



ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Education Digest

orals
6-24-14

Special Edition | Spring 2014

STATE OF OUR SCHOOLS

A MESSAGE FROM DR. ALVIN L. CRAWLEY, SUPERINTENDENT

As summer approaches, we think about reflection and relaxation. I look back on the past few months as your new Superintendent and realize we have not stopped moving in that short time. As I reflect on the work we have done and the work we need to do, I am excited about the future for our students and our school division. We are moving forward.

Our goals are to make sure that every child in the school division receives an outstanding education and that all of our schools are high-performing schools. We know that we have considerable work to do.

To do this work and accomplish our goals, we have to ensure we have good teachers, principals and staff in place — interacting, challenging, supporting and caring for students so that they can both recognize and achieve their individual potential. We also need to nurture our students to make good decisions that impact their short- and long-term success.

Anyone who is skeptical about the future of our schools just needs to walk into a classroom. Take a tour, volunteer to assist a teacher or mentor a student. You will find bright, talented and inquisitive children and dedicated, interested, hardworking educators. They are our inspiration as we move forward in our quest for a high-performing school division and build on the strengths of our diverse community.

We must hold ourselves accountable and look at the areas that need improvement. We must address leadership transitions, state intervention requirements, overcrowding, budget cuts, restructuring of our middle schools, and ensuring consistency in delivery of a rich and rigorous instructional program across all schools. I strongly believe that none

of these issues are insurmountable. Through our budget process we will strengthen our supports to schools and students in the following ways:

- **Special Education:** Continued special education staffing to support inclusion, allowing for the acquisition of more assistive technology, and the expansion of the EXCEL Academy at T.C. Williams High School

- **English Language Learner Support:** Continued support for ELL and International Academy, implementation of the International Academy at the middle school level and implementation of an ELL Summer Learning Program

- **Targeted Intervention:** Additional support for students who are Talented and Gifted at the elementary and middle school levels, including the establishment of a Young Scholars Program; the restructuring of the T.C. Satellite Campus and Chance for Change Academy; and implementation of a Restorative Justice pilot program for alternatives to suspension

- **Literacy and Mathematics:** Increased math focus across the division, and implementation of student improvement/intervention positions at the elementary school level and targeted staff training on teaching math, reading and writing

- **Recruitment, Training and Retention:** Support for targeted recruitment, professional learning at all levels and increased emphasis on competitive compensation

- **Infrastructure and Capacity:** Increased funding for required maintenance services and added financial services positions in procurement and payroll offices

I have confidence that if we work hard and employ proven techniques, we will see profound and lasting changes throughout our



school division. We want to make sure that every student is prepared for the next level. We want to be a culturally competent community that is welcoming to every child who walks through our doors.

This is a time of purpose and growth for our schools. It is a time for new beginnings in ACPs. Now is the time to roll up our sleeves and do the hard work as a community. Now is the time to be champions of student success. Now is our time.

It is my sincere hope that all of you and your families will have a great summer and that our students will engage in fun activities that support their interests and commitment to be being lifelong learners.

Sincerely,


Alvin L. Crawley, Superintendent

FCH 2

GEORGE WASHINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

4646

GW2

Moving Our Middle Schools FORWARD

Our enhanced middle school structure: Two campuses with small, diverse teams of students, teachers and principals. But that's just the beginning.

Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) has a priority to cultivate a middle school environment that supports academic achievement, positive social development and student personalization. In February, the Alexandria City School Board unanimously approved the revision of the city's middle school structure to one school per campus. Under the new set-up, George Washington 1 and 2 middle schools will merge to become George Washington Middle School. Francis C. Hammond 1, 2 and 3 middle schools will become Francis C. Hammond Middle School. The consolidation structure aims to enhance the academic achievement of middle school students and to maximize administrators' time to focus on student achievement while increasing opportunities for personalization.

Beginning in School Year 2014-15, ACPS will focus on these areas at our two middle schools through exemplary vision, strong leadership, curriculum implementation, school climate and ongoing accountability. While middle school can be exciting both academically and socially, it also proves demanding and can influence the lives of students profoundly. The middle school years are an important time for students as they find themselves between childhood and adolescence.

Our middle school program will address the methods by which our English Language Learners, special education and honors programs are taught in the classroom. We will

focus on improving the climate, student services and discipline.

Within the schools, students will be put into diverse cohorts of 125 students. Each

Meet the new middle school administrative teams:



Meilin Jao (above, left) has been selected as the new principal for Francis C. Hammond Middle School. She will be joined by Academic Principals Aurelia Ortiz and Erin Whatley. An additional academic principal position and one dean of students position will be filled to complete the 2014-15 administrative team at Hammond. The new leadership at George Washington includes Principal **Jesse Mazur** (above, right), Academic Principals Pierrette Hall, Kathryn Madigan and Lance Harrell, and Dean of Students Jeanette Jackson.

group will share a fixed team of teachers for core subjects but move around for electives. Throughout middle school, these cohorts of students will travel together from one year

to the next with the same counselor and academic principal, so that a student's experience will be that of being part of a small, cohesive group. This arrangement effectively gives them the small-school experience alongside the arts and sporting opportunities that exist within a much larger environment.

This proven system offers more support to students throughout their sometimes challenging middle school years. It allows for smaller learning communities and consistency in teachers and counselors. ACPS believes that this will help narrow the achievement gap that currently exists among some subgroups of ACPS students.

The honors program continues to offer open enrollment. This September, a workgroup will look at how the honors program is currently operating and whether it can be improved. Hammond and George Washington will each have its own Talented and Gifted (TAG) Resource Teacher to ensure that teachers receive training and support when teaching honors classes.

The success of our students and their futures requires each of us to be a champion. ACPS is committed to championing our middle schools and helping our students achieve a smooth transition into secondary education. As we move forward with an enhanced middle school structure, we invite you to come to school with us, get involved in education and witness Excellence in Action. ■

Did You KNOW...



...that 77 percent of ACPS teachers have advanced degrees?



...that ACPS opened two community partnership inclusion classrooms with Fairlington Preschool in September? Each class includes 12 students: six with disabilities and six typically developing children.

2013-14: A YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ACPS Celebrates Outstanding Achievements by Students and Staff

Throughout the 2013-14 school year, ACPS celebrated a variety of student and staff achievements. Here's a sampling of national, regional and state awards and honors.

■ **Ana Bonilla-Galdamez**, a school social worker at Charles Barrett Elementary School, received the 2014 Social Worker of the Year Award from the National Association of Social Workers Virginia (NASWVA) Chapter.

■ Charles Barrett Math Teacher **Stephanie Chlebus** is one of 102 mathematics and science teachers to receive the 2012 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

■ The **T.C. Williams Crew Team's** many achievements in 2014 include state titles for the Girls' Varsity 8, Boys' Lightweight 8 and Girls' Freshman 8.

■ Cora Kelly Principal **Brandon Davis** received The Washington Post's 2014 Distinguished Educational Leadership Award.

■ Director of School Nutrition Services **Becky Domokos-Bays** won the office of vice president of the School Nutrition Association (SNA).

■ T.C. Williams Librarian **Beth Ebenstein Mulch** was named to the American Library Association's (ALA) 2014 Emerging Leaders program, and was one of two school librarians sponsored by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL).

■ T.C. Williams American Literature and Advanced Placement Language and Composition teacher **Erin Fitch** was one of three teachers across the nation to receive a personal prize of \$2,000 and a further \$1,000 to spend at her school from the University of Tulsa in recognition of inspiring students to achieve greatness.

■ The **T.C. Williams Varsity Football Team** played in the regional tournament for the first time since 1991.

■ T.C. Williams student **Dagim Girma** won the \$5,000 overall second-place award at the national Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship competition in New York City.



Dagim Girma

■ T.C. Williams High School senior **Brendan P. Kerwin** received a 2014 National Merit Scholarship



Photo © Kevin Cruz Photography

of \$2,500. **Carter W. Goodwin** and **Stephen Lockett** were National Merit Semifinalists. Senior **Edom Tesfa** was a Semifinalist in the 50th annual National Achievement Scholarship Program, also conducted by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

■ T.C. Williams students **Robby Lanier, Percell Watson, Jacob Whitacre** and **Delon Bennett** were among 25 students — selected from 950 entrants — who competed in the finals of the Network For Teaching Entrepreneurship Washington Region Business Plan Competition. Robby's comic T-shirt business won him \$275 in seed money in the finals.

■ Samuel W. Tucker's **Virginia Larsen** is the Virginia Academy of School Psychologists' School Psychologist of the Year.

■ The **T.C. Williams High School Marching Titans** performed during the Sugar Bowl half-time show in New Orleans on Jan. 2. The band took second in its class in the field band category among the 14 Sugar Bowl bands competing in a Battle of the Bands.

■ The **T.C. Williams Boys' Track Team** racked up an impressive array of victories this season, including the recent 6A North Region championship, thanks to top individual and team finishes in seven events. USA Track & Field, the governing body for track and field in the United States, named sophomore **Noah Lyles** Athlete of the Week in April in recognition of the student-athlete's 200-meter title at the U.S. Area Youth Selection Trials.

■ At the Virginia State Science and Engineering Festival, T.C. Williams student **Hira Mohyuddin** received first place in the category Behavioral and Social Sciences, and an award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Lori Shabazz

■ Patrick Henry Elementary School Kindergarten Teacher **Lori Shabazz** is the winner of the 2014 Agnes Meyer Outstanding Teacher Award.

■ T.C. Williams 12th-Grade U.S. and Virginia Government Teacher **Ra Alim Shabazz** earned the John Marshall Foundation's annual Teacher Award for excellence in teaching the U.S. Constitution.

■ Jefferson-Houston School First-Grade Teacher/Team Leader **Lindsay M. Stuart** is one of three Virginia educators named to the 2014 Dream Team of 200 teachers who will attend TeachFest in New Orleans.

■ The **T.C. Williams Boys' Soccer Team**, in a thrilling come-from-behind overtime victory, beat McLean (2-1) to advance to the regional semifinals and state tournament.

■ Charles Barrett Crossing Guard **Angie Thigpen** is one of six Most Outstanding Crossing Guards of 2013, selected by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

■ Health Services Coordinator **Robin Wallin** was named Virginia's school nurse administrator of the year by the Virginia Association of School Nurses Inc. ■



Update on the New Jefferson-Houston

This September, Jefferson-Houston School is reaching the critical turning point that it has been working toward for several years. Its brand new state-of-the-art building will open in time for the start of school, and classes will switch from the open plan set-up in 1970 to classrooms specifically designed for a modern learning environment.

The new parking lot behind the school is now open. Furniture has been ordered and will arrive in early July, and plans for roof-top classroom space are progressing.

Construction progress will continue to be chronicled on the ACPS website. A grand opening celebration is being planned for the community this fall. ■

OUR SCHOOL DIVISION'S GOALS

How can Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) achieve the quest to become a consistently high-performing school division? Our main priority is to raise achievement at all levels by concentrating on classroom instruction. We will focus on several targets:

- **Enhancing reading and mathematics instruction** — We will strive to employ the best teachers and provide them with optimal educational materials and meaningful professional development.
- **Bridging the achievement gap between racially and economically diverse students** — We will work to ensure personalized instruction that recognizes each student's unique circumstances.
- **Providing targeted early intervention** — We will reach out to children experiencing challenging situations and will help nurture these students throughout their academic careers.

- **Strengthening student support in honors and Advanced Placement classes** — We will provide a variety of options for students in need of enhanced academic opportunities.

Test scores alone do not make a school division great. The danger in measuring our success primarily by Standards of Learning results is that we risk judging our student population and not our schools. Our division's many positive attributes include a rising graduation rate and falling dropout rate; highly educated, award-winning teachers; programs that recognize and celebrate our diverse student population; a widely respected performing and visual arts program that boasts numerous notable alumni; and a high school athletics program filled with award-winning, championship-caliber athletes who are earning college scholarships.

Above all, ACPS thrives on a sense of community, a shared feeling that we are all pulling in the same direction and a belief that every student can learn.

Looking Ahead: 2014-15 Initiatives

New ACPS Strategic Plan: Replacing the five-year strategic plan adopted in 2009, the new plan will address the future needs of students and establish a vision, goals and strategic objectives to guide the work of the division toward improving academic achievement.

Honors Curriculum Review: This review will look at how students matriculate into the honors curriculum and how they are served throughout the program. Recommendations will be made to ensure that equity and excellence are maintained.

City of Alexandria's Youth Master Plan: The plan is designed to ensure that the City, its schools and community services are effectively aligned. The plan shares a vision for our children that they enter kindergarten and graduate from high school prepared for success.



OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

703-824-6635 • news@acps.k12.va.us
www.acps.k12.va.us

Alvin L. Crawley, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

School Board
Karen A. Graf
Chairman

Christopher J. Lewis
Vice Chairman

Members
Kelly C. Booz
Ronnie Campbell
William E. Campbell
Patricia Ann Hennig

Stephanie A. Kapsis
Justin Keating
Marc Williams

STAY CONNECTED!
Find @ACPSk12 on:



WE'RE MOVING!

The ACPS Central Office is relocating to:

1340 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314

Near the Braddock Road Metro Station and George Washington Middle School

We will be completely moved by early July 2014. Starting in July, contact us at the new ACPS main phone number:

703-619-8000.

