

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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



Welcome to the thirty 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) Project GLAD Summer Institute; (2) Virginia Reads One Book; (3) Ten Wellness Strategies for Educators; and (4) ACPS Unconference 2019. It also includes a section on the power of team building.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy the remaining days of this academic year. As we expressed in our previous newsletters, you are a pivotal influence in your students' lives in school. Enjoy these team-building activities and please enjoy the opportunities provided by this post-SOL time period.

Until next time... Terri 😊

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

The Power of Team Building

In this edition, I want to once again thank everyone for focusing on strategies for ensuring excellence in teaching and learning throughout the school-year. We all know that creating lessons that include creative and engaging activities is essential for warranting student success. As we move forward toward the end of this academic year, we thought it would be useful to revisit the importance of building collaborative classroom communities. Team building is an essential building block of this process, which can not only engage and enhance student academic achievement--but extend and refine students' use of important 21st century skills such as communication, interpersonal dynamics, goal achievement, and conflict resolution. Here are just a few of the many ways you can integrate team building into your classrooms as we approach the summer:

1. Team-Based Interest Group Investigations	2. Collaborative Projects	3. Group Research and Debates	4. Cooperative Learning Structures	5. Simple Team-Building Warm-Up Activities
The last days of the year are ideal for encouraging students to form teams of three-four members. Ask students to identify specific interests they have about concepts, themes, and issues explored during the past academic year. Have students engage in a corners activity in which interest topics are identified. As they move to these corners, have them form smaller subgroups to investigate a shared topic of interest. They can use library time and on-line search technology to develop a presentation, performance, or work product to share their findings with the rest of the class. Such investigations can be short-term (i.e., one period long) or long-term (i.e., multi-day or spaced out throughout the week).	Project-based learning is an ideal way for students to learn about topics of interest as well as how a team can enhance the learning of its members. If there is a key concept, theme, or topic that is part of the curriculum for this academic year, that can be a springboard for a group project. Similarly, students can use project-based learning to research a content area that they wish to explore in greater depth. Projects should have clearly articulated evaluation criteria presented to students at the beginning of the process. Throughout the time students are working together on projects, the instructor can circulate, provide coaching support and encouragement, and revisit with students how they are progressing toward achieving the evaluation criteria identified for the scoring criteria guide or rubric. Encourage teams to be as creative in their final work products, performances, and presentations as possible.	Consider introducing the elements of formal debate to your students. Ask them to decide which side of the debate (negative or affirmative) they are on when discussing an unsettled or controversial proposal, issue, problem, or decision related to content being studied (or explored previously). Use class time for students to research and investigate the issue they are debating. Have them engage in give-and-take discussions of the alternative perspectives associated with the debate topic. Then, take time to have as many students as possible engage in a formal debate presentation before the entire class.	You may wish to revisit the rich variety of group-centered team-building activities available on various cooperative learning websites. One of our personal favorites is the JIGSAW, involving students becoming "expert groups" responsible for presenting an in-depth presentation of a key topic, issue, perspective, or theme being explored in class. In a history class, for example, teams studying the American Civil War might become an expert group on the music of the North and South during the War. Similarly, elementary students studying fairy tales might explore how a familiar fairy tale is presented in other countries and time periods (e.g., the multiple versions of Cinderella available from many cultures and time periods).	There are multiple warm-up and student engagement activities that can reinforce effective team behaviors and interactions. These can range from group-created models and structures, skits and presentations, visual representations of information created by small groups, and graphic organizers in which the students themselves physically interact to represent a key sequence, theme, historical process, and related chronological and conceptual ideas.

**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.

Project GLAD Summer Institute

Did you know that ACPS already has over 250 teachers and administrators trained in Project GLAD strategies? The English Learner (EL) Services Department is holding a Project GLAD Summer Institute for **teachers and leaders who are curious about what Project GLAD is all about** and for those who want to dive deeper into refining their practice. Project GLAD strategies are **EL best practices** that are good for ALL (Academic Language Learners).

For more information, please [click here](#) or see table below.

Date and Time	August 20, 2019 (9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.)
Location	Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School
PLMS Course Number	15867 (Register by July 31, 2019)

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Anna Harvin via email (anna.harvin@acps.k12.va.us).

Virginia Reads One Book

Be sure to mark your calendars for
Virginia Reads One Book 2020.

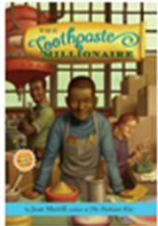
This year VAROB kicks off on...

March 6th, 2020

Join thousands of families
reading across Virginia next spring.



[Download
Flyer](#)



[This Year's Title](#)

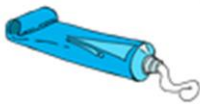


[Visit Our
Website](#)

Spread the word!

And stay tuned for more information on our
website.

#VAROB20



www.readtothem.org

Ten Wellness Strategies for Educators

Practice mindfulness regularly.

Mindfulness can help teachers avoid burnout.

Live in the present rather than dwell on the past.

Laugh more. It's a great way to reduce stress and tension.

Move your body. Stretch and get your heart pumping.

Remember to relax! Give your mind time to wander and your body a chance to relax. Drink a glass of water and/or eat a healthy snack.

Connect with your "spiritual self" - however you define it.

Take care of yourself. You can't nourish others when you're running on empty.

Practice deep breathing. It sends oxygen to your brain which causes you to relax.

Take a short time-out every day where you have no interruptions. This mini recharge will become something that you will look forward to everyday.

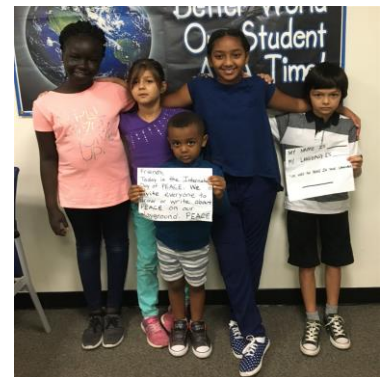
Reflect on the little things. Think about all of the things for which you are grateful.

ACPS Unconference 2019

Join us for the 2019 ACPS Unconference on June 27, 2019, at George Washington Middle School. An Unconference is an innovative approach to conferences where **participants bring their own ideas and engage in rich conversations with colleagues** (instead of pre-set topics). All ideas are welcome! **We look forward to a day full of rich discussion and collaboration.** The Unconference will begin at 8:30 a.m. with breakfast and selection of breakout topics. The rest of the day will be spent in sessions. You can **talk, listen, and even move from session to session** as you see fit. **It's an exciting way to connect with real issues and ideas and to come away with strategies.**

Click [here](#) for more information.

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



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.