

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

A Message from Dr. Terri Mozingo, Chief Academic Officer:

Welcome to another edition of the **Pursuit of Excellence Newsletter**. This edition will keep you updated about the latest developments in a variety of key areas (aligned with the ACPS Strategic Plan 2020), including: (1) trends, focus areas, and high-priority projects involving the Department of Curriculum and instruction; (2) updates on high-priority achievement targets, including ELL, TAG, and Specialized Instruction; and (3) the changing design of Early Childhood Education in our division and our city.

We are committed to providing personalized, team-focused, and time-sensitive services to all ACPS elementary, middle, and high school sites. Our goal is to support the mission of ACPS to ensure that all students succeed by providing a cohesive and standards-based curriculum and ensuring that the written, assessed, and taught curricula promote the achievement of a diverse student population. The selected areas of focus in our plan concentrate on essential areas to prepare our students to succeed. The following table illustrates the key priorities within our plan and their alignment to other goal areas within the ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan Goals:

Our department is committed to working in a collaborative manner with schools and families to ensure that every student achieves success. This newsletter will include some areas of focus for increasing student achievement, supporting teacher development and ensuring parent and family engagement. The subsequent edition will provide a summary of the lessons learned from Teacher Talks: Your Voice Matters. These sessions have been invaluable and meaningful for getting feedback from teachers. Many thanks to those who have spent time sharing their perspectives and ideas.

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Department Priorities	ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan Goals					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Analyze and use data to improve student achievement	X					
Ensure alignment between the written, assessed, and taught curricula	X					
Coach and model effective lessons to attain student success	X		X			
Promote exemplary instructional practices through content academies and customized professional development	X		X			
Facilitate fidelity of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)	X					
Provide instructional resources to ensure effective curriculum implementation	X		X			
Employ cross-functional teaming to increase student achievement	X					
Monitor progress toward key performance indicators	X					

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.

Much of our work occurs as cross-functional teams in order to:

(1) Ensure fidelity of program implementation; (2) support School Education Plan (SEP) goals; (3) provide personalized and excellent service and support for schools requesting specific assistance; and (4) support schools in differentiating curriculum, instruction, and assessment to maximize the achievement of all learners and populations including English Language Learners, Special Education, socio-economically disadvantaged, and Talented and Gifted. We are committed to working together towards a shared vision of excellence, high-performance, and sense of urgency for improving and accelerating student achievement as detailed in the ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan.



Every Student Succeeds

English Language Learner Services

- EAP Instructional Leadership Cohort:** Eight English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers from both George Washington MS and F.C. Hammond MS have enrolled in the EAP Instructional Leadership Cohort, which held its first session in November and will continue through April 2016. The purpose of the EAP Instructional Leadership Cohort is to enhance teachers' capacity and leadership in designing unit plans for the ACPS EAP curriculum guides.
- ELL Writing Prompt Progress-Monitoring:** This year EL students participating in ELD and EAP are taking part in standardized, division-wide writing sample assessments in the fall and spring. Teachers and students completed the first writing prompt administration in November of this year and prompts were holistically scored by ELD and EAP teachers in December. The purpose of the writing sample assessment is to track students' language development in the domain of writing. Teachers are using the data to monitor progress and inform instruction, and the EL Office is using it programmatically to assist in planning future professional learning.
- SIOP Training at Hammond:** Hammond EL and general education teachers participated in a 3-day SIOP Training for Teachers this school year. Participants studied the 8 components and 30 features of the Structured Instruction Observation Protocol in order to become proficient in the use of effective sheltered instructional strategies for EL students in general education and co-taught classes.

- International Academy:** We are very proud of the accomplishments of the academy at both T.C. Williams and Hammond Middle School. Based upon best practices research and success in New York City, the International Academy model provides supports to second-language learners (new to the United States) including: (1) a holistic, integrated curriculum that reinforces both content mastery and language acquisition; (2) highly individualized counseling and support services; (3) opportunities for staff collaboration and planning, including sustained professional learning; and (4) a range of parent and community outreach services.

How Do Principals Really Improve Schools?

According to Rick Dufour and Mike Mattos's recent *Educational Leadership* article (April 2013): "Instead of micromanaging teachers, principals should lead efforts to collectively monitor student achievement through professional learning communities (PLCs). Schools that have effective PLCs have teachers who are more likely to:

- Take collective responsibility for student learning, help students achieve at higher levels, and express higher levels of professional satisfaction (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).
- Share teaching practices, make results transparent, engage in critical conversations about improving instruction, and institutionalize continual improvement (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010).
- Improve student achievement and their professional practice at the same time that they promote shared leadership (Louis et al., 2010).
- Experience the most powerful and beneficial professional development (Little, 2006).
- Remain in the profession (Johnson & Kardos, 2007).



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Office of Curriculum Design and Instructional Services

- **SOL Student Achievement and Gap Analysis Documents (Now On-Line via the [ACPS Curriculum Blackboard Website](#)):** On the Curriculum Blackboard website, you can now find detailed SOL analysis of achievement gap areas in English, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. These documents provide a rich array of electronic resources (from lesson plans to Discovery Learning access) to help teachers address student achievement needs.
- **Benchmark Assessment and Gap Analysis Documents (Now On-Line via the [ACPS Curriculum Blackboard Website](#)):** Like the SOL analysis, you can now find gap analysis and resource documents in the four SOL-tested areas, also available via the Curriculum Blackboard website.
- **Teacher Input Opportunities:** Based upon teacher-talk and related feedback processes, we now have a Curriculum Feedback portal on the Curriculum Blackboard website. You can provide suggestions, strategies, and sample lesson plans to support effective curriculum implementation. [Call Sarah Whelan @ 703-619-8020 for information.](#)
- **Lesson Design, Demonstration Lessons, and Strategy Modeling Opportunities:** Instructional specialists are available to work with both individual teachers and CLTs to address key elements of effective lesson design, including differentiation and acceleration strategies.
- **Summer Enrichment Programs and Summer Content Academies:** The highly successful Summer Enrichment model will continue in July for students identified as “Tier 3,” including rich opportunities for experience-based learning and field trips. We are also offering a range of content academies for teachers, focusing on topics ranging from Balanced Literacy to Reading in the Content Areas.

Talented & Gifted (TAG)

ODYSSEY OF THE MIND (OM)

OM is an international educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college. In our largest year ever, ACPS had 24 teams compete at the Odyssey of the Mind Region 11 competition on Saturday, March 12. Of those teams, we have four teams - our most ever - headed to the state competition in Newport News on April 16 - two fifth grade teams from MacArthur, a team from George Mason, and a sixth grade team from GW (who competed at states last year). Our teams spanned from kindergarten through sixth grade this year. Also, it was the first year that Barrett and Jefferson-Houston competed. ACPS also had 6 primary teams that competed, but do not receive official scores. Congratulations to all!

MacArthur

Problem 1 (fourth grade): 4th place
Problem 2 (fifth grade): 1st place
Problem 4 (fifth grade): 1st place
Problem 5 (third grade): 11th place (tied with Polk)

Polk

Problem 1: 10th place
Problem 5: 11th place (tied with MacArthur)

Maury

Problem 5: 7th place

Barrett

Problem 1: 7th place
Problem 4: 3rd place

Jefferson-Houston

Problem 2: 6th place

George Mason

Problem 1: 10th place
Problem 3: 3rd place
Problem 4: 6th place
Problem 5: 3rd place
Problem 5, Team B: 1st place

GW

Problem 3 (Team 2): 4th place
Problem 3 (Team 1): 7th place
Problem 5 (Team 2): 1st place



Early Childhood in Excellence

We are very excited to announce the addition of *Michelle Smith-Howard* to the C&I team! We are delighted to have her join us as our new *Coordinator of City-Wide Early Childhood Programs*. She will provide extraordinary leadership in this area and ACPS is fortunate to have her as a member of our team. She comes to us after serving as *Director of Early Childhood Development and Intervention* with the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, D. C. and as an early childhood expert with D.C. Public Schools.

- **Effective School Leadership:** Nurture an instructional program and school culture. Leaders from each school hosting VPI participate in monthly mentoring sessions around quality improvement of the pre-K program. Goals are set, monitored and achieved as part of a continuous improvement process.
- **Ongoing System of Staff Training:** Training staff in areas of most need. VPI teachers are collaborating in a broad professional development opportunity with teachers from Early Childhood Special Education, Head Start and community VPI providers. Teacher/child interactions will be observed using the Pre-K CLASS tool and teachers will be provided professional learning specifically designed for their needs and learning styles.



Every Student Succeeds

Curriculum and Instruction IDEA BOX

All teachers are invited to submit feedback and suggestions regarding the ACPS Curriculum. Please use this link to access the feedback form: <http://goo.gl/forms/snAJioBO5s>. Please indicate your subject area, course/grade level, and the specific unit that is the subject of your comments.

You can also access the link to the form from Blackboard. Log in to Blackboard, click on Curriculum, and then click on Idea Box on the left toolbar.

As always, you are also welcome to contact the Instructional Specialist in the content area to discuss questions or comments regarding the curriculum. We appreciate your reflections, comments, and suggestions as we continue to revise and update the curriculum. Contact Sarah Whelan 619-@ 703-619-8020.

