MEMORANDUM

TO: Bridget Loft, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

FROM: Rebecca Hunter, Chair, Advisory Council on Teaching and Learning

CC: Reid Goldstein, School Board Liaison
                Dr. Francisco Duran, Superintendent

RE: Summary report from ACTL committee Progress Memos

DATE: December 18, 2020

The Advisory Council on Teaching and Learning (ACTL) paused its usual cadence of having our 14 department committees provide alternating recommending and non-recommending reports to respond more directly to the current COVID-19 situation. The goal is to provide the School Board with timely input in support of either/both Virtual and Hybrid teaching and learning scenarios and to contribute to real time improvements and sharing of best practices.

To that end, our Committees produced Progress Memos that highlighted what is working, what is not working, and implications for teaching and learning outcomes across the 14 committee areas. Each memo, individually, contains valuable information from parents, teachers, and students about the current teaching and learning experiences across APS. Information and data were gathered by ACTL Committees through various means, including, working with staff supervisors, teacher, student and parent outreach, surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Across the 14 progress memos, there were several common themes for near-term action:

1. **The need for dynamic teaching and learning data (100% of committees).**
   All department committees, in collaboration with the DTL liaison, noted the lack of data to answer the questions posed in the progress memos. Various and dynamic data beyond summative student assessments are needed about teaching and learning before students fail or tune out. The ACTL department committees collected information via interviews and focus groups, polls and surveys, and discussions with PTAs, ACTL school committees, ACTL department committees, and online list serves. Together, information was collected from over 200 parents and 200 APS educators. This information helps paint a portrait of students' learning experiences. However, system-wide and school-level teaching and learning data, disaggregated in meaningful ways, are necessary to allow APS to more effectively meet students' needs. We strongly encourage more robust data collection and analysis from APS. The default should be to present detailed analysis, with special attention to demographic

information and breakdowns for students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students. Without data to understand current conditions, including how it compares to pre-COVID data, it is challenging to recommend improvements or implementation strategies focused on student outcomes. Further, it inhibits the ability to plan for future need, such as how much remediation will be required, how summer school will be utilized (or not), and what will need to be different about the 2021-2022 school year to account for any academic and instructional losses from this year.

2. **The need for visual cues when teaching (50% of committees).**
   Not surprisingly, half of the department committees, particularly core content area committees, noted difficulty teaching (e.g., difficulty not having body language and facial expressions of students to adjust instruction, teaching to "initials" not students) and developing meaningful relationships with students when cameras are off. In interviews, parents, teachers, and students noted creative ways to engage such as turning on cameras during breakout rooms, having a photo instead, or using cameras during office hours.

3. **The need for differentiation and smaller group work (50% of committees).**
   Feedback from parents across the department committees noted the need for differentiation as some students were "bored" while other students were "overwhelmed" with the amount of homework and work assigned for asynchronous time. Small group instruction has the benefit of increasing engagement, social interaction, and language acquisition, which was a related topic for several committees. Teachers are inconsistently utilizing the breakout group function in Teams or not using it at all. There is strong desire from students to have more peer interaction in small groups that can enhance learning and meet many social-emotional needs.

4. **The need for social and academic behavior development (43% of committees).**
   Feedback included student and teachers showing **<u>proactive</u>** social and academic behaviors, such as students attending office hours, speaking up during class, asking questions, as well as teachers, counselors, and specialists reaching out to individual students (rather than waiting for students to attend office hours), as key to successful virtual schooling. At the same time, committees noted that students struggle when students and teachers do not show proactive behaviors (not participating in class, not handing in homework, counselors and teachers not following up). APS should also be cognizant of monitoring how engagement and learning outcomes change over time. There is a concern that the longer virtual learning continues, the more fatigue exists on all sides - teachers, students, and families.

5. **The need for consistency (43% of committees).**
   Committees noted the lack of consistency in implementation in teaching and learning policies and practices including, for example, policies related to cameras; gifted services; lack of consistency in professional development; and lack of supports to ensure consistency. Consistency and accountability have been themes year after year, which seems to indicate a disconnect between DTL and Administrative Services/Superintendent. That is, DTL

determines teaching and learning curriculum and strategies, but the individual school principals overseen by Administrative Services are still able to independently choose to utilize, implement - or not. The continued disconnect of lack of consistency and then lack of accountability perpetuate this year over year dilemma.

6. **The need for off-line or no-technology schoolwork (36% of committees).**
From eye strain and need for more physical movement to mental health, committees noted the importance of mixing in off-line and no-technology schoolwork, such as more paper/pencil assignments to show work. APS also might pursue more proactive approaches to getting needed learning materials, manipulatives, etc., into the hands of under-resourced students. Striking a more balanced approach to on-line and technology-free learning should be a priority.

Table 1: Common themes across ACTL department committees

	The need for dynamic teaching and learning data	The need for visual cues when teaching	The need for differentiation and small groups	The need for social and academic behavior development	The need for consistency	The need for off-line or no-technology schoolwork
Advisory Council on English Learners	1		1	1		
Arts Advisory Council	1				1	
Arlington Advisory Council on Special Education	1			1	1	
Career, Technical & Adult Education	1			1	1	
English Language Arts Advisory Committee	1	1	1			1
Early Childhood Advisory Committee	1		1	1		
Equity & Excellence Advisory Committee	1					
Gifted Services Advisory Committee	1		1		1	
Math Advisory Committee	1	1	1	1		1
Science Advisory Committee	1	1	1		1	1
Social Studies Advisory Committee	1	1				1
Student Health Advisory Board	1	1				1
Advisory Committee on Student Services	1	1		1	1	
World Language Advisory Committee	1	1	1			
TOTAL	14	7	7	6	6	5

Thank you for the opportunity to continue to work with the School Board and the Department of Teaching and Learning to help focus our priorities on student learning outcomes.   We sincerely hope that this work done by our dedicated volunteer department committees, in close collaboration with staff liaisons, will be carefully considered and utilized in APS continuous improvement planning and implementation.

ACTL's work continues and your feedback to these current Progress Memos would be much appreciated as we move forward.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Committee Chair Submittal Memo
2. <u>Progress Memos</u>
   Advisory Council on English Learners (ACEL)
   Arts Advisory Council (ARTS)
   Arlington Advisory Council on Special Education (ASEAC)
   Career, Technical & Adult Education (CTAE)
   Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC)
   English Language Arts Committee (ELAC)
   Equity & Excellence Advisory Committee (E&E)
   Gifted Services Advisory Committee (GSAC)
   Math Advisory Committee (MAC)
   Science Advisory Committee (SAC)
   Social Studies Advisory Committee (SSAC)
   Student Health Advisory Board (SHAB)
   Advisory Committee on Student Services (ACSS)
   World Language Advisory Committee (WLAC)