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AdvancED®
Engagement
Review Report
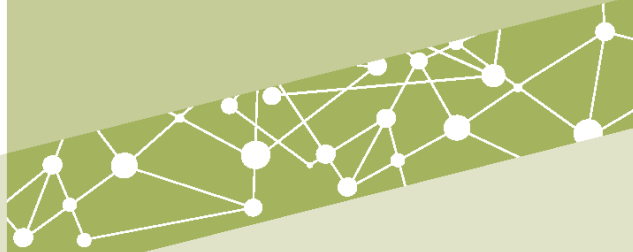
AdvancED®

AdvancED® Performance Accreditation

Results for:

St. Helena Parish School System
Greensburg, Louisiana

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Introduction

AdvancED Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

Accreditation is pivotal to leveraging education quality and continuous improvement. Using a set of rigorous research based standards, the accreditation process examines the whole institution—the program, the cultural context and the community of stakeholders—to determine how well the parts work together to meet the needs of learners. Through the AdvancED Accreditation Process, highly skilled and trained Engagement Review Teams gather first-hand evidence and information pertinent to evaluating an institution's performance against the research-based AdvancED Performance Standards. Using these Standards, Engagement Review Teams assess the quality of learning environments to gain valuable insights and target improvements in teaching and learning. AdvancED provides Standards that are tailored for all education providers so that the benefits of accreditation are universal across the education community.

Through a comprehensive review of evidence and information, our experts gain a broad understanding of institution quality. Using the Standards, the review team provides valuable feedback to institutions that helps to focus and guide each institution's improvement journey. Valuable evidence and information from other stakeholders, including students, also is obtained through interviews, surveys and additional activities.

As a part of the Engagement Review, stakeholders were interviewed by members of the Engagement Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's learning environment and organizational effectiveness. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the Engagement Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Groups	Number
Board Members	3
Superintendent	1
System- and School-level Administrators and Support Staff Members	27
Teachers	3
Students	21
Parents / Community Partners	13
Total	**68**

Once all of the information is compiled and reviewed, the team develops the Engagement Review Report and presents preliminary results to the institution. Results from the Engagement Review are reported in four ratings represented by colors. These ratings provide guidance and insight into an institution's continuous improvement efforts as described below:

Color	Rating	Description
Red	Needs Improvement	Identifies key areas that need more focused improvement efforts
Yellow	Emerging	Represents areas to enhance and extend current improvement efforts
Green	Meets Expectations	Pinpoints quality practices that meet the Standards
Blue	Exceeds Expectations	Demonstrates noteworthy practices producing clear results that exceed expectations

AdvancED Continuous Improvement System

The AdvancED Continuous Improvement System (CIS) provides a systemic fully integrated solution to help institutions map out and navigate a successful improvement journey. In the same manner that educators are expected to understand the unique needs of every learner and tailor the education experience to drive student success, every institution must be empowered to map out and embrace their unique improvement journey. AdvancED expects institutions to use the results and the analysis of data from various interwoven components for the implementation of improvement actions to drive education quality and improved student outcomes. While each improvement journey is unique, the journey is driven by key actions. AdvancED identifies three important components of a continuous improvement process and provides feedback on the components of the journey using a rubric that identifies the three areas to guide the improvement journey. The areas are as follows:

Commitment to Continuous Improvement	Rating
The institution has collected sufficient and quality data to identify school improvement needs.	Meets Expectations
Implications from the analysis of data have been identified and used for the development of key strategic goals.	Exceeds Expectations
The institution demonstrates the capacity to implement their continuous improvement journey.	Exceeds Expectations

Continuous Improvement Journey Narrative

System and school leaders of St. Helena Parish School System have developed and are sustaining a comprehensive, systemic continuous improvement process that promotes and supports student learning focused on improved achievement levels. During the "Overview of the School Improvement Journey," system representatives described the collaborative and cooperative processes for determining continuous improvement priorities. The continuous improvement journey began with an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) of the then-current educational realities in the parish. These discussions provided information that became the background for the Blueprint to Excellence (system continuous improvement plan). System leaders also invited parents and community members / stakeholders in to learn about the continuous improvement planning processes; these stakeholders had opportunities to offer ideas for consideration in the Blueprint to Excellence. Several parents and community partners shared ways in which they contribute to successful implementation of the Blueprint to Excellence; these community members included former students, parents, residents and community partners from around the parish, representatives from higher education institutions, a former school board member, and local law enforcement officers.

The system's Blueprint to Excellence is a living document that identifies the continuous improvement process; the plan is intentionally implemented at the system level and extended with similarly developed plans at each school. The Blueprint is reviewed and revised annually and is widely communicated to all stakeholders in various ways, including but not limited to print documents and the system website.

The preface remarks of the Blueprint to Excellence share these bold ideas: "As we look forward to establishing this parish as one of the best in the state of Louisiana, our focus is on improving the performance of our students through rigorous professional development for our educators, and relevant instruction in the classroom. We understand that sustainable growth must be achieved." The Blueprint to Excellence was first developed for the 2011 – 2012 school year; implementation is intentional and system leaders guide annual review and revision processes to ensure that continuous improvement efforts are both clearly described and address current realities. The preface concludes: "We look forward to the challenges ahead as we strive to achieve our vision. It is through these challenges that our dedication and commitment to the children of this parish will prevail. A new public school system will emerge that we all can be proud of and support."

To achieve this lofty ideal, system leaders crafted nine Vital Goals, each with Bold Plays (implementation strategies) that will foster a solid educational foundation for students, ensure sustainable success, and set attainable goals toward the vision. Seven Vital Goals focus directly on efforts to Increase Student Achievement: VG1. Students will improve their literacy and reading comprehension; VG2. Students will improve their mathematical literacy and comprehension; VG4. Students will acquire Executive Function skills to improve their levels of proficiency; VG5. Students and teachers will have relevant technology resources; VG6. Students will be college and career ready; and VG7. Students will graduate on time. One Vital Goal is focused on Developing Educator Effectiveness: VG3. Students will have quality, engaging instruction in all classes. Two Vital Goals demonstrate commitment to Building Public Confidence: VG8. The community will become partners in education and VG9. A commitment to continuous improvement. Each Vital Goal is operationalized within the following component areas: 1) District Level Bold Plays (implementation strategies); 2) Responsible Person(s); 3) District Implementation Timeline (beginning – ending dates); and 4) Measures (generally stated).

The early pages of the Blueprint include student performance data that show improvement over time (1999 – 2000 through 2014 – 2015) and support the assertion that the Bold Plays were not only implemented but were also effective in improving student performance on state assessments over time. Included as part of the Executive Summary and Overview of Continuous Improvement presentation by system leaders were overviews of implementation activities and quantitative results from each of the last five years, those years included in the Blueprint to Excellence. The array of programs and processes that have been developed and implemented is impressive – and represents the collective efforts of virtually every system employee, operational staff members as well as educators. The credit for successful implementation and improvement of programs and student achievement goes to these collective efforts along with system leaders whose commitment is to develop leadership skills in others, not simply to manage processes and people.

The Blueprint to Excellence includes several charts of longitudinal data that show improvement of student achievement since 2011. Further, system leaders proudly shared in discussions and the Executive Summary that in the 2015 – 2016 state testing cycle the Parish made significant improvement: for the first time in the history of the Louisiana school letter grading system: no school in St Helena Parish earned an "F" rating. Then again in 2016 – 2017 cycle, the Parish continued to show improvement, earning state rankings of 1, 3, or 4 in five areas: growth ("3"), closing the achievement gap ("4"), achievement of African American students ("1"), achievement of students with disabilities ("3"), and ACT growth (#4).

A concluding comment from system leaders about the Blueprint to Excellence as the foundational document that guides the Continuous Improvement Journey in St Helena Parish School System: "We've laid out a Blueprint to Excellence that has VITAL GOALS with BOLD PLAYS (implementation strategies) that will foster a solid educational foundation for our students, ensure sustainable success, and set attainable goals toward our vision."

AdvancED Standards Diagnostic Results

The AdvancED Performance Standards Diagnostic is used by the Engagement Review Team to evaluate the institution's effectiveness based on AdvancED's Performance Standards. The diagnostic consists of three components built around each of the three Domains: **Leadership Capacity**, **Learning Capacity** and **Resource Capacity**. Point values are established within the diagnostic and a percentage of the points earned by the institution for each Standard is calculated from the point values for each Standard. Results are reported within four ranges identified by the colors representing Needs Improvement (Red), Emerging (Yellow), Meets Expectations (Green), and Exceeds Expectations (Blue). The results for the three Domains are presented in the tables that follow.

Leadership Capacity Domain

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution's progress toward its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution's leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its 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 implement strategies that improve learner and educator performance.

Leadership Capacity Standards		Rating
1.1	The system commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about teaching and learning, including the expectations for learners.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the system's purpose and desired outcomes for learners.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.3	The system engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support system effectiveness.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.7	Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the system's purpose and direction.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.9	The system provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.10	Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making that results in improvement.	**Meets Expectations**
1.11	Leaders implement a quality assurance process for its institutions to ensure system effectiveness and consistency.	**Exceeds Expectations**

Learning Capacity Domain

The impact of teaching and learning is the primary expectation of every system and its institutions. The establishment of a learning culture built on high expectations for learning, along with quality programs and services, which include an analysis of results, are all key indicators of the system's impact on teaching and learning.

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.1	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the system.	**Meets Expectations**
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation and collaborative problem-solving.	**Emerging**
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs and skills needed for success.	**Exceeds Expectations**
2.4	The system has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers that support their educational experiences.	**Meets Expectations**
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.	**Exceeds Expectations**
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is aligned to standards and best practices.	**Exceeds Expectations**
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.	**Exceeds Expectations**
2.8	The system provides programs and services for learners' educational future and career planning.	**Exceeds Expectations**
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.	**Meets Expectations**
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.	**Exceeds Expectations**
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement of student learning.	**Exceeds Expectations**
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.	**Meets Expectations**

Resource Capacity Domain

The use and distribution of resources align and support the needs of the system and institutions served. Systems ensure that resources are aligned with its stated purpose and direction and distributed equitably so that the needs of the system are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The system examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, and system effectiveness.

Resource Capacity Standards		Rating
3.1	The system plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the system's effectiveness.	**Exceeds Expectations**
3.2	The system's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.	**Exceeds Expectations**
3.3	The system provides induction, mentoring, and coaching programs that ensure all staff members have the knowledge and skills to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.	**Meets Expectations**

Resource Capacity Standards		Rating
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.	**Meets Expectations**
3.5	The system integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.	**Exceeds Expectations**
3.6	The system provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the system.	**Exceeds Expectations**
3.7	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the system's purpose and direction.	**Exceeds Expectations**
3.8	The system allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the system's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.	**Exceeds Expectations**

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) Results

The eProve™ Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) is a learner-centric classroom observation tool that comprises 28 items organized in seven environments aligned with the AdvancED Standards. The eleot provides useful, relevant, structured, and quantifiable data on the extent to which students are engaged in activities and/or demonstrate knowledge, attitudes, and/or dispositions that are conducive to effective learning. Classroom observations are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes. Results from eleot are reported on a scale of one to four based on the degree and quality of the engagement.

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	**35**
Environments	**Rating**
Equitable Learning Environment	2.91
Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs	2.77
Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	3.37
Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner	3.40
Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions and dispositions	2.11
High Expectations Environment	2.82
Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher	2.97
Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	2.91
Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work	2.66
Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	2.66
Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning	2.89
Supportive Learning Environment	3.17
Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful	3.17
Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	3.06

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	**35**
Environments	**Rating**
Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks	3.34
Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher	3.11
Active Learning Environment	3.12
Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and the teacher predominate	3.11
Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences	2.91
Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities	3.31
Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments	3.14
Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	3.01
Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored	2.91
Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work	3.26
Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content	3.00
Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed	2.89
Well-Managed Learning Environment	3.25
Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other	3.49
Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others	3.43
Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another	2.97
Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions	3.11
Digital Learning Environment	2.34
Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	2.43
Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	2.34
Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for learning	2.26

eleot® Narrative

Engagement Review Team members observed students engaged in learning in 35 classrooms in all 3 schools on Tuesday, Nov 7, 2017. The following summary outlines the team's ratings related to the eleot® 2.0 items, along with a few specific observation details.

Highest Ratings:

Well-Managed Learning Environment - The overall team rating is 3.25, the highest rating for this system; additionally, the two highest-rated eleot items are in the Well-Managed Learning Environment. Specifically, team members observed that mutual respect is pervasive between and among students and adults (rated 3.49). It was clear that students in observed classrooms know the rules and that they follow those rules and work well with others (rated 3.43). Further, students used time purposefully (rated 3.11). Team members saw few transitions during the brief classroom observations; however, when transitions happened, those transitions were smooth – students knew what was expected and behaved accordingly during the transitions and little time was wasted (rated 2.97). In one classroom, the teacher said she would give students 30 seconds to transition to next station, and all students got to their stations quickly and quietly. Another teacher plays soft music while students are

working in stations, and students worked collaboratively and had quiet discussions that did not get louder than the music.

Supportive Learning Environment - The overall team rating is 3.17, the second highest rating for this system. In many classrooms, students were "supported by their teachers and their peers . . . to understand content and accomplish tasks" (rated 3.34) during the time of formal classroom observations. Team members observed learners had "congenial and supportive relationships with their teacher" (rated 3.11) in most classrooms. Notable was the fact that "Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful" (rated 3.17); this purposeful behavior was also noted above in comments about the Well-Managed Learning Environment. Further, team members observed that students in most classrooms were willing to "take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)" (rated 3.06). One team member observed struggling learners taking risks in learning because of the teacher's rapport with them and the recognition she showed regarding learners' efforts. "Wow, you did an awesome job! I know those ratios were giving you difficulty, but you did a great job setting up the tape diagram!"

Lowest Ratings:

Digital Learning Environment - The overall team rating is 2.34, the lowest for this system. Ratings in this learning environment are clustered in a narrow range from 2.26 ("communicate and work collaboratively for learning") to 2.34 ("conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning") to 2.43 ("gather, evaluate, and/use information for learning"). Even though these ratings are lower than those of other learning environment items, the consistent ratings of these items is evidence of the intentional efforts to fully integrate technology into student learning (one of the "Vital Goals" included in the Blueprint to Excellence). In fact, one team member observed a student who was modeling her digital assignment on the interactive whiteboard to demonstrate "how to" complete the assignment, along with rationale for the particular items she chose to use. St. Helena Early Learning Center classrooms used technology extensively in learning centers, where students were actively engaged and showed enthusiasm while working with technology devices such as iPads and Promethean Boards.

Equitable Learning Environment – Even though the rating for this learning environment is the fifth highest (rated 2.91), it is notable that two of the highest rated items are in this environment. First, students have "equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support" (rated 3.37) and "Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner" (rated 3.40). Learning centers were noted where students were accessing the same instructional topic through different avenues using different learning tools (i.e., computers, art, writing, and reaching / fluency strategies). One team member noted during team discussions that in "every single observation all students have fair treatment and equal access to teachers, activities, and resources." On the other hand, two of the lower-rated items are also in this environment. Team members observed few classrooms where students had "opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions and dispositions" (rated 2.11). Further, team members observed few classrooms where students engaged in "differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs." (rated 2.77).
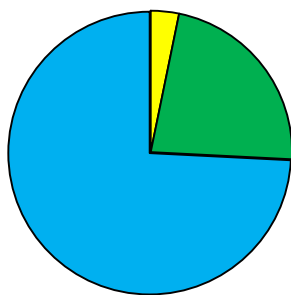
High Expectations Environment / Progress Monitoring Environment - Related to the High Expectations Learning Environment (sixth highest rating at 2.82), it was clear during classroom observations that students in many classrooms were striving to meet the high expectations established by the teacher (rated 2.97). During formal classroom observations, team members saw students in many classrooms who were actively participating in learning activities that were "challenging, yet attainable" (rated 2.91). Also noteworthy is the observation that students in many classrooms demonstrated responsibility for managing their time and behavior and "were self-directed in their learning" (rated 2.89). Further to the focus on students becoming independent learners, it was clear to team members during formal observations that students in some classes monitor their own learning (rated 2.91 in the Progress Monitoring Learning Environment ratings). One team member observed that students responded well to teacher feedback about their classwork during formal observations.

It bears repeating that there is excellent rapport and mutual respect between students and teachers. Friendliness, continuous affirmation, positive support and reinforcement, and high degrees of understanding for student needs were evident across all grades. Team members observed students engaged in higher level thinking in some classrooms (rated 2.66). Students in a few classrooms were working in groups (rated 3.14, Active Learning Environment) to complete classwork and do projects.

As team members observed students engaged in learning it was clear that system leaders and teachers are committed to the intent of the stated vision: "To develop a productive school culture that increases student achievement, improves teacher effectiveness and builds public confidence." During formal classroom observations and in other places throughout the school, it was apparent that there was a sense of community and that all students received assistance and support when needed. Students were willing to take risks to present or perform in front of the class whether they were sure their work was correct or not. It was clear to team members that everyone in the St Helena Parish school community is focused on providing learning opportunities and resources to help all students learn and practice the knowledge and skills necessary to live successful lives after leaving school.

Findings

The chart below provides an overview of the institution ratings across the three Domains.

Legend:
- Needs Improvement (red)
- Emerging (yellow)
- Meets Expectations (green)
- Exceeds Expectations (blue)

Rating	Number of Standards
Needs Improvement	0
Emerging	1
Meets Expectations	7
Exceeds Expectations	23

Powerful Practices

Powerful Practices reflect noteworthy observations and actions that have yielded clear results in student achievement or organizational effectiveness and are actions that exceed what is typically observed or expected in an institution.

Powerful Practice:
Leaders have developed and are sustaining a comprehensive systemic continuous improvement process that extends from the system's vision for improving student achievement, teacher effectiveness and public confidence. (Standards 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.11)

Primary Standard: 1.3

Evidence:
Education in St. Helena Parish Schools has changed dramatically since the 2012 – 2013 school year. Before that school year, community support and student achievement had been extremely low. That said, during the last six years, the system has not only survived the challenges that come from these realities, they are thriving by staying true to the system's vision: "To develop a productive school culture that increases student achievement, improves teacher effectiveness and builds public confidence." Working collaboratively with parents and community

representatives, as well as staff members, system leaders have developed and intentionally implement a Blueprint to Excellence (continuous improvement plan) that focuses on improving three crucial aspects of education in the Parish: 1) Student Achievement, 2) Teacher Effectiveness, and 3) Public Confidence. The superintendent and other system and school leaders shared with team members that the continuous improvement process and the Blueprint to Excellence are "dynamic" – leaders meet with representatives of stakeholder groups annually to review of implementation and to revise the components of the Blueprint.

By sharing leadership while implementing continuous improvement processes, system leaders demonstrate a "We go first" mentality that provides direct support and modeling of effective shared leadership practices in the schools. Engagement Review team members learned much about how this successful leadership model has taken hold in the system. The superintendent and others noted that this success comes from intentional efforts to guide program implementation rather than from trying to manage people. By focusing on shared leadership, the system continues to focus on growth in achievement for the whole child – academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. Clear evidence was provided during the Engagement Review to support the assertion that staff members work collaboratively to set high expectations for all students and to do whatever it takes to help students meet those high expectations.

Engagement Review team members learned from presentations and discussions about the myriad processes that are in place to ensure that work to implement the Bold Plays (improvement strategies) defined in the Blueprint to Excellence are effectively used to reach the 9 Vital Goals. Team members also gleaned information about the on-going, systemic improvement processes from documents provided by system and school leaders (i.e., the Blueprint to Excellence [continuous improvement plan], information about collaboration during the Summer Leadership Institutes). Team members also learned during interviews and informal discussions with system personnel about professional development opportunities that are provided to support effective implementation of the Bold Steps.

System leaders work diligently to maintain open communication with stakeholders. In past years, stakeholders from all areas noted through interviews that communication with and from the schools was an area of need, and this was promptly addressed. System and school leaders provide information in a variety of ways and offer opportunities for residents of the parish to gather and discuss educational issues and continuous improvement plans. Through public community forums in each part of the system, the system website, social media sites (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Let's Talk) and an open-door policy at the schools, system and school leaders are working toward the stated vision of increasing public confidence in its schools. This transparency about the continuous improvement process is grassroots evidence that system and school leaders have support from members of all stakeholder groups.

St. Helena Parish Schools recognizes that learning does not end when a student leaves school. Starting from Pre-K, the goal for all students is to graduate high school. However, in the continuous improvement process, leaders emphasize that graduation is not the ultimate goal – they work tirelessly to prepare students for college and careers, while systematically focusing on the arts and technology as integral parts of the teaching and learning processes.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for Improvement are those actions that will guide and direct institutions to specific areas that are worthy of additional attention.

Opportunity for Improvement:
Formalize existing program evaluation processes to ensure that all programs are directly aligned with the system vision by focusing on instruction that meets the needs of all students. (Standards 2.1 and 2.12)

Primary Standard: 2.12

Evidence:
While it is evident from review of student achievement data and state-assigned school letter grades that the numerous programs used throughout the system are helping to increase student achievement levels, there is not sufficient documentation that programs are evaluated formally. The Milestone Moments identify great results of programs that have been implemented and deemed successful. Agendas for the annual Leadership Summit and Board Retreat included some items related to program implementation. The system has begun using LEAN Frog "practical application of Lean Six Sigma tools and strategies" to help create systematic processes to assess, improve, and sustain their improvement efforts. These various processes and events are in place to provide opportunities for discussions about program success. Further, the Blueprint to Excellence includes some "Bold Plays" (implementation strategies) that foreshadow program evaluation; however, the Blueprint does not yet include defined processes for transforming the information from the "Implementation Timeline" and the "Measures" into formal program evaluation processes.

Improvement Priorities

Improvement priorities are developed to enhance the capacity of the institution to reach a higher level of performance and reflect the areas identified by the Engagement Review Team to have the greatest impact on improving student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Improvement Priority:
Extend current instructional strategies and learning activities to include more opportunities in all grade levels for students to increase creative and innovative thinking and promote collaborative problem-solving. (Standards 2.1 and 2.2)

Primary Standard: 2.2

Evidence:
The learning culture promotes collaborative creativity and innovation in classrooms across all three school campuses. However, during the Engagement Review, team members observed students in only a few classrooms working collaboratively to solve problems that require higher levels of critical thinking. Team members observed some students in these types of classrooms holding discussions, questioning one another's ideas, and synthesizing information from the text in order to formulate sound conclusions. On the other hand, during formal observations, team members did not observe many instances where protocols for collaboration were modeled; nor were higher levels of student thinking required as part of the observed lessons in many classrooms.

During formal observations, team members observed some classrooms where the learning culture fostered collaborative experiences that require critical thinking about ideas by the students. An example of this was observed in an English class in which students were reading an age-appropriate novel; they were encouraged to read excerpts from the novel during which the students actually read the different character parts. The teacher posed questions throughout the lesson that required students to think critically and share their ideas. The questioning technique presented opportunities for students to compare the actions in the story to real-life situations they might encounter; students were also asked to use higher level thinking skills as they thought about and shared how they might have reacted in a similar situation. These examples demonstrate effective processes

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for learning collaboratively and using higher level thinking skills; however, these kinds of learning activities were the exceptions rather than the rule.

Seating arrangements in some classrooms, along with directions to discuss within the group, validate the instructional design of collaborative problem-solving. However, during formal observations, even with these non-traditional seating arrangements, opportunities for critical thinking in collaborative groups were limited in most classrooms. For example, in middle school classrooms, stations were designed to encourage collaborative learning; however, in multiple classrooms where stations were used, students were either non-verbally working while sitting together in groups or the work they were completing as a group was rote vocabulary or basic math practice. In a high school mathematics class, the students enthusiastically volunteered to work problems at the board to model for other students; however, the problems only required low-level problem-solving techniques such as isolating the variable, combining like terms, or utilizing the FOIL method. In one classroom, only a particular few students seemed to discuss or use higher level thinking to solve problems within their group, and when the next group rotated into that same station, they did not participate in collaborative discussions.

While these descriptions from formal observations are examples of effective use of collaborative learning strategies, these processes are not yet the norm across all grades and subjects; however, it is fair to note that it's still early in the implementation phase.

Accreditation Recommendation and Index of Educational Quality™ (IEQ™)

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

AdvancED provides the Index of Education Quality™ (IEQ™) as a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of standards and review criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus. The IEQ is comprised of the Standards Diagnostic ratings from the three Domains: 1) Leadership Capacity; 2) Learning Capacity; and 3) Resource Capacity and the results of eleot classroom observations. The IEQ results are reported on a scale of 100 to 400 and provides information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria.

Institution IEQ	367.65

Conclusion Narrative

The four-day system Engagement Review at St. Helena Parish School System (Greensburg, Louisiana), occurred on November 5 - 8, 2017. Even from such a brief visit, it was clear that the school board, the superintendent, other system and school leaders, teachers, and other staff members have a two-part focus: to support all learners, adults as well as children and young people . . . and to promote the knowledge and skills that students need to be successful in the 21st Century world. System leaders did a great job of preparing for the Engagement Review, as well as answering questions and providing additional artifacts and evidence while the team was at the system.

It was evident throughout the Engagement Review that stakeholders of St. Helena Parish School System share commitment to helping students master the knowledge and skills they will need to be successful 21st Century citizens. During the Engagement Review, this commitment was reflected in words through interviews, artifacts and

other written evidence and during observations of student learning and informal interactions with students.

System leaders shared in the Executive Summary and the Continuous Improvement Journey presentation many ways in which they develop and implement improvement efforts focused on improved student learning. Although people used different terms and offered different examples, comments were centered on doing what is best for students, providing research-based learning resources and well-trained staff members who provide supportive services, whatever their roles. All of these taken together help the system and its schools project a reality in the community that helps to "build public confidence" in its schools. School leaders shared an important summary thought in the Executive Summary: "In light of the challenges that we have had to bear, we have implemented several initiatives over the last few years that align to the vision and goals of the system. High expectations have been established for all students. Our program offerings relate directly to those expectations."

One example of the focus on innovation and reinventing what education might look like in St Helena Parish, system leaders created an organizational chart that is organized as a Venn diagram, at the center of which are the students, along with teachers, school leaders, and parents. The three interlocked circles represent 1) citizens, school board, superintendent; 2) the Division of Academic Affairs (i.e., Chief Academic Officer, Chief Innovative Officer, Chief School Improvement Officer, their staff members); and 3) the Division of Academic Operations (i.e., Chief Financial Officer, Supervisor of Child Nutrition, Executive Chief of Staff, Supervisors of Human Resources, their staff members). System leaders shared with the Engagement Review team that the information and format of the organizational chart have been adapted as the continuous improvement process has evolved over past years.

Another step away from the ordinary is a graphic that displays significant events along the past six years of the continuous improvement journey – "A Timeline of How We Got Here."
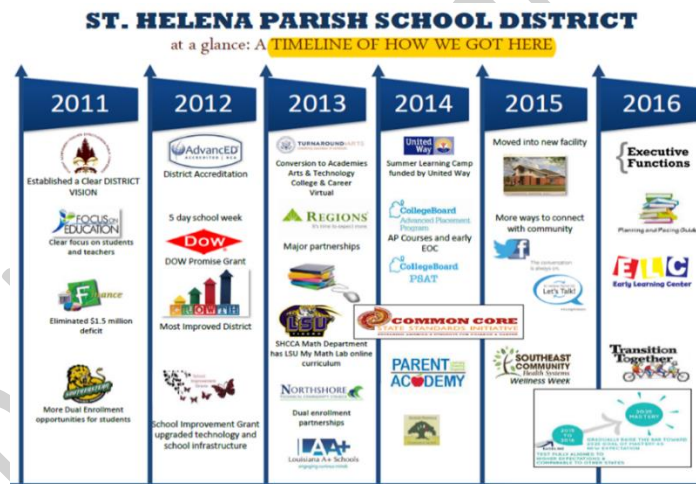
The superintendent shared during discussions that "Nothing's more powerful than a group of committed educators who they can solve any problem together." As teachers and other instructional leaders address the Improvement Priority, they will extend the problem-solving attitude to include students, young and older. As they become better informed about instructional strategies that challenge students to learn and practice the skills required for creative and innovative thinking and collaborative problem-solving, students are, indeed, likely to become better problem-solvers and collaborative workers. And, as system and school leaders, working collaboratively with teachers, develop and implement program evaluation processes, they can further improve instruction and help students become able to monitor their own learning and set their own learning goals. To echo an earlier thought, the over-arching goal must be that students experience a balanced program of academics within a student-centered learning environment that will help them become prepared to participate productively in the 21st Century global society.

In conclusion, Engagement Review team members heard from many people and observed in schools and other

venues throughout the system a commitment to doing whatever it takes to provide the best programs and services for each student in the parish. "St. Helena continues to manage ways to trim and stretch available resources in a manner that is capable of delivering the promise of quality education for all students. . . . We will continue to make tough decisions about how to move forward efficiently and effectively. The growth that we have experienced thus far is a clear indicator that we are moving in the right direction."

Next Steps

The results of the Engagement Review provide the next step to guide the improvement journey of the institution in their efforts to improve the quality of educational opportunities for all learners. The findings are aligned to research-based criteria designed to improve student learning and organizational effectiveness. The feedback provided in the Accreditation Engagement Review Report will assist the institution in reflecting on their current improvement efforts and to adapt and adjust their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

Upon receiving the Accreditation Engagement Review Report the institution is encouraged to implement the following steps:
- Review and share the findings with stakeholders.
- Develop plans to address the Improvement Priorities identified by the Engagement Review Team.
- Use the findings and data from the report to guide and strengthen the institution's continuous improvement efforts.
- Celebrate the successes noted in the report
- Continue your Improvement Journey

Team Roster

The Engagement Review Teams are comprised of professionals with varied backgrounds and professional experiences. All Lead Evaluators and Engagement Review Team members complete AdvancED training and eleot® certification to provide knowledge and understanding of the AdvancED tools and processes. The following professionals served on the Engagement Review Team:

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Mary Mickelson	Ms. Mickelson is an AdvancED certified Lead Evaluator and has led school and system teams in Indiana, Alabama, Arizona, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. Mary has served as Lead Evaluator or Associate Lead for more than 40 DoDEA schools in Europe, Japan, Korea, and stateside locations. She has served as Lead Evaluator or Associate Lead for international school teams in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Switzerland and China. Mary has worked extensively with AdvancED as an Indiana state committee member (ten years as the state superintendent's designee). Ms. Mickelson is currently an adjunct instructor for graduate education and transition to teaching programs (including student teaching) and high ability certification courses. Mary has written and teaches curriculum and instruction courses for online graduate education programs. Particular areas of expertise include: continuous improvement at the school and system levels; data-driven decision-making; curriculum and instructional improvement; and professional development. Mary served the Indiana Department of Education in several roles: Director of School Accreditation (approximately 2200 public and non-public schools); education consultant for accreditation and gifted/ talented education. In addition, Mary has experience at the local school and system levels: continuous improvement and assessment director; gifted / talented education coordinator / teacher/ curriculum developer; music educator. Ms. Mickelson holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from Indiana State University and the gifted/talented education endorsement from Purdue University.
Aquetta Butler	Mrs. Aquetta Butler is a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) in Hattiesburg, MS; She earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Sociology with an Emphasis in Social Work. After graduation, Mrs. Butler worked for ten (10) years as a Social Worker for the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Children Services. As a Social Worker, Mrs. Butler worked with abused and neglected children. She returned to school and earned a Masters in Elementary Education from Alcorn State University. She worked for 10+ years as an elementary and middle school teacher, having taught the following grades: 2nd, 4th, 6th - 8th. Mrs. Butler returned to graduate school and earned a Specialist in Educational Leadership. This degree was also earned at USM. Mrs. Butler transitioned from the classroom to administration and has served as an administrator on both the elementary and secondary levels. She is now the Accountability & Assessment Director at Natchez-Adams School District, Natchez, Mississippi. Mrs. Butler has served as an Engagement Review team member. She notes that her participation on the team was professionally enlightening and that she gained a wealth of knowledge. Mrs. Butler continues to advance her knowledge base and attends local, state and national conferences on educational topics.

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Becky Johnson	Rebecca Johnson is the IEP/Transition Facilitator for West Feliciana Parish Schools, as well as the 9th/10th Grade Academic Coordinator at West Feliciana High School in St. Francisville, Louisiana. She has served on a high school AdvancED review team as well as a system review team. She was the chairperson for the 2013 AdvancED review for the West Feliciana Parish School System and will do the same for this upcoming review in March 2018. Rebecca is in her 18th year as an educator, with all of those years spent at West Feliciana High School. She has experience with guiding and working with teachers of varying grades as well as both special and general education. Mrs. Johnson holds an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education, grades 1 - 8, with an add-on in Special Education – Mild / Moderate, grades 1 – 12, which was earned from Northwestern State University. She holds a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from University of Phoenix.
Mildred Johnson	Mildred Johnson is currently a teacher at Tangipahoa Parish Alternative School in Tangipahoa Parish School System in Hammond, Louisiana. She has served as an assistant principal, a high school and middle school principal and Special Educator Coordinator for the parish. Mildred is in her twenty-fifth year as an educator. Mrs. Johnson has an undergraduate degree in English and a minor in Special Education from Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, Texas. She also holds a Masters +30 in Administration and Supervision from Southeastern Louisiana University. She has served on high school AdvancED review teams for many years.
Kathleen Lopiparo	Mrs. Kathleen Lopiparo has been an educator for 26 years. She worked as a high school English teacher for 15 years in both St. Bernard Parish and Ascension Parish before moving into administration. Mrs. Lopiparo served as an assistant principal at Dutchtown High School for 3 years, followed by her role as Dutchtown High School Associate Principal of the Freshmen Academy for the next 6 years. Currently, Mrs. Lopiparo works as a High School Instructional Supervisor and Instructional Support partner in Ascension Parish. She continues to develop professionally by participating in both state and national conferences. Mrs. Lopiparo organizes and facilitates accreditation efforts for Ascension Parish including support to individual schools, and she has served on two school Engagement Review Teams over the past two years.

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About AdvancED

AdvancED is a non-profit, non-partisan organization serving the largest community of education

professionals in the world. Founded on more than 100 years of work in continuous improvement,

AdvancED combines the knowledge and expertise of a research institute, the skills of a management

consulting firm and the passion of a grassroots movement for educational change to empower

Pre-K-12 schools and school systems to ensure that all learners realize their full potential.