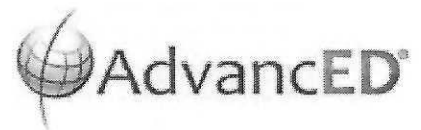


Report of the External Review Team for Appling County School System

249 Blackshear Hwy
Baxley
GA 31513-7148
US

Dr. Scarlett Miles Copeland

Date: January 29, 2017 - February 1, 2017



Copyright (c) 2017 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	4
Results	9
Teaching and Learning Impact	9
Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning	10
Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement	11
Student Performance Diagnostic	11
Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)	13
eleot™ Data Summary	15
Findings	18
Leadership Capacity	22
Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction	23
Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership	23
Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic	24
Findings	24
Resource Utilization	26
Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems	26
Findings	27
Conclusion	29
Accreditation Recommendation	32
Addenda	33
Individual Institution Results (Self-reported)	33
Team Roster	34
Next Steps	36
About AdvancED	37
References	38

Introduction

The External Review is an integral component of AdvancED Performance Accreditation and provides the institution with a comprehensive evaluation guided by the results of diagnostic instruments, in-depth review of data and documentation, and the professional judgment of a team of qualified and highly trained evaluators. A series of diagnostic instruments examines the impact of teaching and learning on student performance, the capacity of leadership to effect continuous improvement, and the degree to which the institution optimizes its use of available resources to facilitate and support student success. The results of this evaluation are represented in the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™) and through critical observations, namely, Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities.

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 specific to their institution type, demonstrate acceptable levels of student performance and the continuous improvement of student performance, and provide evidence of stakeholder engagement and satisfaction. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the conditions, processes, and practices within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness.

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 Standards were developed by a committee comprised of talented 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 define institutional quality and guide continuous improvement. Prior to implementation, an internationally recognized panel of experts in testing and measurement, teacher quality, and education research reviewed the standards and provided feedback, guidance and endorsement.

The AdvancED External Review Team uses AdvancED Standards, associated indicators and criteria related to student performance and stakeholder engagement to guide its evaluation. The Team examines adherence to standards as well as how the institution functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics expected of an accredited institution. The Standards, indicators and related criteria are evaluated using indicator-specific performance levels. The Team rates each indicator and criterion on a scale of 1 to 4. The final scores assigned to the indicators and criteria represent the average of the External Review Team members' individual ratings.

The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation. It energizes and equips the institution's leadership and stakeholders 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 the in-depth examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with all stakeholder groups, and extensive observations of learning, instruction, and operations.

Use of Diagnostic Tools

A key to examining the institution is the design and use of diagnostic tools that reveal the effectiveness with which an institution creates conditions and implements processes and practices that impact student performance and success. In preparation for the External Review the institution conducted a Self Assessment that applied the standards and criteria for accreditation. The institution provided evidence to support its conclusions vis a vis organizational effectiveness in ensuring acceptable and improving levels of student performance.

- an indicator-based tool that connects the specific elements of the criteria to evidence gathered by the team;
- a student performance analytic that examines the quality of assessment instruments used by the institution, the integrity of the administration of the assessment to students, the quality of the learning results including the impact of instruction on student learning at all levels of performance, and the equity of learning that examines the results of student learning across all demographics;
- a stakeholder engagement instrument that examines the fidelity of administration and results of perception surveys seeking the perspective of students, parents, and teachers;
- a state-of-the-art, learner-centric observation instrument, the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™) that quantifies students' engagement, attitudes and dispositions organized in 7 environments: Equitable Learning, High Expectations, Supportive Learning, Active Learning, Progress Monitoring and Feedback, Well-Managed Learning, and Digital Learning. All evaluators must be trained, reach acceptable levels of inter-rater reliability, and certified to use this research-based and validated instrument.

The External Review Team's findings and critical observations are shared in this report through the IEQ™ results as well as through the identification of Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities.

Index of Education Quality

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 AdvancED Standards and other evaluative criteria. Beginning in the 2013-14 school year, AdvancED introduced a new framework to describe the results of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduced an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™). The IEQ™ comprises three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the capacity of leadership to guide the institution toward the achievement of its

vision and strategic priorities; 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 and demonstrated improvement.

The three domains of performance are derived from the AdvancED Standards and associated indicators, the analysis of student performance, and the engagement and feedback of stakeholders. Within each domain institutions can 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 serve as a valuable source of guidance for continuous improvement. Upon review of the findings in this report and building on their Powerful Practices, institutional leaders should work with their staff to review and understand the evidence and rationale for each Opportunity for Improvement and Improvement Priority as well as the corresponding pathway to improvement described in the performance levels of the selected indicator(s).

The IEQ™ provides a new framework that recognizes and supports the journey of continuous improvement. An institution's IEQ™ is the starting point for continuous improvement. Subsequent actions for improvement and evidence that these have had a positive impact will raise the institution's IEQ™ score.

Benchmark Data

Throughout this report, AdvancED provides benchmark data for each indicator and for each component of the evaluative criteria. These benchmark data represent the overall averages across the entire AdvancED Network for your institution type. Thus, the AdvancED Network average provides an extraordinary opportunity for institutions to understand their context on a global scale rather than simply compared to a state, region, or country.

It is important to understand that the AdvancED Network averages are provided primarily to serve as a tool for continuous improvement and not as a measure of quality in and of itself. Benchmark data, when wisely employed, have a unique capacity to help institutions identify and leverage their strengths and areas of improvement to significantly impact student learning.

Powerful Practices

A key to continuous improvement is the institution's ability to learn from and build upon its most effective and impactful practices. Such practices serve as critical leverage points necessary to guide, support and ensure continuous improvement. A hallmark of the accreditation process is its commitment to identifying with evidence, the conditions, processes and practices that are having the most significant impact on student performance and institutional effectiveness. Throughout this report, the External Review Team has captured and defined Powerful Practices. These noteworthy practices are essential to the institution's effort to continue its journey of improvement.

Opportunities for Improvement

Every institution can and must improve no matter what levels of performance it has achieved in its past. During the process of the review, the External Review Team identified areas of improvement where the institution is meeting the expectations for accreditation but in the professional judgment of the Team these are Opportunities for Improvement that should be considered by the institution. Using the criteria described in the corresponding rubric(s) to the Opportunity for Improvement, the institution can identify what elements of practice must be addressed to guide the improvement.

Improvement Priorities

The expectations for accreditation are clearly defined in a series of the rubric-based AdvancED Standards, indicators and evaluative criteria focused on the impact of teaching and learning on student performance, the capacity of the institution to be guided by effective leadership, and the allocation and use of resources to support student learning. As such, the External Review Team reviewed, analyzed and deliberated over significant bodies of evidence provided by the institution and gathered by the Team during the process. In the professional judgment of the Team as well as the results of the diagnostic process, the Team defined, with rationale, Improvement Priorities. The priorities must be addressed in a timely manner by the institution to retain and improve their accreditation performance as represented by the IEQ™. Improvement Priorities serve as the basis for the follow-up and monitoring process that will begin upon conclusion of the External Review. The institution must complete and submit an Accreditation Progress Report within two years of the External Review. The report must include actions taken by the institution to address the Improvement Priorities along with the corresponding evidence and results. The IEQ™ will be recalculated by AdvancED upon review of the evidence and results associated with the Improvement Priorities.

The Review

On January 29 - February 1, 2017, an External Review Team (Team) composed of five educators representing AdvancED™, a non-profit international accrediting organization, conducted a System External Review for Appling County School System in Baxley, GA. The five-member team consisted of the Lead Evaluator and one team member from Florida, with the remaining three team members being residents of Georgia.

Appling County School System is a rural school system in Southeast Georgia consisting of four elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. The system serves approximately 3,500 students in grades Pre-K through 12. The school system is one of the largest employers in Appling County, with approximately 500 employees systemwide. Appling County has a population of 18,540 residents, with blueberries, cotton, tobacco, pines and rosin as prime resources.

Prior to the visit, the Lead Evaluator collaborated with the system's AdvancED contact to discuss logistics of the review, including hotel arrangements, transportation during the visit, meals, needs of team members and detailed schedules. The Team completed preparatory work to enhance the efficacy of the review, including on-line training, participation in telephone conversations with the Lead Evaluator and reviewing various documents shared by the system. The Assurances, Self Assessment, Executive Summary, Student Performance

Evaluation, and Stakeholder Feedback results were made available for the Team to review while conducting their off-site work. In addition, the system contact provided a link to access system evidence electronically. Additional evidence and artifacts were provided for the Team on-site.

On Sunday, January 29, 2017, the first Team Work Session was held in the conference room of the Comfort Inn in Blackshear, GA. The session began with an orientation of the review process, a review of Team expectations and Team discussions regarding preliminary views of each standard. Following dinner, the Superintendent's Overview was presented, providing additional information for the Team to consider in developing questions for interview sessions the following day.

The Team visited the system's six schools. The five-member Team was divided into two two-member units, with the Lead Evaluator serving individually as a third unit. Each unit visited two schools - one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

The system's AdvancED contact was helpful in coordinating the details of the visit, serving as a resource during the visit and ensuring that stakeholders were available to meet with the Team. Other staff members facilitated transportation and meal deliveries to ensure that the Team had a pleasant stay. The combined efforts of system staff and the External Review Team resulted in a successful experience.

The Team expresses sincere appreciation to the system for the hospitality, system preparation and acts of kindness expressed during the review. The system's Internal Review process included participation by numerous stakeholders. The system conducted surveys of parents, students and staff to assist in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Documentation provided for the Team was well-organized and very helpful in completing the required tasks.

Stakeholders were interviewed by members of the External Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's effectiveness and student performance. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the External Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Interviewed	Number
Superintendents	1
Board Members	5
Administrators	9
Instructional Staff	97
Support Staff	25
Students	97
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	21
Total	255

Results

Teaching and Learning Impact

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement is the primary expectation of every institution. The relationship between teacher and learner must be productive and effective for student success. The impact of teaching and learning includes an analysis of student performance results, instructional quality, learner and family engagement, support services for student learning, curriculum quality and efficacy, and college and career readiness data. These are all key indicators of an institution's impact on teaching and learning.

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 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.

Institutions 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 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
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.	2.20	2.69
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.	2.20	2.49
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	2.20	2.59
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	2.20	2.71
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	2.20	2.58
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	2.40	2.48
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	3.00	2.60

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
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.	3.20	2.97
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.	2.00	2.50
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.	3.00	2.47
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	3.00	2.65
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	2.00	2.64

Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	2.80	2.66
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.	2.40	2.49
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	2.00	2.15
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.	2.00	2.50
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.	3.20	2.75

Student Performance Diagnostic

The quality of assessments used to measure student learning, assurance that assessments are administered with procedural fidelity and appropriate accommodations, assessment results that reflect the quality of

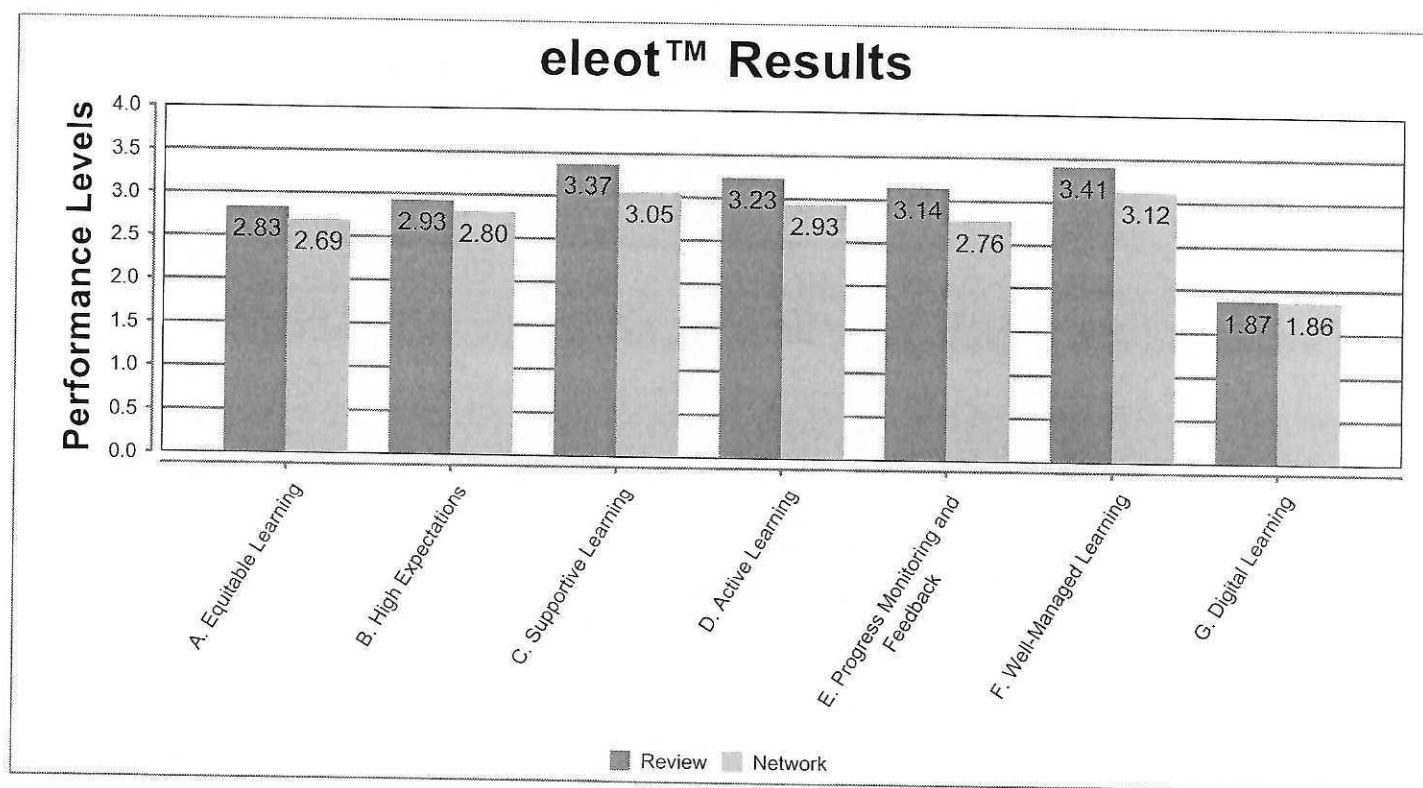
learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	4.00	3.33
Test Administration	3.00	3.52
Equity of Learning	3.00	2.54
Quality of Learning	3.00	2.96

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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. Every member of the External Review Team is required to be trained and pass a certification exam that establishes inter-rater reliability. Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale (4=very evident; 3=evident; 2=somewhat evident; and 1=not observed). The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in eleot™ as well as benchmark results across the AdvancED Network.



The External Review Team conducted 57 eleot™ observations in the six schools in the system. The system's eleot averages exceeded the AdvancED Network (AEN) averages in all seven learning environments. The Well-Managed Learning Environment received the highest average rating of 3.41, compared to the AEN average of 3.05. The Supportive Learning Environment placed second, with an average rating of 3.37, compared to the AEN average rating of 3.05. Ranking third was the Active Learning Environment, with a 3.23

average rating, compared to the AEN average of 2.93. The Progress Monitoring Learning Environment ranked fourth, receiving an average rating of 3.14, compared with the AEN average of 2.76. The next highest rated area was the High Expectations Learning Environment, receiving an average rating of 2.93, compared with the AEN average of 2.80. In sixth place was the Equitable Learning Environment, receiving an average rating of 2.83, compared with the AEN average of 2.69. The Digital Learning Environment ranked seventh, with an average rating of 1.87, compared with the AEN average of 1.86.

Instances in which students "had differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs" (A-1), were evident/very evident in only 58 percent of classrooms observed, with an average Team rating of 2.44 on a four-point scale. Instances in which students "had opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences" (A-4), were evident/very evident in only 37 percent of classrooms observed, with an overall average Team rating of 1.91. Results also indicated that instances in which students were "provided exemplars of high quality work" (B-3) were evident/very evident in only 46 percent of classrooms observed, with an average Team rating of 2.02 on a four-point scale.

The elect observations confirmed statements from stakeholders regarding the supportive and well-managed learning environments in the schools. While technological tools and software programs were available for student use, very little technology use was observed during classroom visits. Incorporating instructional technology in classroom activities would help the system to strengthen instructional practices, providing opportunities for students to do research, create original works and collaborate with other students.

The Team determined through interviews with staff that teachers used the elect observation tool periodically to observe each other to improve classroom instruction, which is commendable. Teacher familiarity with the elect tool may account for the system's results exceeding the AdvancED Network Averages in all learning environments. Team members examined various artifacts and evidences, reviewed survey data, made general observations and conducted numerous interviews with various stakeholder groups to determine ratings for each of the Standards and Indicators. The Team is confident that both the elect and Standard ratings accurately reflect the findings of the Team.

eleot™ Data Summary

A. Equitable Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.44	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	17.54%	40.35%	10.53%	31.58%
2.	3.51	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	56.14%	40.35%	1.75%	1.75%
3.	3.46	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	52.63%	42.11%	3.51%	1.75%
4.	1.91	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	3.51%	33.33%	14.04%	49.12%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.83						

B. High Expectations			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.35	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	38.60%	57.89%	3.51%	0.00%
2.	3.21	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	33.33%	54.39%	12.28%	0.00%
3.	2.02	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	8.77%	36.84%	1.75%	52.63%
4.	2.98	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	28.07%	47.37%	19.30%	5.26%
5.	3.11	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	33.33%	47.37%	15.79%	3.51%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.93						

C. Supportive Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.51	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	50.88%	49.12%	0.00%	0.00%
2.	3.51	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	50.88%	49.12%	0.00%	0.00%
3.	3.39	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	49.12%	42.11%	7.02%	1.75%
4.	3.49	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	52.63%	43.86%	3.51%	0.00%
5.	2.96	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	35.09%	40.35%	10.53%	14.04%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.37						

D. Active Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.33	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	49.12%	36.84%	12.28%	1.75%
2.	2.88	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	33.33%	40.35%	7.02%	19.30%
3.	3.47	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	54.39%	38.60%	7.02%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.23						

E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.07	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	29.82%	52.63%	12.28%	5.26%
2.	3.16	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	35.09%	49.12%	12.28%	3.51%
3.	3.33	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	42.11%	50.88%	5.26%	1.75%
4.	3.05	Understands how her/his work is assessed	35.09%	43.86%	12.28%	8.77%
5.	3.11	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	40.35%	42.11%	5.26%	12.28%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.14						

F. Well-Managed Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.79	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	78.95%	21.05%	0.00%	0.00%
2.	3.70	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	71.93%	26.32%	1.75%	0.00%
3.	3.21	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	50.88%	29.82%	8.77%	10.53%
4.	2.79	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	35.09%	31.58%	10.53%	22.81%
5.	3.56	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	57.89%	40.35%	1.75%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.41						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.26	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	19.30%	26.32%	15.79%	38.60%
2.	1.68	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	7.02%	15.79%	15.79%	61.40%
3.	1.65	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	5.26%	21.05%	7.02%	66.67%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 1.87						

Findings

Improvement Priority

Develop, implement and monitor a systemic process to provide guidance and direction for educators in the horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment.

(Indicator 3.2)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.2

Evidence and Rationale

A review of the system's Self Assessment indicated that, while the system is utilizing vertical and horizontal alignment to some extent, it is not implemented systemically. The document states, "Although we have had some teachers take an active part in the review of curriculum, others have not fully embraced the monitoring and adjusting process." System and school level staff revealed that adjustments to the curriculum are made in each school site, indicating that some teachers desired autonomy in the instructional design process. The Self Assessment also stated, "The Appling County School System's (ACSS) School Improvement Monitoring and Processes survey confirmed this self assessment with three of the five lowest scoring items relating to the systematic process of evaluating, renewing, and assessing curriculum."

The Team also noted the variance in achievement in each school and from level to level, which may be indicative of a disconnect in alignment. Staff shared that attempts had been made to align curriculum and instruction in some schools. However, the process is not systemic.

School staffs stated that articulation between school levels had increased to some extent. For example, teachers at the primary school served as proctors for testing at the elementary school. In addition, second and

third grade teachers now meet twice monthly to discuss curricular issues to enhance vertical alignment. However, the system has not developed any formal mechanism to encourage vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum and instruction at all levels systemically.

Developing and implementing a process to ensure the alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment will enhance student achievement and success systemically while providing opportunities for staff to collaborate across grade levels and schools.

Improvement Priority

Indicator 3.12

Provide, coordinate and evaluate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of all students. (Indicator 3.12)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.12

Evidence and Rationale

A review of artifacts revealed that the system has developed a Response to Intervention (RtI) Infinite Campus Academic Intervention Plan and Schedule that outlines interventions for Tiers 2 and 3 by grade span for English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. The Self Assessment states, "Appling County School System has a comprehensive referral process in place to identify the needs of students and to target support through programs and services that focus on enhancing student achievement. For example, there is a clearly documented Response to Intervention (RtI) process in place with timelines, procedures, and lists of responsible personnel, as well as additional documentation, such as flow charts, to guide the process."

Interviews with teachers and data from classroom observations revealed that, although a system plan exists, all instructional staff are not familiar with the process. Software programs, such as iRead, Read 180, System 44, Moby Max and STAR 360, were adopted to provide interventions and monitor student progress. However, the RtI system has not been consistently expanded beyond this point.

Employing a robust RtI program, using real-time data, will ensure that students are provided differentiated instructional strategies for both remediation and acceleration.

Improvement Priority

Indicator 3.9

Develop, implement and evaluate a systemic student advocacy program to ensure that each student is well-known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school. (Indicator 3.9)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.9

Evidence and Rationale

A review of various documents and statements during interview sessions revealed that the system has not implemented a formal student advocacy program systemwide. The Self Assessment Report stated, "Our 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. The structures allow employees to gain insight into and serve as an advocate for the student's needs regarding learning skills, thinking skills, and life skills." However, the Team was unable to find school rosters indicating student assignments to specific staff for advocacy purposes. Statements during interviews with district and school personnel referenced the small school sizes as meeting the intent of Indicator 3.9. While small school sizes may allow teachers and staff members to know students and their needs, the system has not developed a formal structure whereby each student has one adult in the school to advocate for and support that student's educational experience. Statements from parents and staff indicated that many students "fall between the cracks," as further evidenced by student performance results.

The Team did determine that Appling County High School (ACHS) has developed a formalized student advocacy process for some of its students through the "Students On a Roll" (SOAR) program. The ACHS Self Assessment Report stated, "Our school also implemented the SOAR program in FY15 where freshmen are divided into groups and a teacher is assigned to be an advisor. SOAR groups meet once a month and continue through the sophomore year."

Developing and implementing a formalized, systemic student advocacy program will enhance achievement and success for all students.

Opportunity For Improvement

Develop, implement and monitor a systemic, systematic, inclusive and comprehensive professional development plan, including a training component for all staff in the analysis and use of data to inform instruction.

(Indicator 5.2, Indicator 5.3, Indicator 5.4, SF2. Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis, SP2. Test Administration, SP3. Quality of Learning, SP4. Equity of Learning)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.3

Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with district and school level staff indicated that the responsibility for progress monitoring was assigned to Instructional Support Specialists. Progress monitoring is included on the Appling County RtI Academic Intervention Plan and Schedules document, yet knowledge of the tier of interventions is not pervasive at the classroom level, as revealed during interviews.

A review of artifacts, statements during interviews and classroom observations indicated data may be used in the development of system and school level plans. However, use of data for instructional planning and differentiation of materials and instructional strategies was not apparent. The professional learning schedules

provided by each school indicated variance in the topics addressed and did not reveal an emphasis on disaggregation of data for instructional planning or differentiated strategies for instruction. Flex groups were mentioned at one elementary school, yet this instructional model was not visible in all classroom settings. Rather, most students were provided the same activities using the same strategies from group to group.

When asked about interventions, staff members reported that all students were using computer software, such as iLearn and MobyMax. Minimal references were made regarding adjustments in the use of these programs based on RtI levels. Read 180 and System 44 were some of the supports provided outside of the grade level content classroom. However, variations in instructional materials and methodologies were not observed during many classroom observations.

The College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) results for the system indicated that the achievement gap between the lowest quartile and the state, as well as achievement for students in the economically disadvantaged, English language learners and students with disabilities subgroups, is below state and subgroup targets for expected performance.

The Team found no evidence of a systemic plan for evaluating the effectiveness of professional learning or plans for technical assistance for schools and/or individuals. In addition, the Team found minimal evidence of program evaluation or focus walks.

Using differentiated instructional strategies will maximize access to the curriculum and provide teachers formative data for day-to-day adjustments to instruction. Expanding formative assessment data to include classroom assessments aligned with the Achievement Level Descriptors provided by the Georgia Department of Education will assist in determining progress toward mastery of the standards. Progress monitoring may be useful when conducted at intervals more frequently than the monthly examples discussed by staff during interview sessions.

Leadership Capacity

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution's progress towards its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution's leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its institutional purpose and direction, the effectiveness of governance and leadership to enable the institution to realize its stated objectives, the ability to engage and involve stakeholders in meaningful and productive ways, and the capacity to enact strategies to improve results of student 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 more than 32,000 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.

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 1 - Purpose and Direction

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	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	2.40	2.68
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.	3.00	2.68
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.	2.80	2.90
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.	2.80	2.65

Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	2.80	2.97
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	2.80	2.96
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.	2.20	3.17
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	3.00	3.03
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	3.40	2.74

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	2.80	2.70

Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

Stakeholder Feedback is the third of three primary areas of evaluation in AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. The AdvancED surveys (student, parent, and teacher) are directly correlated to the AdvancED 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, survey results, and the degree to which the institution analyzed and acted on the results.

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Questionnaire Administration	4.00	3.42
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	4.00	3.03

Findings

Improvement Priority

Indicator 1.1

Create, implement, document and monitor a comprehensive plan to review, revise and communicate the vision, mission and belief statements systemically and systematically, including all stakeholder groups in the process.

(Indicator 1.1)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.1

Evidence and Rationale

During school visits, the Team noted that the vision and mission statements were conspicuously posted throughout the schools. In addition, the Team found that the vision and mission statements were developed with input from numerous stakeholders from varied stakeholder groups. However, the Self Assessment stated, "While the mission and vision are a decade old, stakeholders collectively feel that it continues to encompass the overall purpose of our school system."

A review of artifacts and statements during interviews with various stakeholder groups at the school and district levels confirmed that both statements had existed for many years, with no well-defined process in place for review. Rather, it appeared that very little discussion occurred systemically regarding the purpose and direction of the system on a regular basis. Stakeholders shared that the system did not have a process in place to systematically review the vision and mission of the system. The Team found no evidence of agendas or meeting minutes to suggest the review and possible revision of the statements.

Engaging all stakeholder groups in developing the vision, mission and belief statements for the system will ensure that the school system's focus is aligned with the needs of the community, as community needs often change. Such action would also enhance camaraderie and "buy-in" from stakeholders in helping the system to realize its goals.

Improvement Priority

Review and revise current hiring practices regarding the composition of interview committees to ensure that board members do not inadvertently interfere with the day-to-day operations of the system.

(Indicator 2.3)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.3

Evidence and Rationale

A review of artifacts and interviews with various stakeholder groups revealed that board members participate on interview committees when administrative personnel are hired. In reviewing the Appling County Hiring Procedures Manual, under the section entitled, "Stage One – Orientation and Initial Preparation," the Team noted the following statement: "Administrator level positions will include a minimum of three community stakeholders (parent and/or community representatives), one board of education member, one internal employee and the hiring manager."

The Team was also informed by various stakeholder groups that board members assisted in the selection of coaches. As head of the school system, the superintendent is responsible for making personnel recommendations to the Board during regularly scheduled board meetings. Board members will have the opportunity to question the superintendent either in open and/or closed sessions before voting on a candidate for employment. The inclusion of board members on school or district interview teams may be viewed as the governing body misunderstanding the difference between its roles and responsibilities and those of system and school leadership.

Reviewing and revising current hiring policies and procedures will protect board members from actions that may be construed as board interference in the day-to-day operations of the system and/or schools. Ensuring that board members and the superintendent understand and execute their respective roles with fidelity will enhance the efficacy of district operations and increase the focus on students.

Resource Utilization

The use and distribution of resources must be aligned and supportive of the needs of an institution and the students served. Institutions must ensure that resources are aligned with the stated mission and are distributed equitably so that the needs of students are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes an examination of the allocation and use of resources, the equity of resource distribution to need, the ability of the institution to ensure appropriate levels of funding and sustainability of resources, as well as evidence of long-range capital and resource planning effectiveness.

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 more than 32,000 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 and ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
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.	2.00	2.87
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.	3.00	2.87
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	3.00	3.06
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	2.20	2.76

This report is pending final approval by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

© 2017 Advance Education, Inc. All rights reserved unless otherwise granted by written agreement.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	2.20	2.73
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	2.60	2.72
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.	2.20	2.58
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.	2.20	2.60

Findings

Improvement Priority

Review and refine current hiring procedures to ensure they promote the diversity of instructional and administrative staffs systemwide.

(Indicator 4.1)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.1

Evidence and Rationale

The Quality Assurance Review Report for the AdvancED External Review conducted on March 25 – 28, 2012, included the following Required Action for the Appling County School System.

“Required Action 1 – Develop personnel procedures to include the following:

A plan that focuses recruitment and retention efforts to identify teaching and administrative candidates who mirror the demographics of the system.

A succession plan to address the anticipated retirement of a significant number of administrative, instructional and classified personnel.”

The current External Review Team found that the system developed a Hiring Procedures Manual that indicates a process to hire and retain personnel. However, procedures found within the manual could preclude minority (and other) candidates from consideration for employment. For example, Section 4C of the Administrative Procedure for Filling Personnel Vacancies states: “The applicant’s State of Georgia Educator Certificate(s) and any other required license or certificate for a position are to be included with the online application. Incomplete applications that do not include a copy of required State of Georgia Educator Certificate(s) and/or other required license or certificate will be disqualified, due to failure to meet minimum requirements.”

The current process may inadvertently disqualify minority applicants as well as other highly qualified potential candidates. It is possible that recent graduates may not have certification, final degrees conferred, or their Teacher Portfolios readily available when applying for positions. During the Superintendent's Overview presentation, the Team was informed that hiring and retaining teachers is a challenge for the system. These procedures may be hampering recruitment efforts.

In addition, statements during interviews with staff and parents suggested that the system had not made concerted efforts to recruit instructional and administrative candidates who mirror the demographics of the system. Stakeholders were unclear regarding the colleges and/or universities visited or the composition of teacher recruitment teams.

Reviewing, refining and implementing the current recruitment plan with fidelity could increase the pool of minority applicants and, ultimately, the number of qualified minority teachers and administrators.

The system has developed and implemented a succession plan to address anticipated retirements. The Team recommends that implementation of the plan be reviewed and monitored to ensure that qualified minority staff are being prepared for both administrative and instructional positions.

Opportunity For Improvement

Establish, implement and monitor an annual comprehensive process for evaluating support systems that address the physical, social, emotional and counseling needs of the students.

(Indicator 4.7, Indicator 4.8)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.7

Evidence and Rationale

A review of the system's Self Assessment and other artifacts revealed that numerous programs and services were available to meet the physical, social, emotional, counseling and other needs of students. Parent and student survey results verified the provision of numerous services to meet students' needs. However, statements during interview sessions indicated that services and programs offered were not consistent from school to school.

The Team found a list of multiple agencies that provided support services to the students. However, program effectiveness through evaluation was not provided. Statements during interviews and a review of assessment data did not reflect any evidence of an evaluation process to determine the efficacy of services provided. Further review of documents revealed minimal evidence of program evaluations.

Employing a comprehensive evaluation process will assure equal access for all students to all programs, based on students' needs, while ensuring system funds are spent appropriately when services are provided by an external agency.

Conclusion

The Appling County School System has established a positive, caring culture in its efforts to fulfill its mission of "providing a quality education that promotes maximum individual achievement and social responsibility." When asked to provide one-word descriptors of the system, stakeholders responded with such terms as "teamwork, home, support, family, positive, unified, second home, proud, satisfaction, servant-oriented, blessed, happy, compassionate, opportunistic, caring, future, thoughtful, supportive, cohesive, accountable, unity, grateful, fortunate, outstanding, resourceful, friendly, family-oriented, accommodating, unique, committed, safe, collaborative, transparent, diverse, inclusive, encouraging, amazing, mentoring, dedicated, persistent, one team, data-driven, purposeful, team, cohesive, teamwork, genuine, dynamic, a blessing."

Themes that emerged during the review focused on the collection of data, the system's communication efforts and collaboration systemwide. Strengths of the system include the collaboration and camaraderie of the staff systemically; the cleanliness and maintenance of the facilities; community involvement through the System's Stakeholder Meetings; and the varied business and community partnerships established.

The system developed a Strategic Plan in 2013. Staff indicated that the strategic planning process was a collaborative effort, including board members, administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members to determine the system's greatest needs and discuss possible solutions. Three strategic goals were established: student achievement, internal processes and building positive relations. Support staff were involved in the implementation phase of the plan.

Although three of the current board members began their service in January of 2017, all stakeholder groups viewed the Board as positive and supportive. School, system and community stakeholders shared feelings of confidence that the new board members had no hidden agendas and were interested in the welfare of all students.

A spirit of collaboration was pervasive systemwide. During a 2015 summer training session, teachers were informed that they "would complete a day-by-day learning plan during collaborative planning throughout the year as they plan the instruction, activities, and assessments that fit the needs of their own students and teaching styles."

The foundation for professional learning communities (PLCs) has been established. Expanding the use of PLCs would enhance opportunities for all teachers and support staff to receive professional learning in curriculum alignment and data analysis to inform instruction.

The system describes itself as "data-driven" and has introduced progress monitoring and formative measures as part of the assessment program. These measures are in addition to state-mandated summative assessments. Even though the system is inundated with assessment results, all instructional and support staff need to understand how assessment results should drive student differentiation activities, curricular pacing and adjustments and the development of school improvement plans.

Additional data sources, including attendance, discipline and climate surveys, should be considered in developing improvement plans for both the system and schools. Performance and perception data should inform the on-going monitoring and evaluation of improvement plans and program evaluation.

Perhaps the system's greatest challenge is budget constraints due to less state funding. The decrease in funding has resulted in major concerns for the system. The retirement rate of certified staff is increasing. Although the system has developed and implemented an employee Succession Plan, the lack of competitive salaries minimizes the chances of attracting, hiring and retaining highly qualified certified teachers. Class sizes have increased and some programs were eliminated. District staff stated that the system has not provided pay raises in eight years, with some pay scales being frozen since 2012.

Statements from several staff members indicated that the workload is sometimes overwhelming, placing high demands on a few employees. Many stakeholders believed the low salaries played a significant role in the loss of staff. Administrative staff confirmed that staff members have resigned due to low salaries. One administrator stated, "It's a challenge with the low salaries for staff."

The Team has identified six Improvement Priorities, focusing on implementing a student advocacy program; aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment; evaluating learning support services; developing a comprehensive plan with the vision and mission of the system; and reviewing the system's hiring practices. The implementation of these established priorities will serve as a foundation for the continued growth and development of the system. The Team encourages system and school leaders to continue to work collaboratively to realize their vision of "becoming a system of excellence for all learners."

Improvement Priorities

The institution should use the findings from this review to guide the continuous improvement process. The institution must address the Improvement Priorities listed below:

- Develop, implement and monitor a systemic process to provide guidance and direction for educators in the horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment.
- Indicator 1.1
Create, implement, document and monitor a comprehensive plan to review, revise and communicate the vision, mission and belief statements systemically and systematically, including all stakeholder groups in the process.
- Indicator 3.12
Provide, coordinate and evaluate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of all students.
- Indicator 3.9
Develop, implement and evaluate a systemic student advocacy program to ensure that each student is well-known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school.
- Review and refine current hiring procedures to ensure they promote the diversity of instructional and administrative staffs systemwide.
- Review and revise current hiring practices regarding the composition of interview committees to ensure

that board members do not inadvertently interfere with the day-to-day operations of the system.

Accreditation Recommendation

Index of Education Quality

The Index of Education Quality (IEQ™) provides a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of indicators and evaluative criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus.

The IEQ™ comprises three domains: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; and 3) the use of resources and data to support and optimize learning.

The overall and domain scores can range from 100-400. The domain scores are derived from: the AdvancED Standards and indicators ratings; results of the Analysis of Student Performance; and data from Stakeholder Feedback Surveys (students, parents, and staff).

	External Review IEQ Score	AdvancED Network Average
Overall Score	269.27	278.94
Teaching and Learning Impact	261.90	268.48
Leadership Capacity	300.00	293.71
Resource Utilization	242.50	286.27

The IEQ™ results include information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria as well as to other institutions in the AdvancED Network. The institution should use the information in this report, including the corresponding performance rubrics, to identify specific areas of improvement.

Consequently, the External Review Team recommends to the AdvancED Accreditation Commission that the institution earn the distinction of accreditation for a five-year term. AdvancED will review the results of the External Review to make a final determination including the appropriate next steps for the institution in response to these findings.

Addenda

Individual Institution Results (Self-reported)

Institution Name	Teaching and Learning Impact	Leadership Capacity	Resource Utilization	Overall IEQ Score
Altamaha Elementary School	290.48	345.45	300.00	307.69
Appling County Elementary School	300.00	318.18	300.00	305.13
Appling County High School	323.81	300.00	314.29	315.38
Appling County Middle School	328.57	327.27	342.86	330.77
Appling County Primary School	280.95	318.18	228.57	282.05
Fourth District Elementary School	366.67	381.82	228.57	346.15

Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Rozalyne P Wright	Dr. Rozalyne P. Wright, Education and Diversity Consultant, earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Spanish from Bethune-Cookman College (University) in Daytona Beach, Florida; her master's degree in administration from the University of Tampa; and a doctorate in educational leadership from Nova Southeastern University. She began her educational career in 1972 as a classroom teacher at R. B. Cox Elementary School in Dade City, Florida. Her 17 years of experience at Cox Elementary School included classroom teacher, migrant language arts resource teacher, assistant principal, and principal. In 1989, she relocated to Highlands County, serving as coordinator of personnel and director of elementary and federal programs. In March 2001, she was employed by the Collier County School Board as director of diversity prior to assuming responsibilities as executive assistant to the superintendent. She retired from the Collier County School District in 2008 and, subsequently, established ZORAD Consultative Services, LLC. She provides contracted services for AdvancED and supervises interns for several universities.
Ms. Debbie Fountain	Mrs. Fountain is the Curriculum Director with the Jenkins County School System. She has 27 years of professional experience. Previous work experiences include elementary school assistant principal, GNETS program coordinator, and school social worker. College affiliations are with East Georgia State College, Georgia Southern University, and the University of Georgia. Mrs. Fountain has served as the Jenkins County System Facilitator for two district accreditation cycles and as an External Review Team Member and Associate Lead Evaluator on several AdvancED ERTs. Special interests include the Continuous Improvement Cycle and the unique challenges facing rural school districts, including school funding and program equity.
Dr. Michael E. Lodico	Michael Lodico spent 31 years in the public schools of North Carolina, serving as teacher, curriculum specialist, school administrator, regional center consultant, and central office director. He retired as assistant superintendent for curriculum of Asheville City Schools in 2008. He has degrees from Cornell University and Western Carolina University. His doctoral dissertation (2003) was a study of the characteristics of most improved high schools in North Carolina. He has worked as a Lead Evaluator for AdvancED since 2010, leading review teams in 14 states.
Dr. Russ Chesser	<p>Dr. Russ Chesser has been an educator for 23 years having served as a Teacher and Coach at Charlton County High School for seven years. Dr. Chesser has also served as an Assistant Principal for 6 years and as a Principal at all three levels for 10 years at various schools/districts across the state of Georgia. Dr. Chesser earned a Bachelors Degree in Middle Grades Education from Armstrong Atlantic State University, Masters in Educational Leadership from Valdosta State University and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University.</p> <p>Prior to starting his educational career, Dr. Chesser served on active duty with the U.S. Air Force for four years. He also served as a citizen soldier with the Florida Air National Guard for seven years and the Air Force Reserves for seven years.</p> <p>There is no greater calling than shaping the lives of our future citizens!</p>

Member	Brief Biography
Mr. Chalmus S. Thomas	Chalmus is a graduate of Florida A and M University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Education and a Master in Educational Administration. Administrative positions held include Curriculum Coordinator, Assistant Principal, and Principal. Mr. Thomas has participated in a number of school and system external reviews and even though retired, he continues his association with AdvancED SACS CASI in that role. He also works with schools and school systems as a consultant on classroom management and student discipline. In addition, he occasionally mentors under-achieving and at-risk students in Leon County Schools, Florida.
Dr. Valerie Whitehead	Dr. Valerie Whitehead currently serves as the Executive Director for Assessment and Accountability for Glynn County Schools in Brunswick, GA. She has twenty-nine years as an educator and all in Glynn County Schools. During this time, Dr. Whitehead served as a teacher of students with disabilities for 18 years and then transitioned into several school-based instructional roles prior to her current district level position. She earned a Bachelors Degree in Mental Retardation from Georgia Southern University in 1988 and continued my education through this institution earning a Masters Degree (1991) and Specialist Degree (1993) in Specific Learning Disabilities. Dr. Whitehead's doctoral degree was earned in Instructional Leadership through Argosy University's Sarasota, FL campus in 2010 after successful completion of an action research study involving teacher and student development. In addition to assigned duties, Valerie enjoys teaching professional learning courses with the most recent including Gifted endorsement courses and Cultural Diversity training.

Next Steps

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with 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. Consider the Opportunities for Improvement identified throughout the report that are provided by the team in the spirit of continuous improvement and the institution's commitment to improving its capacity to improve student learning.
4. Develop action plans to address the Improvement Priorities identified by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward addressing the Improvement Priorities.
5. Use the report to guide and strengthen the institution's efforts to improve student performance and system effectiveness.
6. Following the External Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the Improvement Priorities. Institutions are required to respond to all Improvement Priorities. 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 address the Improvement Priorities. The accreditation status will be reviewed and acted upon based on the responses to the Improvement Priorities and the resulting improvement.
7. Continue to meet the AdvancED Standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

About AdvancED

AdvancED is the world leader in providing improvement and accreditation services to education providers of all types in their pursuit of excellence in serving students. AdvancED serves as a trusted partner to more than 32,000 public and private schools and school systems – enrolling more than 20 million students - across the United States and 70 countries.

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 became part of AdvancED.

Today, NCA CASI, NWAC and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. The Accreditation Divisions of AdvancED share research-based quality standards that cross school system, state, regional, national, and international boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified and consistent process designed to engage educational institutions in continuous improvement.

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.
- Horng, 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.