

# **Whitfield County School District Oral Exit Report**

**Quality Assurance Review Team  
District Accreditation**



# A Picture of AdvancED



## World's Largest Educational Community

- 23,000 public and private schools
- 30 states and Navajo Nation
- Department of Defense Education Activity
- 65 countries
- 15 million students
- 18,000 volunteers
- 3 million plus teachers

# A Picture of AdvancED

*Dedicated to Advancing Excellence in Education through:*



## Accreditation

- Standards, continuous improvement, quality assurance
- **NCA CASI and SACS CASI** are the accreditation divisions of AdvancED

## Professional Services

- Professional development, technical assistance, conferences, consulting

## Research and Innovation

- Publications, resources, tools, evaluation
- NSSE serves as our research and innovation division of AdvancED

# District Accreditation

*A national protocol for school systems committed to systemic, systematic, and sustainable improvement*

- Builds the capacity of the system and its schools to increase and sustain student learning
- Stimulates and supports improvement and effectiveness throughout the system

# District Accreditation

- Ensures all people, processes, departments and operations of the system work in concert
- Strengthens efforts to meet accountability requirements
- Encourages growth beyond compliance to achieve excellence
- Promotes continuous not episodic improvement

# Systems Approach

District Accreditation applies a systems approach to improvement. It examines how all elements of the school system work in concert for the benefit of student learning. It looks for examples of systemic, systematic, and sustainable improvement.

- **Systemic improvement** – using and aligning the interdependent functions within and across the district to produce improvement
- **Systematic improvement** – fostering improvement efforts that are regular and predictable at all levels of the district
- **Sustainable improvement** – maintaining improvements over time

# Pillars of Accreditation

To earn and maintain District Accreditation, districts must:

1. Meet the **AdvancED Quality Standards**
2. Engage in **Continuous Improvement**
3. Demonstrate **Quality Assurance** through Internal and External Review



# Expectations

## District

- Meets the *AdvancED* Standards for Quality Systems
- Identifies and guides the implementation of a systemic continuous improvement process
- Monitors its schools through a quality assurance process
- Prepares and hosts a QAR visit every five years

## Schools

- Meet the *AdvancED* Standards for Quality Schools
- Implement the district's continuous improvement process
- Participate in the district's quality assurance process



# Purpose & Role of the Quality Assurance Review Team

1. Determine the extent to which the district meets the *AdvancED* standards.
2. Assess the efficacy of the district's improvement efforts.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the district's methods for quality assurance.
4. Provide high-quality feedback with clear recommendations and actionable next steps.
5. Make an accreditation recommendation.

# Activities of the Quality Assurance Review Team

- *Artifacts/documents review*
- *Interviews*
- *School visits*
- *Observations*
- *Professional deliberations*

# Interviews with Stakeholders

- During the on-site Quality Assurance Review, team members interviewed:
  - 100 Administrators
  - 132 Teachers
  - 33 Support Staff
  - 101 Parents, community, and business partners
  - 157 Students
  - 4 Board members

**TOTAL of 527 stakeholders**

# Criteria Used to Arrive at the Team's Findings

- When reviewing evidence to arrive at its findings, the team:
  - Sought a district perspective;
  - Pursued evidence that could be corroborated through multiple sources;
  - Examined the context and capacity of the district in relation to its vision, mission, and beliefs; and
  - Applied the criteria for accreditation.

# Structure of Team's Findings

## Strengths

- Strong and effective practices, processes, or systems which benefit the school district

## Commendations

- Significant accomplishments in meeting and/or exceeding accreditation standards and requirements

## Challenges

- Limitations and/or barriers that may be impacting (or have the potential to impact) the district's performance and effectiveness

## Recommendations

- Actions that will enhance district effectiveness and improve student learning

# Strengths

- The School Board and Superintendent share a strong working relationship built upon mutual respect and a shared vision.
- The Superintendent provides exemplary leadership.
- Welcoming and safe school environments have been established throughout the district.
- The vision, mission and beliefs of the school district have been clearly defined and provide a common focus and language for district improvement.
- Students take ownership in their learning.
- Central office and school-based leadership are responsive, valued and respected.
- Many teachers have embraced practices that engender student engagement.
- Students recognize and credit teachers for heartfelt compassion and dedication to their success as individuals.

# Commendations

**The Quality Assurance Review Team commends Whitfield County Schools for:**

- strong district and school-based leadership that is dedicated to improving learning opportunities for all students.
- schools throughout the district working collaboratively to ensure a unified focus on student achievement is maintained.
- the system having achieved tremendous gains in the graduation rate.
- implementing a standards-based reporting system for grades K-2.
- its commitment to highly technical 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms.

# Challenges

- Ensuring all stakeholders understand and support the vision, mission and beliefs of the school district
- Ensuring the infrastructure and personnel are sufficient to support the implementation and use of technology
- Ensuring the implementation of differentiated instruction for all students
- Ensuring a systemic approach to the utilization of data to monitor student progress and guide instructional decisions



# Recommendations

- **The Quality Assurance Review Team recommends that Whitfield County Schools:**
  - broaden and expand efforts to communicate the district vision, mission and beliefs to all stakeholders.
  - expand the capacity of building infrastructure and human resources in the technology department to accommodate the current technology acquisitions.
  - develop and implement a systemic process focusing on strategies for differentiation of instruction for all students.
  - develop a systemic approach to using student achievement data to monitor academic progress and guide instructional decisions.

# Next Steps

- Written report of findings submitted within 30 days
- After receipt of the report, the district is expected to:
  - Review and communicate the findings.
  - Address the recommendations.
  - Monitor accreditation standards on ongoing basis.
  - Monitor strategies for improvement.
  - Submit the Accreditation Progress Report.

# Accreditation Recommendation

- The Quality Assurance Review Team recommends to the AdvancED Accreditation Commission that the Whitfield County School System be awarded District Accreditation as a quality school system.
- Once reviewed and approved by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, the district and all its schools are granted a 5-year term accreditation.

# Final Thoughts

- On behalf of the Quality Assurance Team, I extend:
  - Our **appreciation** for your hospitality, support, and professionalism;
  - Our **respect** and acknowledgement of the quality of the school district; and
  - Our **congratulations** for your progress toward achieving District Accreditation as a quality system.

*AdvancED District Accreditation  
for Quality Systems  
[www.advanc-ed.org](http://www.advanc-ed.org)*

*...helping schools  
and school systems  
improve student  
learning*

