



[Manassas Park City Schools](https://www.manassasparkschools.org/)

Virginia Is For Learners Innovation Network

Cohort 3.0 Case Study Report

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Manassas Park City Schools: Fostering Individual Excellence

MPCS VaLIN Cohort 3.0 Local Innovation

After a successful and rewarding experience in VaLIN cohort 1.0, Manassas Park City Schools was eager to participate in cohort 3.0. The team wanted to expand its knowledge of culturally responsive teaching practices and to ensure that equitable opportunities were provided for all students in the school district. Manassas Park City Schools is an incredibly diverse school system, but the team noted that there were identified gaps in ensuring that staff had all of the training and support necessary to meet students' needs. In addition, the Virginia Board of Education had recently passed a requirement to include a Culturally Responsive Teaching and Equitable Practices standard in the new teacher evaluation standards and a requirement to complete Cultural Competency training prior to the start of the 2022-2023 school year.

To help prepare teachers to meet this new standard and to enhance the required training, the MPCS VaLIN team wanted to develop a framework that could help students, teachers, and leaders move along a continuum in meeting Individual Excellence. The team believed strongly that high expectations for all members of the school community were paramount, and the team worked closely with their ALP coach to refine and create the Individual Excellence Framework. The work of cohort 3.0 has been built on the outcomes achieved in Manassas Park City Schools' cohort 1.0, when the initial Common Language Innovative Framework was developed and shared with MPCS stakeholders.

For the MPCS team, the innovation was in the process itself. The innovation became apparent in the creative path it took to continue to do the work in a conflicting time both nationally and in the state. In looking at ways to help support teachers in improving their cultural competency and culturally responsive teaching practices, the team discussed several options including: creating a pilot group who would complete a book study together, adding additional cohorts throughout the upcoming school year, creating and building a Canvas course to house resources and facilitate staff participation and engagement, and leading a book study with each of the cohorts that focused on the foundations of culturally responsive teaching and learning. There were challenges in planning these activities and in developing the cohorts. The challenges will be outlined in the section below.

As the school year progressed, the team decided to pause on developing the cohorts and instead reverted back to reviewing cohort 1.0's Common Language Innovation Framework. It was at this time that the team decided to focus on the first portion of the original framework. The first step was renaming that section from Inclusive Excellence to Individual Excellence. The team revised this piece of the framework through the lens of ensuring equity and personal development among the district's students, staff, and school leaders. It is through this personal development, that understandings of cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching practices could be discussed, promoted, and developed in all of the district's stakeholders. In this journey was truly 'the work'.

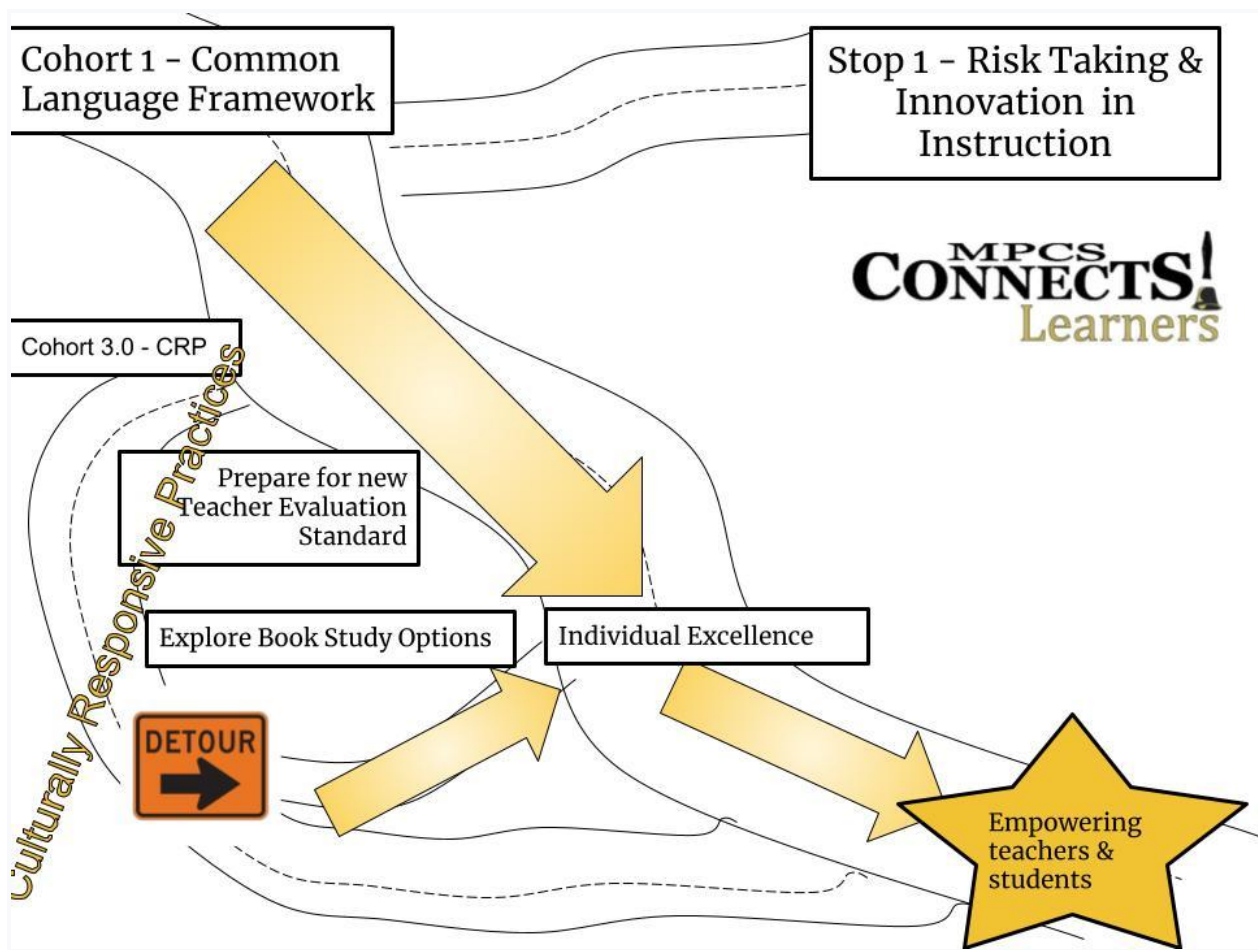
Our Challenges

In the Caring and Connected Community cohort, there were many challenges and roadblocks that presented themselves throughout this school year. The team was eager to begin planning the pilot group and to read literature that dove deeply into culturally responsive teaching. During this time period of fall and early winter, there was a shift nationally and in the state on how equity in schools was being approached. Throughout team meetings, the team had frequently visited and referenced the EdEquity resources page posted on the VDOE website. In January, many of the EdEquity resources were removed from the VDOE website and the training on the new teacher evaluation standards was postponed. The VDOE delayed the release of the cultural competency training until early June. Several of the books that the team had read and had planned on using in the pilot course had come into debate. It was during this uncertainty that the MPCS VaLIN team decided to pivot and the team refocused its energy on an avenue that would get the team where it wanted to be for students, staff, and school leaders.

Some of the team members were able to attend the VCU/Radford initial training modules from which the VDOE-provided cultural competency training would be modeled after. The teacher evaluation training on the new standard was rescheduled and presented statewide during the month of June. At this time, MPCS has determined that it will use the VDOE cultural competency training modules to meet the requirements for training and licensure requirements.

During the March 9th in person VaLIN meeting, the team enjoyed connecting with the other members of the Caring and Connected community cohort and they realized that many of their challenges with the shifting tides were also being experienced by other districts within their own VaLIN work. At the March in-person session, the MPCS team

created a graphic depiction of this journey and the challenges that the team had faced during the school year and shared it with the other cohort teams that were present:



Through participation in cohort leader conversations and cohort community conversations, the team was able to connect with the leaders and members of the other teams. The team also heard ideas and suggestions of national leaders whose work is focused on equity and social emotional learning.

In the late winter/early spring, the team pivoted to revisiting the common language innovation framework and began to really dive into the first part of that framework. The team renamed the first part of the framework to Individual Excellence and worked with the ALP coach, Stephanie Malia Krauss, to edit and revise aspects of the framework and any language that could be open for debate. The group felt that despite the challenges, it was vital to continue the work of revising the framework and to begin rolling it out to district leaders.

Intended outcomes for learners (aligned with 5C's of the Profile of the Graduate)

This year's VaLIN cohort's work focused on these three aspects of the 5C's:

Collaboration: Virginia students will graduate prepared for life outside the classroom when they learn how to integrate diverse perspectives and rely on fellow learners to achieve a common goal.

Movement along the Individual Excellence continuum relies on collaboration between stakeholders.

Citizenship: Virginia students will graduate prepared for life outside the classroom when they learn how to integrate diverse perspectives and rely on fellow learners to achieve a common goal.

Communication: When students have opportunities to develop their communication skills, they are able to utilize verbal and nonverbal methods to listen, speak, read and compose information for their benefit as well as those around them.

The revised Individual Excellence Framework offers a continuum of statements and look-fors that students, educators, and leaders as they move through the continuum with support, self-reflection, and deepening understanding of culturally responsive practices. The team is eager to continue to operationalize the framework so that it can be used with all stakeholders.

Our story and evolution of innovation over time

The following Prezi presentation offers a depiction of the journey from MPCS VaLIN cohort 1.0 to cohort 3.0:

[Manassas Park City Schools Cohort 3.0 Journey](#)

Actions our team took to design and implement the innovation

As the cohort navigated through the current climate, discussions within the team, and with their ALP coach, the team decided to review the common language innovation framework from cohort 1.0 and centered on how this year's team could revise the initial Inclusive Excellence to reflect Individual Excellence, with offering a continuum that

focuses on self-reflection and high expectations for all. It is from this that cohort 3.0 created its Primary Artifact: [Individual Excellence Framework](#). The artifact was presented at the annual Division Leadership Retreat in mid June and the cohort led an afternoon of activities with the division's leadership team that focused on self-reflection and in exploring aspects of the new framework, specifically for leaders. The cohort plans on continuing the work into next school year and to operationalize the various aspects of the Individual Excellence framework.

Impact of our actions on intended outcomes

The VaLIN 3.0 Cohort was able to share the Individual Excellence framework at the MPCs Leadership Team Retreat. Team members led the leadership team through an individual self-reflection activity and the group did a Gallery Walk of the Leader statements in the framework to begin generating specific examples of how these actions could be operationalized in schools.

In early June, the VDOE released the Cultural Competency training module that can be used to meet the requirement for cultural competency training to occur before the start of the 2022-2023 school year. The team reviewed the training module and discussed how the Individual Excellence framework could be connected towards preparing staff for the new evaluation standard #6 (culturally responsive teaching and equitable practices) and for increasing their efficacy in culturally responsive teaching practices.

Plans for next steps with regard to an operational/actionable/sustainable plan

The VaLIN 3.0 team plans to continue to meet next year in order to operationalize and build out the Individual Excellence Framework for students, staff, and leaders. The team plans on being an integral group in the strategic planning process that will be taking place throughout the school district next school year. The team is also considering applying to VaLIN Cohort 4.0.

Links to artifacts:

Books read by the team:

"Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People" by Mahzarin Banaji

"You Can't Teach What You Don't Know" by Gary Howard

"Culturally Responsive Teaching and Brain" by Zaretta Hammond

Resources and links that we curated through participation in 3.0:

[VEA EdEquity Resources](#)

[Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers](#)

[Building a Community of Culturally Responsive Leaders](#)

[AASA Leading for Equity: Webinar Series](#)

[Preparing Staff for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Practices](#)

[VSBA: Understanding the Difference Between Critical Race Theory \(CRT\) and Education](#)

[Equity: What you Need to Know](#)

[Learning for Justice \(Teaching Tolerance\)](#)

[Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The danger of a single story | TED](#)