

# PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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

Welcome to the thirty seventh 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) Professional Development Updates; and (2) Do's and Don'ts for Students Who Refuse to do Work. It also includes a section on how students can keep learning during the upcoming summer months.

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



## Seven Ideas For Keeping Learning Going During the Coming Summer Months!

We can already feel the temperatures rising— accompanied by thunderstorms occurring earlier and earlier this year. That means that summer is already on the way—a time for ACPS educators and students to enjoy the rewards of having time off by being with family and friends, and relaxing with travel and recreational experiences. For this edition of our newsletter, we thought that this would be a good time to thank each of you for your dedication to preparing our students for the Virginia SOLs, your teaching responsibilities, and—most importantly—your students. As the SOLs come to a close, it is important to consider how you can enrich students' post-SOL learning experiences as we wrap up this academic year. Now, let's explore how you can support our students to continue their learning as they enjoy their summer vacation. There is an educational body of research which states that unless students experience educational continuity during their summer break, they can lose key concepts and skills they have learned during the academic year. Here are seven ideas for keeping learning going during the coming summer months:

- 1. Summer Reading Experiences to Extend and Refine Students' Learning:** Summer is a great time for students to enhance their investigation of key concepts, themes, ideas, and events studied during their academic coursework. It is beneficial to provide them with general questions to guide their reading of fiction and non-fiction text (What is the central theme or ideas in this text? How does the author present and develop key ideas and characters? What insights did this reading selection give you about the time period, subject, yourself, and your world? Would you recommend this reading selection to a friend? Why or why not?). Text selections can include suggested reading lists derived from unit resources and hyperlinks included in our curriculum on the ACPS Canvas website.
- 2. Suggested Summer Writing Activities:** Middle school Honors English students are given a suggested set of readings and assignments to submit as their first activity during the next academic year. This idea can be modified more informally for elementary and high school students. For example, you can help students by encouraging them to reflect on their summer experiences (especially their "peak" experiences) by creating informal narratives, descriptive, and informational writing. If possible, you might encourage students to form "summer writing teams," with each group promising to reflect on their fellow team members' writing (either electronically or in person).
- 3. Make Use of Social Media:** Students are encouraged to keep in touch with peers using various forms of social messaging. You might work with your class to determine key concepts, skills, and themes that they find especially interesting and relevant to the world outside of the classroom. Students can post reflections and messages about how they have used this key academic knowledge in their day-to-day summer experiences.

\*Next issue will cover the remaining four ideas so please stay tuned! ☺

**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.

**Creating Our Collective Genius: Coaching with Curriculum, with Jennifer Abrams**

\*Hosted by Collaborative Classroom, Learning Forward Virginia, and Learning Forward Maryland\*

How can we use our collective genius to collaborate and problem-solve to best support the needs of students? We invite you to create a community of collective genius, support, and collaboration. Keynote speaker, Jennifer Abrams, will encourage us to be our best selves while supporting our students. This one-day institute is designed for teams of educators from districts, including Central Office instructional specialists, principals, and teacher leaders. Please register as soon as possible as space is limited to 60 participants.

[Register Here Today!](#)

<b>When</b>	<b>Friday, July 12, 2019 (9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.)</b>
<b>Where</b>	<b>Residence Inn at National Harbor - 192 Waterfront Street, National Harbor, MD 20745</b>
<b>Registration Fees</b>	<b>\$125 Registration Fee (Institute Materials and Lunch Included)</b>

**Do's and Don'ts for Students Who Refuse to do Work**

<b>DON'T</b>	<b>Don't punish.</b> If a child or young adult is struggling with some social or emotional challenges at the moment, punishment is only going to push them further away. Your discipline will appear as harsh, mean, and uncaring.	<b>DO</b>	<b>Keep teaching.</b> Just because a student doesn't lift their pencil, doesn't mean they're not listening and learning. Continue teaching, talking, and even involving that student if they want to participate. Remember that the ultimate goal is to educate the student, not force them to work. If they are in the classroom, keep teaching them!
	<b>Don't send students out of the classroom.</b> I can't stress this enough! It does not fix the problem. It will most likely make it worse in the long-term. The student might feel anger and resentment towards you. The message you are sending is that you have given up on them.		<b>Give wait time.</b> When a student refuses work at first, sometimes all they need is a little down time. It's okay to let them have their head down or keep their arms crossed. Plan to ignore and wait to see if they come around within five minutes or so.
	<b>Don't get in a power struggle.</b> No one ever wins in a power struggle! Energy is wasted even if the student complies; it will be filled with resentment.		<b>Ignore the small behaviors.</b> If the student crumples up the paper, breaks their pencil, or scribbles all over it, avoid the impulse to tell the student they shouldn't do that or give any further instructions. When things like this happen, the student is either agitated or attention-seeking. A strategy that will help in this instance is just giving space.
	<b>Don't act out of frustration or anger.</b> When you start to feel frustrated due to a student's behavior, remember this phrase: "He's not giving me a hard time; he's having a hard time." There is no shame in taking a deep breath, and walking away from a situation.		<b>Be reflective.</b> Consider what you could be doing that might be triggering the student to refuse to work. For example, are you using a harsh tone? Did you embarrass the student by calling them out for something right before? Sometimes, there isn't anything apparent, but it's always worth considering first!
	<b>Don't use threats.</b> You might be tempted to say things like, "If you don't do your work, I'm going to call your parents," or "Finish this or you can't go to the gym." Sometimes, these threats can only make a student dig their heels in deeper and you might regret what you've said later on. Instead, be mindful about what you say and make sure your consequence fits the severity of their inappropriate behavior.		<b>Focus on the relationship.</b> For most students, forming a strong relationship is everything. Spend time with your students during lunch, talk with them after class, and just get to know them. Once a connection is developed, many times your students will have a much easier time working for you because they know you care. Building a relationship with your students isn't a quick process, but it's always important and worth it.
	<b>Don't embarrass the student.</b> Publicly calling the student out might result in a power struggle or escalating the situation. Instead, consider ways to privately support the student to help both of you get what you need.		



*Submitted by Arnecia Moody, Lead School Social Worker and Adapted from Pathways to Success*

**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.