Report of the
External Review Team
for
Marion County Board of Education

1697 Pineville Road
P. O. Box 391
Buena Vista
GA 31803
US

Mr. Richard McCorkle
Superintendent

Date: May 1, 2016 - May 4, 2016

AdvancED®

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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

The Marion County School District (District) serves a small rural community in Buena Vista, Georgia, approximately thirty-five miles east of Columbus, Georgia. The system has an enrollment of 1,453 students and includes two schools, L.K. Moss Elementary School and Marion County Middle High School. The estimated population of Marion County is 8,797.

A significant accomplishment for the District was the opening of the Marion County Middle High School in the fall of 2012. Prior to that, secondary students were enrolled in Tri-County High School which served students from Marion County and two surrounding counties. Changes in state law allowed Marion County to pursue the possibility of a high school serving the students in the county. The passage of a bond referendum and the commitment of the school board to building a high school in Marion County enabled the system to build a modern, comprehensive high school centrally located in the county. Stakeholders agreed the successes in academics, athletics and extra-curricular activities could be attributed, in part, to the sense of ownership and pride in the new school and the system.

On Sunday, May 1, 2016, a four-member AdvancED External Review Team (Team) from Georgia, Alabama and South Carolina visited Madison County School System for its System Performance External Review. The

Team's professional experiences and educational expertise allowed them to assess and evaluate the system's effectiveness in meeting the systemic, systematic and sustainable improvement requirements of accreditation. During the four days, the Team reviewed evidence provided by the system, interviewed 106 stakeholders and observed 37 classes using the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™.)

The Lead Evaluator communicated with the District contact through phone calls and emails to finalize the Team schedule and ensure that all arrangements were in place. Before the review, the District mailed a flash drive containing all artifacts specific to the review to Team members. Accreditation reports were submitted in a timely manner, allowing sufficient time for Team members to study the report , the evidence and the District website. The District engaged in thorough and comprehensive process to develop the Accreditation Report. On April 2, prior to the External Review, Team members participated in a conference call with the Lead Evaluator. They also communicated through phone calls and emails.

On Sunday afternoon, May 1, 2016, the Team met in the conference room of the hotel in Americus, Georgia to review the accreditation process and share initial thoughts about the District's ratings and artifacts. The Team developed questions based on the information provided by the District and contained in the Accreditation Report. Review of the schedule and logistics related to the External Review concluded the initial Team meeting. A delicious meal was provided by a local restaurant.

On Monday, May 2, 2016 the Team was transported to the District office by the superintendent who gave the Team a tour of the District and the community. After an organizational meeting for the Team, the superintendent's overview provided additional information about the District. The overview included a historical perspective of the District. Following the overview, the Team interviewed the superintendent to gain additional insight about the current status and initiatives of the District.

The Standards overview provided information specific to the five AdvancED Standards, the Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostics and the Student Performance Diagnostic. The PowerPoint presentation provided additional information for the Team. Interviews with the staff members who worked on each Standard were conducted by the Team. All five board members were present and interviewed in three groups.   Seventeen parents and community members were interviewed in two groups. Finally, the Team reviewed physical artifacts provided by the District in the development of the Accreditation Report. Student achievement data were reviewed.

The Team returned to the hotel where they enjoyed an excellent meal provided by the restaurant at the hotel. During the evening meeting, the Team reviewed information learned from the presentations and interviews. Each Team member rated all indicators, and subsequent discussions regarding the ratings were conducted. Potential Powerful Practices, Improvement Priorities and Opportunities for Improvement were considered. The meeting concluded with a review of the schedule for the following day and the development of questions for the school leadership teams.

The Team was transported to L.K. Moss Elementary School Tuesday morning. The school leadership team presented a brief PowerPoint presentation which highlighted the significant initiatives, student and staff

accomplishments and the trend data about student achievement. The Team conducted classroom observations using the eleot™ and interviewed students, teachers, support staff and the media specialist. After lunch at the Marion County Middle High School, the Team met with members of the middle and high school leadership team. A PowerPoint presentation provided an overview of the recent accomplishments of students and staff. It also provided an overview of the student achievement data and the new programs designed to improve student learning. Classroom observations using the eleot™ were conducted by the Team. Students, teachers, the guidance counselor and support staff were interviewed.

The evening work session included a delightful meal from the hotel restaurant. The team reviewed the results of the eleot™ observations, discussed additional information gathered from the presentations and interviews, and identified possible Powerful Practices, Improvement Priorities, and Opportunities for Improvement. The Team rated all indicators individually at the end of the work session.

On Wednesday, the Team met at the Madison County School Board office to review additional artifacts. Each Team member entered final ratings into ASSIST. Consensus regarding the Powerful Practices, Improvement Priorities and Opportunities was reached. Statements were drafted and edited to be included in the Exit Report. The review concluded with an Exit Report to the Board presented by the Lead Evaluator.

The Team expresses its appreciation to the Madison County School District for its hospitality and willingness to participate in the AdvancED accreditation process. From the Team's arrival to its departure the hospitality was outstanding. The lodging arrangements and meals provided the Team with every comfort. Staff, as well as the stakeholders interviewed, answered questions thoroughly and expressed their support of the District. The Team interviewed a total of 106 stakeholders. The District's transparency provided valuable information as the Team validated the Accreditation Report. The sense of family and "oneness" described by all stakeholder groups that characterized the District and community was evident to Team members throughout interviews and in the schools.

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	10
Instructional Staff	34
Support Staff	7
Students	32
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	17
Total	**106**

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.	2.75	2.68
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.	2.00	2.50
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	2.00	2.55
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	2.75	2.73
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	2.25	2.57
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	2.00	2.48
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	2.00	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.	3.00	2.92
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.	2.75	2.40
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	2.53
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	2.75	2.64
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	2.00	2.66

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.	2.75	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.	3.00	2.41
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	3.00	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.	2.50	2.46
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.	3.00	2.72

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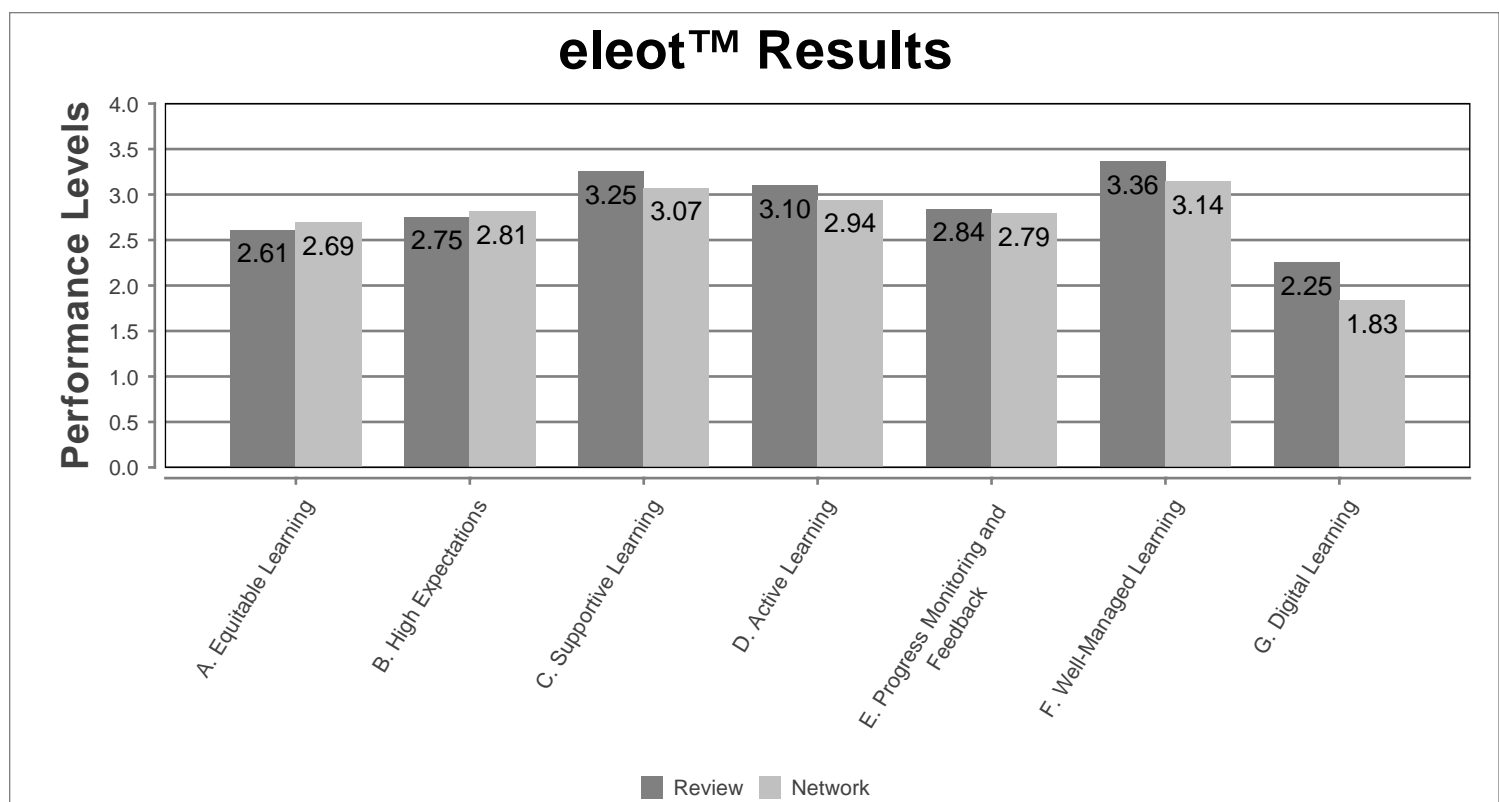
learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	3.00	3.28
Test Administration	4.00	3.50
Equity of Learning	3.00	2.44
Quality of Learning	3.00	2.97

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.

eleot™ Results

Environment	Review	Network
A. Equitable Learning	2.61	2.69
B. High Expectations	2.75	2.81
C. Supportive Learning	3.25	3.07
D. Active Learning	3.10	2.94
E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback	2.84	2.79
F. Well-Managed Learning	3.36	3.14
G. Digital Learning	2.25	1.83

The Team, all of whom were trained and certified in eleot™ completed 37 of the eleot™ observations in two schools. The Team used the ratings of Very Evident, Evident, Somewhat Evident, and Not Observed for scoring based on what occurred during the 20-minute observation. Of the seven Learning Environments, the system scored higher than the AdvancED Network (AEN) averages in five Environments.

Using the eleot™, the Well-Managed Learning Environment received the highest rating. The system's rating of 3.36 was higher than the AEN average of 3.13. Speaking and interacting with teachers and peers F (1) and knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences F (5)   were rated by 100 percent of the Team members as either very evident or evident.

The Supportive Learning Environment received the second highest rating of 3.25 which was above the AEN average of 3.06. The Team rated C (4)"….learning experiences are positive" as very evident or evident in 92 percent of the classrooms. In addition, C (4) "….support and assistance" was observed as very evident or evident in 91 percent of the classes.

The Active Learning Environment score of 3.10 was above the AEN average of 2.94. Students were observed as "actively engaged in learning activities" D (3) in all classes with the Team rating this statement as very evident or evident in 91 percent of the observations. One student commented, "Our teachers make classes fun and interesting."

The Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment was scored at 2.84 compared to the AEN average of 2.79. The statement "understands how work is assessed" was not observed in 41% of classes. Team members asked students in some classes to explain how their work would be graded and many students were unaware of grading expectations. However, a rubric designed to assess student work was evident in one class.

The Digital Learning Environment received the lowest rating of 2.25; however, it was above the AEN average of 1.82. Smartboards were observed in all classrooms, but student usage was limited. Teachers were observed using the device as an overhead projector in some classes. The availability of digital devices varied significantly throughout the system. That variance helped the Team with their deliberations and provided additional information for an Opportunity for Improvement (Indicator 4.2.)

The Equitable Learning Environment rating of 2.61 was below the AEN average of 2.69. Item A (1) "…differentiated learning opportunities" was not observed in 54% of the classes. This rating provided additional support to the Improvement Priority which addressed the need for the system to develop

Although the Digital Learning Environment received the lowest rating of all Environments, the Team observed creative student use of digital tools in two classes. For example, in an elementary science class a student used the SmartBoard to access an interactive weather map. The students created a meteorologist script, then role played as a meteorologist using the SmartBoard as their weather map. The use of technology by students was limited by the inconsistent availability of digital tools across the system

Whole group instruction was observed in many classes at the secondary level; however, at the same time students were attentive and responded when questioned by the teacher.   At the elementary level students were observed working in small groups, but the groups were all given the same assignment with little individualization of instruction observed. The students were well-behaved and the classrooms were well managed.

The results of the eleot™ were aligned to the indicator ratings, and they were instrumental in confirming the development of the Powerful Practices, Improvement Priorities and Opportunities. The shared commitment to a culture of excellence was evident in all interviews and observations. Review of artifacts and interviews confirmed that although the system had experienced improvement in student achievement, clearly defined processes to guide these initiatives have not been developed. In addition, mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and practices to improve student learning are informal. The limited differentiated instruction, use of exemplars and higher order thinking questioning provided the Team with additional information used in the determining the Improvement Priorities and the Opportunities for Improvement.

The Team found students to be helpful, friendly and well mannered. Teachers and school leaders were open and honest in response to questions from the Team. The eleot™ results indicated that in five of the seven learning Environments the system's scores exceeded the AEN averages. Interviews with teachers, school leadership and students revealed a commitment to improvement. One student said, "Everyone at this school wants me to do well." The artifacts reviewed, interviews, eleot™ results and observations were aligned to provide the Team with information to make informed decisions about the Indicator ratings and the development of statements to guide the system as it continues to improve and provide all students with a quality education.

eleot™ Data Summary

A. Equitable Learning			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	1.89	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	13.51%	16.22%	16.22%	54.05%
2.	3.24	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	54.05%	24.32%	13.51%	8.11%
3.	3.32	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	51.35%	35.14%	8.11%	5.41%
4.	1.97	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	13.51%	16.22%	24.32%	45.95%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.61						

B. High Expectations			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	3.19	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	40.54%	37.84%	21.62%	0.00%
2.	3.24	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	56.76%	16.22%	21.62%	5.41%
3.	1.95	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	16.22%	8.11%	29.73%	45.95%
4.	2.86	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	35.14%	24.32%	32.43%	8.11%
5.	2.51	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	27.03%	24.32%	21.62%	27.03%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.75						

C. Supportive Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.35	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	48.65%	40.54%	8.11%	2.70%
2.	3.46	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	54.05%	37.84%	8.11%	0.00%
3.	3.35	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	54.05%	29.73%	13.51%	2.70%
4.	3.22	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	51.35%	29.73%	8.11%	10.81%
5.	2.89	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	37.84%	29.73%	16.22%	16.22%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.25						

D. Active Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.41	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	62.16%	18.92%	16.22%	2.70%
2.	2.32	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	29.73%	10.81%	21.62%	37.84%
3.	3.57	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	64.86%	27.03%	8.11%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.10						

E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback				%			
Item	Average	Description		Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.97	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning		35.14%	35.14%	21.62%	8.11%
2.	3.03	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding		40.54%	27.03%	27.03%	5.41%
3.	3.11	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content		40.54%	32.43%	24.32%	2.70%
4.	2.27	Understands how her/his work is assessed		16.22%	35.14%	8.11%	40.54%
5.	2.81	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback		27.03%	37.84%	24.32%	10.81%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.84							

F. Well-Managed Learning				%			
Item	Average	Description		Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.78	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers		78.38%	21.62%	0.00%	0.00%
2.	3.51	Follows classroom rules and works well with others		54.05%	43.24%	2.70%	0.00%
3.	2.97	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities		40.54%	32.43%	10.81%	16.22%
4.	2.95	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities		48.65%	18.92%	10.81%	21.62%
5.	3.59	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences		59.46%	40.54%	0.00%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.36							

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

G. Digital Learning				%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	2.57	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	32.43%	27.03%	5.41%	35.14%
2.	1.92	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	21.62%	5.41%	16.22%	56.76%
3.	2.27	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	32.43%	10.81%	8.11%	48.65%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.25							

Findings

Improvement Priority

Develop, implement and monitor processes that ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum to include differentiated instructional strategies.

(Indicator 3.1, Indicator 3.2, Indicator 3.6)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.2

Evidence and Rationale

Review of artifacts, interviews and observations found limited evidence of an aligned K-12 curriculum. Interviews with teachers revealed that alignment initiatives had begun at the building level, but a systemic process to ensure the curriculum is vertically and horizontally aligned had not been developed. Although the curriculum is guided by the Georgia Standards of Excellence and Common Core Georgia Performance Standards, a process to ensure an aligned K-12 curriculum which provides opportunities for all students to be career and college ready was not evident.

Interviews with school and District leadership and staff indicated data are used to target instruction, but evidence of differentiated instruction to meet individual student needs varied by class. The eleot™ results revealed differentiated learning opportunities and activities were not evident in 54 percent of the classes observed. In addition, the use of exemplars was not observed in 46% of the classes. Collaboration among and between school staff and District leadership to provide a seamless K-12 curriculum was limited. Interviews indicated that a Response to Intervention (RtI) program was in place, but clearly defined protocols and practices to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions was not evident. Written RtI protocols were reviewed by the Team, but mechanisms to determine if interventions impacted student learning were not

defined.

A systematic and systemic continuous improvement process with clear guidelines to ensure that vertical and horizontal alignment with the District 's purpose will enhance the curriculum, instruction and result in improved student learning. Using data to inform instructional and curriculum decisions will enable the District to provide intentional and targeted instruction to improve student achievement and to identify appropriate interventions to improve student learning.

Opportunity For Improvement
Identify and implement targeted programs that will meet the unique learning needs of English Leaner (EL) students.
(Indicator 3.12)

Primary Indicator
Indicator 3.12

Evidence and Rationale
Artifacts, interviews and review of the District's demographic data revealed the District has experienced an increase in the number of EL students in recent years. The first program targeted at meeting the needs of EL students was implemented in January 2016. The Team did not find evidence of a process to monitor the program for EL students. Interviews and observations indicated a limited, intentional focus on providing for the unique learning needs of the EL students. Although the District has identified the need to provide educational opportunities for EL students, a formalized program was not evident to the Team.

Educational opportunities that support the learning needs of all students will enable the District to identify and focus on the unique learning needs of EL students to support the District's purpose to provide all students with a quality education

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.	2.00	2.62
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	2.63
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.	3.00	2.89
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.	2.00	2.61

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.	3.75	2.95
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.25	2.92
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.	4.00	3.12
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	3.25	2.97
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	2.50	2.67

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.	2.25	2.76

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	3.36
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	4.00	3.04

Findings

Improvement Priority

Develop, document and evaluate formalized processes to ensure that the development of the District's purpose and direction maintains a clear focus on student learning and the strategic plan has mechanisms in place to monitor conditions that support effective instruction and student learning.
(Indicator 1.1, Indicator 1.4)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.4

Evidence and Rationale

Team members reviewed evidence that some external stakeholder groups were represented in the development of the mission and beliefs. The strategic plan was developed in collaboration with some external stakeholders, board members, District and school leadership; however, a clearly documented process to guide the development of the plan was not evident. The Team found no evidence that a formalized process to develop a strategic plan for improving student learning and the conditions that support learning had been developed. District leadership and board members confirmed that clearly defined processes to develop a

strategic plan and review and revise the purpose and direction of the District had not been designed. Although external stakeholders were involved in the development and review of the strategic plan, evidence that all stakeholder groups were represented was not reviewed by the Team. The District leadership has remained consistent for the last seventeen years and the Team observed and learned from interviews that although it has been a common practice to review the purpose regularly and to develop a strategic plan, the practice is based on the collective memory of the leadership and not on a clearly defined process.

In addition, review of the strategic plan and other documents, the Team found limited evidence of mechanisms to monitor the conditions that support student learning. Evaluation of the process used to develop the current strategic plan was not evident. An inclusive and comprehensive process that is implemented with fidelity will ensure the District has a formalized, written guide as it continues to improve.

Clearly defined processes to develop a strategic plan and review the mission and belief statements will enable District and school leadership to adhere to policies and practices that have proven successful regardless of the individuals in leadership positions.

Powerful Practice
The Marion County School Board has clearly defined policies and procedures that protect and support the purpose and direction to provide all students with a quality education in a safe, nurturing and challenging environment and to ensure the effective operation of the District and its schools.
(Indicator 2.1, Indicator 2.3)

Primary Indicator
Indicator 2.1

Evidence and Rationale
 Review of artifacts and interviews revealed the school board consistently supports the purpose and direction of the District with a focus on providing challenging and equitable learning opportunities for all students in a safe and nurturing environment. The School Board Policy Manuel outlined the responsibilities and roles of school board members. Clearly defined policies limit board intervention in the daily operations of the District. The board policies were on the District website and are accessible to all stakeholders. One board member said. "Everyone in the community supports the schools, from the Chamber of Commerce to the folks who keep our facilities clean. We all know what our role is."

All five board members stated their responsibility as board members was to develop, monitor and revise policies, approve the budget and to hire the superintendent. Interviews with all stakeholder groups confirmed that the board supported purpose and direction of the District in policy and practice. The Marion County School Board's adherence to policies and practices that support the District's purpose and direction ensures the effective operation of the District and its schools.

Powerful Practice
The Marion County School Board, superintendent, system-wide leadership and staff are committed to a culture

that provides quality educational experiences that enhance student achievement that is consistent with the system's purpose and direction.
(Indicator 1.3, Indicator 2.4)

Primary Indicator
Indicator 1.3

Evidence and Rationale
Interviews with all stakeholder groups, observations and review of artifacts reveal a shared commitment to a culture that reflects its purpose and direction and places priority on the educational and social values benefitting student achievement and growth. Groups interviewed repeatedly mentioned the shared commitment to providing all students with opportunities to excel. The partnerships the District had developed with local pastors, the Chamber of Commerce, a retired teacher group, the local military base and other community and civic organizations was a testament to the support the community provides for the District. The superintendent stated, "We expect the best from you and we're going to provide the best for you."

In addition, all leadership and staff expressed a commitment to provide opportunities to ensure each student has the opportunity to reach his/her goals. One student said, "Everyone here wants the students to be successful in academics and in all of our activities." A shared culture focused on what is best for students increases the potential for improved teaching and student preparation and learning. All stakeholder groups interviewed expressed commitment to providing opportunities for each student to be successful. The commitment to the vision "Excellence in all that we do" was pervasive among all stakeholders in the school community.

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.	3.00	2.92
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.	2.25	2.93
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	3.50	3.05
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	2.25	2.63

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.	3.00	2.74
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	3.00	2.54
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.	2.25	2.66
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.	3.00	2.60

Findings

Opportunity For Improvement

Establish and implement a formalized process to guarantee instructional time is protected; material and fiscal resources are allocated so that all students have equitable opportunities to attain challenging learning expectations.

(Indicator 4.2)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.2

Evidence and Rationale

Artifacts, interviews and classroom observations revealed the Marion County Board of Education does not have a clearly defined or formalized process to ensure instructional time is fiercely protected. During classroom observations students were observed leaving and returning from non-instructional activities during instruction. The expectation that bell-to-bell instruction occurred in all classrooms was not evident in practice. Interviews with stakeholders indicated a lack of equity in the distribution of resources. Student access to digital devices was not consistent across all classrooms, Although Smartboards were evident in all classrooms observed, other digital devices for student use were limited or not present some classrooms. A process to ensure all fiscal and material resources are allocated equitably was not evident to the Team. A plan to increase access and support the integration of technology to support student learning was included in the strategic plan, however, accountability measures and a process for evaluating the completion of the goal were not evident to the Team.

A process to ensure all resources are allocated with equity will enable the District to provide opportunities for all students to access materials and tools to enhance learning.

Conclusion

The Team found several themes that emerged as they reviewed the District with respect to the Index of Educational Quality (IEQ.) Those three areas provided the framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance through AdvancEd Accreditation. Leadership Capacity (Standards 1 and 2), Teaching and Learning (Standards 3 and 5) and Resource Utilization (Standard 4) combined to provide themes that were directly related to student success and organizational effectiveness.

The Team shared themes with the district and the School Board. The team felt the district was "A focused, hard working and supportive school system dedicated to excellence, energized by the sense of family, and committed to the success of each individual student."

Team members saw and heard evidence of District and school leadership, Board, teachers, students and external stakeholders who had a shared commitment to a culture of excellence and support for the mission "To provide all students with a quality education in a safe, nurturing and challenging learning environment."   When asked to use one word to describe the District, the most frequently used words by all stakeholder groups were family and oneness.

The Team noted a constant and reoccurring sense of family and focus on each student. One Team member stated, "Despite the challenges of demographic changes, state requirements and new assessments, the District's focus remains on the success of each student. "They (the District) look for solutions not excuses."

The District had a governing board that provided stable and responsible leadership. The board recently undertook the arduous task of reviewing and revising all policies to ensure conformity with state and federal laws. The Board also reviewed compliance with all state board rules and regulations. The clearly defined policies ensured the board respects the autonomy of District and school leadership. In addition, the superintendent's stable leadership has provided the District with a consistent focus on student learning. One stakeholder commented, "Enthusiasm for the district comes from the top down."

It was the shared commitment of all stakeholders to a culture supportive of the purpose and direction of the district and the high level of trust for district and school leadership that under-girded Governance and Leadership (Standards 1 and 2.) That trust and confidence in the district manifested itself in an IEQ score of 308.33 as compared to the AEN average of 392.64 in the Leadership Capacity Domain.

A review of Standard 1 revealed the Marion County School District had clearly defined mission, vision and belief statements which were developed with input from teachers, administrators, board members, parents and community members. The development of those statements was documented in the artifacts however, a process to ensure all stakeholder groups were represented was not evident. A clearly defined and formalized process to regularly review and revise the purpose, direction and belief statements had not been developed.

Standard Two reflected a governance and leadership model that was exemplary. The board's initiative to review and revise all policies to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and guidelines required

significant research and time. Interviews with all board members revealed a keen awareness of the roles and responsibilities of board members and the need to adhere to all policies which respect the autonomy of District and school leaders. The governing board was recognized by the Team for protecting the autonomy of the leadership to accomplish goals and manage the day-to-day operations of the District. The guidance provided by the Board allows the District to operate effectively.

The Board's decision to build a secondary school in the county to serve the needs of local students was applauded by all stakeholder groups. The improvement in student achievement and the excellence athletics and extracurricular activities was, in part, a result of the renewed sense of community attributed to the new school. System leadership had established partnerships with local pastors, retired teachers, the Chamber of Commerce as well as other service organizations which had fostered a sense of ownership among all members of the community.

The District leadership team made up of District and school leaders met monthly to address areas of growth and to monitor District programs and initiatives. The District leadership team reviewed current data related to student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

The Teaching and Leadership Domain (Standards 3 and 5) had a score of 269.05 compared to the AEN average of 268.94. The Team found the focus of teaching and learning in K-12 was on the improvement of the graduation rate. The district's graduation of 84% exceeded the state average. The intentional efforts to improve the graduation rate were driven by the commitment to provide all students with educational experiences to prepare them for their chosen career. Programs to support increased student graduation included the Scholars Academy, expanded Career and Technical Education (CATE) programs, extensive athletic and extracurricular activities, credit recovery and additional Advanced Placement and dual enrollment offerings.

The curriculum was based on the Georgia Standards of Excellence and Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. Teachers articulated their intentional approach to using the standards to inform instruction. Teachers used state provided curriculum maps to pace instruction. Interviews and artifacts indicated that although the state standards provide the framework for the curriculum, horizontal and vertical alignment of the curriculum was limited. Building level alignment of curriculum was evident; however, the Team was unable to find evidence of a K-12 alignment.

The eleot™ results, which were below the AEN average for differentiated instruction and higher order thinking, confirmed that challenging learning experiences to ensure all students have opportunities to develop learning and thinking skills that lead to success at the next level were limited. An Improvement Priority to horizontally and vertically align the curriculum and to provide differentiated instruction to meet individual learning was in lockstep with the eleot™ results, observations, interviews and artifacts.

Marion County teachers participated in professional learning opportunities outlined in the District Professional Learning Plan. Results from a needs assessment were used to determine professional learning needs. A focus of professional learning had been on instructional strategies to engage students. Results from the eleot™ confirm that teachers throughout the District had effectively used these strategies. Professional learning opportunities were offered by the District, the Chattahoochee-Flint RESA and local and state

conferences.

A multi-tiered program of intervention, Response to Intervention (RtI), had been used to target students who needed additional academic support. The RtI process used data to identify students in need of interventions. Teachers at the elementary school monitored the achievement of each student and referred struggling students. Interventions were identified and implemented. Interviews with teachers indicated that an evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions was based on improved achievement. Evaluation protocols to monitor the fidelity with which interventions were implemented or if other factors contributed to the lack of success of an intervention had not been developed.

Instruction was monitored and evaluated by the use of Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), the Georgia instrument for teacher evaluation. Although the TKES protocols required four observations per year for each teacher, evidence that the results of the observations were targeted at improved instructional practice was limited.

Evidence of a district-wide structure to provide each student with an adult advocate was not reviewed; however each school had a structure to provide all students with an adult to serve as an advocate. The elementary school had an informal structure whereby all students have homeroom teachers who served as an advocate. In the middle high school, a formal structure was implemented that provided every student with an adult with whom they met daily as a regular part of the schedule. Students were assigned to a small group which met to address student concerns. In addition, the superintendent met with each senior individually to discuss future college and career plans and to give assistance to students who requested it. One student said, "He is really interested in what I plan to do in the future. I don't think all superintendents do that."

Programs to meet the unique learning needs of some students had been implemented. The Program for Advanced Learners (PAL) and the Scholar's Academy were in place as enrichment for students identified as gifted or academically advanced. Advanced placement and dual enrollment classes gave students challenging opportunities to engage in rigorous college-level courses in high school. Career classes through Career and Technical Education (CATE) offered students opportunities to explore career options. Special Education classes included self-contained and inclusion models. Credit recovery opportunities were afforded to students who needed this resource. The District had experienced an increase in the number of English Learners (EL) in recent years. A teacher was employed to meet the needs of the non-English speaking population in January 2016. The District identified the need to provide a comprehensive program for EL students in the Accreditation Report. An Opportunity for Improvement to develop and monitor instructional programs to meet the unique needs of EL students was developed by the Team.

Using data to inform continuous improvement initiatives (Standard 5) is an integral part of the Teaching and Learning Domain. The comprehensive state assessment system comprised the majority of the District's assessment program. Interviews with teachers indicated local tests were used to identify and target areas in need of improvement. Common assessments across grade levels and similar courses were not evident. Comparison and trend data, when available, were used to evaluate student progress and to target programs needed to support the purpose and direction of the District. Results from the Georgia Milestone were used to

evaluate student achievement. Each elementary student maintained a folder that contained his/her goals and specific growth goals.

The District used data from a wide range of sources: student achievement, graduation rate, attendance, discipline and surveys to determine and monitor continuous improvement initiatives. The review of data were an integral part of the role of the District leadership team. Data were reviewed by staff to develop the strategic plan, improvement plans and school improvement plans, Stakeholders were informed about all data related to student learning, school performance and the achievement of the District via print and digital sources. The local newspaper included information regarding student achievement; District and school newsletters are sent home; data were presented at board meetings; data were posted on the District website; and data were viewed at all parent-teacher conferences.

The Resource Utilization (Standard 4) was scored at 278.12 which was below the AEN average of 283.86. Madison County School District had enjoyed a highly qualified, stable professional and support staff in recent years. The Board and District leadership identified the need to employ additional minority staff as vacancies became available. Strategies to recruit minority teachers included participation in career fairs at Historically Black Colleges and active recruitment from education programs at local and state colleges and universities. The process to employ highly qualified staff was clearly defined.

The Team issued an Opportunity for Improvement to develop and implement a policy to ensure instructional time is protected. Classroom observations and interviews revealed instructional time is not consistently protected in policy or practice. Team members observed frequent interruptions in instruction with students arriving late or leaving early. Bell-to-bell instructional activities were not widely observed.

Equitable distribution of digital devices was not observed across the District. Some classrooms were equipped with computers for student use while others had none. A process to determine how material resources are utilized to support the purpose and direction of the District was not evident. An Opportunity for Improvement addressed the need to develop, implement and monitor a process to ensure all material and fiscal resources are provided equitably. The Team did not find evidence of an evaluation process to determine what resources were available and how they were being used. A teacher commented, "we were told we had money to spend and to purchase equipment." A needs analysis to determine the resources to be purchased was not evident.

The facilities in the District were safe, healthy and clean. The elementary school was an older building but it was well maintained, attractive and inviting, The Marion County Middle High School was a state of the art facility. The open areas, natural lighting, and classrooms were beautiful. The athletic facilities were excellent. Both schools had a secured entry which limited access to the building. All facilities were well maintained by custodial staff as well as by teachers and students. A sense of pride and ownership in the facilities by students and staff was evident to the Team.

The District engaged in a process to develop a strategic plan which involved internal and external stakeholders. The plan was approved by the board and guided current decisions made by the District leadership. Mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of programs outlined in the strategic plan were not

included. The District has a technology plan which identifies infrastructure and hardware needs.

The District employed a range of media and information to support the K-12 educational, social, extra-curricular and counseling programs. The media centers served the school population and supported the educational programs of the schools. Qualified media personnel were employed for assistance to students and staff.

The counseling program at the middle high school provided support services, referral, educational and career planning for all students. A written program which included small group and individual counseling as well as dissemination of information regarding career and college planning was included in the artifacts. One student commented, "My counselor is amazing. I don't think there is anything she couldn't help me with." A counselor at the elementary school provided age and grade appropriate services for all students.

Additional methods for the District to meet the physical, social and emotional needs of students were provided by school personnel or local agencies. For example, students in need of intense psychological counseling were referred to local mental health personnel. Procedures to formally evaluate these services were not in place. Attendance is closely monitored and home visits were conducted as needed. The District transported parents who do not have transportation to school conferences and events.

The District had a clear focus on providing challenging educational experiences for all students to achieve their goals. The trust and confidence stakeholders had in the District to meet the needs of students was impressive. The Marion County School District's strong commitment to continuous improvement was evident to all stakeholders. An administrator said, "If we are going to do it, we should win it." This belief in the ability of the District to overcome obstacles permeated the school community.

The Team's findings reflected information gathered through artifact review, interviews and observations. Most of findings were identified by the District as a part of their Accreditation Report and validated by the Team. The District recently introduced a program for English Learners (EL) in response to the increased number of EL students in the District. The District earned an overall Index of Educational Quality (IEQ) score of 282.32 which was above the AEN average of 279.34. The reoccurring theme in the Improvement Priorities and Opportunities for Improvement was the need for the District to develop processes to guide decision making and to include mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of programs and practices developed after data analysis and review.

The AdvancED External Review Team found alignment between their final scores for all indicators and their Improvement Priorities. As Marion School District continues to review data for continuous improvement initiatives, the Team is confident the District will continue to experience success. The combined strength of the staff and the incredible support of the community will lend support for the overall goal of providing a quality educational experience for every student.

Using the work the District has already begun, the powerful and shared vision of oneness and a passion for every student, the District should be able to engage and significantly complete the AdvancED Team's two

Improvement Priorities, monitor the progress of all students and significantly impact the opportunities for all students in Marion County.

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, document and evaluate formalized processes to ensure that the development of the District's purpose and direction maintains a clear focus on student learning and the strategic plan has mechanisms in place to monitor conditions that support effective instruction and student learning.
- Develop, implement and monitor processes that ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum to include differentiated instructional strategies.

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	282.32	278.34
Teaching and Learning Impact	269.05	268.94
Leadership Capacity	308.33	292.64
Resource Utilization	278.12	283.23

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
L.K. Moss Elementary School	347.62	354.55	357.14	351.28
Marion Middle High School	333.33	336.36	342.86	335.90

Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Mrs. Holly Wingard	Holly Wingard has worked in both a large metropolitan school district and in a small rural district in South Carolina. After 34 years, she has retired from the school system. She has taught, served as a guidance counselor, senior counselor, testing coordinator, administrative team member, and Advanced Placement coordinator. She has served on SACS/AdvancED review teams for over 25 years, serving as a school Lead Evaluator in South Carolina and in other states. She serves as a consultant to districts preparing for AdvancED reviews. Mrs. Wingard has an undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia and an M.ED from the University of South Carolina.
Dr. Barbara Donald	Barbara has numerous years of experience as an administrator, educator, speaker, researcher, and Information Technology consulting. She has worked as a Data Systems Specialist, Technical Consultant/Educator, Information Specialist, Account Executive, and Service Consultant at A T & T and Bell South. She has taught computer classes at Uppsala University in Sweden, New York City Public Schools, Nova Southeastern University in Florida, Heritage Senior Center and numerous state and local educational institutions that included Director, Georgia Literacy Resource Center. Presently, she is a Professor at DeVry University, teaching Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving since 2006. In addition , she is a Professor at Colorado Technical University teaching Network Infrastructure Design, Network Administration, Ethics, and Student Success Factors since 2010. She has consulted with Morehouse College and created the online Ethics and Compliance Training for faculty.
Dr. Steve Oborn	Dr. Steve Oborn is a retired superintendent and college professor. He currently owns and operates his own consulting firm in Georgetown, Ohio. His educational career has spanned over 44 years, and he served as a public school superintendent for 23 years. Dr. Oborn earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Capital University, his Master of Arts Degree from The Ohio State University, and his Doctor of Philosophy Degree from The University of Dayton with a concentration in educational leadership and organizational dynamics. Dr. Oborn has published numerous articles and presented at numerous conferences with a focus on teacher as researcher and organizational design. He is completing a book titled, " Build a new school: The education of the whole child," and a school board training platform, "Changing complex to simple: Governing dynamics for boards of education-The power of the Starr Initiative©." Dr. Oborn has served as a Lead Evaluator for AdvancED for over four years, and leads teams nationally and internationally. He has been associated with North Central Association for over 40 years, serving Ohio as an Ambassador and Lead Evaluator.
Mrs. Tanya Allen	Tanya Goolsby Allen is currently the principal of Burdell-Hunt Magnet Elementary School. She attended Bibb County schools, and after receiving her undergraduate degree, she returned to teach in the same school district. Mrs. Allen received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from the University of Georgia, a M. Ed from Mercer University, and a Specialist Degree and Leadership Certification from Georgia College and State University, She has over 20 years of experience as an educator. She has worked as an English Language Arts teacher at both Miller Middle and Weaver Middle, She served as an assistant principal at Hartley Elementary and Rutland Middle. Mrs. Allen is also a National Board Certified Teacher and has received various certification and awards. Mrs. Allen serves on the OneMacon! Business Education Partnership.

Member	Brief Biography
Mrs. Stacey Turvin	Currently, Stacey Turvin is the Director of Instructional Services and Federal Programs with the Barbour County School District in the state of Alabama. Stacey also serves on the Governing Board for the East Alabama Regional In-service Center. She is a graduate of Troy University, with a Bachelor of Science in Education degree with a Major in Comprehensive Math Education and a Masters in Educational Administration. Stacey returned to school to obtain an A+ Certification in computer network and operating systems. Stacey worked with the Houston County School System and the Dale County School System as a Mathematics Teacher and Basketball Coach. While continuing as a classroom teacher, she was given the added responsibility of Transition School Administrator and while maintaining the fore mentioned positions she earned the position of At-Risk Administrator for Dale County School System. During her time with the Dale County School System, Stacey was on loan to the Alabama State Department of Education, where she worked as a PEER Assistant assigned to Chamber County Schools. Stacey's career path led her to the Barbour County School District, where she held the position of Assistant Principal / At-Risk Supervisor at Barbour County Middle School for one year before becoming Principal of Barbour County Middle School for the next four years.

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.

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