

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the twenty-fifth 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) AVID Updates; (3) MTSS; and (4) Chronic Stress in Teachers.

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

The Dawn of System Leadership

(By Peter Senge, Hal Hamilton, and John Kania)

Part I: Core Capabilities of System Leaders

Though they differ widely in personality and style, genuine system leaders have a remarkably similar impact. Over time, their profound commitment to the health of the whole radiates to nurture similar commitment in others. Their **ability to see reality through the eyes of people very different from themselves encourages others to be more open** as well. They **build relationships based on deep listening**, and networks of trust and collaboration start to flourish. They are so convinced that something can be done that they do not wait for a fully developed plan, thereby freeing others to step ahead and learn by doing. Indeed, one of their greatest contributions can come from the strength of their ignorance, which permits them **to ask obvious questions and to embody an openness and commitment to their own ongoing learning and growth** that eventually infuse larger change efforts.

There are **three core capabilities that system leaders develop** to foster collective leadership. **The first is the ability to see the larger system.** In any complex setting, people typically focus their attention on the parts of the system most visible from their vantage point. This usually results in arguments about who has the right perspective on the problem. **Helping people see the larger system is essential to building a shared understanding of complex problems.** This understanding enables collaborating organizations to jointly develop solutions not evident to any of them individually and to work together for the health of the whole system rather than pursue symptomatic fixes to individual pieces.

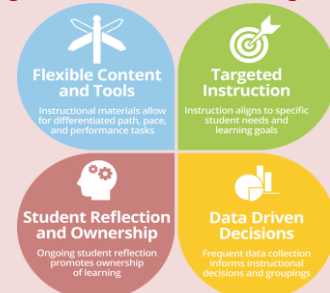
The second capability involves fostering reflection and more generative conversations. Reflection means **thinking** about our thinking, **holding** up the mirror to see the taken-for-granted assumptions we carry into any conversation and **appreciating** how our mental models may limit us.

Deep, shared reflection is a critical step in enabling groups of organizations and individuals to actually “hear” a point of view different from their own, and to appreciate emotionally as well as cognitively each other’s reality. This is an essential doorway for building trust where distrust had prevailed and for fostering collective creativity.

The third capability centers on shifting the collective focus from reactive problem solving to co-creating the future. Change often starts with conditions that are undesirable, but artful system leaders help people **move beyond just reacting to these problems to building positive visions** for the future. This typically happens gradually as leaders help people articulate their **deeper aspirations and build confidence based on tangible accomplishments** achieved together. This **shift involves not just building inspiring visions but facing difficult truths about the present reality** and learning how to use the tension between vision and reality to inspire truly new approaches.

**Next Issue: Part 2 - Article from the Stanford Social Innovation Review (Winter 2015)*

Spotlight: Personalized Learning Elements



- **Instruction is aligned** to rigorous college- and career-ready standards and the social and emotional skills students need to be successful in college and career.
- **Instruction is customized**, allowing each student to design learning experiences aligned to his or her interests.
- The **pace of instruction is varied** based on individual student needs, allowing students to accelerate or take additional time based on their level of mastery.
- **Educators use data** from formative assessments and student feedback in real-time to differentiate instruction and provide robust supports and interventions so that every student remains on track to graduation.
- **Students and parents have access** to clear, transferrable learning objectives and assessment results so they understand what is expected for mastery and advancement.

**The Shifting Paradigm of Teaching: Personalized Learning According to Teachers (2016)*

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.

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

Previously, we covered the first two recipe ingredients for students to experience success when taking notes. The first was examining the **different modes of writing**. The second was focusing on **note-taking formats**. This issue will cover the last ingredients:

Ingredient #3: Focused Note-Taking Process (FNT)

Take Notes - Create the Notes.

Select a note-taking format, set up the note page, record the Essential Question, and take notes based on an information source, selecting, paraphrasing, and arranging information.

Process - Think About the Notes.

Revise notes by underlining, highlighting, circling, etc., to identify, select, sort, organize, and classify the main ideas and details.

Connect Thinking - Think Beyond the Notes.

Analyze the notes using inquiry to make connections and deepen content knowledge by asking questions and adding your own thinking to create greater understanding, identify gaps or points of confusion, and connect your new learning to what you already know.

Summarize and Reflect.

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.

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.

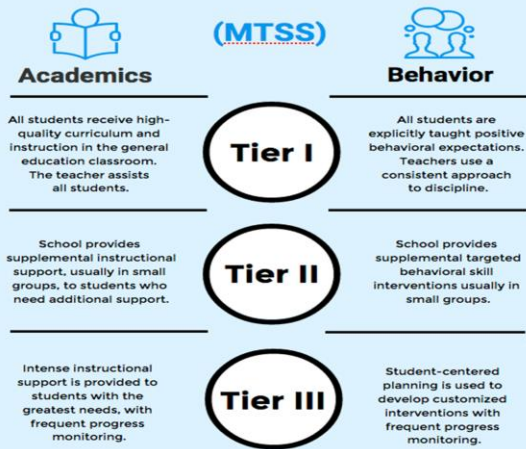
FNT Tips for Success

1. Start slow! **Scaffold FNT learning by exploring the writing modes** one at a time (text organization or content delivery).
2. **Provide the note-taking format AND ask students to explain** how the format is organized. Consider the relationship between the column headers, bubbles, arrows or pieces that make up the actual chosen format.
3. **Help students** determine text type.
4. **Post note-taking formats** as anchor charts to show how information can be organized.
5. Before exposing new information, **share the task/purpose** so that students know what information to gather, or note.
6. Do **ask that students learn to take their notes** instead of always giving students the information.
7. **Model the FNT process** to ensure that students are having several interactions with their notes.
8. Make time during class to **allow students to share their notes with a peer** so they can edit or revise their thinking.
9. **Check notes periodically** through peer review or through teacher quick-checks to ensure students are taking the notes on information you intend them to learn about.
10. When students are ready, **give them a choice** for **HOW** they want to take notes.



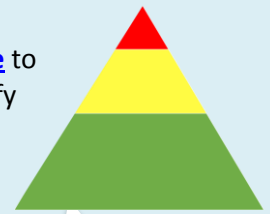
*For more information on the AVID program, please email [Jodie Peters](mailto:jodie.peters@avied.org).

Multi-Tier System of Supports



Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

As a friendly reminder, you can use this [blank MTSS template](#) to develop your school-based MTSS. By doing so, you can identify essential resources, materials, and professional development related to each tier. Please note that this was suggested as a strategy during the Data Chats.



Healthy
Tips

Chronic Stress in Teachers

In the modern education system, **teachers are more stressed** than ever. Stress in teachers occurs when the **demands of teaching consistently outpace their ability to cope** with their daily task. Educators today do more than teach academic lessons and are expected to work effectively even when their students face difficulties outside the classroom, from unmet physical needs to mental health issues. **The more needs students have, the more teachers are expected to do.**

Chronic stress in educators starts as **decreased productivity and creativity**, escalating to more severe symptoms like persistent anxiety, dissociation, frustration, and, eventually burn out. **Teaching is one of the most stressful occupations in the country.** Roughly half a million U.S. teachers leave the profession each year – a **turnover rate of over 20 percent** due to an inability to regulate chronic stress. Below are some **helpful ways** to assist teachers in reducing and managing stress:

- **Cultivate positive connections between staff members.** When we are stressed, often the way we heal is in relationships with other people. So just like traumatized students need to feel safe and supported, teachers who work with them need to feel this way as well. Taking the time to build a strong staff community, and filling teachers' cups with positive interactions and specific praise from both colleagues and administrators, will help them feel cared for. And this will, in turn, help them take better care of their students.
- **Create a teachers' wellness group at your school—but keep it optional.** Giving teachers time and space to talk about what's stressing them out and, most importantly, to practice calming techniques such as mindfulness or progressive muscle relaxation can mitigate their stress.
- **Get help with your traumas.** Any adult helping children with trauma, who also has his or her own unresolved traumatic experiences, is more at risk for compassion fatigue (the emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events).
- **Practice self-care.** Guard yourself against having your work become the only activity that defines who you are. Keep perspective by spending time with children and adolescents who are not experiencing traumatic stress. Take care of yourself by eating well and exercising, engaging in fun activities, taking a break during the workday, finding time to self-reflect, finding things to laugh about, and allowing yourself to cry.
- **Practice Mindfulness in the classroom.** Daily mindfulness is very beneficial for teachers to build self-reflection skills and an awareness of their internal state and level of stress. This practice allows teachers to model and teach self-regulation skills.



**Submitted by Arneia Moody, Lead School Social Worker and Adapted from Trauma Aware School and The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*

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](#).

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