

Report of the
External Review
for
Whitfield County School System

Post Office Box 2167
Dalton, GA, 30722-2167
US

Dr. Judy Gilreath, Superintendent

Date: November 3, 2013 - November 6, 2013



North Central Association on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

Copyright ©2013 by Advance Education, Inc. AdvancED grants to the Institution, which is the subject of the External Review Team Report, and its designees and stakeholders a non-exclusive, perpetual, irrevocable, royalty-free license and release to reproduce, reprint, and distribute this report in accordance with and as protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States of America and all foreign countries. All other rights not expressly conveyed are reserved by AdvancED.

Table of Contents

Introduction to the External Review 1

Part I: Findings 2

- Accreditation Standards and Indicators 2
- Learning Environment 25
- Student Performance 26
- Stakeholder Feedback 27
- Individual Institution Results 28

Part II: Conclusion 30

- Summary of the External Review 30
- Required Action 36

Part III: Addenda 37

- The External Review Team 37
- Next Steps 38
- Celebrating Accreditation 39
- About AdvancED 39
- References 40

Introduction to the External Review

Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools and designed primarily to distinguish schools adhering to a set of educational standards. Today the accreditation process is used at all levels of education and is recognized for its ability to effectively drive student performance and continuous improvement in education.

Institutions seeking to gain or retain accreditation must meet AdvancED standards specified for their institution, demonstrate high levels of student performance or improvement of student performance if applicable, and provide evidence of stakeholder satisfaction with the operation of the institution. The accreditation standards focus on conditions and processes within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards, student performance, and stakeholder feedback.

Institutions participate in an External Review by a team of highly qualified evaluators who examine the institution's adherence and commitment to the accreditation criteria. The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation as it energizes and equips the leadership and stakeholders of an institution to achieve higher levels of performance and address those areas that may be hindering efforts to reach desired performance levels. External Review is a rigorous process that includes examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with stakeholders, and observations of instruction, learning, and operations.

The AdvancED External Review Team used the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators and related criteria to guide its evaluation, looking not only for adherence to standards but also for how the institution functioned as a whole and embodied the practices and characteristics of quality.

Using the evidence at their disposal, the AdvancED External Review Team arrived at a set of findings contained in this report. The report is presented in three sections: Findings, Conclusion, and Addenda.

Part I: Findings

The Findings section presents the External Review Team's evaluation of the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators. It includes Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement identified by the External Review Team, as well as observations about Student Performance, the Learning Environment, and Stakeholder Feedback.

Accreditation Standards and Indicators

Standards help to delineate what matters. They provide a common language through which an education community can engage in conversations about educational improvement, system effectiveness, and achievement. They serve as a foundation for planning and implementing improvement strategies and activities and for measuring success. AdvancED's Standards for Quality were developed by a committee comprised of effective educators and leaders from the fields of practice, research, and policy who applied professional wisdom, deep knowledge of effective practice, and the best available research to craft a set of robust standards that ensure excellence and continuous improvement. Before implementation, the standards were reviewed by internationally recognized experts in testing and measurement, teacher quality, and education research.

This section contains an evaluation of each of AdvancED's Accreditation Standards and Indicators, identification of Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement related to each of the standards (if appropriate), and a description of the evidence examined by the External Review Team.

The AdvancED Standards and Indicators are the first of three primary areas of evaluation for AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. Using indicator-specific performance levels, the External Review Team evaluates the degree to which the institution meets each indicator on a scale of 1 to 4. The scores assigned to the indicators are averaged to arrive at a single score. This score, along with scores from evaluations of student performance and stakeholder feedback, will be used to determine the accreditation status of the institution.

Average Indicator Score for this Institution	2.29
--	------

Standard 1: The system maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Purpose and direction are critical to successful institutions. A study conducted in 2010 by the London-based Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reported that "in addition to improving performance, the research indicates that having a sense of shared purpose also improves employee engagement" and that "lack of understanding around purpose can lead to demotivation and emotional detachment, which in turn lead to a disengaged and dissatisfied workforce."

AdvancED has found through its evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution commits to a shared purpose and direction and establishes expectations for student learning that are aligned with the institutions' vision and supported by internal and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and overall institution effectiveness.

Standard 1			
The system maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Governing body policies, procedures, and practices • District purpose statements - past and present • Survey results • Written District Quality Assurance Review procedures and documents that monitor its schools' adherence to the district purpose and direction • Examples of communications to stakeholders about the district's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook) • Observations • Copy of strategic plan referencing the district purpose and direction and its effectiveness • Accreditation Report 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written District Quality Assurance Review procedures and documents that monitor schools' adherence to the district purpose and direction and that of the school • Examples of school purpose statements if different from the district purpose statement • Accreditation Report • Observations • Interviews 	3.0
1.3	The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Interviews • District Quality Assurance Review plans that document two-way communication on district and school effectiveness and learning, thinking, and life skills • Examples of schools' continuous improvement plans • Survey results • Accreditation Report • Professional development plans and implementation timelines on topics related to equity, organizational effectiveness, and improved instruction and programs • Statements of shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning • The district strategic plan 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Examples of schools continuous improvement plans • District Quality Assurance Review plans that document two-way communication on district and school effectiveness and learning, thinking, and life skills • Survey results • Observations • The district data profile 	2.0

Standard 2: The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.

Governance and leadership are key factors in raising institutional quality. Leaders, both local administrators and governing boards/authorities, are responsible for ensuring all learners achieve while also managing many other facets of an institution. Institutions that function effectively do so without tension between the governing board/authority, administrators, and educators and have established relationships of mutual respect and a shared vision (Feuerstein & Opfer, 1998). In a meta-analysis of educational institution leadership research, Leithwood and Sun (2012) found that leaders (school and governing boards/authority) can significantly "influence school conditions through their achievement of a shared vision and agreed-on goals for the organization, their high expectations and support of organizational members, and their practices that strengthen school culture and foster collaboration within the organization." With the increasing demands of accountability placed on institutional leaders, leaders who empower others need considerable autonomy and involve their communities to attain continuous improvement goals. Leaders who engage in such practices experience a greater level of success (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Similarly, governing boards/authorities that focus on policy-making are more likely to allow institutional leaders the autonomy to make decisions that impact teachers and students and are less responsive to politicization than boards/authorities that respond to vocal citizens (Greene, 1992).

AdvancED's experience gained through evaluation of best practices has indicated that a successful institution has leaders who are advocates for the institution's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The institution's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

Standard 2			
The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Observations • Professional development plans • Student handbooks • Staff handbooks • Accreditation Report • District operations manuals • Communications to stakeholder about policy revisions • School handbooks 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing authority minutes relating to training • Communication plan to inform all staff on code of ethics, responsibilities, conflict of interest • List of assigned staff for compliance • Proof of legal counsel • Governing authority training plan • Assurances, certifications • Accreditation Report • Observations • Historical compliance data • Interviews • Governing authority policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest 	2.0
2.3	The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications regarding governing authority actions • District strategic plan • Examples of school improvement plans • Roles and responsibilities of school leadership • Observations • Interviews • Social media • Accreditation Report • Survey results regarding functions of the governing authority and operations of the district • Stakeholder input and feedback • Maintenance of consistent academic oversight, planning, and resource allocation • Agendas and minutes of meetings 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of decisions aligned with the district's strategic plan • Professional development offerings and plans • Examples of collaboration and shared leadership • Examples of decisions aligned with the school's purpose statement • Interviews • Survey results • Observations • Examples of decisions in support of the schools' continuous improvement plans • Examples of decisions aligned with the district's purpose and direction • Accreditation Report 	2.0
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Minutes from meetings with stakeholders • Examples of stakeholder input or feedback resulting in district action • Interviews • Copies of surveys or screen shots from online surveys • Survey responses • Involvement of stakeholders in a school improvement plan • Observations 	2.0
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation • Accreditation Report • Governing body policy on supervision and evaluation • Job specific criteria • Observations 	2.0

Opportunities for Improvement**Indicator**

1. Develop and implement a leadership development program for all areas of the system that expands the leadership capacity across the system and leads to succession planning and meeting the future needs of the system.

2.4

Developing leaders throughout the system enables an organization to create consistency of purpose while providing a collaborative culture that enables all members of the educational community to continuously improve and meet the challenge of rapid change.

Standard 3: The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.

A high-quality and effective educational system has services, practices, and curriculum that ensure teacher effectiveness. Research has shown that an effective teacher is a key factor for learners to achieve to their highest potential and be prepared for a successful future. The positive influence an effective educator has on learning is a combination of "student motivation, parental involvement" and the "quality of leadership" (Ding & Sherman, 2006). Research also suggests that quality educators must have a variety of quantifiable and intangible characteristics that include strong communication skills, knowledge of content, and knowledge of how to teach the content. The institution's curriculum and instructional program should develop learners' skills that lead them to think about the world in complex ways (Conley, 2007) and prepare them to have knowledge that extends beyond the academic areas. In order to achieve these goals, teachers must have pedagogical skills as well as content knowledge (Baumert, J., Kunter, M., Blum, W., Brunner, M., Voxx, T., Jordan, A., Klusmann, U., Krauss, S., Nuebrand, M., & Tsai, Y., 2010). The acquisition and refinement of teachers' pedagogical skills occur most effectively through collaboration and professional development. These are a "necessary approach to improving teacher quality" (Colbert, J., Brown, R., Choi, S., & Thomas, S., 2008). According to Marks, Louis, and Printy (2002), staff members who engage in "active organizational learning also have higher achieving students in contrast to those that do not." Likewise, a study conducted by Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2010), concluded that leadership in effective institutions "supports teachers by creating collaborative work environments." Institutional leaders have a responsibility to provide experiences, resources, and time for educators to engage in meaningful professional learning that promotes student learning and educator quality.

AdvancED has found that a successful institution implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning. The curriculum provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students feedback to improve their performance.

Standard 3
The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.1	The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning expectations for different courses and programs • Interviews • Course, program, or school schedules • Student work across courses or programs • Course or program descriptions • Lesson plans • Observations • Survey responses from program leaders receiving students from previous programs, schools, or grade-levels • Graduate follow-up surveys • Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices • Posted learning objectives • Enrollment patterns for various courses and programs • Accreditation Report • Descriptions of instructional techniques • Presentations and interviews found a lack of high expectations for all students 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum guides • A description of the systematic review process for curriculum, instruction, and assessment • Accreditation Report • Common assessments • Standards-based report cards • Surveys results • Observations • Interviews • Program descriptions • Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices • Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps • Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum 	2.0
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic assessments • Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource • Findings from supervisor formal and informal observations • Examples of student use of technology as a learning tool • Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge • Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the approved or prescribed instructional strategies and programs • Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Observations 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum maps • Accreditation Report • Supervision and evaluation procedures • Documentation of collection of lesson plans, grade books, or other data record systems • Recognition of teachers with regard to these practices • Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs • Interviews • Observations • Professional development offerings and plans tied to the prescribed education program, instructional strategies, developmentally appropriate practices, and student success 	2.0
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Common language, protocols and reporting tools • Agendas and minutes of collaborative learning committees • Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings • Professional development funding to promote professional learning communities • Interviews • Evidence of informal conversations that reflect collaboration about student learning • Examples of improvements to content and instructional practice resulting from collaboration • Accreditation Report 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance • Interviews • Accreditation Report 	2.0
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Observations • Interviews • Professional learning calendar with activities for instructional support of new staff • Stated and Board Approved Non-negotiables. 	2.0
3.8	The system and all of its schools engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keep them informed of their children's learning progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance • Observations • Survey results • Volunteer program with variety of options for participation • List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days • Accreditation Report • Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child's progress • Parental/family/caregiver involvement plan including activities, timeframes, and evaluation process • Interviews • Information and communication is Spanish noted by parents. 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.9	The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Description of formalized structures for adults to advocate on behalf of students • Interviews • Observations • Master schedule with time for formalized structure 	2.0
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Observations • Accreditation Report • Major inconsistencies exist around the metric used in grading to determine mastery. Parents feel that some data is not timely. 	1.0
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation tools for professional learning • Accreditation Report • Observations • Interviews 	2.0
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of learning support services and student population served by such services • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Observations • Data used to identify unique learning needs of students 	3.0

Opportunities for Improvement**Indicator**

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 1. | Review and develop an active system-wide monitoring process of student level, building level and system level data to ensure continuous improvement at all levels. | 3.2 |
| | A system-wider monitoring process that analyzes student, building and total system data will assist the system and provide insight into equity issues. Standard scores and results posted for individual buildings vary in their self assessment and lack consistency with the overall system Self Study. | |
| 2. | Develop and implement a system-wide framework for professional learning communities to build teacher capacity and support vertical and horizontal instructional improvement with high performing best practices that lead to student success. | 3.5 |
| | Professional learning opportunities build teacher capacity and impact student learning when the system creates a focus on instructional improvement and the implementation of research and best practices with fidelity. Protocols for the use of time in professional learning opportunities that are based on best organizational practices have the potential to increase the impact on student learning and overall organizational effectiveness. | |

Standard 4: The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.

Institutions, regardless of their size, need access to sufficient resources and systems of support to be able to engage in sustained and meaningful efforts that result in a continuous improvement cycle. Indeed, a study conducted by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (Pan, D., Rudo, Z., Schneider, C., & Smith-Hansen, L., 2003) "demonstrated a strong relationship between resources and student success... both the level of resources and their explicit allocation seem to affect educational outcomes."

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in the 30,000 institutions in the AdvancED network that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The institution provides a safe learning environment for students and staff. The institution provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff members to improve their effectiveness. The institution ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

Standard 4			
The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.1	The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • District budgets or financial plans for the last three years • District quality assurance procedures for monitoring qualified staff across all schools • School budgets or financial plans for last three years • Interviews • Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement and retention of professional and support staff for the district and schools 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Examples of school schedules • Accreditation Report • Examples of efforts of school leaders to secure necessary material and fiscal resources • Examples of school calendars • Interviews 	3.0
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Observations • Accreditation Report • Example systems for school maintenance requests • Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements • Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments • School safety committee responsibilities, meeting schedules, and minutes • Some facilities are in need of a review of maintenance issues. 	2.0
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District strategic plan showing the areas of budget, facilities, quality control, and other strategic systems • Survey results • Interviews • Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments • Accreditation Report • Observations 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Evaluation procedures and results of education resources • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Schedule of staff availability to assist students and school personnel related to finding and retrieving information 	3.0
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model • Policies relative to technology use at the district-level and school-level • District technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure for the district-level and school-level • Accreditation Report • Interviews • Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness 	3.0
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Interviews • Student assessment system for identifying student needs • Accreditation Report • List of support services available to students 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.8	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• List of services available related to counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning• Accreditation Report• Budget for counseling, assessment, referral, educational and career planning• Description of IEP process• Interviews• Description of referral process	2.0

Standard 5: The system implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and system effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.

Systems with strong improvement processes move beyond anxiety about the current reality and focus on priorities and initiatives for the future. Using results, i.e., data and other information, to guide continuous improvement is key to an institution's success. A study conducted by Datnow, Park, and Wohlstetter (2007) from the Center on Educational Governance at the University of Southern California indicated that data can shed light on existing areas of strength and weakness and also guide improvement strategies in a systematic and strategic manner (Dembosky, J., Pane, J., Barney, H., & Christina, R., 2005). The study also identified six key strategies that performance-driven systems use: (1) building a foundation for data-driven decision making, (2) establishing a culture of data use and continuous improvement, (3) investing in an information management system, (4) selecting the right data, (5) building institutional capacity for data-driven decision making, and (6) analyzing and acting on data to improve performance. Other research studies, though largely without comparison groups, suggested that data-driven decision making has the potential to increase student performance (Alwin, 2002; Doyle, 2003; Lafee, 2002; McIntire, 2002).

Through ongoing evaluation of educational institutions, AdvancED has found that a successful institution uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine strategies to improve student performance. The institution implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained, and the institution demonstrates progress in improving student performance and institution effectiveness.

Standard 5
The system implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and system effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model • Documentation or description of evaluation tools/protocols • Interviews • Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local or school assessments on student learning and school performance • Observations • Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness • Accreditation Report • Evidence that assessments are reliable and bias free 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.2	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of data used to measure the effectiveness of the district systems that support schools and learning • Observations • Accreditation Report • List of data sources related to district effectiveness • Survey results • Examples of changes to the district strategic plan based on data results • Examples of use of data to design, implement, and evaluate continuous improvement plans and apply learning • Interviews • List of data sources related to student learning, instruction, program effectiveness, and conditions that support learning 	2.0
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Professional learning schedule specific to the use of data • Documentation of attendance and training related to data use • Interviews 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.4	The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Policies and procedures specific to data use and training • Accreditation Report • Description of process for analyzing data to determine verifiable improvement in student learning • Examples of use of results to evaluate continuous improvement action plans • Observations • Evidence of student readiness for the next level • Evidence of student growth • Evidence of student success at the next level 	3.0
5.5	System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Sample communications to stakeholders regarding student learning, conditions that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals • Observations • Executive summaries of student learning reports to stakeholder groups • Interviews 	3.0

Powerful Practices

Indicator

1. Whitfield County elementary and middle school personnel and students use Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) to assess students academic growth which provides a clear and comprehensive student assessment that is given multiple times annually to measure and monitor student achievement.

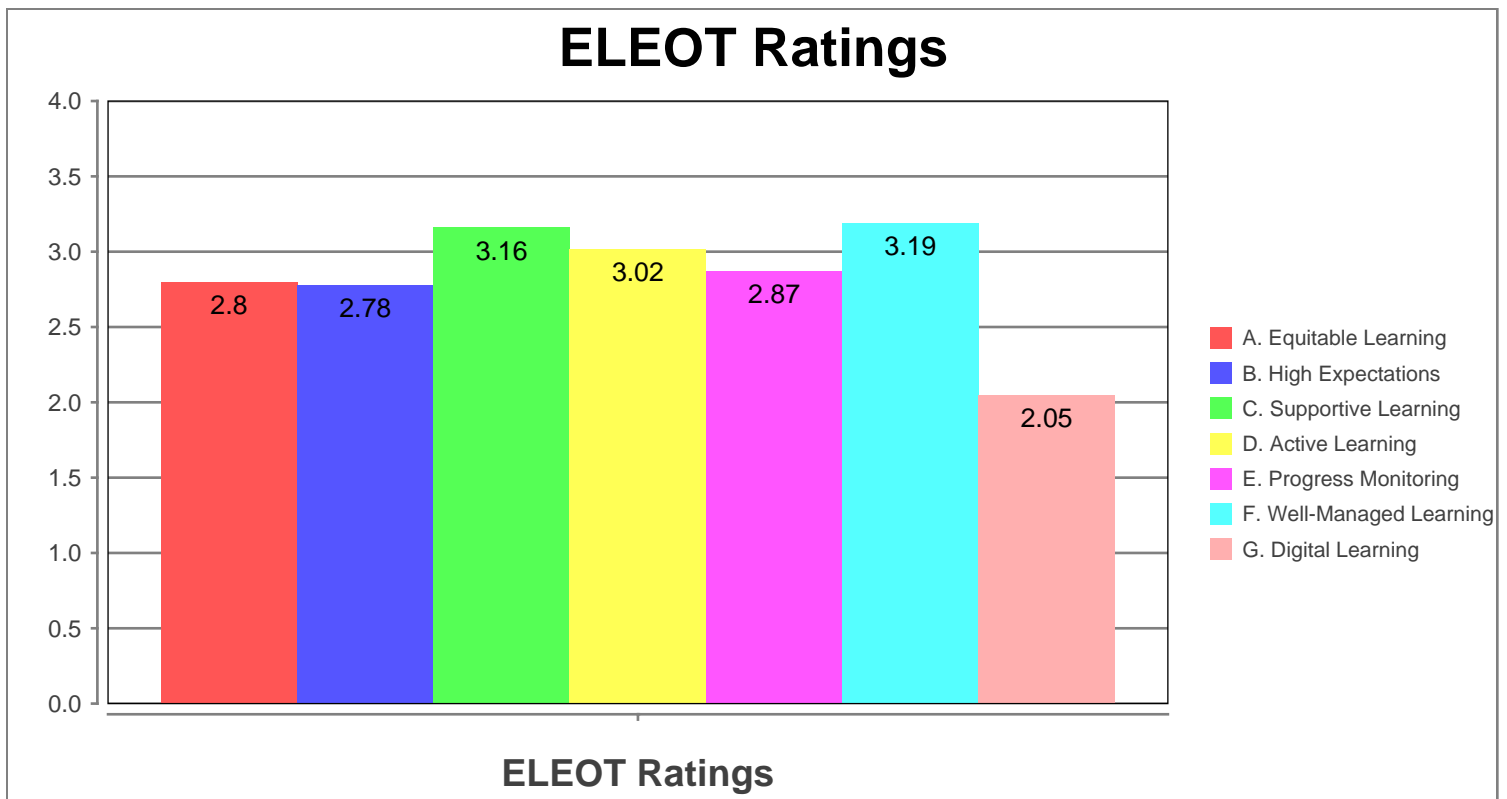
5.1

The team found the use of a standardized assessment program that measures progress from the beginning of the school year to end of the session with a mid-term measurement offers great promise for the system to become more focused on achievement and the instructional program. The assessment program creates rigor and fosters a clear understanding of where the district is going with its curriculum and instructional program. Students and parents report that the use of the assessment program allows students to set goals and informs parents on how they can assist and support their students.

Learning Environment

Every learner should have access to an effective learning environment in which she/he has multiple opportunities to be successful. The Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT) measures the extent to which learners are in an environment that is equitable, supportive, and well-managed. An environment where high expectations are the norm and active learning takes place. It measures whether learners' progress is monitored and feedback is provided and the extent to which technology is leveraged for learning.

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. External Review Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale. The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in ELEOT.



Student Performance

Student Performance on assessments is the second of three primary areas of evaluation for AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. Institutions are asked to collect and analyze student performance data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the assessments used by the institution, the degree to which the institution properly administered the assessments, analyzed and acted on the results, and the overall performance of students using a set of rubrics. Results of that evaluation are reported below.

Student Performance Evaluation	
Evaluative Criteria	Performance Level
Assessment Quality	4.0
Test Administration	4.0
Quality of Learning	3.0
Equity of Learning	3.0

Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder Feedback is the third of three primary areas of evaluation in AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. The AdvancED surveys are directly correlated to the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators; they provide not only direct information about stakeholder satisfaction but also become a source of data for triangulation by the External Review Team as it evaluates indicators.

Institutions are asked to collect and analyze stakeholder feedback data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the administration of the surveys by institution and the degree to which the institution analyzed and acted on the results. Results of that evaluation are reported below.

Stakeholder Feedback Evaluation	
Evaluative Criteria	Performance Level
Questionnaire Administration	3.0
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.0

Individual Institution Results

AdvancED requires internal and external stakeholders from each individual institution within the system to evaluate their institution on the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools, student performance, and stakeholder feedback. The following table provides the results of those self-analyses. Higher scores indicate higher perceived performance on each of the measures. The range of possible scores for each of the institutions within the system are 1 (low performing) to 4 (high performing).

Institution	Indicator Averages	Questionnaire Administration	Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	Assessment Quality	Test Administration	Quality of Learning	Equity of Learning
Antioch Elementary School	2.82	2.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Beaverdale Elementary School	2.78	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Cedar Ridge Elementary	2.62	2.0	3.0	2.0	4.0	2.0	2.0
Coahulla Creek High School	2.06	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.0
Cohutta Elementary School	3.13	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Dawnville Elementary School	2.93	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Dug Gap Elementary School	2.78	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	2.0
Eastbrook Middle School	2.27	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.0
Eastside Elementary School	2.78	1.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
New Hope Elementary School	2.88	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
New Hope Middle School	2.58	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
North Whitfield Middle School	2.33	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Northwest Georgia College and Career Academy	2.84	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Northwest Whitfield County High School	2.48	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Phoenix High School	2.76	1.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Pleasant Grove Elementary School	2.33	1.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Southeast Whitfield County High School	2.73	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0

Institution	Indicator Averages	Questionnaire Administration	Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	Assessment Quality	Test Administration	Quality of Learning	Equity of Learning
Tunnel Hill Elementary School	2.52	1.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Valley Point Elementary School	2.51	4.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	2.0	2.0
Valley Point Middle School	2.36	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Varnell Elementary School	2.64	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Westside Elementary School	2.45	1.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Westside Middle School	2.64	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Whitfield-Dalton Crossroads Academy	2.27	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0

Part II: Conclusion

Summary of the External Review

In off-site and on-site review sessions, the AdvancED External Review Team examined artifacts and evidence provided by the institution. During the on-site portion of the review, the team reviewed additional artifacts, collected and analyzed data from interviews, and conducted observations.

A six member team conducted an External Review in Whitfield County Schools, on November 3, 2013 through November 6, 2013, for the purpose of reviewing the system's Internal Review and achieving district accreditation. To begin the review experience, the team held an offsite conference call/orientation/training meeting where initial feedback was shared based on information provided to the team prior to arrival.

The External Review for Whitfield County School District began with the arrival of the out-of-state team members on Sunday, November 3rd. The team consisted of six members. Of the six, three members were from out-of-state representing Michigan, Kentucky and Florida. The team brought over 200 collective years of educational experience to the process. Four of the six members were practitioners consisting of one superintendent, three central office administrators, and one classroom teacher.

On Sunday evening, the team began their planning work at 4:00 p.m. in the conference room at the Hampton Inn hotel. At 6:30 p.m. the superintendent for the Whitfield County School District and members of the Whitfield County Board of Education along with all central office administrators joined the team for dinner.

On Monday morning, the team began their day with a standards presentation by the superintendent followed by time set aside for the superintendent interview. Members of the administrative team presented a review of each individual standard and provided insight by referencing the artifacts and evidence that had been collected to validate their external review ratings. The morning concluded with interviews with all five members of the board of education. The afternoon session consisted of interviews of principals representing 21 schools with six schools to be scheduled for on site visits on the second day of the reviews. The remainder of the afternoon was spent interviewing community members and parents. A total of 90 interviews were conducted with stakeholders.

On Tuesday, the External Review Team divided into three sub-teams of two persons each and visited a total of six schools. Schools visited included two high schools, two middle schools and two elementary schools. The schools were selected randomly and with an effort for the team to observe both the demographic diversity of the district as well as geographic diversity. Each school visit consisted of an interview with the principal, the building school improvement team, teachers, students and parents.

The final day of the review consisted of follow-up interviews with the superintendent and several members of the administrative team. A final presentation and oral exit was made at an official meeting of the school board.

Using the evidence collected, the team engaged in dialogue and deliberations concerning the degree to which the institution met the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators.

Standard 1

Whitfield County Schools (WCS) established their vision, mission and beliefs in 2005 as documented in the Executive Summary and heard during interviews by the review team. The vision, mission and beliefs are posted throughout the district and have been communicated to all stakeholders for their understanding and support via the system website. The district and the schools statements focus on student success. Each school in the district has developed a vision, mission and beliefs that align with the district statements.

Through school visits and interviews it was evident that the schools are communicating student progress and achievement to parents; however, it was apparent through interviews conducted with stakeholders as well as artifact review that the district needs to improve their efforts in communicating continuous improvement for student achievement by developing and implementing a communication plan.

The system implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and system effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.

Standard 2

After a review of artifacts, it is evident that the governing body strives to establish policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools through the positive working relationship between the board and superintendent. Recent reorganization of the central office administration provides the platform that the system needs to move forward. Defining the roles and relationships between these positions and the positions at the schools appears to be the next steps.

Evidence contained in the artifacts indicates that the governing board attends yearly state trainings offered through Georgia School Board Association to ensure that they function and operate both responsibly and effectively. As a result of interviews, it became evident that further trainings would be beneficial in defining the distinction between the boards' roles and responsibilities and those of system and school leadership as well as to help clarify their role as liaison between the stakeholders and the school system.

In order to foster a culture that is consistent with the system's purpose and direction, the leadership and staff have adopted The Non-Negotiable Practices for High Student Performances, which reinforce the ideals identified in the district's beliefs. WCS has been successful in obtaining stakeholder input to help shape these decisions that aid in the improvement of the schools through the use of a variety of surveys. The implementation of the state mandated teacher and administrator evaluation system is also driving the system's decisions to improve professional practices by identifying both teachers' and leaders' strengths and opportunities for improvements.

Standard 3

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.

Artifacts, presentations, and interviews indicate a need to review active system-wide monitoring and analysis of student-level, building-level and system-level data to ensure continuous improvement. Currently, this data analysis includes a variety of assessments. Many of these assessments reach all students, while others evaluate those in specific programs. These assessments prepare set benchmarks that better inform the teaching and learning through progress monitoring, that lead modification of instruction.

The team found a lack of a clearly defined process and more importantly the lack of operational definitions for many terms and processes. Interviews with staff also found differing interpretations of terms and processes at some levels of the system. From organizational terms such as the difference between instructional practices such "professional learning communities" and "walkthroughs," interpretations and definitions presented variation among stakeholders.

Artifacts related to Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and interviews with system level and school level stakeholders indicate a need for a system-wide framework and/or structure for PLCs. This will result in building teacher capacity and supporting vertical and horizontal instructional improvement in high performing best practices for student success.

Some schools are practicing grade-level team meetings. In these schools, team members found that results of the grade-level meetings were being transferred into classrooms and appeared to be making a difference in student performance.

The evidence, interviews and observations indicate rigor of instruction that is not consistent across the district. To increase student learning, rigorous instruction congruent to student tasks and assessments needs to be increased. When professional development activities are aligned with the needs assessment of classroom instruction and student performance, the capacity to deliver the expected levels of rigor and engagement of students by classroom teachers, support staff and instructional leadership increases.

Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning. The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.

It was not clear to the External Review Team, from interviews or from the artifact review, that all schools are using a consistent process to identify students who need additional instruction to meet mastery in the curriculum, and those that need advanced instruction after meeting mastery.

Reviews indicate there are pockets of excellence in the district to identify and place students in flexible grouping to help them meet mastery in learning targets. In addition, there is a clear identification process and program for gifted and talented students listed on the webpage, but there is no clear direction about what students might do to advance beyond grade level standards in the district curriculum. It was reported, in staff interviews, that every school is on its own to create programs and services; rather than have district-wide expectations for all schools to carry out that support both students who have mastered the curriculum and those that need help to gain mastery.

Standard 4

The system has a Board Policy to guide the final steps in approving personnel. The administration should consider reviewing the current hiring protocols to ensure hiring occurs according to established procedures. The current process may need to be updated to include the procedures for posting and hiring practices for positions that are deemed to be promotions for those who may want to apply. Hiring practices should be the same from the Central Office to schools and between schools. Incorporating into the systems professional development plan a more comprehensive process for mentoring individuals new to their positions (1 to 3 years) will increase retention.

A review of system and school level budgets for each site revealed that the system provides and coordinates adequate support services for students at all levels. The system provides full time counselors on each campus and adequate levels of special education faculty, support staff, and system level staff to potentially meet the learning needs of all students. Decreasing revenue has caused the system to substantially reduce clinical support at each school. The system may want to consider alternative methods for meeting students' health needs. Example: Possibly having a Health Department Nurse supervise certified nursing assistants at each site or shared between feeder schools.

Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are generally focused on supporting the purpose and direction of the system, its school, educational programs, and system operations. Based on observations, interviews, and reports, the system provides technological resources with an infrastructure that is unable to support the overall use for critical instructional resources (MAP, Odyssey). Based on the evidence reviewed, instructional time is protected in policy but needs to be reviewed against practice.

Standard 5

Based upon the information shared through interviews, presentations and document/artifact reviews, the team observed the use of multiple assessment measures by system and school personnel. These measures include a comprehensive assessment of locally developed and standardized assessments that produces data about student learning as well as school and system performance.

Whitfield County elementary and middle schools use Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) to assess students academic growth. The clear and comprehensive student assessment is given three times annually to measure and monitor student achievement. Students monitor their individual growth by consistently setting learning goals from the data received from the assessment.

Evidence noted from Central Office information and during school visits indicates the use of multiple assessment measures across all classrooms, courses, and educational programs to enhance learning at every level. Areas of strength noted by team members include the following, (1) the existence of appropriate tools and systems necessary for evaluation; (2) formative assessment measures through varied benchmark instruments and the implementation of informal walk-through procedures at all levels; and (3) a comprehensive approach to continuous improvement through multiple assessment data including Measure of Academic Progress (MAP), ACT/ Advanced Placement exams, Odyssey, College and Career Readiness instruments.

Professional and support staff continuously collect, and analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation and organizational conditions that support learning. Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.

The team found a need for the development of a specific protocol or set of written procedures across the district to for collecting, analyzing, and applying learning from data sources. Information shared during interviews with teachers, school administrators, and Central Office.

Administrators reveal attempts to structure and design school improvement processes and procedures are at the beginning stages. As evidenced through inconsistent implementation plans for improving student learning and

information shared regarding professional learning around data analysis, the team is suggesting a possible disconnect between school level and central office progress monitoring.

As evidenced through the implementation of Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), locally developed assessments, and the administration of appropriate guidelines for state and local assessments, the schools and system appear to have processes in place for implementing continuous improvement action plans focused on student learning which include readiness for progression and success at the next level.

Interviews, artifact review, and team member observation, the team recognizes that system and school leaders regularly utilize multiple delivery methods to communicate comprehensive information about student learning, system and school effectiveness.

During the on-site review, members of the External Review Team evaluated the learning environment by observing classrooms and general operations of the institution. Using data from these observations, the team evaluated the quality of instruction and learning that took place classified around seven constructs or environments: equity, high expectations, support, engagement, progress monitoring and feedback, management, and use of technology.

The team conducted 50 observations in six schools that included two elementary schools, two middle schools and two of the district high schools. The team observed some outstanding examples of instruction during the observations and also noted some examples in need of improvement. Through its evaluation process, the system will be able to create specific standards for instructional delivery. The results from the ELEOT are as follows using a four point scale:

- A. Equitable Learning Environment: 2.80
- B. High Expectations Environment: 2.78
- C. Supportive Learning Environment: 3.16
- D. Active Learning Environment: 3.02
- E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment: 2.87
- F. Well-Managed Learning Environment: 3.19
- G. Digital Learning Environment 2.05

The team noted that the areas of strength include the Supportive Learning Environment (C) and that environment is well managed (F). The Digital Learning Environment (G) is an area of challenge and an opportunity for improvement particularly due to inefficiencies that were observed during school visits.

The Whitfield County staff provided the visiting team with a very open and honest self-appraisal sharing numerous artifacts and evidence to validate their process of Internal Review. The district was well prepared for the visit and expressed the hope that the visiting team would produce a valuable report that would assist the district in its efforts to continuously improve.

During the on-site portion of the review, the team reviewed additional artifacts, collected and analyzed data from interviews, and conducted classroom observations. A work session was held late Sunday afternoon upon the

team's arrival. During the external review process, the team was able to complete a review of artifacts and documentation

In the past, accreditation reviews resulted in an accreditation recommendation on status. Labels such as advised, warned, probation, or all clear were used to describe the status of a school relative to the criteria. Beginning with school year, 2013-14, AdvancED is introducing a new framework to describe the result of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduces an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ). The IEQ is comprised of three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; and 3) use of resources to support and optimize learning. Therefore, your institution will no longer receive an accreditation status. Instead, your institution will be accredited with an IEQ score. In the case where an institution is failing to meet established criteria, the accreditation will be under review thereby requiring frequent monitoring.

The three domains of performance are derived from the AdvancED Standards and Indicators; the Analysis of Student Performance; and the Engagement and Involvement of Stakeholders. Within each domain institutions will be able to connect to the individual performance levels that are applied in support of the AdvancED Standards and evaluative criteria. Within the performance levels are detailed descriptors that can be a valuable source of guidance for continuous improvement. Upon review of the findings in this report, institutional leaders should work with their staff to review and understand the evidence and rationale for each Required Action as well as the corresponding pathway to improvement described in the performance levels of the selected Indicator.

The IEQ provides a new framework that recognizes and supports the journey of continuous improvement. Your institution's IEQ is the starting point for continuous improvement. Your actions for improvement that have a positive impact will be reflected in your IEQ score.

IEQ Institutional Score: 244

Teaching and Learning Impact: 252
(Standards 3 and 5; Student Performance Criteria)

Leadership Capacity: 225
(Standards 1 and 2; Stakeholder Engagement Criteria)

Resource Utilization: 250
(Standard 4)

The External Review team recommends that the Whitfield County Schools be accredited, pending further review and final action by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

Required Action

1. Develop systemic rigorous performance and achievement criteria for all students to provide an equitable process for grading, evaluating and reporting student progress that is understandable to students and their parents and results in improved instructional practice.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 3.10

Description:

Grading and reporting practices appear to be based on individual teacher determination rather than on a clearly defined criteria that are consistent throughout the system. Common grading practices will ensure a system-wide approach to reporting and provide consistency for parents and students who may transfer to other schools within the system. It will also provide clarity as the system reports on student performance system-wide.

2. Review, revise and implement the current Response to Intervention (RTI) guidelines to meet individual student needs as they perform below bench marks.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 3.12

Description:

There appears to be a range in the application of criteria throughout the system. A review and establishment of a consistent system-wide approach will provide greater equity and assistance to students who perform below benchmarks.

Part III: Addenda

The External Review Team

Lead Evaluator:

Mr. Michael A Bugenski

Associate Lead Evaluator:

Mr. Anthony D Pack

Team Members:

Mrs. Kelly R Wilson

Ms. Rhonda Vickers

Mrs. Mardi Montgomery

Ms. Debra White

Next Steps

The institution should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the Powerful Practices section to maximize their impact on the institution.
3. Develop action plans to address the Required Actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward addressing the Required Actions.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the institution's efforts to improve student performance and system effectiveness.
5. Following the External Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the Required Actions. Institutions are required to respond to all Required Actions. The Required Actions should be completed before the Accreditation Progress Report is submitted. The report will be reviewed at the appropriate state, national, and/or international levels to monitor and ensure that the system has implemented the necessary actions to complete the Required Actions. The accreditation status will be reviewed and acted upon based on the completion of the Required Actions and the resulting improvement.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the External Review, the team submits the final report to AdvancED for review and for action by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission that confers accreditation upon the institution. Upon receiving its accreditation, the institution should share its achievement with internal and external communities.

About AdvancED

In 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), both founded in 1895, and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form AdvancED: one strong, unified organization dedicated to education quality. In 2011, the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) that was founded in 1917 joined NCA CASI and SACS CASI as part of AdvancED. AdvancED is the world's largest education community, representing 30,000 public and private schools and systems across the United States and in 75 countries worldwide and educating 16 million students.

Today, NCA CASI, NWAC, and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, these divisions share research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, national, and international boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help educational institutions continuously improve.

References

- Alwin, L. (2002). The will and the way of data use. *School Administrator*, 59(11), 11.
- Baumert, J., Kunter, M., Blum, W., Brunner, M., Voxx, T., Jordan, A., Klusmann, U., Krauss, S., Nuebrand, M., & Tsai, Y. (2010). Teachers' mathematical knowledge, cognitive activation in the classroom, and student progress. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(1), 133-180.
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. (2012). *Shared purpose: the golden thread?* London: CIPD.
- Colbert, J., Brown, R., Choi, S., & Thomas, S. (2008). An investigation of the impacts of teacher-driven professional development. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 35(2), 134-154.
- Conley, D.T. (2007). *Redefining college readiness (Vol. 3)*. Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center.
- Datnow, A., Park, V., & Wohlstetter, P. (2007). *Achieving with data: How high-performing school systems use data to improve instruction for elementary students*. Los Angeles, CA: Center on Educational Governance, USC.
- Dembosky, J., Pane, J., Barney, H., & Christina, R. (2005). *Data driven decision making in Southwestern Pennsylvania school districts*. Working paper. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
- Ding, C. & Sherman, H. (2006). Teaching effectiveness and student achievement: Examining the relationship. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 29 (4), 40-51.
- Doyle, D. P. (2003). Data-driven decision making: Is it the mantra of the month or does it have staying power? *T.H.E. Journal*, 30(10), 19-21.
- Feuerstein, A., & Opfer, V. D. (1998). School board chairmen and school superintendents: An analysis of perceptions concerning special interest groups and educational governance. *Journal of School Leadership*, 8, 373-398.
- Fink, D., & Brayman, C. (2006). School leadership succession and the challenges of change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42 (62), 61-89.
- Greene, K. (1992). Models of school-board policy-making. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 28 (2), 220-236.
- Hornig, E., Klasik, D., & Loeb, S. (2010). Principal time-use and school effectiveness. *American Journal of Education* 116, (4) 492-523.
- Lafee, S. (2002). Data-driven districts. *School Administrator*, 59(11), 6-7, 9-10, 12, 14-15.
- Leithwood, K., & Sun, J. (2012). The Nature and effects of transformational school leadership: A meta-analytic review of unpublished research. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48 (387). 388-423.

Marks, H., Louis, K.S., & Printy, S. (2002). The capacity for organizational learning: Implications for pedagogy and student achievement. In K. Leithwood (Ed.), *Organizational learning and school improvement* (p. 239-266). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

McIntire, T. (2002). The administrator's guide to data-driven decision making. *Technology and Learning*, 22(11), 18-33.

Pan, D., Rudo, Z., Schneider, C., & Smith-Hansen, L. (2003). Examination of resource allocation in education: connecting spending to student performance. Austin, TX: SEDL.