

# PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the thirty fifth 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) Agriculture, Ecology, and Water Quality Professional Learning; (2) NSF Speakers Bureau; (3) Summer FLE Certification; and (4) Tips for Ensuring Student Success in Social Studies. It also includes a section on exploring what happens once SOL testing is completed.

**Thank you for your continued support! Have a great weekend!**



## To the SOLs and Beyond — What Can We Expect When Testing Is Finished?

**Greetings everyone!** We sincerely hope that in the midst of spring showers and your deep commitment to **preparing our students for success on the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments**, you are **taking some time to find balance and peace of mind** in your work and personal lives. This **kind of balance is becoming increasingly significant in the face of our hurry-up world** with its focus on multitasking, computer screen overload and social media consumption, and hour-long (or longer) commutes!

In light of these and other realities facing each of us today, we thought we'd devote this edition of our newsletter to considering the following essential question: ***What can ACPS teachers and their students look forward to when SOL testing is over—and multiple academic weeks become available for extending and refining learning?*** Here are a few quick suggestions to help you explore that important question.

<p><b>1. Continue to Follow and Teach the ACPS Curriculum:</b></p>	<p>Our Canvas-based curriculum in all content areas and grade levels is designed to encompass a full year's duration. The teaching, learning, and assessment suggestions presented in all program areas provide a plentiful resource for your work with students beyond the SOL testing period.</p>
<p><b>2. Extend and Refine Student Learning:</b></p>	<p>Use post-SOL instructional time to help students go deeper into key aspects of the curriculum. You can help students extend and refine their learning by revisiting key themes, concepts, skills, and essential questions using many of the strategies identified below. Extending/refining activities can also be built around the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, including learning tasks requiring comparison, classification, analysis of perspectives, induction, deduction, and creative expression. This time period is an ideal venue for instructors to model and reinforce students' ability to respond to a range of higher-level questions, including emphasis upon "How," "Why," and "To what extent" questions.</p>
<p><b>3. Integrate a Variety of Cooperative Learning Structures and Strategies:</b></p>	<p>Although ACPS curriculum encourages teachers to use these kinds of strategies throughout the academic year, the post-SOL time period is an ideal opportunity for instructors to use more complex cooperative learning processes, including variations on the Socratic seminar, reciprocal teaching of complex reading materials, and jigsaws (allowing expert groups to present their in-depth findings and conclusions to the rest of the class about a key aspect of content being studied).</p>

*\*The next volume will cover the remaining three suggestions for refining learning after the SOLs.*

### 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.

Teachers from the NOVA area are invited to join the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) for an enriching five-day experience in their local community. Participants will learn to help *“Save the Bay”* by supporting local farmers and raising vegetables on their own schoolyard. Activities will include a day on CBF’s custom workboat investigating the Potomac River. Participants will visit local farms and gardens to learn how buying locally significantly reduces nitrogen in the Bay and improves water quality.



Please see table below for more details:

When	July 15 - 19, 2019
Where	Five days locally in the NOVA area
Cost	\$300
Credit	CBF will provide documentation for continuing certification credit hours/points for successful completion of the course requirements.

If you have any questions, please contact Cindy Duncan at [cduncan@cbf.org](mailto:cduncan@cbf.org). For more information, FAQs, and registration, please visit: [cbf.org/ccsummer](http://cbf.org/ccsummer).



**National Science Foundation (NSF) Speakers Bureau**

Request an NSF Speaker at your event today! For more information, visit [www.nsf.gov](http://www.nsf.gov).



Interested in learning about the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) mission, programs and the exciting breakthroughs that have come from NSF-funded research? A member of the NSF Speakers Bureau would be happy to share.

Whether you are a K-12 teacher, an industry representative or a member of a civic or professional group or otherwise, NSF speakers value outreach and seek to engage communities throughout the United States, as well as inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers.

**Summer Family Life Education (FLE) Certification Course**

We are excited to announce a brand-new format for our Family Life Education (FLE) certification class. This new hybrid model course is required for anyone who will be teaching FLE lessons. ACPS' recent policy update explicitly states that each student in grades K-10 shall receive FLE instruction unless they have opted out of the course.

The class will operate as follows: Participants will be asked to attend three in-person meetings on Aug 5, 6, and 7, 2019, from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. each day (location TBD). Various online assignments will be due prior to and following these in-person sessions, and will be communicated well in advance to all participants.

The class will be worth 20 recertification points.

Here is the PLMS sign-up information:

[Section #18810 | 2019 Summer FLE Certification Course](#)

Section Dates	August 5 - 7, 2019
Course	15808 <a href="#">Family Life Education Certification</a>

If you have any questions, please contact Mike Humphreys via email ([michael.humphreys@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:michael.humphreys@acps.k12.va.us)) or at 703-619-8020.

FIND OUT MORE OR REQUEST A SPEAKER AT NSF SPEAKERS BUREAU.

## Tips for Ensuring Student Success: Social Studies Teaching and Learning

Powerful social studies incorporates opportunities for students to explore and debate compelling questions, develop disciplinary skills (such as understanding maps and analyzing primary sources), draw conclusions and use evidence to support them, and communicate and take action based on their ideas. **The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) identifies four dimensions** as part of an **“Inquiry Arc”** that frames the way students learn social studies in the **college, career, and civic life (C3 Framework)**.

**The C3 Framework emphasizes the acquisition and application of knowledge to prepare students for college, career, and civic life.** It intentionally envisions social studies instruction as **an inquiry arc of interlocking and mutually reinforcing elements** that speak to the intersection of ideas and learners. The **four dimensions highlighted below center on the use of questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, deepen investigations, acquire rigorous content, and apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings** to become active and engaged citizens in the 21st century. (<https://www.socialstudies.org/c3>)

Inquire	Investigate	Draw Conclusions	Communicate and Act
Dimension	Purpose	Ideas for Inquiry and Literacy Connections	
<b><u>Inquire: Develop Questions and Plan Inquiries</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask and respond to essential questions</li> <li>Develop supporting questions necessary to answer the essential question</li> <li>Figure out how to explore the questions</li> </ul>	Compelling and supporting questions provide a way to tie together the facts, concepts, and generalizations of social studies. Compelling questions engage students and provide an anchor for instruction. Developing and responding to supporting questions shapes the inquiry and helps students acquire necessary content.	<b><u>Inquiry:</u></b> Students and teachers work together to develop compelling and supporting questions based on student interest and background knowledge.  <b><u>Literacy:</u></b> Teacher poses compelling questions related to a theme explored in the text.	
<b><u>Investigate: Apply Disciplinary Concepts and Tools</u></b> Key concepts and skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>History</li> <li>Geography</li> <li>Civics</li> <li>Economics</li> </ul>	The disciplinary ideas of civics, economics, history, and geography are the lenses through which students develop deep and enduring understanding. These practices and habits of mind are explicitly taught and practiced as part of powerful social studies.	<b><u>Modeling:</u></b> Teacher presents concepts, and vocabulary and models disciplinary thinking.  <b><u>Inquiry:</u></b> Students investigate concepts with teacher guidance and modeling.  <b><u>Literacy:</u></b> Teacher and students apply disciplinary concepts to selected text(s).	
<b><u>Draw Conclusions: Evaluate Sources and Use Evidence</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather information and evaluate sources</li> <li>Use evidence to develop claims in response to compelling questions</li> </ul>	Students use various technologies and skills to find information and evidence to answer compelling and supporting questions. They learn to draw conclusions and give reasons to support their ideas. They apply disciplinary concepts and tools to examine content.	<b><u>Modeling:</u></b> Teacher presents interpretations of primary sources.  <b><u>Inquiry:</u></b> Students analyze a range of materials and draw conclusions.  <b><u>Literacy:</u></b> Teacher and student use literature and other texts.	
<b><u>Communicate and Act: Present Conclusions and Take Informed Action</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construct arguments and communicate conclusions</li> <li>Ask questions and critique conclusions</li> <li>Take informed action</li> </ul>	Students work individually, with a partner, in small groups, and/or as a class to communicate ideas or take action. Communication can be in the form of essays, reports, multimedia presentations, speeches, letters, etc. This dimension emphasizes the importance of civic engagement and participation.	<b><u>Modeling:</u></b> Teacher presents arguments and conclusions and has students respond to them.  <b><u>Inquiry:</u></b> Students use evidence to defend a conclusion and/or take action on an issue.  <b><u>Literacy:</u></b> Students reflect and communicate about social studies concepts expressed in literature.	

For more information, please contact Sarah Whelan via email ([sarah.whelan@acps.k12.va.us](mailto:sarah.whelan@acps.k12.va.us)) or at 703-619-8328.

### 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.