The Alexandria City Public Schools Teaching and Learning Framework
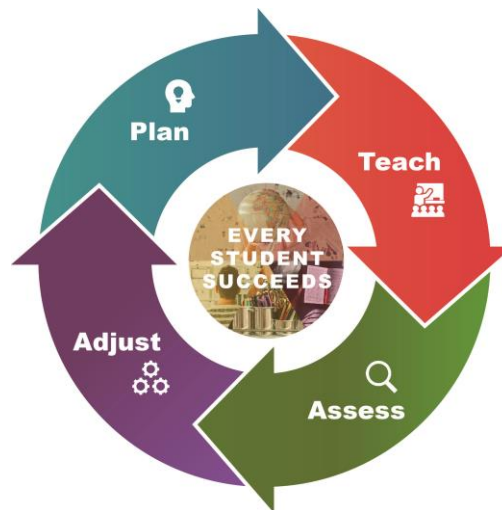

Figure 1: ACPS Teaching and Learning Framework

PURPOSE

The *ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan* presents a powerful vision: *Every Student Succeeds.* To support this goal, the *ACPS Teaching and Learning Framework* explains division expectations for effectve teaching. It identifies four critical areas essential for every student to achieve success. ACPS serves over 15,000 students with unique learning needs and capabilities, representing various cultures, languages, and regions from throughout the world. As a result, this framework includes research-based strategies that have been proven effective in meeting the needs of our diverse learners, including English Learners, Students with Disabilities, and Talented and Gifted students. It also integrates the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) with 21st century skills identified in the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate.*

The framework begins with principles for teachers to *plan* lessons that are aligned with curriculum standards and pacing requirements. Next, the framework highlights ways to *teach* to ensure that all students receive an engaging and appropriate educational experience—one that is both culturally appropriate and strategy rich. Third, the *assess* section emphasizes teachers' monitoring of their students' achievement using meaningful and ongoing feedback. The final section of the framework, presents strategies teachers can use to *adjust* how they reinforce students' learning to guide them toward proficiency and beyond.

Alexandria City Public Schools is committed to providing a foundation for *instructional excellence* that is consistent with instructional practices that lead to higher student achievement.. This framework outlines the essential components of *effective teaching and learning* while supporting teachers and school leaders in their professional growth. It also reinforces the work of *Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)* as part of the *School Education Planning* process. This framework provides a common language to ensure a coherent, intentional approach to curriculum and instruction.

Alexandria City Public Schools, Department of Curriculum and Instruction: Every Student Succeeds!

Plan

When a teacher plans effectively, he or she:

1. **Designs clear learning targets that are communicated to students as evidenced by:**

   - One or more **learning objectives (i.e., content and language objectives)** that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-specific;
   - Learning objectives that express a **cognitive complexity** (aligned with *Bloom's Revised Taxonomy*) that matches the identified SOLs and learning sequence of the lesson; and
   - An **essential question** that synthesizes the big idea of the lesson.

2. **Reflects on data to modify plans to respond to student needs as evidenced by:**

   - A **variety of assessments** (diagnostic, formative, summative) to monitor student progress within the lesson.

3. **Incorporates resources (including technology) to foster literacy in the content areas, engagement, critical thinking, creativity, and other globally competitive skills as evidenced by:**

   - A **meaningful learning sequence** that moves students from the concrete to the representational and abstract **(C-R-A):**
   - Integration of **key academic language and vocabulary** throughout the lesson sequence;
   - Differentiated and **scaffolded learning** activities to accommodate students' varying readiness levels, interests, and learner profiles; and
   - A plan for **purposeful closure** that requires students to reflect upon their learning and revisit lesson objective(s) and essential question(s).

Teach
**When a teacher is effective,
he or she ensures that every lesson:**

1. Includes an engaging **"activator or warm-up"** activity that hooks learner interest and makes connections between lesson content and prior learning experiences.

2. Starts with a **"framing the learning"** activity for students, helping them understand the purpose of what they are learning—and why they are learning it.

3. Includes **key concepts or skills** that help students understand the sequence of skills they are to learn and apply in order to complete a required lesson task(s).

4. Incorporates the **gradual release of responsibility** as learners progress from modeling to shaping (via guided practice) toward growing levels of independent use, application, and transfer.

5. Engages students in **experience-based applications** of key lesson and unit vocabulary, especially academic language essential to mastering content.

6. Incorporates **flexible grouping** (including cooperative learning structures) to reinforce students' growing level of independent practice and transfer.

7. Reinforces the **"10-2" rule** (ensuring that no more than 10 minutes of direct instruction occurs before students engage in independent and/or small group debriefing, reflection, and questioning).

8. Integrates **blended technology** into the teaching-learning process to reinforce student engagement, proficiency, and understanding.

9. Makes certain that the overall lesson or key lesson segments culminate in some form of **performance task** confirming students' level of understanding related to the lesson objectives.

10. Ends every lesson in a meaningful **closure activity,** allowing students to reflect upon what they have learned—and **why** they have learned it.

<u>Assess</u>

When a teacher is effective, he or she:

1. Addresses required **Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs)** as the foundation for their assessment and lesson design.
2. Uses a combination of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment tasks to monitor and evaluate student progress in **meeting or exceeding** standards**.**
3. **Uses multiple assessment practices** to monitor and evaluate students' mastery of the skills and content taught in their courses. Examples of acceptable assessment tools include but are not limited to the following:
   - Culminating projects
   - Performance assessment tasks (e.g., academic prompts)
   - Constructed-response test and quiz items
   - Selected-response test and quiz items
   - Student self-assessments (e.g., using rubrics for self-monitoring)
   - Peer response group feedback
   - Daily criterion-based assessment feedback (teacher-to-student)
4. **Provides daily formative assessment feedback** to ensure that students understand what they are learning and why they are learning it.
5. Creates and provides students with **scoring rubrics and exemplars** of acceptable student work in advance of major projects and related performance-based assessment tasks.
6. Permits students to **revisit and review their work** (e.g., performance assessment tasks, tests, quizzes, essays, research reports, etc.) in all instances where it is clear that additional study, effort, and time will produce improved performance and achievement.
7. Revisits with students the learner's work if, in the teacher's professional judgment, **progress and effort** are being made to meet or exceed standards as delineated by the course syllabus or outline.
8. Awards a final grade for reassessment performance that reflects the student's degree of mastery of identified **course standards and task-specific performance indicators.**

Adjust
When a teacher is effective, he or she:

1. Differentiates the teaching-learning process to ensure student mastery of the ACPS core curriculum, including addressing students' **varying readiness levels, interests, and learner profiles.**

2. Adjusts the teaching and learning process based upon **diagnostic and formative assessment results.**

3. **Uses a range of differentiation strategies for English Learners** based on WIDA results. Strategies for EL students include—but are not limited to:
   - **Activating Prior Knowledge and Building Background**
   - **Comprehensible Input**
   - **Interactive Discourse and Cooperative Learning**
   - **Explicit Instruction of Language**
   - **Scaffolding**
   - **Cultural Competence Strategies**
   - **Metacognition**

4. **Differentiates instruction for** Special Education students to include a range of IEP-related strategies and interventions. However, some universal or general strategies are also especially effective in working with all SPED students:
   - **Addressing IEP-Identified Accommodations**
   - **Station Learning**
   - **Parallel Teaching**
   - **Alternative Teaching**
   - **Specially Designed Instruction**

5. Promotes **rigor and engagement** for all learners by using a range of strategies**:**
   - **Higher-Level Questions and Follow-Up Probes**
   - **Socratic Seminars, Debates, and Related Discourse Strategies**
   - **Options for Independent Inquiry and Small Group Discussion and Text Analysis**

6. Uses the following instructional practices involving adjustment of content, process, and product to allow for advanced student work within a unit or subject area:
   - **Independent Research Projects**
   - **Simulations**
   - **Scenarios and Case Studies**