

*Monthly Newsletter*



**SPOTLIGHT: STEPHANIE SMITH**

Stephanie Smith joined the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, then the Office of Minority Achievement, in 2016 as an Elementary Equity Coordinator. Prior to this, she served as a seventh grade English teacher at Thomas Jefferson Middle School. Ms. Smith hails from Brooklyn, NY and moved to the Northern Virginia area after completing her Bachelor's Degree in English from Virginia State University and teaching for two years at Petersburg High School in Petersburg, VA. She taught for five years in Alexandria City Public Schools before returning to Virginia State University to obtain her Masters of Arts in English. Since joining Arlington Public Schools Ms. Smith co-created and co-facilitated the award winning Summer Literacy Academy for APS and has worked diligently to create a safe and successful space for all students and families. In her current role as Equity Coordinator of Thomas Jefferson Middle School she created a discipline data collection system that has helped to inform professional learning for TJ staff. This system has been duplicated at Carlin Springs Elementary School and Dorothy Hamm Middle School. Ms. Smith is currently in the process of implementing a Culturally Responsive Practices professional learning for staff and students as we move to a more restorative approach to disciplinary infractions.

**IMPORTANT DATES**

March is Women's History Month, where we commemorate and encourage the study, observance and celebration of the vital role of women in American history.

March is also the Virginia School Board Association's Equity in Education Month

March 8 - International Women's Day

March 10 - International Day of Women Judges

March 15 - International Day to Combat Islamophobia

March 21 - International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

March 25 - International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

**RAMADAN**

Evening of Wednesday, March 22 - Evening of Friday, April 21

Ramadan is a month-long religious observance, during which Muslims worldwide refrain from eating or drinking between sunrise and sunset. Muslims will partake in self-reflection and improvement. Ramadan begins when the first crescent moon is sighted after the New Moon, falling in March this year. Ramadan ends when the crescent moon is first seen after the New Moon in April. After a full month of fasting the religious holiday Eid will occur during which families will get together and celebrate.

Muslim students pray extra nightly prayers and participate in other religious practices throughout the day and night. We ask schools to make arrangements to ensure that Muslim students can observe Ramadan.

**Considerations include:**

- Establishing a place for students to pray during the school day and a quiet space during lunch
- When possible, schedule exams early in the day when observants may have more energy.

**AROUND NOVA**

**We Who Believe in Freedom: Black Feminist DC** will trace Black feminism in Washington, DC from the turn of the 20th century through the civil rights and Black Power movements to today. The exhibition will open on the first floor of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, DC as part of a groundbreaking partnership between the National Women's History Museum and DC Public Library.

Contact us at [DEI@apsva.us](mailto:DEI@apsva.us)

**SPOTLIGHT: MONICA LOZANO CALDERA**

Ms. Lozano Caldera serves as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator at the Arlington Career Center (ACC). She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology at the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana Colombia; she obtained her master's degree in Family Counseling from Valencia Catholic University and a master's degree and doctorate under a dissertation in neurosciences. She began her career as a clinical psychologist at the Pontificia Bolivariana University and started her Creativity & Human Development practice in Colombia. After establishing residency in the United States, she worked in Arlington County DHS as a Mental Health Therapist with the Violence Intervention Program and as a High-Intensity Language Training Resource Counselor at Arlington Public Schools. As a DEI Coordinator for APS, she provides students with the resources necessary to develop behaviors that support academic success while building staff capacity in culturally responsive teaching. Monica sponsors several ACC student clubs, including the Asian American/Pacific Islander Club, Muslim Student Association, Pride, Community Service Club, DEI College Bound Scholars, and JACC (Jewish Club). She also provides support to Sister Circle and Latinas Leading Tomorrow. In 2009, she started Lunch Talk about Race and Identity. This club became Diversity Chats and was recognized as a best practice space where students can share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to Race and Identity and capitalized ideas to improve culture and climate in APS. Ms. Lozano Caldera delivers professional development for teachers and programs for families, and she leads the Family and Community Engagement (FACE) TEAM. She is co-leader of the ACC Equity Team and sponsor of the No Place For Hate campaign. She is also a College and Career Team member and supports students individually in their academic and postsecondary plans.

Favorite quote: "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

**IN THE CLASSROOM**

**Culturally Responsive Teaching and Equitable Practices**

**Indicator 4:** Utilizes inclusive curriculum and instructional resources that represent and validate diversity from all rings of culture that include generational, gender, religion, class, nationality, race, ethnicity, native language ability, and sexuality by connecting classroom curriculum and instruction to the cultural examples, experiences, backgrounds, and traditions of all learners.

**Teacher Practices:**

- Explicitly drawing connections between salient content and the lives of the students in the class and members of the greater community.
- Actively identifying opportunities within the curriculum to celebrate diversity.
- Purposefully utilizing curriculum to expose students to different viewpoints, cultures, and identities.

**WHAT WE ARE READING**

Please use this [link](#) to share your thoughts on what we're reading and offer suggestions to expand our library and collective knowledge.

**Inclusion on Purpose: An Intersectional Approach to Creating a Culture of Belonging at Work**  
*Ruchika Tulshyan*

Our office's professional library of resources - click [here](#) to access.

**TERM OF THE MONTH**

**Bias**

An inclination or predisposition for or against something. (American Psychological Association)

Follow us on Twitter [@DEI\\_APS](#)