Report of the
External Review
for
Colquitt County School System

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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	2.69

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.	• Interviews • Governing body policies, procedures, and practices • District purpose statements - past and present • Documentation or description of the process for creating the district's purpose including the role of stakeholders • 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) • Copy of strategic plan referencing the district purpose and direction and its effectiveness • Accreditation Report • Communication plan to stakeholders regarding the district's purpose	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.	• Agendas and/or minutes that reference a commitment to the components of the schools' purpose statements • 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 • Examples of written stakeholder communications or marketing materials that portray the school purpose and direction • Accreditation Report • Interviews	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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.	• Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders about educational programs and equitable learning experiences • 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 • Accreditation Report • Statements or documents about ethical and professional practices • 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	3.0

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.	• 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 • Professional development plans and implementation timelines on topics related to equity, organizational effectiveness, and improved instruction and programs • Agenda, minutes from continuous improvement planning meetings • Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders • The district data profile • The district strategic plan	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.	• Interviews • Staff handbooks • Accreditation Report • Communications to stakeholder about policy revisions • School handbooks • Online Board Policy Manual	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	• Governing authority minutes relating to training • Proof of legal counsel • Governing authority training plan • Accreditation Report • Findings of internal and external reviews of compliance with laws, regulations, and policies • Observations • Interviews • Governing authority policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest • Governing code of ethics	4.0
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.	• Communications regarding governing authority actions • District strategic plan • Examples of school improvement plans • Roles and responsibilities of school leadership • Roles and responsibilities of district leadership • Interviews • 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	4.0

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.	• 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 • Examples of decisions in support of the schools' continuous improvement plans • Examples of improvement efforts and innovations in the educational programs • Examples of decisions aligned with the district's purpose and direction • Accreditation Report	3.0
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	• 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 • Communication plan • Involvement of stakeholders in district strategic plan	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	• 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 • Supervision and evaluation documents with criteria for improving professional practice throughout the system and student success noted	3.0

Powerful Practices   *Indicator*

1. The Colquitt County School Board and superintendent have internalized the required training and function as a cohesive unit who operate responsibly.

   Interviews with board members, system and school level administrators, community members, and parents indicate the Colquitt County Board of Education (CCBOE) works cooperatively, responsibly and effectively to support and facilitate the efforts of the superintendent and his staff to improve student achievement. Board member participation in Georgia School Board Association (GSBA) Governance Training has enabled them to evaluate their decisions in accordance with their defined roles and responsibilities. Annual professional learning attended by all board members and the superintendent ensures a review of the policies and facilitates maintaining a high level of ethical behavior. Stakeholder groups interviewed revealed a positive perception of the CCBOE and CCSS Administration. One comment made during the interviews by a stakeholder was, "Our board and administrators have integrity and high morals." Additionally, the CCBOE met the criteria established by the GSBA to earn Quality Board status in December 2013. When the governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively, student performance and system effectiveness are promoted.

   2.2

2. The governing body protects and respects the autonomy of system and school leadership to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations.

   As evidenced through interviews, board meeting agendas, board policies, the systematic approach with the Fanning Institute to gain stakeholder input, and administrative regulations, the governing body actively supports and respects the leadership's responsibility to accomplish the goals for improvement in teaching and learning, as well as manage day-to-day operations of the system and its schools. Furthermore, efforts are focused on maintaining a clear distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the board of education and those of system and school administrators. Through a systematic and defined process, the governing board and each individual member participate in formal professional development conducted by GSBA and RESA that is comprehensive as it addresses the roles and responsibilities of the governing body. Stakeholder interviews indicated the board is perceived as functioning as a cohesive unit and follows appropriate laws and regulations. Additionally, the board of education has an established process for maintaining a comprehensive and up to date policy manual which effectively guides its decision-making and responsibilities. A clear delineation of responsibilities allows leadership to deal effectively with issues and concerns and ultimately to concentrate efforts on student achievement and overall organizational effectiveness.

   2.3

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.	• Interviews • Course, program, or school schedules • Student work across courses or programs • Survey results • Lesson plans • Observations • 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	2.0
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.	• Curriculum guides • Accreditation Report • Common assessments • Standards-based report cards • Surveys results • Observations • Interviews • Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices • Curriculum writing process • Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps • Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	• 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 • Surveys results • 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 • Interdisciplinary projects	2.0
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	• Curriculum maps • Accreditation Report • Supervision and evaluation procedures • Documentation of collection of lesson plans, grade books, or other data record systems • Peer or mentoring opportunities and interactions • Surveys results • 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	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	• Observations • Common language, protocols and reporting tools • Agendas and minutes of collaborative learning committees • Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings • Survey results • Interviews • Evidence of informal conversations that reflect collaboration about student learning • Examples of cross curricular or program projects, interdisciplinary instruction, and classroom action research projects • Accreditation Report	3.0
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	• Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance • Survey results • Examples of assessments that prompted modification in instruction • Interviews • Accreditation Report	3.0
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	• Accreditation Report • Interviews • Professional learning calendar with activities for instructional support of new staff	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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.	• Performance-based report cards • 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	3.0
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.	• Accreditation Report • Survey results • Interviews	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.	• Interviews • Sample communications to stakeholders about grading and reporting • Accreditation Report • Sample report cards for each program or grade level and for all courses and programs • Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting	2.0
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	• Survey results • District professional development plan involving the district and all schools • Brief explanation of alignment between professional learning and identified needs • Accreditation Report • Interviews	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	- List of learning support services and student population served by such services - Interviews - Accreditation Report - Observations - Training and professional learning related to research on unique characteristics of learning - Data used to identify unique learning needs of students	2.0

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.	• 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 • Assessments of staffing needs • Documentation of highly qualified staff • Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement and retention of professional and support staff for the district and schools	3.0

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.	• Observations • Examples of school schedules • District quality assurance procedures showing district oversight of schools pertaining to school resources • Accreditation Report • Examples of efforts of school leaders to secure necessary material and fiscal resources • Examples of school calendars • Interviews • Alignment of school budgets with school purpose and direction • Alignment of district budget with district purpose and direction • District strategic plan showing resources support for district	3.0
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	• District quality control procedures showing the monitoring of compliance with district expectations for school facilities and learning environments • Interviews • Observations • Accreditation Report • Example systems for school maintenance requests • Survey results • Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements • Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments • Example maintenance schedules for schools • Example school records of depreciation of equipment	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	• District strategic plan showing the areas of budget, facilities, quality control, and other strategic systems • District quality control procedures showing the monitoring of compliance with district expectations for school facilities, learning environments • Evaluation results of the effectiveness of the district strategic plan or indicators of changes resulting in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategic plan • Interviews • Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments • Accreditation Report • Observations	3.0
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	• Evaluation procedures and results of education resources • Interviews • Accreditation Report • District education delivery model intended for school implementation including media and information resources to support the education program • Data on media and information resources available to students and staff • Schedule of staff availability to assist students and school personnel related to finding and retrieving information	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	• 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 • Survey results • District technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure for the district-level and school-level • District quality control procedures that monitor the effectiveness of technology services at the district-level and school-level • Assessments to inform development of district and school technology plans • 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 • Examples of school-level technology plans and budgets to improve technology services and infrastructure to students and staff • Observations	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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.	• Interviews • Student assessment system for identifying student needs • Accreditation Report • Schedule of family services, e.g., parent classes, survival skills • Social classes and services, e.g., bullying, character education • List of support services available to students	3.0
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.	• 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 • District quality assurance procedures that monitor program effectiveness of student support services • Interviews • Description of referral process	3.0

Powerful Practices   *Indicator*

1.   Colquitt County School System maintains excellent facilities and support services to provide clean and healthy teaching and learning environments.   4.3

Over the past ten years all thirteen schools in the system have had construction and/or renovation. The last project is in the construction phase with completion of the new high school scheduled for 2015. The Self Assessment, interviews of all stakeholders, and visits to the schools validated the system's plan to elevate the standard of the system's facilities. The Board's successful passage of three consecutive Educational Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST) referenda to fund the construction/renovation of facilities further verifies the community's commitment to providing excellent facilities. The facilities are maintained by an outstanding maintenance and operations staff that are all certified in their areas.

Interviews with system personnel and community stakeholders praised the School Nutrition Program and their recent approval as a Community Eligibility Provision program allowing all students in grades pre-k though nine to receive free meals during the school day. Wrap-around services at both the system and school levels were proudly described by stakeholders at all levels. The interviewees indicated partnerships with various organizations are designed to help students be successful physically, emotionally and mentally. The Self Assessment corroborated by interviews with system personnel and community stakeholders described a strong collaboration with the YMCA that provides after-school child care, swim lessons for elementary students, and mentoring. In addition, the system employs a nurse at each school and ten social workers for the thirteen schools, as well as two Hispanic translators to support the growing Hispanic population. Grant opportunities are aggressively pursued to provide additional funding for student learning. The district had just been awarded Georgia's Striving Reader Comprehensive Literacy Grant for K-5 which was almost $2,000,000. Plans were being discussed to seek another grant source for funds to better serve children birth to preschool age. When an organization adopts clear and high expectations for maintaining safety, cleanliness, and a healthy environment, as well as offering a wide array of student support services, the system's goals and objectives for student learning can be more easily obtained.

Opportunities for Improvement   *Indicator*

1.   Provide the infrastructure and instructional technology equipment needed to support the system's goal for twenty-first century classrooms.   4.6

The system has provided a technology infrastructure and equipment for the schools in the system. However, interviews of the various stakeholder groups, the Self Assessment, and visits to the schools indicate the need to improve the infrastructure and increase band width in several of the schools. Principals stated that if they had five iPads in each classroom their servers would crash. One school of over 1300 students has only one computer lab. Another school with approximately 600 students has twenty iPads on a cart and ten iPads in the media center that can be checked out. Teachers at one school are requesting any computers or laptops that are being replaced by newer ones in other schools. System personnel indicate the development and implementation of a new plan for technology that will hopefully be funded through an upcoming ESPLOST referendum. The Director of Technology stated that in designing twenty-first century classrooms the focus will not be "one size fits all" but recognition of differing needs for various content and instructional strategies needed to teach that content. System personnel acknowledged the need for a "refresh" plan to accommodate the needs of our rapidly changing technological world. Maintenance of a fully functioning infrastructure and up-to-date instructional technology equipment are necessary to achieve the system's goal of providing technology necessary to support twenty-first century student learning.

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.	• 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 • 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	2.0
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.	• Observations • Accreditation Report • Survey results • Examples of changes to the district strategic plan based on data results • 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.	• Accreditation Report • Professional learning schedule specific to the use of data • Survey results • Observations • Training materials specific to the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data • 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.	• Interviews • Accreditation Report • Examples of use of results to evaluate continuous improvement action plans • Observations • Evidence of student growth	2.0
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.	• Accreditation Report • Communication plan regarding student learning, systems that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders • Sample communications to stakeholders regarding student learning, conditions that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals • Examples of district marketing tools and websites that cite student achievement results or that make promises regarding student achievement • Executive summaries of student learning reports to stakeholder groups • Interviews	3.0

Opportunities for Improvement	*Indicator*

1. Design and implement systematic processes and procedures for collecting, analyzing, and applying all formative and summative data to be used to improve student learning.

   5.2

   The Self Study pointed out numerous areas of concern in regard to systematic processes and procedures for collecting, analyzing, and applying learning from all data sources. It was noted that many courses in K-2 and high school are not assessed through criterion referenced tests or end-of-course tests. Administrators and teachers discussed the need for additional system-wide benchmarks for all subjects and grade-levels. Some interviews revealed a lack of consistency in benchmarks across schools and grade levels. Even though a study of grading procedures had been conducted in recent years, many staff members shared concerns over the inconsistency across schools. Observations and interviews did substantiate the collection, analysis, and application of data at the local schools. Yet, these procedures were not systematic. Trends are reviewed at some local schools, but trends in data are not consistently analyzed and compared as a system in Colquitt County. Even though the curriculum and instruction personnel meet annually to develop and implement improvement plans, a more formalized evaluation of improvement is needed. Teachers expressed a need for professional learning by content areas to analyze data, identify problematic areas, and discuss implementation of assessments with fidelity. Vertical alignment is developing but many staff members feel it is inconsistent across the system and schools. Numerous staff members cited the need for universal screeners that provide valid and reliable common assessment of students. As staff members continuously collect, analyze, and apply learning from a range of data sources, student learning, instruction, program effectiveness, and the conditions that support learning will improve.
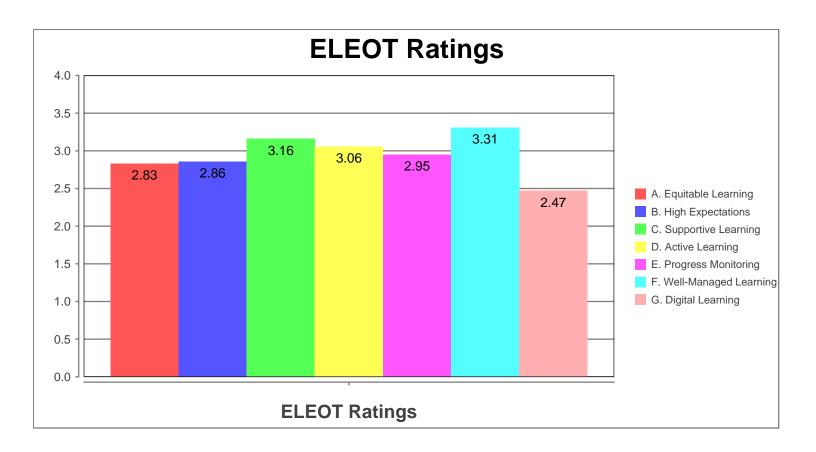
2. Develop written and shared assessment procedures to produce verifiable and continuous student learning improvement that leads to student readiness for successful performance at the next level.

   5.4

   The Curriculum and Instruction Division has established four "non-negotiables" for all schools in the system to give direction to an effective instructional model. These non-negotiables include the important components of Standards-Based Classrooms, Balanced Assessments, Common Planning, and Response to Intervention. All of these components demonstrate a need for collecting consistent data and are evidence of the efforts the system has outlined for arriving at a fully implemented effective instructional model. Because the organization recognized the need to better prepare students for readiness at the next level, they submitted an application for the Striving Readers Grant. They just received notification during the External Review that they were successful in securing the $1.9 million endeavor for grades K-5. Interviews revealed that the College and Career Readiness Initiative discussed by staff at all levels must be supported by a foundation of grade level preparation to begin in pre-k through all grade levels. Having well-developed plans and procedures for instructional outcomes, learning activities, materials, resources, and assessments contributes to student readiness for successful performance at the next level.

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.

ELEOT Ratings

Item	Rating
A. Equitable Learning	2.83
B. High Expectations	2.86
C. Supportive Learning	3.16
D. Active Learning	3.06
E. Progress Monitoring	2.95
F. Well-Managed Learning	3.31
G. Digital Learning	2.47

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	4.0
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	4.0
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	4.0

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
Charlie A Gray Jr. High School	2.27	1.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.0
Colquitt County High School	3.06	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Cox Elementary School	2.36	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Doerun Elementary School	2.85	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	1.0
Funston Elementary School	2.47	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Hamilton Elementary School	2.71	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Jackie R. Stringfellow Elementary School	2.65	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Norman Park Elementary School	2.6	3.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Okapilco Elementary School	2.69	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
R. B. Wright Elementary School	3.02	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Sunset Elementary School	2.98	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Willie J. Williams Middle School	2.52	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0

Other System Institutions

The following institutions did not complete the required Accreditation Report for this External Review.

Institution	Institution
Jim Mack Odom Elementary School	

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.

The External Review Team was provided the Executive Summary, the Self-Assessment, and numerous other documents in ASSIST prior to the visit on February 23-26, 2014. Documentation was also provided prior to the on-site review through an electronic link to Colquitt County's AdvancED collection of artifacts and documents sorted by standards. A thumb drive was also mailed to each team member in case anyone had problems accessing the data through the link. During the on-site portion of the review, the team also collected and analyzed data from interviews with 208 persons and conducted sixty-two classroom observations. The school system was prepared and organized for the review and open and honest in its self-appraisal as powerful practices, challenges and opportunities for improvement were duly noted. Colquitt County Schools viewed the review process as a way to validate and recognize the system's current improvement efforts, as well as provide valuable feedback for the continuous improvement efforts that permeate the system.

AdvancED's six person External Review Team, with three out-of-state and three in-state members, arrived in Moultrie, Georgia, on Sunday afternoon, February 23, 2014, and finalized the oral report at approximately 4:00pm on Wednesday, February 26, 2014. Colquitt County Schools were well-prepared as the system contact was in constant communication with the team's Lead Evaluator to ensure readiness of all aspects of the review. All necessary documents were completed with fidelity; all schedules were developed and reviewed; and all necessary arrangements had been made. During the review, the External Review Team was able to interview five of six board members, thirty-five district and school level leadership team members including the superintendent for a total of fourteen district-level and twenty-one school-level personnel, eighty-eight teachers and support staff, forty-seven students, and twenty-seven parents and community representatives for a total of 208 persons interviewed. Team members also observed sixty-two classrooms. The External Review Team members had all information that was needed to complete the review and were able to visit seven of the district's thirteen schools. Colquitt County Schools adhered to the accreditation process completely and with much enthusiasm. The leadership, hard work, and cooperation by system administrators, teachers and staff were evident as they were well-prepared for the external review process.

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.

Colquitt County School System is committed to its vision of having all schools become "Schools of Excellence." Artifact reviews, discussions with stakeholders and classroom observations verified the organization's commitment to its mission of being committed to the daily pursuit of excellence in student achievement while working with parents and the community to serve the needs of all children in a positive and safe environment. Staff members were aware of the vision and supported the system's purpose and direction. Their logo tagline, "Each Day-Excellence in Every Way," is on many of their publications and is displayed proudly throughout the school system.

The system leadership established a Strategic Plan based on an external audit by The Fanning Institute of the University of Georgia in the fall of 2012. While the plan includes five goals, strategies, responsibilities, action steps, resources and timelines, no benchmarks were identified to provide measurement for evaluation of all efforts. Even the system leadership posed the question of "How will we monitor ourselves?" Therefore, a Required Action for Standard One was, "Establish a systematic evaluation process to ensure alignment, implementation, and monitoring of all continuous improvement efforts at the system and school levels to increase student achievement."

Because the governing board of Colquitt County School System has established that leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations so effectively, this area of governance and leadership yielded clear results in organizational effectiveness. Policy governance consistently guides all board actions as the governing board functions with clearly defined authority and responsibility. Training has been internalized by the Colquitt County School Board and the superintendent as verified through interviews with many different stakeholder groups. The team often heard comments about the integrity and high morals of the board. In December of 2013, the Colquitt County Board of Education earned "Quality Board" status with the Georgia School Board Association.

Colquitt County School System has experienced academic growth during recent years, and the overall graduation rate has increased from 47% in 2000 to 86% in 2013. The five-year trend data for the standardized testing in Georgia (CRCT) revealed slight changes from year to year for Colquitt County students. CRCT Math scores ranged from 70% in grade 3 to 89% in grade 8 meeting or exceeding expectations. CRCT reading scores ranged from 91% in grade 3 to 97% in grade 8 meeting or exceeding expectations. Science and social studies achievement levels were not as high with social studies being lowest at grade 6 with 69% and highest at grade 7 with 84%, while science was lowest at grade 6 with 65% and highest at grade 8 with 83% meeting or exceeding expectations in 2012-2013. End of course tests in 2012-2013 ranged from a low of 58% for Mathematics 11 to a high of 87% in Ninth Grade Literature meeting or exceeding expectations. Colquitt County had an all-time high of 96% meeting the writing standards on the Georgia High School Writing Test in grade 11. As the system continues to focus efforts on continuous improvement of student learning and system effectiveness, they need to create and implement a plan to systematically monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout all levels of the school system, utilizing data as the focal point for all instructional decision-making.

While professional development has occurred in several areas, overall areas of need that drive the plan did not surface in interviews and classroom observations. There was a listing of professional learning activities but no systematic professional development plan aligned with the district's strategic plan. The Required Action offered in this area was, "Develop, implement, and systematically evaluate a comprehensive professional learning plan for all staff that reflects the purpose of the system with regard to teaching, learning, and assessments to improve instructional practices and student learning."

Ninety-seven percent of the staff in Colquitt County are highly qualified and sixty-eight percent have earned advanced degrees. The central office has reorganized to now have a Division of Curriculum and Instruction. Two district curriculum directors along with two system-wide instructional coaches, three instructional support specialists, three instructional technology specialists, and gifted and special education department support work with curriculum-focused administrators at the schools to provide more instructional expertise and support in the areas of teaching and learning.

Colquitt County School System provides excellent facilities and a wide array of student support services as a part of their commitment to having safe, clean, and healthy learning environments for all students and staff. Student enrollment has increased from 8609 students in 2005-2006 to 9550 in 2013-2014. Demographics have changed with the percentage of Whites decreasing from 61% to 45%, the percentage of Blacks decreasing from 34% to 27%, and the Hispanic population increasing from 5% to 25% over a twenty-year period. In response to increased enrollment and programs, as well as the growing numbers of English as second Language (ESOL) students, the system is to be commended on its strategic resource management, its aggressive building plans and extensive student support services. Over a ten-year period, every school has had construction and/or renovation, and a new high school is currently under construction. Interpreters have been hired to work with the ESOL students and their families. Each school has a school nurse, and ten social workers serve the students and their families of Colquitt County. Technology equipment and infrastructure have been provided but a "refresh" plan is needed to accommodate the needs of the rapidly growing technological world. To support the system's goal for twenty-first century classrooms, increased band width, more infrastructure, and equipment are needed.

Colquitt County's commitment to continuous improvement is evidenced by their analysis of such assessments as Georgia's state tests (CRCT) at grades three through eight, the state Writing Test at grades five and eight, the Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test in grade eleven, the End-of-Course Tests (EOCT), Dibels in the elementary grades, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) in grades three, five, and eight, and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Fast Forword, Dreambox Learning, Differentiation Toolbox, ThinkGate, and Desire 2 Learn are yet other assessments used at various schools to target areas needing improvement. Even with all of these assessments, the staff realizes a need for consistency in benchmarks across schools and grade levels and a more formalized process for collecting, analyzing, and applying data at local schools. Opportunities for improvement suggested by the External Review Team include: 1)the design and implementation of systematic processes and procedures for collecting, analyzing, and applying all formative and summative data to be used to improve student learning and 2) the development of written and shared procedures to produce verifiable and continuous student learning improvement that leads to student readiness for successful performance at the next level.

The following themes and /or trends emerged as part of the External Review Team's professional deliberations:
*Cohesiveness of the board
*A board that protects and respects the autonomy of system and school leadership
*Commitment to continuous improvement
*Excellent facilities
*An array of student support services

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 External Review Team conducted sixty-two classroom observations throughout the district. Using data from these observations, the team evaluated the quality of instruction and learning that took place classified around the seven constructs or environments: equity, high expectations, support, active engagement, progress monitoring and feedback, classroom management and digital learning. There are thirteen school sites in the system with ten elementary schools, one middle school, one junior high school, and one high school. The team was able to

observe for a minimum of twenty minutes each, sixty-two classroom environments representing the various grade levels at seven of the thirteen schools. The two strongest areas (learning environments) observed were: 1) a well-managed learning environment where classroom rules were followed, students interacted respectfully with teachers and peers, and knew the routines and behavior expectations; and 2) a supportive learning environment in which students demonstrated positive attitudes about the classroom and learning, took risks in learning without the fear of negative feedback, and were provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks. During the sixty-two observations, the learning environment with the least observable evidence gathered was the digital learning environment. Technology was being used by students in about two-thirds of the classrooms visited but not so much as a tool to conduct research, create original works , or to communicate and work collaboratively for learning. These observations are consistent with the ELEOT Rating Tool (Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool) ratings.

By all measures this was a very positive External Review Team review. The system was well-prepared, having completed the Executive Summary and Self-Assessment, gathering and making available evidence and artifacts, and providing stakeholder surveys and student achievement data. The superintendent is deserving of recognition for his commitment to Colquitt County School System's continuous improvement process. The superintendent along with the support of the district contact for accreditation, ensured that the External Review Team had all materials and equipment needed to successfully complete its task. The principals and staff at each school visited were very gracious and accommodated every request of the team. As previously mentioned, the team, in a span of four days, interviewed at least 208 persons and observed sixty-two classroom lessons. Team members spent considerable time applying professional judgments and deliberating connections between observations, interviews, artifact reviews, and the different indicator and standard ratings.

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 this school year, 2013-14, AdvancED introduced 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 introduced 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: 285

Teaching and Learning Impact: 262
(Standards 3 and 5; Student Performance Criteria)

Leadership Capacity: 317
(Standards 1 and 2; Stakeholder Engagement Criteria)

Resource Utilization: 300
(Standard 4)

The External Review team recommends that Colquitt County School System be accredited by the AdvancED
Accreditation Commission for a five-year term of accreditation.

Required Action

1. Establish a systematic evaluation process to ensure alignment, implementation, and monitoring of all continuous improvement efforts at the system and school levels to increase student achievement.

   Related Indicator or Assurance: 1.4

   Description:
   System leadership established a Colquitt County Schools Strategic Plan based on an external audit by The Fanning Institute of the University of Georgia in the fall of 2012. Five goals were identified which were intended to drive the system's continuous improvement efforts. Evidence gathered from the system's self-assessment reveals a need for a more formal approach for monitoring continuous improvement efforts. Presentations by system leaders supported these findings, which were also echoed during interviews with the chairpersons for each standard's committee. The question, "How will we monitor ourselves?" was posed by system leadership and defines this need. While the Strategic Plan includes strategies, responsibilities, action steps, resources and timelines, no benchmarks have been identified to provide measurements for evaluation of all efforts. Documentation does not identify clearly set benchmarks that will allow the system to measure the effectiveness of the strategies that have been designed. Interviews with board members, system and school leaders, teachers, community members, and parents describe the early stages of implementation of the Strategic Plan. An awareness of the plan has been built throughout the system; however, due to its infancy, clarity was not provided by groups in relation to content. This is a validation that the five goals are communicated but the strategies and actions of "how" to achieve the goals may not be thoroughly understood in the schools. Classroom observations provided some examples of instructional strategies that are aligned to the actions included in the Strategic Plan; other classroom visits provided evidence that the actions have not permeated the system. Additionally, documentation exists that a variety of stakeholders, beyond staff, were involved in the development of the AdvancED self-studies for both the system and the schools. The school improvement cycle requires the analysis of data, setting of goals, planning of strategies and actions, implementation of benchmarks, and evaluation of efforts, including adjustments to the plan, as needed. Establishing a method to determine the effectiveness of strategies should be embedded in this on-going process.. It is important that there are processes for monitoring the fidelity of implementation to ensure maximum impact on student learning.

2. Create and implement a plan to systematically monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout all levels of the school system, utilizing data as the focal point for all instructional decision making.

   Related Indicator or Assurance: 3.2

   Description:
   The team conducted 208 interviews that included 35 system and school level administrative interviews and 88 teacher interviews. Evidence from the interviews, as well as from 62 classroom observations, indicates the need for systematic vertical and horizontal alignment that is embedded in the system's culture. Classroom

observations indicated a need for consistency in instructional practices, although some areas are very strong. Observations of formative and summative assessments indicate that while the system is using statewide assessment data, there is little evidence of system-developed formative and summative assessments. Observations and interviews did reveal that the systematic use of assessments to drive instructional decision making is limited and global in nature, as opposed to student specific use. Four non-negotiables have been established for schools in the system to include standards' based classroom instruction, collaborative planning with common planning time scheduled, balanced assessments and data analysis, and response to intervention planning and implementation. Once these non-negotiables become embedded across the system, data will be the focal point for all instructional decisions. The systematic monitoring and adjusting of curriculum and assessment will assist the organization in ensuring consistency throughout the school system in terms of high expectations for student achievement.

3. Develop, implement and systematically evaluate a comprehensive professional learning plan for all staff that reflects the purpose of the system with regard to teaching, learning, and assessment to improve instructional practices and student learning.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 3.11

Description:
Evidence gathered from thirty-five system administrator interviews, eighty-eight teacher and support staff interviews, and sixty-two classroom observations indicate the lack of a systematic professional development plan that is aligned with the system's strategic plan. There are two district curriculum directors, two system-wide coaches who concentrate on support in math and reading areas, three instructional technology specialists, gifted and special education support personnel, and curriculum-focused administrators at the schools to provide instructional expertise and support in the areas of teaching and learning. The system was recently awarded the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant for grades K-5 that will provide a wealth of professional learning. While professional learning has occurred in numerous areas, overall areas of need that drive the plan did not surface in interviews and classroom observations. The committee that developed the self-study for Standard Three stated a strong need for a formalized professional development plan to include sustained training on best instructional practices. "A plethora of training initiatives have been implemented, but many are not well-sustained," is a quote that was voiced by several system employees. The development, implementation, and systematic evaluation of a professional learning plan that is aligned with the system's purpose and direction will improve instruction, student learning, and the conditions that support learning.

Part III: Addenda

The External Review Team

Lead Evaluator:
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Associate Lead Evaluator:
Dr. Therese M Reddekopp

Reviewer:
Mr. Brad Jacobson

Team Member:
Mr. R. D. Harter

Mrs. Jodie Johns Jacobs

Mr. Anthony D Pack

Dr. Julie S Von Frank

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.

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