

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the twenty-ninth edition of the *Pursuit of Excellence Newsletter*. This version will update you on the trends, focus areas, and priorities for the Department of Curriculum and Instruction: (1) Talent Development Updates; (2) Absolutely Excellent Recognitions; and (3) Teaching and Learning Framework. It also includes a section on the value of caring in education that **reminds me of our teachers and leaders**.

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

Caring in Education

Recently during one of the Data Chats, the notion of **caring** entered our discussion. In the 1980s, **Nel Noddings wrote about the concept of caring as a way to emphasize the importance of listening to others and responding in ways that help establish caring relationships**. While educators have so many responsibilities for educating the "whole child," caring is definitely a theme that is more relevant today. Hence, given that this was recently mentioned, I thought you might enjoy this fun topic.

- Dr. Terri H. Mozingo, Chief Academic Officer

Leaders Caring for Teachers

In *Start with Why*, author Simon Sinek states: "Great leadership begins not with *what* an organization needs to do and not with *how* those things will be done, but with *why* the enterprise matters."

Powerful education leaders always make sure that their *schools are orderly*, that adults are **attentive to achievement**, and that they themselves stay **current in pedagogical knowledge**. But what drives these leaders is the **architecture of young lives** - a sense of obligation to help young people construct sturdy and worthy lives. At a place deep in their souls, *these leaders sense the responsibility that emanates from making decisions that will profoundly and permanently affect the young people they serve*.



These leaders likely *work too hard* and **care too much**, but they are **fed by the work** they and their colleagues do. In other words, the **work strengthens them** rather than diminishes them.

Certainly these leaders unambiguously understand that the work of *building student lives happens at the hands of teachers*, and that much of the leader's work must focus on **supporting teacher success**. In addition, however, they **care for the welfare of teachers** in the same way they **care about the welfare of students**. They learn about the *teachers as human beings - in the classroom and beyond*. They **seek teacher input and advice**. They listen. They prove themselves to be worthy of a **teacher's trust**, time and time again. They *pay attention to teaching*, not for purposes of judgment, but to *learn from teachers and students*. They provide **multiple forms of support** to help each teacher *grow as a person and as a practitioner* of and contributor to education.

Teachers Caring for Themselves

Our teachers work extraordinarily hard, are involved with their students on multiple levels, and are devoted to the disciplines they teach. They also understand the need to separate from that work on a periodic basis and to define themselves in other ways. They may be photographers, rock climbers, cooks, gardeners, community activists, animal enthusiasts, poets, etc. In these other identities, the teachers find "new air to breathe." Creativity finds release. They are renewed.



These teachers seek to **create joy in learning**. They take pleasure both from creating those **enlivening opportunities** for their students and from the satisfaction that their students take from the opportunities. In other words, they work to create **classrooms that feed their students** and feed them as well. They draw **pleasure from small victories**. They **laugh** at the moments of levity that are an inevitable part of classroom life. They seek out and spend **significant time with peers** who **inspire and energize** them.



* Article from ASCD Educational Leadership Volume 73 Number 8 (May 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.

Talent Development Updates

On **Wednesday, March 20, 2019**, **Dr. Bill Daggett, Founder and Chairman of the International Center for Leadership in Education**, will offer insights into the state of today's American educational system, including a discussion on the rules, regulations, teaching practices, and traditions that exist. Consider using at a team, grade-level, or faculty meeting, and discuss the implications as it relates to your School Improvement Plans (SIPs).

What: Educating for the Future

When: 3/20/2019 @ 2:00 p.m. EST / 11:00 a.m. PST

During this discussion, Dr. Daggett will share:

How today's students will need an educational program that is focused on the future

What schools can do to prepare students for a different set of skills and knowledge than what is currently being taught

Various strategies from the nation's most rapidly improving schools that have successfully addressed these challenges, including ideas like zero-based budgeting, various staffing patterns, and innovative instructional practices

Register Here:

<https://event.on24.com/eventRegistration/EventLobbyServlet?target=reg20.jsp&referrer=http%3A%2F%2Fmail.acps.k12.va.us%2Fzimbra%2F&eventid=1925759&sessionid=1&key=AA3013BCC0A0C3766DBA AE5B0F493446®Tag=&sourcepage=register>



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

Absolutely Excellent Recognitions!

Last month, over **120 T.C. Williams German students** took the National German exam.

Seniors Paul Scheland took 1st place and Paula Filios took 3rd place in the entire state respectively.

The following T.C.W. German students also received gold medals: Virginia Arnold, Maria Areyan Hernandez, Julian Barrett, Riley Butcher, Julie Cizek, Elspeth Collard, Helen Cooper, Isabel Cruz-Rivera, Nicholas Gentry, Delia Hughes, Leslie Lytle, Mia Lunati, Sabine Mead, Paul Ostermann-Healy, Max Penczar, Jeffrey Pizanti, Tucker Stone, Leela Trujillo, and Aidan White.

Many of these students are now eligible to apply for the AATG study award in Germany.

The following students received silver medals: Abigail Adams, Alison Bingman, Colin Canady, Eliza Coast, Lena Cromley, Ava Elkins, Stella Grimes, William Jones, Daniela Meaurio, Sanskar Pokharel, Emma Reese, William Rhodes, and Zachary Fink.

Lastly, the following students earned a bronze medal: Regina Allen, Max Belmont, Mara Boggess, Akiva Dienstfey, Grason Gardner, Alan Gonzalez-Osorio, Romeo Quini, Tiara Madric, Katharine McNabb, and Samuel Pierce.

Each year, the national **German exam is administered to over 25,000 high school students across the United States** and is extremely competitive. **The German teachers for these T.C. Williams students are Frau Johnson and Herr Levine.**

Congratulations to all students on a job well done!

For more information, please contact Tanja Mayer-Harding via email (tanja.mayer-harding@acps.k12.va.us).



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@acps.edu).

*Please note: all *Pursuit of Excellence* newsletters are posted on [Canva](https://www.canva.com/). Log in with your ACPS Google ID to access these newsletters.

Teaching and Learning Framework Revisited

As teachers continue to work together within their **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**, please ensure that they are using the [Teaching and Learning Framework](#) as part of their school improvement discussions. This framework provides some key indicators for what is expected during **Planning, Teaching, Assessing, and Adjusting** instruction.

PLAN

- **Designs clear learning targets that are communicated to students as evidenced by:**
 - One or more **learning objectives (i.e., content and language objectives)** that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-specific;
 - Learning objectives that express a **cognitive complexity** (aligned with *Bloom's Revised Taxonomy*) that matches the identified SOLs and learning sequence of the lesson; and
 - An **essential question** that synthesizes the big idea of the lesson.
- **Reflects on data to modify plans to respond to student needs as evidenced by:**
 - A **variety of assessments** (diagnostic, formative, summative) to monitor student progress within the lesson.
- **Incorporates resources (including technology) to foster literacy in the content areas, engagement, critical thinking, creativity, and other globally competitive skills as evidenced by:**
 - A **meaningful learning sequence** that moves students from the concrete to the representational and abstract (**C-R-A**);
 - Integration of **key academic language and vocabulary** throughout the lesson sequence;
 - Differentiated and **scaffolded learning** activities to accommodate students' varying readiness levels, interests, and learner profiles; and
 - A plan for **purposeful closure** that requires students to reflect upon their learning and revisit lesson objective(s) and essential question(s).

TEACH

- Includes an engaging **"activator or warm-up"** activity that hooks learner interest and makes connections between lesson content and prior learning experiences.
- Starts with a **"framing the learning"** activity for students, helping them understand the purpose of what they are learning—and why they are learning it.
- Includes **key concepts or skills** that help students understand the sequence of skills they are to learn and apply in order to complete a required lesson task(s).
- Incorporates the **gradual release of responsibility** as learners progress from modeling to shaping (via guided practice) toward growing levels of independent use, application, and transfer.
- Engages students in **experience-based applications** of key lesson and unit vocabulary, especially academic language essential to mastering content.
- Incorporates **flexible grouping** (including cooperative learning structures) to reinforce students' growing level of independent practice and transfer.
- Reinforces the **"10-2" rule** (ensuring that no more than 10 minutes of direct instruction occurs before students engage in independent and/or small group debriefing, reflection, and questioning).
- Integrates **blended technology** into the teaching-learning process to reinforce student engagement, proficiency, and understanding.
- Makes certain that the overall lesson or key lesson segments culminate in some form of **performance task** confirming students' level of understanding related to the lesson objectives.
- Ends every lesson in a meaningful **closure activity**, allowing students to reflect upon what they have learned—and **why** they have learned it.

ASSESS

- Addresses required **Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs)** as the foundation for their assessment and lesson design.
- Uses a combination of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment tasks to monitor and evaluate student progress in **meeting or exceeding** standards.
- **Uses multiple assessment practices** to monitor and evaluate students' mastery of the skills and content taught in their courses. Examples of acceptable assessment tools include but are not limited to the following:
 - Culminating projects
 - Performance assessment tasks (e.g., academic prompts)
 - Constructed-response test and quiz items
 - Selected-response test and quiz items
 - Student self-assessments (e.g., using rubrics for self-monitoring)
 - Peer response group feedback
 - Daily criterion-based assessment feedback (teacher-to-student)
- **Provides daily formative assessment feedback** to ensure that students understand what they are learning and why they are learning it.
- Creates and provides students with **scoring rubrics and exemplars** of acceptable student work in advance of major projects and related performance-based assessment tasks.
- Permits students to **revisit and review their work** (e.g., performance assessment tasks, tests, quizzes, essays, research reports, etc.) in all instances where it is clear that additional study, effort, and time will produce improved performance and achievement.
- Revisits with students the learner's work if, in the teacher's professional judgment, **progress and effort** are being made to meet or exceed standards as delineated by the course syllabus or outline.
- Awards a final grade for reassessment performance that reflects the student's degree of mastery of identified **course standards and task-specific performance indicators**.

ADJUST

- Differentiates the teaching-learning process to ensure student mastery of the ACPS core curriculum, including addressing students' **varying readiness levels, interests, and learner profiles**.
- Adjusts the teaching and learning process based upon **diagnostic and formative assessment results**.
- **Uses a range of differentiation strategies for English Learners** based on WIDA results. Strategies for EL students include—but are not limited to:
 - **Activating Prior Knowledge and Building Background**
 - **Comprehensible Input**
 - **Interactive Discourse and Cooperative Learning**
 - **Explicit Instruction of Language**
 - **Scaffolding**
 - **Cultural Competence Strategies**
 - **Metacognition**
- **Differentiates instruction for Special Education students** to include a range of IEP-related strategies and interventions. However, some universal or general strategies are also especially effective in working with all SPED students:
 - **Addressing IEP-Identified Accommodations**
 - **Station Learning**
 - **Parallel Teaching**
 - **Alternative Teaching**
 - **Specially Designed Instruction**
- Promotes **rigor and engagement** for all learners by using a range of strategies:
 - **Higher-Level Questions and Follow-Up Probes**
 - **Socratic Seminars, Debates, and Related Discourse Strategies**
 - **Options for Independent Inquiry and Small Group Discussion and Text Analysis**
- Uses the following instructional practices involving adjustment of content, process, and product to allow for advanced student work within a unit or subject area:
 - **Independent Research Projects**
 - **Simulations**
 - **Scenarios and Case Studies**