

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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



Welcome to the thirty eighth 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) SAI Highlights for 2018-2019; and (2) August Differentiated Team Training. It also includes a section on how students can keep learning during the upcoming summer months.

As always, please share with us your suggestions for extending students' learning into the summer. We deeply appreciate your contributions to our shared thinking about how to best serve the students of ACPS.

Until next time... Terri ☺

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



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.

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

Last issue, we introduced three of the seven ideas for lengthening students' learning during the forthcoming summer months. **This issue will focus on the four remaining ideas.**

(4) Encourage Students to Use Their Local Library: Libraries are rich treasure troves of resources. Our Alexandria City Library System is deeply committed to providing a range of summer enrichment programs for students and their families, including recommended reading lists, book discussions, and an introduction to student uses of technology-enhanced library explorations. Please make certain that students are aware of the location of their local library and the range of services available to them there.

(5) Think Logs: As testing concludes, you might introduce (or continue to reinforce) the idea of student self-reflection via tools such as daily reflective journals, electronic diaries, and "think logs." A think log, for example, asks students to take some time (perhaps at the end of the day) to reflect on their experiences and how their daily activities helped them make use of important concepts, vocabulary, and skills learned in each of their classes during the previous academic year. A proper think log also asks students to assess how they have used higher-order reasoning skills in their daily lives (e.g., application, analysis, interpretation, synthesis, evaluation, and creative expression). At first, students may find this approach unusual or challenging so helping them become more fluent and automatic in using daily reflective writing can help them learn its value and the richness of its possibilities in expanding their self-awareness and understanding of their world. Ultimately, they can truly learn what it means to be a life-long learner.

(6) Teaching the Whole Child: To reinforce the value of students continuing their learning during the summer, you may wish to take some time to discuss with them their plans for the summer, their everyday activities and responsibilities, and ways they can use these various strategies to enhance their summer learning. As part of these conversations, please encourage your learners to understand the relationship between their physical growth and development (including exercise and dietary choices) and their emotional and mental well-being. Also, ask them to reflect on their personal goals for the coming academic year—and ways in which they can strengthen strategies and practices that have supported their learning—and areas in which they might set goals for improvement.

(7) Exploring Their Community and Their City: Reading, writing, math applications, and STEM experiences are strongly aligned with students' exploration of the city in which they live. Encourage students to explore with their parents and family members the richness of Alexandria, including: (a) taking walking tours in areas like Del Ray and Old Town (which has been called one of the "Great Streets" of America); (b) helping students to experience the history of the city, including its historic-site museums and historical places like the Carlyle House; (c) encouraging students to interact with artists at work in places like the Torpedo Factory; and (d) investigating more unusual resources and sites in Alexandria, including the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, the Tiny Spite House (the skinniest house in America), and the oldest Farmers Market in the United States. The reading, writing, and reflective experiences previously identified are great ways to enrich student exploration of the wonderful city in which they live.

SAI Highlights for 2018-2019

Over the second semester, the Office of Talent Development has traveled to each school in order to conduct the **Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI)** with staff members. This survey provides us with a great deal of information on the professional learning needs and preferences of teachers. This information will be vital as we continue to **customize and differentiate professional growth opportunities** across the division. Below are some of the **highlights and key learnings** from the survey:

- **970 staff members across 17 schools** took the SAI
- The highest ratings came in the category of **Leadership**.
 - Leaders speak about the connection between professional learning and student achievement (**78.4% agreement**)
 - Leaders advocate for resources for professional learning (**80% agreement**)
- The **lowest ratings** came in the category of **Data**.
 - Assessment of professional learning is determined **before** the learning plan is created (**36.5% agreement**)
 - Professional learning programs are continuously assessed to ensure quality results (**39% agreement**)
- The top three topics identified as a **priority for professional learning** in the future were:
 - Interventions and differentiation
 - Creating an environment that supports risk-taking and reflection
 - Blended learning
- The top three types of **preferred professional learning opportunities** were:
 - Time to observe another teacher
 - Professional learning communities
 - Independent study

This feedback will be vital as we continue to **develop our professional learning programs** at the division and school level. Surveys have been shared with Principals in order for them to use this feedback to plan for the 2019-2020 school year.

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

August Differentiated Team Training

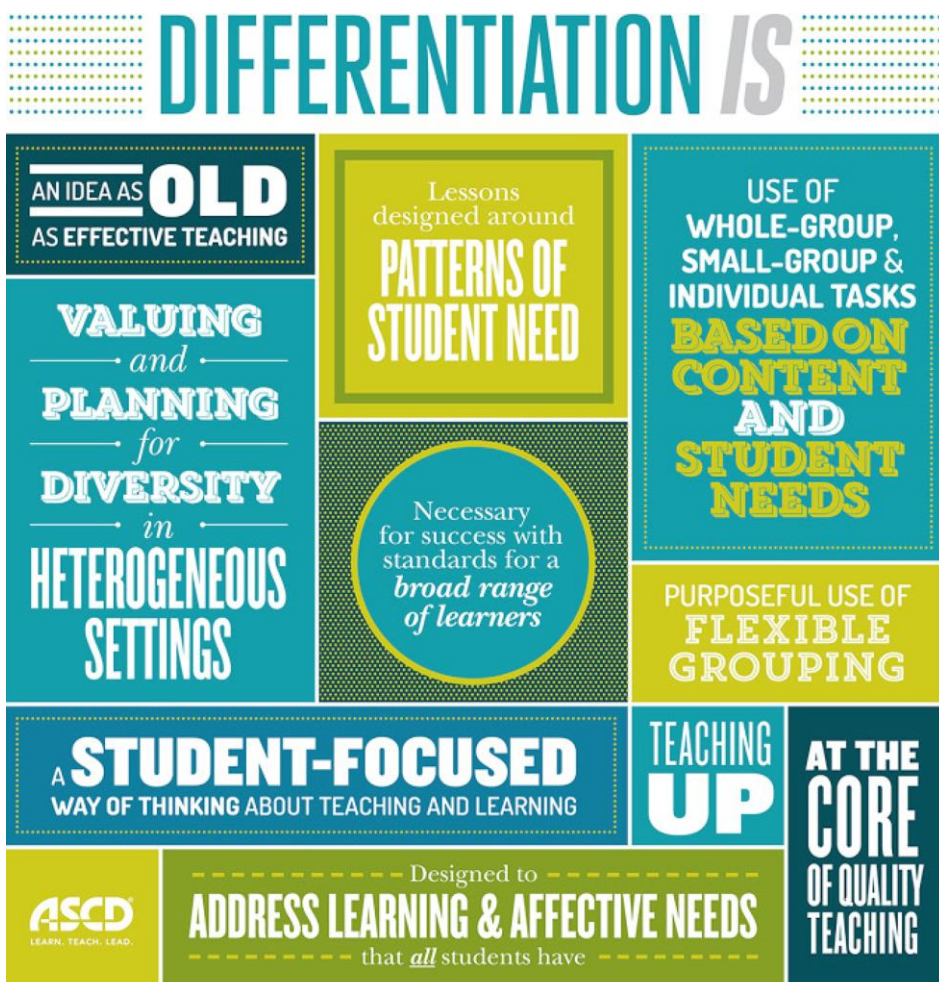
Dates: August 1-2, 2019

How can I differentiate my instruction to meet the needs of all learners? This course is designed to introduce cross functional teams from each elementary school to **strategies and approaches to differentiation of instruction** for all students. Led by **Dr. Richard Cash**, this course will provide tools and knowledge for school-based teams to provide differentiation support to their individual school faculties.

Summer reading assignments and books will be sent to team members by June 20, 2019. All elementary schools should have a team signed up for **PLMS course # 15869 section # 18788**. The training will be held at **Patrick Henry School Cafeteria** from 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Teachers will be paid **\$150 per day**. Teams should be comprised of an **Administrator, Talented and Gifted (TAG) teacher, English Learners (EL) teacher, Special Education teacher, Literacy Coach**, as well as a **4th and 5th general education teacher**.

If there are any questions, please contact Donna Brearley via email (frances.brearley@acps.k12.va.us) or Dr. Debra Lane via email (debra.lane@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).

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