

# PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the thirtieth 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) Differentiation Initiative Underway; (2) Literacy Updates; (3) National Board Certification Information for Teachers; and (4) How to Work with Disruptive Students. 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 is the New Basic Skill!



In this time of **spring renewal and anticipation of our upcoming spring break**, ACPS educators are working tirelessly to support their students to achieve academic success. With **SOL testing also on the horizon**, our educators are continually helping learners prepare for **high-stakes assessments and academic achievement**. But I thought I'd take "the road less traveled" for this newsletter introduction and reflect on a powerful, affective resource at the heart of every student's education - the power of a **caring and supportive teacher**.

It seems so simple to suggest that **caring is an essential building block** for student growth. However, research suggests that it is the **true lifeblood of learning** - and can sometimes be overlooked or forgotten in the rush to complete lessons and units.

As Robert J. Marzano confirms in his ground-breaking publication "*What Works in Schools*," **safe, orderly, and inviting classrooms are one of the five most important components of effective schools** and are essential in promoting equity and excellence. Without a learning culture grounded in the principles of **mutual support, encouragement, and respect**, classrooms can be very intimidating - even overwhelming - places for many of our students. **Caring classrooms exude an atmosphere of warmth, support, and collaboration**. The teacher deeply understands and respects **every learner** - and continually communicates those attributes in all classroom interactions.

According to Marzano, caring classrooms **have clear routines, consistently and equitably applied norms and rules, and a shared spirit of mutual support and friendship**. Students are encouraged to have an **active voice** and role in their own learning process, including sustained opportunities to express their individual learning profiles, interests, and **needs for differentiation and alternative paths** to demonstrate standards mastery (including options for acceleration and coaching-based interventions).

Finally, a **caring classroom is culturally responsive**. Everyone is encouraged and expected to succeed. Students' **diverse cultural backgrounds, languages, and experiences are dignified, respected, and actively integrated** into lesson design. Perhaps most importantly, a caring classroom is a family - a **tightly knit system of mutual support and respect**. As Marzano reminds us, before advanced learning and independent application can occur, the bedrock of **caring must be in place** as our foundation and starting point.

**Best wishes to all of you for continuing success in creating caring and nurturing learning environments in ACPS!**



### 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.

## Differentiation Initiative Underway

**The Differentiation Initiative in ACPS is officially underway!** Dr. Richard Cash kicked off the work by conducting **Administrator Overview Sessions** on March 4-5, 2019, as well as a parent evening on March 4, 2019. The sessions provided a look at how the **brain and learning are connected**, and what **components are needed** to successfully engage students. It also highlighted the importance of understanding and knowing our students in order to differentiate learning appropriately for them. **Dr. Cash will return to ACPS on August 1-2, 2019, to work with cross-functional school teams in order to equip them with tools and strategies to further develop their own differentiated approaches to teaching and learning.**

If you missed it or would like to review his presentation, it can be found at:

<http://nrch.consulting/handouts>.

 Dr. Richard Cash's [Biography](#) and [Curriculum Vitae](#).



For more information, please contact Donna Brearley via email ([frances.brearley@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:frances.brearley@acps.k12.va.us)) or at 703-619-8093.

## Literacy Updates

Analyzing data is an important component of progress monitoring and MTSS implementation at ACPS. **Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH)** will be on-site to present mid-year Reading Inventory (RI) data analysis to all ACPS principals on **Wednesday, April 3, 2019, at Central Office (Conference Rooms 310-3A/3B)**. Principals are invited to also bring any other staff members who they believe may benefit from seeing this presentation. Participants can choose to attend one of two sessions: **11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. or 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.** Administrators will also receive student by student data files of RI scores by proficiency band as of the mid-year RI.

**Please register in PLMS for course #18760 (11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.) or #18761 (1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.).**

For more information, please contact [Kimberly Schell](#).

## National Board Certification for Teachers - Information Session

**April 2, 2019 - 4:00 p.m. Central Office (310-3B) and April 10, 2019 - 4:00 p.m. TCWHS Room B334**

### 1. What is National Board Certification?

The founding mission of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by:

- Maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do;
- Providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards;
- Advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers.

### 2. What does the National Board Certification process entail?

<http://www.nbpts.org/national-board-certification>

### 3. Am I eligible?

- 1) Hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution;
- 2) Have at least three FULL years of teaching experience by the end of the 2018-2019 school year;
- 3) Hold a valid teaching license

<http://boardcertifiedteachers.org/certificate-areas>

### 4. What are the fees and what ACPS support is available to candidates? What are the extrinsic incentives?

**Before:** For ACPS cohorts fill out application on ACPS Google Forms:

<https://goo.gl/forms/710HJUQnPoHMDA5j1>

**During:** ACPS Candidate Support Course (sign up in PLMS) To Be Decided  
Register as an applicant for the Annual Registration Fee \$75

**After:** State Stipend: \$5000 (Year 1) \$2500 (Year 2-10) ACPS Bonus: \$2200 (Year 1-10)

**Recertification Points:** Range from 45-180

### 5. Next Steps:

If....	Then....
I am interested in pursuing NBCT	Visit <a href="http://www.nbpts.org/national-board-standard">http://www.nbpts.org/national-board-standard</a>
I am applying for ACPS funding	All applications are due by May 3, 2019 <a href="https://goo.gl/forms/710HJUQnPoHMDA5j1">https://goo.gl/forms/710HJUQnPoHMDA5j1</a>
I am going to pay for this on my own	Complete registration process.

**Contacts:** Melissa King – Renewal Candidates ([Melissa.king@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Melissa.king@acps.k12.va.us)); Michelle Hudgens – New Candidates ([Michelle.Hudgens@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Michelle.Hudgens@acps.k12.va.us)); Debra Lane – Director of Talent Development ([Debra.lane@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:Debra.lane@acps.k12.va.us))

**Questions:** NBCT Customer Support: Monday - Friday, from 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. CDT, 1-800-22TEACH.

## 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 [Canvas](https://www.canvas.com). Log in with your ACPS Google ID to access these newsletters.

## How to Work With Disruptive Students

Good teachers maximize their instructional time and minimize distractions in their classrooms. The most common disturbance in a school is a disruptive student. The tips below identify how to deal with problems quickly and efficiently, minimizing the disruptions.

### Prevention First

- Prevention is the best way to handle a disruptive student. The first few days of school may arguably set the tone for the whole school year. Students are feeling out their teachers and will push to see what they are allowed to get away with doing. It's essential for teachers to quickly establish boundaries. Doing so will help deter problems later on down the road. It is also necessary to start building rapport with your students immediately. Fostering a trusting relationship can go a long way in disruption prevention simply out of mutual respect for one another.

### Stay Calm and Emotion Free

- Teachers must stay calm when addressing a disruptive student. Staying calm can diffuse difficult situations quickly. If you become combative and confrontational, it can escalate the situation making it a potentially dangerous situation.

### Be Firm and Direct

- Don't ignore situations hoping that they will go away. Also, don't allow your students to get away with the little things. Instead, immediately address their negative behavior and educate them on how their behavior impacts others. Students may resist structure early on, but they ultimately embrace it because they feel safe in a structured learning environment.

### Listen Carefully to Students

- Don't jump to conclusions. If a student has something to say, listen to their side. Sometimes, some things led to the disruption that you may not be aware of. Sometimes things are going on outside of the classroom that led to the behavior. It may not make a difference in how you handle the situation, but listening may build some trust or provide you with insights into other important issues in your students' lives.

### Remove the Audience

- Never intentionally embarrass a student or call them out in front of their classmates. It will do more harm than it will good. Addressing a student individually in the hallway or after class will ultimately be more productive than discussing them in front of their peers. They will be more receptive to what you have to say. No one wants to be called out in front of his or her peers. Doing so ultimately damages your credibility and undermines your authority as a teacher.

### Give Students Ownership

- Student ownership offers individual empowerment and potentially has the most significant impact on behavior change. It is easy for teachers to say it is my way or the highway, but allowing students to develop an autonomous plan for behavior correction may be more effective. Give them the opportunity for self-correction. Encourage them to establish individual goals, rewards for meeting those goals, and consequences when they do not. Have the student create and sign a contract detailing these things. Encourage the student to keep a copy in a place that they often see such as their locker, mirror, notebook, etc. Good teachers maximize their instructional time and minimize distractions in their classrooms. The most common distraction in a classroom is a disruptive student.



*Submitted by Arnecia Moody, Lead Social Worker and Adapted from <https://www.thoughtco.com>*