



Arlington
Public
Schools

Professional Learning

BRIEFING REPORT

April 2017





PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The Office of Professional Learning (OPL) supports professional learning for targeted groups and programs. The vision for the OPL is that all APS staff engage in effective professional learning so every student achieves. The OPL works with staff to expand their knowledge and skills so that they may implement the most effective educational practices.

The services coordinated by this office include coordination of and support for the Mentor Program, the Career Advancement Program, teacher evaluation, and university partnerships. The office also organizes and delivers in-service programs, workshops, and courses.

The original charge of the Arlington Public Schools (APS) Office of Professional Development was to provide support for instructional staff. As a result of the 2016 program evaluation, OPL is re-envisioning itself to support organized, cohesive professional learning for all APS staff. As a part of this shift, the office is rebranding its name as the Office of Professional Learning (OPL) and will begin supporting a professional learning framework for all staff. The office is redefining the services provided based on the creation of a new professional learning framework and five-year plan, while supporting areas of foci in the Department of Instruction to include personalized learning and inclusive practices.

Major Services

- The Office of Professional Learning:
- provides support for evaluators and teachers in understanding the Teacher Performance Standards and the T-Scale evaluation process, in collaboration with Human Resources and Administrative Services.
- supports the ongoing learning of APS administrators through participation on the Administrative Conference Planning Team and supporting the work of the Aspiring Leaders program, in collaboration with Administrative Services.

- provides teachers with a more in-depth understanding of, and assistance with, the expectations and components of the APS knowledge and skills based pay system for T-Scale staff to include CAP Portfolios I (local) and III (National Board Certification).
- equips veteran teachers with the knowledge and skills to provide each new teacher consistent, ongoing support during their first year of employment in Arlington Public Schools through the mentoring program.
- plans, implements, and evaluates the provision for orienting new T-Scale staff to APS.
- develops partnerships with universities to support APS in recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff, in collaboration with Human Resources.
- oversees the management of and assistance with the system (Electronic Registrar Online) that allows employees to register, record, and receive credit for workshops, courses, and training offered within APS.
- coordinates field experience and observation placements designed to give university students guided and controlled experiences with professionals in the elementary and secondary schools.
- provides oversight and support for offices and schools in planning, implementing, and evaluating effective professional learning.
- guides the work of the Instructional Lead Teachers (ILT) who are classroom teachers interested in serving in a leadership role. The OPL provides ILTs with enhanced opportunities to learn and grow, and capitalizes on their skills and talents for the benefit of students.
- provides guidance and support for the P-Scale evaluation process in collaboration with Human Resources.
- plans, implements, and evaluates the provision for professional growth of A-Scale employees.
- supports Human Resources in the implementation of the Assistant to Teacher Program.



- provides county-wide professional learning and structures to support county-wide initiatives such as Administrative Conference, Professional Learning Communities, Cultural Competence, Professional Learning Days, Adaptive Schools, Cognitive Coaching, Responsive Classroom, and Personalized Learning.
- coordinates university cohorts for APS teachers to earn additional credentials such as endorsements in ESL via George Mason University and Special Education via University of Virginia and Gifted via University of Virginia.
- supports the Educator's Rising program for high school students.

Bright Spots

The OPL is committed to supporting the creation of shared understanding and language of **effective professional learning** to include planning, implementation, and evaluation through the engagement of stakeholders. Five stakeholder redesign professional learning group meetings were held from June 2016 to January 2017 in which the group provided input on recommendations and necessary elements for the professional learning framework. In addition, the OPL, in collaboration with Human Resources and Administrative Services, supported a principal group (two elementary, two middle, and two high school principals) as well as the Director of Talent Acquisition and Management and the OPL Supervisor in attending the Learning Forward National Conference to build shared understanding of effective professional learning at the school level. The OPL is supporting and encouraging various groups and activities in the building of common language and understanding of effective professional learning.

In alignment with the APS commitment to retain highly qualified staff, the OPL oversees the **Career Advancement Process**. There are two opportunities in a teacher's career to advance on the salary schedule based on demonstrated knowledge and skills: National Board and the CAP process. This school year we are supporting the largest APS National Board cohort ever with 85 teachers participating in the process. In addition, the CAP process recognizes teacher's knowledge and skills and allows them to earn more in salary earlier in their career, leading to improved job satisfaction and retention.

To support APS in recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff, the OPL collaborates with Human Resources to establish **university networks and partnerships**. An ongoing partnership with George Washington University places students in the George Washington University STEAM program at both elementary and high school levels. Additionally, in collaboration with Human Resources we launched the Arlington Public Schools GMU English as a Second Language Cohort with courses beginning in the fall of 2016. Participants will earn an ESL endorsement after successful completion of the two-year program. Two additional cohorts are in the planning stages: one for special education endorsement and one for education leadership.

Data which Provides Insight

- The OPL created seven modules to support new and experienced evaluators with the elements of the T-Scale evaluation process and provided face-to-face sessions throughout the year.
- Three online courses were created for new teachers (elementary, middle, and high) in order to supply them with necessary information and assist them in completing required tasks related to licensure and professional responsibilities. A trained mentor monitored each course to answer questions and assist in completion of the tasks.
- The OPL Supervisor met with a group of high school students to gain insight into the student perspective on professional learning for T-Scale staff. The students overwhelmingly talked about the importance of student and teacher relationships.



In support of the system-wide goal of establishing a **single system of record for professional learning** for the APS workforce, the OPL expanded the use of ERO to offices beyond Instruction. In collaboration with Human Resources, all APS staff are now added users in ERO. The OPL is working to improve **awareness and communication about professional learning opportunities** utilizing the data in our single system of record. We have updated the website with monthly offerings, created summaries of offerings for early release days, and are building a summer professional learning web page to highlight summer opportunities. Finally, the office continues to use the @APSLearns twitter account to highlight professional learning experiences.

The OPL **implements cognitive coaching strategies** by conducting planning and reflecting conversations with schools and offices about supporting effective instruction through several professional learning designs. The following offices and schools are engaged in these active planning and reflecting conversations this school year: World Languages, English/Language Arts, Minority Achievement, Personalized Learning, Williamsburg Middle School, and Jefferson Middle School. These conversations result in building workforce capacity and more cohesive work.

The OPL organizes, advertises, and evaluates the annual **Instructional Assistant In-Service**. 506 Instructional Assistants attended the August 31, 2016 Instructional Assistant In-Service this year. Thirty-seven sessions were offered. In addition to learning on one day, ongoing support for assistants is being provided as elementary assistants participate in the five county-wide writing workshop sessions. The OPL leadership supports the learning of Instructional Assistants.

Significant collaboration with Human Resources and the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction has been focused on the **development of a professional learning framework and plan**. The excerpt below explains the importance of the framework and plan in creating cohesive and aligned professional learning.

"A professional learning plan is the navigation system for the comprehensive professional learning system. A comprehensive professional learning system is the engine that powers educator learning. The professional learning system creates the conditions and structures in which effective professional learning works and links professional learning to other systems that function in a state, school system, or school. It requires, however, a guidance system that sets the destinations, gives directions, and provides progress indicators and other information to support the journey. The professional learning plan is that navigation system.

A professional learning plan establishes short- and long-term plans for professional learning and implementation of the learning. Such plans guide individuals, schools, districts, and states in coordinating learning experiences designed to achieve outcomes for educators and students.

When the guidance provided by the plan aligns high-priority needs with actions, capacities, and resources to address those needs, individual and collective effort is focused on the destination—college- and career-ready students. A comprehensive professional learning system without a plan is an engine without steering, and a plan without a system is a steering mechanism without any power. The two must be inextricably connected."

"Professional Learning Plans: A Workbook for States, Districts and Schools," Learning Forward Corporation, 2015 (learningforward.org)

What We Learned

APS is committed to engaging all staff in effective high quality professional learning. This includes several considerations that impact long-range planning. To address the needs of adult learners, professional learning must be goal driven and provide opportunities for meaningful work. APS acknowledges the varied experience and expertise staff bring to any new learning. The creation of goal-oriented competency-based professional learning through a professional learning framework will provide opportunities for autonomy in acquiring new knowledge and skills. The professional learning framework will allow staff to have control over their learning through varied opportunities while providing a clear purpose for the learning and balancing the three purposes of professional learning: individual development, for team and school improvement and for district-wide program implementation.

Moving Forward

The OPL will continue to collaborate with stakeholders to redefine the Office of Professional Learning vision, mission, core competencies, and services. The creation and implementation of the professional learning framework will guide the learning for all staff in APS in a coherent, cohesive manner.

Program Evaluation Recommendation Progress

Recommendation 1: Implement a system that:

- aligns all instructional professional learning efforts across the district with each other to support Strategic Plan goals, School Board priorities, and/or budget initiatives; and
- coordinates school-based and central office professional development offerings through a collaborative solution process.

Completed Work

- Gathered feedback and ideas from school and department stakeholders
- Created a one-stop shopping page for professional learning opportunities
- Provided administrators with a memo on elementary early release Professional Learning offerings
- Expanded ERO to include all staff members and PL offerings

Current Areas of Focus

- Developing a holistic Professional Learning Framework for all staff members
- Highlighting Professional Learning Framework experiences using Twitter

Next Steps

- Implement the Professional Learning Framework
- Establish a single system of record for all PL offerings

Recommendation 2: Conduct an APS professional learning policy review

Current Areas of Focus

- Updating Policy Implementation Procedures to incorporate professional learning hours
- Developing a holistic Professional Learning Framework for all staff members

Next Steps

- Adjust policies to align with new framework

Recommendation 3: Create and pilot professional development delivery models that identify best practices and include tools for evaluation.

Completed Work

- Creation of the Director of Talent Acquisition and Development Position in Human Resources to support the professional learning of all staff

Current Areas of Focus

- Book study group on "Becoming a Learning System"
- Utilize the face-to-face observation tool for effective professional learning for Festival of the Minds presenters and Administrative Conference Presenters as well as supporting presenters in utilizing the ERO feedback data

Next Steps

- Develop system of accountability to monitor implementation of the Professional Learning Framework
- Incorporate the "Six Key Elements of High quality Professional Learning" from AASA into the Professional Learning Framework
- Support professional learning using a variety of models including blended learning, instructional rounds, job-embedded coaching and support, etc.

