*Next issue will cover **Part 3 - Focused Note-Taking Process (FNT) - Tips for Success.**

For more information on AVID, please email [Jodie Peters](mailto:jodie.peters@acps.edu).



Engaging Students Through the Arts!

Are you **sick of teaching from the whiteboard**? Are your kids going to scream if you give them one more ditto sheet? Do you have students that you cannot engage? Reach them through the arts! The **arts are naturally inquiry-based, hands-on, and focus on developing personal expression**. Any subject or content area can be connected through the arts, and the arts have been used to explore every human endeavor! Here are some simple ways to get started:

Content-Based Song Writing

Educators have been using songs to help students remember information since at least the days of ancient Greece! Research by contemporary brain scientists has proven that singing helps retention and suggests that writing songs on a subject can deepen understanding. It is also a great way to help English Learners become more fluent with the language. So, the next time you are studying an ecosystem or time period, consider having your students compose a song!



Role Playing

Taking on the role of another, fictitious or real, is a great way to get students interested in historical figures or invest themselves in the characters of studied literature.

Consider having students interview these characters or have them give a monologue about an issue important to them. You could even have the students make a short film investigating a background aspect of the character's life.

Illustrate Concepts

Understanding complex or abstract concepts can be difficult when working primarily with words; even an excellent visual aide has its limits. So, consider having students practice visualization by developing their own models. Have them draw concepts based on what they are reading and compare these to the standard model afterward. If you are not sure about how to fit this into your classroom, an easier way to start is to encourage students to mind map and doodle in their note taking. Research shows that this is more effective than writing alone.

Other Resources

Here are more quality resources to explore the integration of the arts into your teaching practice. Arts Edge (<https://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators.aspx>) is an amazing source of inspiration and boasts a vast database of cross-content lessons for literacy, math, science, and social studies. Generator (<https://www.acmi.net.au/education/online-learning/film-it/>) is a site built for young filmmakers and provides screenwriting and storyboarding resources as well as modules on more technical aspects of the process. It has everything you need to guide your students through creating a documentary. If you can't devote the time to filmmaking and are worried about students coming in without the art skills to be successful, Make Beliefs Comix (<https://www.makebeliefscomix.com/>) is a great tool for visual storytelling. With this tool, students can make custom three-panel comic strips about any topic they can dream of using hundreds of pre-generated characters, objects, and backgrounds.

For more information, please contact Andrew Watson via email (andrew.watson@acps.k12.va.us) or at 703-619-8047.

Reducing Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are *traumatic* experiences that occur in a young person's life **before the age of 18** that the person remembers as an adult. They are **stressful or traumatic events** that may include household dysfunction such as witnessing domestic violence or growing up with a household member who has problems with drugs, alcohol, or incarceration. ACEs also include students who suffer sexual, emotional, or physical abuse. Adverse Childhood Experiences are **strongly related to the development and pervasiveness of a wide range of health problems** throughout a person's lifespan.

Do you ever wonder how a **negative experience from childhood** has affected your life? What about the students in your class - what impact have adverse childhood experiences had on them? Nearly **46 percent of kids have faced some trauma**, which might include child abuse or neglect. These negative life experiences can have a **lasting effect on our students' health** (including higher rates of obesity, diabetes, depression, and suicide attempts) and increase the likelihood of them engaging in behaviors such as smoking, alcoholism, and drug use. It also **increased the risk of them experiencing negative experiences** such as lower graduation rates and lack of academic achievement.

We must find ways to disrupt this pattern. Part of the **solution involves schools and early childhood education systems, the health care system, the criminal justice system, parents and families**, and even libraries and community centers taking a more active role in students' lives. Education systems can help by **providing safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments** for all students. This necessary action can have a positive impact on a broad range of health problems and on the development of skills that will help students reach their full potential.

Please see the links below for further information about Adverse Childhood Experiences:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=95ovIJ3dsNk>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gm-INpzU4g>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-SSwYTe8TY>

***Submitted by Arnecia Moody, Lead School Social Worker and Adapted from www.kp.org.*

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).

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