

ADVISORY COUNCIL IN TEACHING AND LEARNING (ACTL) ADVISORY COMMITTEE FEEDBACK ON CONTINUOUS LEARNING

1. *What is working well with distance learning?*

- Students enjoyed working at their own pace and in the order they wanted.
- No grades worked well for many, reduced stress and allowed for focus on social-emotional well-being
- Canvas cumbersome but SOME teachers are getting better and more consistent.
- Where there was direct teacher engagement, with teachers and specialists a child knew (1:1, weekly check-ins, class time, small groups, office hours, and especially a combo), but very inconsistent.
- When there was peer engagement.
- When there were synchronous learning opportunities, and when they were recorded and posted for access later.
- When teachers would send an email at beginning of each week to communicate assignments and expectations; helpful when parents copied.
- Parents appreciated the asynchronous flexibility to help accommodate when they could help their student, and to allow teens not to have to wake up so early.
- APS focused on equity.
- APS focused on getting devices and reliable wi-fi access to every student.
- SeeSaw was perceived to be a positive platform.
- Canvas – lots of potential with the Calendar/InBox/etc – but very inconsistent usage and cumbersome/frustrating.
- When there was great and organized teacher communication in a predictable pattern.
- When teachers on a team collaborated and pushed out weekly plans at the same time and organized in a similar way.
- When all teachers used the same platform so that all assignments/messages in same place.
- When assignments were sent by Monday and due end of the week; provided flexibility and consistency.
- When assignment feedback was turned around quickly, but this was inconsistent.
- When video classes were offered, students were more engaged and accountable.
- Students, parents, staff learning to use the new tools at a fast pace.

2. *How well have the various tools and systems for distance learning worked during the closure (e.g. systems for lesson delivery, communication and assignments, Canvas, Seesaw, Google Classroom)?*

- APS must ensure every family has reliable internet access as a starting point.
- Privacy concerns reported.

- Tech support must be more readily available 24/7 – like a help line. Cannot rely just on reaching each school's ITC. Many reports of technical challenges that took a long time to solve and then no access for their student to school.
- Some families also report a need for training, for parents and/or children, to use various platforms; younger children sometimes required quite a bit of technical assistance, which parents did their best to provide.
- APS should explore consolidating platforms/programs; there are too many (described as “overwhelming”) and very inconsistent, both in terms of platforms themselves and how they were used.
- Students and parents frequently reported wishing they could go to ONE place for all assignments and messages, even those with good executive functioning skills.
- Frustration when VPN/system throwing people off, sometimes for a matter of hours.
- Canvas is very cumbersome and utilized very inconsistently:
 - Hard to find information when in so many different places.
 - Too much time to navigate and is inefficient.
 - Students and parents frustrated.
 - Teachers should all be utilizing Canvas in the same/similar way. (Calendar tool, for example, to let students/parents see all assignments in one place.)
 - No overview of class expectations.
 - Random posting locations for video's, assignments, due dates; very confusing.
- MS Teams worked OK (raising hand to speak was appreciated) but it also received some criticism; synchronous learning when it happened was challenging.
- Many would like to see Zoom as option for synchronous learning and being able to see others in the ‘classroom.’
- Google classroom received positive feedback and seemed to be an easier format; could replace Canvas. Also could replace Teams, according to one parent, due to its meeting component. (Would still require consistency.)
- Seesaw has received positive feedback; but cannot print and gets congested quickly. Not an option for all students as dependent on teacher and schools.
- Flip Grid has received positive feedback.
- IXL has not worked well as no ability for teacher to see how math problem solved. Same for most online math programs.
- Examples of other programs being used Razkids, Brainpop, Quizlet, CK-12.
- Access to Mindwell worked for many students with Dyslexia.
- No real-time feedback or access to teachers has been challenging across platforms.
- No paper packet options for grades 3-5, and there should be that option.
- Access on iPads is much more challenging than laptop.
- Communication with teachers has been challenging and inconsistent. Some teachers have gone above and beyond and it has been great; but mostly seems to be less engagement, lack of consistency in how teachers communicate and through what method, across grades, schools, and county.

3. *How effective was the PreK-2 plan, including the paper-based learning packets, teacher engagement, and the “At Home with APS” videos?*

- “At Home with APS” videos are not advertised well; most teachers and families are not aware of what they are.
- Not everyone had access to “At Home with APS.”
- Mixed feedback from those who did watch “At Home with APS.” Some liked, some found too simple.
- Videos need a slower pace (pauses at strategic points) and made available more often.

- Packets were very different school by school; no consistency. Some parents reported packets provided helpful routines, links were easy to use, and good variety of texts. Others were disappointed and didn't find packets challenging or engaging.
- No direction for packets so parents were left on their own to figure out how to do.
- Many children could not do much of the work independently; often required much parent help.
- Many parents indicated they found their own material and did not use APS packets as not helpful
- Too many worksheets no hands-on learning or creative work ideas provided by APS (just paper and computer).
- Adding SeeSaw was helpful.
- Teacher check-ins as whole class too large, not as effective.
- Teacher check-in in small groups were better received.
- Regular feedback on work was suggested as part of regular contact.
- Students responded much better to seeing *their* teachers, whom they knew.
- Students also enjoyed seeing classmates and appreciated when that could happen.
- Need more engagement somehow: the most positive feedback was on direct teacher connection/engagement, but teacher engagement was inconsistent school to school.
- Very difficult to keep this age engaged in a video call of any kind for more than a short period.
- Immersion was challenged with not enough engagement time especially for non-Spanish speaking families of students in Immersion.
- Definitely some teachers who went above and beyond, but seemed to be reported as exception and highly variable by school and what the administration was telling the teachers they were allowed/not allowed to do.

4. ***How reasonable were learning expectations (e.g. for student work and online engagement)?***

- Extremely uneven and inconsistent -- it was very much teacher by teacher, school by school.
- Clear that much more differentiation is needed – for at grade level, below, and above. The one size fits all did not work.
- Some students with learning differences do not access curriculum well on a screen at any time; there was little done to address this. No or difficult access to related services in some cases.
- Gifted students did not feel challenged and no differentiated work was provided (in most cases).
- 4th Quarter material would have been welcomed by many families. Other families were glad that the pressure of new material had not been imposed.
- Expectations were reasonable given such abrupt change and many known and unknown issues (lack of internet, parents working, parent required teaching, challenges with real time teacher engagement, family situations, etc.). "Given Covid uncertainties, this approach made sense..."
- Expectations were fair and allowed a balance of academic and social-emotional focus.
- Expectations were too low and did not keep students engaged.
- Assignments provided on multiple platforms made keeping up overwhelming to some students.
- Without a reward/consequence, engagement was challenging. Needed more expectations.
- "Thank you for not grading during this time."
- Clearly, no community-wide consensus exists regarding what should have been expected during this unprecedented, unexpected, and difficult time.
- Young kids cannot be expected to work independently all day with just one brief meeting as set-up. Parents had difficulty balancing this with work demands.
- Conference call schedules could get tricky for students if teachers did not coordinate with each other.
- Review of materials complicated by lack of textbooks; should bring back to access to textbooks.

- Expectations for this period would depend on what the track will be for next year, in sequential areas like World Languages and math. Might have been too low if expectation is to move students up with no allowances for what has happened.
- Expectations of teachers needed to be realistic, too. How can we support more teachers to learn how to do this well? This situation is not exactly what they trained for or signed on for, either.

5. ***How might distance learning be improved?***

- Teacher training; more professional development on tools and virtual learning techniques to engage students.
- More consistency between and within schools about teacher engagement, which platform(s) used, how they're used, how/where assignments and calendars can be found, etc.
- Use best practices and proven content that can be shared between teachers; less time for each teacher to develop own content/material and more time to engage with students. Provides consistency.
- More, and more frequent, communication between students, teachers, and parents, with clear, concise expectations, availability, assignments, grading, etc.
- More direct student engagement with teachers, provided consistently across Arlington.
- More engagement with classmates, both for social-emotional needs and social-emotional skills.
- Required minimum consistency between schools and among teachers.
- More differentiation to reach all students whether at, below or above grade level.
- Synchronous learning; Real time instruction via Teams and required minimums.
- Recording synchronous learning for those who cannot access real time or need to go back and review.
- More short teacher instructional videos on each new content posted for students to access when needed.
- More access to teachers than 1 office hour per week.
- More access to counseling services; a program with classes led by counselors to share experiences and focus on social-emotional learning and need for connection with peers during these stressful times.
- Middle school students should have laptops rather than iPads.
- Find ways to provide devices to K-2 for similar engagement options as 3-12. (Middle schoolers' old iPads after providing laptops to middle schoolers?)
- IEPs and accommodations must be followed, including related services. How to updated/write for Virtual Learning scenario.
- Reading and writing: Need OG, Wison, explicit instruction, *not* Lucy Calkins; and for writing, please provide specific opportunities. Should incorporate more writing and writing assignments not just computer based/multiple choice.
- Need more options for math instruction.
- More real time or timely feedback from teachers on assignments.
- ELA instruction could be interwoven with Social Studies and Science which will allow for more engagement and creativity.
- Consolidate platforms used across APS; flexibility is important but there are too many platforms and some are not great. When every school/teacher is doing their own thing, it's too confusing; can be overwhelming. (Some respondents suggested choosing Google Classroom over Canvas.)
- Collect data on which platforms work best and need least IT intervention, then use only those.
- Parent, student and teacher training on how to use tools, applications and resources (preferably before schools starts), especially Canvas, if it is the platform teachers will be using.
- Consider using textbooks; also any online textbook subscriptions.
- Consider college style – large lecture type class and then smaller “TA” type follow up classes.
- Consider a 4x4 schedule so less classes to track at any one time.

6. ***If distance learning continues in September, how might the introduction of new content best be accomplished? What guidelines should be considered for time commitment/student engagement?***

- Whatever the guidelines are, the most important thing is that they be clear, clearly communicated and consistent.
- Ideally some in-person instruction in a hybrid model.
- Help/train/support teachers in online teaching and learning.
- Keep Equity as a top priority; many families have already engaged paid-for resources to continue their students' learning, further expanding learning gaps for those who cannot afford it.
- Synchronous learning; followed up by small group time and assignments.
- Teacher and peer engagement must be a priority. Various options exist: flipped classroom; recorded lectures; recorded instructions/tutorials for student work; class meetings/discussions; small group and one-to-one check-ins; discussion boards; working in teams; etc.
- Balance between synchronous and asynchronous; must allow flexibility and accessibility.
- Screen time is a concern for some parents.
- All instruction should be recorded for flexibility and access if student cannot get on real time for many potential reasons.
- Teachers should provide recorded direct instruction video lessons.
- Consolidate platforms and require some minimum consistency.
- Have your best teachers in each grade and content area in the entire school system produce instructional videos for ALL students. Then have the individual teachers have small group class sessions after students watched the videos.
- Set higher and appropriate expectations for every student; differentiated as needed. Include multiple make-up options to get things right, since distance learning will be imperfect. Tricky balance between appropriately challenging work with accountability, on one hand, and allowing for differing circumstances and mental well-being/not too much stress, on the other hand.
- Utilize a co-teaching model.
- Ensure student IEP accommodations and delivery of therapies, etc., are appropriate and flexible for all scenarios – virtual, hybrid or in school.
- 24/7 tech support; post IT help phone/e-mail address on all school websites, and in various languages.
- Daily video call opportunities for students.
- Consider 4x4 block schedules for MS/HS so not so many classes to juggle.
- Teachers should work across APS in content teams and rotate teaching via video or recorded videos.
- Include discussion boards in every class where students can engage.
- Make sure everyone has device and internet.
- Find way to get devices to K-2; get laptops to middle schoolers (can give their iPads to K-2).
- For elementary, daily morning class meeting; if possible similar at MS/HS in their 'homeroom,' but can be later to accommodate teen sleep schedules.
- Continue to ramp up food distribution; work with community/government/religious organizations for further food help as well as healthcare and rent, so that all kids can be ready and able to learn.
- Hands-on (labs, for instance) where possible, and of course, in small groups with social distancing if needed; relate content to real world where possible.
- Teachers and students next year might not know each other and will not have built relationships – how can we help them build working relationships remotely?
- Great opportunity for independent projects and research, for those students for whom it's appropriate.
- Provide info for summer enrichment: for instance, there are a number of free or very inexpensive language programs available on the market for language learners, and APS could provide that list, and any similar lists in other subjects, to all families.
- Make short-term and long-term learning goals readily available for students.
- "See Question 5," many similar improvement suggestions.