# Report of the
# External Review Team
# for
# Pike County Public Schools

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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

Located about an hour southwest of Atlanta, Pike County (GA) Schools is the home of 3,350 students, 85 percent white, eight percent African American, three percent multi-racial and the remainder reporting other ethnicities. Forty-four percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Up until about five years ago, the academic story of Pike County was not that dissimilar to many rural Georgia school systems. Overall, student scores on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) were somewhere near the middle of the state with few students scoring at the 'Exceeds' level. Students were performing below average on the SAT, ACT, and AP exams. In 2012 Pike County 15-year-old students participated in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Pike County's Accreditation Report notes that their "students performed dismally." This was a seminal time in the history of Pike County Schools. The report that follows reflects many initiatives and strategies that have been put into place in the last five years.

Initial contact with Pike County Schools occurred on January 10 with email exchanges between the Zebulon High School Principal who served as the system's contact person and the Lead Evaluator. Periodic email exchanges and phone conversations between the Pike County Schools contact person and the Lead Evaluator continued from that time up through the end of the visit.

The External Review Team was composed of five professional educators, three from Georgia (including the Associate Lead), one from Florida, and the Lead Evaluator was from Kentucky. Cumulatively, the Team had more than 143 years of educational experience representing teaching at all levels from elementary through post-graduate and administration from school principal, instructional supervisor, finance officer, assistant superintendent, superintendent and college dean.

Several hours of preparation by the External Review Team occurred before the on-site visit.  To facilitate and organize the visit, the Lead Evaluator prepared a video that focused on Pike County Schools (GA) and provided team members an overview of the process, expectations for the Team, where the evidence provided by the schools and system would be located and the logistics of planned activities.  Following the team members' review of the video, each team member emailed the Lead Evaluator acknowledging the Standard to which he or she had been assigned and asked questions or provided comments he or she had regarding the video.  The Lead Evaluator also had numerous contacts (e.g., email messages, phone calls, etc.) with team members to discuss various aspects, logistics, and requirements for the on-site visit. As requested by the Lead Evaluator and using system-supplied evidence as their guide, team members sent their first-round ratings to the Lead Evaluator by Saturday, March 18.  The Team's average rating for each Indicator facilitated some of the discussion at the Team's first face-to-face meeting.

The first on-site meeting began at 4:00 PM, Sunday, March 19 at Comfort Inn in Griffin, GA.  Comfort Inn served as the home base for the Team for the duration of the visit.   Following brief introductions and reminders of team protocol and expectations, each of the Standards was discussed along with the evidence provided by system personnel.  The discussion for each of the Standards and Indicators was led by the member assigned that Standard.  Team averages generated by Round One rankings were also considered as a part of the discussion. Following the discussion of each of the Standards, the Team discussed interviews scheduled for the following day.  Team members shared areas where additional information was needed in order to make a more informed decision regarding each Indicator's rating.

At 6:00 PM the Team met the system contact person at Longhorn restaurant for dinner.  This allowed the Team to chat with the contact person and get to learn a bit more about Pike County and its schools. Following dinner, the Team returned to the hotel and had a brief meeting to discuss the schedule and logistics for the following day.

Monday's work primarily focused on interviews.  The day began with the superintendent providing an overview of the system.  He noted the significant successes realized by the school system prior to the nation's financial recession and the challenges the system had faced in the past five years.  In addition to losing 20 percent of its core teachers, the system has not had adequate funding to invest in digital hardware and technology infrastructure. Further, it has been necessary for school personnel to approach the local banks and take out Tax Anticipation Notes (TAN) to meet its financial obligates.  The superintendent reported in his FY18 Budget Review that "The District's resources have eroded to a degree that it is having a negative impact on students and staff."  During interviews with the board members, they recognized the financial challenges as well. Interestingly, at 16.2 mills, Pike County has one of the lowest tax rates in Georgia.  The Board could raise the

rate to 20 mills without voter recall, but cite the extremely conservative nature of the citizenry for its reluctance to raise the rate to the allowable 20 mills.  The Board is currently discussing raising the tax rate 1.4 mills.

Following the superintendent's overview and interview, a leadership team composed of both central office and school-based leaders met with the External Review Team and discussed their areas of oversight and their linkage to AdvancED Standards and Indicators.  They noted that during the formative stages of the internal review they found several documents and artifacts that informed their Indicator ratings.  They compared the wording of the Indicator ratings and the identified evidence and collectively decided the system's rating for the Self Assessment.

Five of the system's six board members participated in midday interviews citing their role as a policy-making body and respecting the autonomy of the superintendent and principals to lead the system and the schools.  When asked how the culture of trust between the superintendent and board was developed, the board chair reflected on years of focusing on students in making all decisions.  He noted that the superintendent kept the board informed and respected the roles they held as elected board members.

An extended afternoon work session allowed team members time to debrief concerning evidence gained during interviews.  The afternoon work session was followed by interviews with parents and stakeholders.  The 18 participating parents and stakeholders were divided into two groups to facilitate and encourage more participation.  They shared system strengths including a caring culture, competent teachers and high expectations.  They also shared concerns of limited finances, aging technology and outdated textbooks.  Following the parents and stakeholders' interviews, the Team left the school system to return to the hotel for dinner and a multi-hour work session.

Tuesday was set aside to work in the schools, observing in classrooms and talking with school-based personnel.  To visit all the schools, the Team was divided into two teams with a two-member team going to the primary and elementary schools and a three-member team going to the middle and high schools.  In addition to the 50 classroom observations, team members were able to talk with 88 students in formal and informal settings.  In late afternoon, the Team returned to the hotel for its evening work session.

The evening work session began with a discussion of the eleot™ results.  Discussed elsewhere in this report, the Team noted that except for the Digital Learning Environment, all Environments exceeded AdvancED Network average.  Each of the Indicators was discussed and rated considering the evidence collected.  Once all Indicators were rated, preliminary ratings were entered into the AdvancED Network Master Sheet allowing for calculation of the Index of Education Quality and comparison of system's Indicator score and the AEN average score for each Indicator.  This process facilitated identification of Improvement Priorities and Powerful Practices.

Wednesday, the final day in Pike County, began with a review of the drafted Improvement Priorities and Powerful Practices. These action statements were divided with each team member expected to cite at least three sources of evidence to support the action statements providing for triangulation of evidence.  The morning work session also included a review of the Exit Report.  During a pre-lunch meeting that involved the

Superintendent, Associate Lead Evaluator and Lead Evaluator, the External Review Team's findings were reported to the Superintendent.  Following lunch, an early afternoon called board meeting provided an opportunity for the Lead Evaluator to share the External Review Team's findings including three Powerful Practices, three Improvement Priorities and an affirmative recommendation for reaccreditation.

The quality and efficiency of an organization are often reflected in the way in which its personnel approach all tasks.  Led by the principal of Zebulon High School it was obvious that system personnel worked diligently in preparing for the External Review.  Requests for more information were met quickly and efficiently.  The External Review Team wishes to express its sincere appreciation for the manner in which system personnel prepared for the accreditation visit and the professional manner in which everything was done while the Team was there.  The hospitality and graciousness of the system personnel were sincerely appreciated.  The attention to detail was evident and helped focus the work of the Team.

Access to all stakeholder groups was well organized.  As a result, conversations and interviews were numerous and ranged from extended interviews in which a number of topics were discussed in-depth to shorter interviews during which one or two main ideas were explored.  The feedback gained through the interviews brought clarity and a better understanding of system-supplied evidence.  The interviews, classroom observations and evidence helped in the triangulation of data and therefore helped ensure the accuracy of all aspects of the final report.

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 | 25 |
| Instructional Staff | 69 |
| Support Staff | 7 |
| Students | 88 |
| Parents/Community/Business Leaders | 18 |
| **Total** | **213** |

# 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. | 3.00 | 2.69 |
| 3.2 | Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice. | 3.00 | 2.49 |
| 3.3 | Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations. | 3.00 | 2.59 |
| 3.4 | System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success. | 3.80 | 2.71 |
| 3.5 | The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels. | 3.80 | 2.58 |
| 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. | 3.00 | 2.60 |

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|-----------|-------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 3.8 | The system and all of its schools engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keep them informed of their children's learning progress. | 3.80 | 2.97 |
| 3.9 | The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience. | 1.20 | 2.50 |
| 3.10 | Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses. | 3.00 | 2.47 |
| 3.11 | All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning. | 2.80 | 2.65 |
| 3.12 | The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students. | 3.00 | 2.64 |

## Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|-----------|-------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 5.1 | The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system. | 2.80 | 2.66 |
| 5.2 | Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning. | 3.20 | 2.49 |
| 5.3 | Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data. | 3.20 | 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. | 2.80 | 2.50 |
| 5.5 | System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders. | 3.00 | 2.75 |

## Student Performance Diagnostic

The quality of assessments used to measure student learning, assurance that assessments are administered with procedural fidelity and appropriate accommodations, assessment results that reflect the quality of
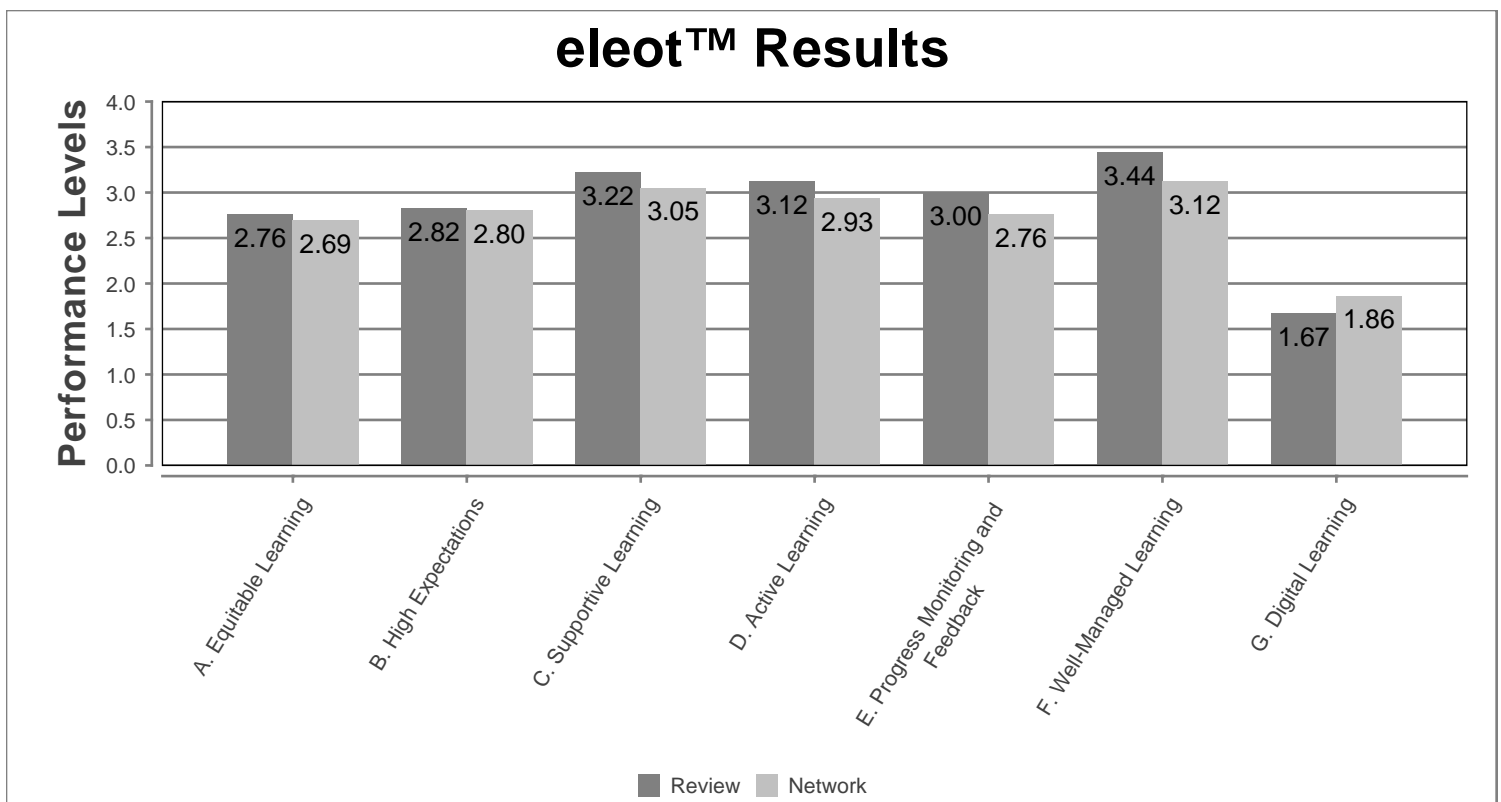
learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

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

# Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. Every member of the External Review Team is required to be trained and pass a certification exam that establishes inter-rater reliability. Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale (4=very evident; 3=evident; 2=somewhat evident; and 1=not observed). The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in eleot™ as well as benchmark results across the AdvancED Network.

## eleot™ Results

| Environment | Review | Network |
|---|---|---|
| A. Equitable Learning | 2.76 | 2.69 |
| B. High Expectations | 2.82 | 2.80 |
| C. Supportive Learning | 3.22 | 3.05 |
| D. Active Learning | 3.12 | 2.93 |
| E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback | 3.00 | 2.76 |
| F. Well-Managed Learning | 3.44 | 3.12 |
| G. Digital Learning | 1.67 | 1.86 |

Clearly one of the most enjoyable days in an External Review is the day that the Team is in the schools interacting with teachers and students.  This is where so many seeds are planted, students challenged and encouraged and new ideas take root.  As educators, team members recognized that "light bulb coming on" when a student grasps the new-found knowledge.  Therefore, it was with a great deal of anticipation that team members embraced the planned observations.

Wanting to ensure that all schools were visited, the Team divided into one two-member team and one three-member team. The two-member team visited the Pike County Primary and Pike County Elementary Schools. The three-member team visited Pike County Middle, Pike County Ninth Grade Academy, and Pike County High School. Using the eleot™, the External Review Team observed in 50 classrooms, observing all grade levels and a wide variety of content areas including core courses, music, art, physical education, and STEM. The Team 's experiences were largely rewarding and provided rich data sources with which to combine with system-provided documents and artifacts, interviews, presentations and surveys.

At the end of the day, all team members commented on how polite, respectful and pleasant they found the Pike County students to be. Therefore, it was no surprise that a Well-Managed Learning Environment with a Team average of 3.44 on a 4-point scale was the highest of all Environment. When this is compared to the AdvancED Network (AEN) average of 3.12 it should seem obvious the high level of respect, easy collaboration and smooth transitions exhibited by students. The Supportive Learning Environment with an average of 3.12 (AEN 3.05) was the second highest rated Environment and provides an understanding of the types of relationships that are fostered between teachers and students. As the third highest rated Environment, the Active Learning Environment's average of 3.12 (AEN 2.93) reflects the system's renewed interest and focus on problem-solving and collaboration as key ingredients in their instructional process.

The lowest of all Environments was the Digital Learning Environment with an average of 1.67 (AEN 1.86). Given the high ratings on all the other Environments, it was somewhat surprising to experience the nearly non-existent use of digital tools. Further, in the few places where digital tools were used, it was primarily teachers who were using them. This finding corroborates many statements made during student interviews in which slow, out-of-date, and rarely used technology was mentioned often. While still above the AEN average, the second and third lowest rated Environments were Equitable Learning with an average of 2.76 (AEN 2.69) and High Expectations with an average of 2.82 (AEN 2.80).

The highest rated of all Items with an average of 3.60 on a 4-point scale was from Environment F (Well-Managed Learning), Items 1 and 2. "Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers," (F.1) and "Follows classroom rules and works well with others." (F.2) The third highest rated Item with an average of 3.44 was "Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences." (F.5) All of the three lowest rated Items were in Digital Learning Environment and include "Uses digital tools/ technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning" (G.2); "Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning" (G.1); and, "Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning (G.3) earning averages of 1.58, 1.68 and 1.74 respectively.

Equitable Learning Environment
With the next to lowest average of 2.76 on a 4-point scale (AEN 2.69) the Equitable Learning Environment is a study in contrasts. Two Items "Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support" (A.2) and "Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied" (A. 3) were evident/very evident in more than nine out of ten classrooms observed. Conversely, "Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs" (A.1) was evident/very evident in six of ten

classrooms and "Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/ differences" (A.4) was evident/very evident in approximately four of ten classrooms.  Given the system's focus on problem-solving and collaboration, providing greater opportunities for more differentiation should be considered as a leverage point for increased student learning.

High Expectations Learning Environment
The High Expectations Learning Environment was the third lowest of all Environments with an average of 2.82 (AEN 2.80).  The highest rated of all Items in this Environment is "Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher" (B.1) with an average of 3.22.  "Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable" (B.2) was a close second with an average of 3.14.   Averaging 1.94 "Is proved exemplars of high-quality work" (B.3) was the lowest of all Items in this Environment.  With the system's adoption of Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) and its attention to academic instruction on student construction of knowledge and conceptual understanding it seems that an increased use of exemplars would help the district move toward its purpose and vision.

Supportive Learning Environment
As the second highest rated Environment with an average rating of 3.22 (AEN 3.05) four of the five Items of the Supportive Learning Environment were evident/very evident in more than 90 percent of all classrooms observed.  The lone exception "Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs" (C.5) averaged 2.90.  This Item links to A.1 that deals with differentiation of learning opportunities.  Additionally, on the student survey 36 percent of high school students and 55 percent of middle school students agreed/strongly agreed that "All of my teachers change their teaching to meet my learning needs."

Active Learning Environment
It was evident/very evident to the External Review Team that students are "actively engaged in the learning activities" (D.3) in 94 percent of observed classrooms.  Occurring much less frequently, "Makes connections from content to real-life experiences" was evident/very evident in 66 percent of classrooms.  With the expansion of the STEM program currently underway, connecting classroom activities with real-life experiences should occur more often.

Progress Monitoring and Feedback
Averaging 3.00 (AEN 2.76) the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment was the fourth highest of all Environments.  In 90 percent of classrooms it was evident/very evident that students "have opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback" (E.2) and "demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson content" (E.3).

Well-Managed Learning
As noted previously, without exception, the students the External Review Team observed were polite, friendly, and well-behaved.  This was reflected in the Well-Managed Learning Environment which averaged 3.44 (AEN 3.12).  All of the top three Items occurred in this Environment and include "Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers" (F.1), "Follows classroom rules and works well with others" (F.2), and "Knows

classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences." (F.5)   These Items averaged 3.60, 3.60 and 3.44 respectfully.

Digital Learning Environment

Use of digital tools to enhance instruction was nearly missing in all observed classrooms.  "Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning" was evident/very evident in 24 percent of classes.  "Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning" was evident/very evident in 20 percent of classrooms.  "Uses digital tools/ technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning" was evident/very evident in 26 percent of classrooms.

Interviews with students and teachers reflected a disappointment in the amount and quality of available technology.  It seems obvious that the system's purpose will never be realized with the current hardware and infrastructure used to support that hardware.

Most of the observed classrooms were led by competent teachers who were teaching well-behaved students.  Student collaboration was encouraged, but most of the collaboration focused on the same problem with the same solution for all.  Increased differentiation that allows for students to identify real-life problems that need to be solved is a critical next step.  The emerging agricultural-based STEM program shows great promise in this area.  Once this program is fully functional it can become a showcase for other teachers to observe and learn.

**eleot™ Data Summary**

| A. Equitable Learning | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Item** | **Average** | **Description** | **Very Evident** | **Evident** | **Somewhat Evident** | **Not Observed** |
| 1. | 2.64 | Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs | 20.00% | 42.00% | 20.00% | 18.00% |
| 2. | 3.20 | Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support | 32.00% | 58.00% | 8.00% | 2.00% |
| 3. | 3.10 | Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied | 12.00% | 86.00% | 2.00% | 0.00% |
| 4. | 2.10 | Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences | 8.00% | 30.00% | 26.00% | 36.00% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.76** | | | | | | |

| B. High Expectations | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Item** | **Average** | **Description** | **Very Evident** | **Evident** | **Somewhat Evident** | **Not Observed** |
| 1. | 3.22 | Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher | 34.00% | 56.00% | 8.00% | 2.00% |
| 2. | 3.14 | Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable | 30.00% | 56.00% | 12.00% | 2.00% |
| 3. | 1.94 | Is provided exemplars of high quality work | 8.00% | 22.00% | 26.00% | 44.00% |
| 4. | 2.92 | Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks | 18.00% | 60.00% | 18.00% | 4.00% |
| 5. | 2.86 | Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing) | 16.00% | 58.00% | 22.00% | 4.00% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.82** | | | | | | |

| C. Supportive Learning | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Item** | **Average** | **Description** | **Very Evident** | **Evident** | **Somewhat Evident** | **Not Observed** |
| 1. | 3.34 | Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive | 36.00% | 62.00% | 2.00% | 0.00% |
| 2. | 3.42 | Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning | 50.00% | 42.00% | 8.00% | 0.00% |
| 3. | 3.14 | Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback) | 22.00% | 70.00% | 8.00% | 0.00% |
| 4. | 3.28 | Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks | 34.00% | 60.00% | 6.00% | 0.00% |
| 5. | 2.90 | Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs | 14.00% | 64.00% | 20.00% | 2.00% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.22** | | | | | | |

| D. Active Learning | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Item** | **Average** | **Description** | **Very Evident** | **Evident** | **Somewhat Evident** | **Not Observed** |
| 1. | 3.24 | Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students | 40.00% | 44.00% | 16.00% | 0.00% |
| 2. | 2.78 | Makes connections from content to real-life experiences | 26.00% | 40.00% | 20.00% | 14.00% |
| 3. | 3.34 | Is actively engaged in the learning activities | 50.00% | 34.00% | 16.00% | 0.00% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.12** | | | | | | |

| E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item | Average | Description | Very Evident | Evident | Somewhat Evident | Not Observed |
| 1. | 2.94 | Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning | 22.00% | 50.00% | 28.00% | 0.00% |
| 2. | 3.16 | Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding | 28.00% | 60.00% | 12.00% | 0.00% |
| 3. | 3.16 | Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content | 28.00% | 62.00% | 8.00% | 2.00% |
| 4. | 2.66 | Understands how her/his work is assessed | 16.00% | 44.00% | 30.00% | 10.00% |
| 5. | 3.08 | Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback | 20.00% | 68.00% | 12.00% | 0.00% |

**Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.00**

| F. Well-Managed Learning | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item | Average | Description | Very Evident | Evident | Somewhat Evident | Not Observed |
| 1. | 3.60 | Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers | 62.00% | 36.00% | 2.00% | 0.00% |
| 2. | 3.60 | Follows classroom rules and works well with others | 62.00% | 36.00% | 2.00% | 0.00% |
| 3. | 3.22 | Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities | 48.00% | 36.00% | 6.00% | 10.00% |
| 4. | 3.32 | Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities | 60.00% | 22.00% | 8.00% | 10.00% |
| 5. | 3.44 | Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences | 44.00% | 56.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% |

**Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.44**

| G. Digital Learning | | | % | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Item** | **Average** | **Description** | **Very Evident** | **Evident** | **Somewhat Evident** | **Not Observed** |
| 1. | 1.68 | Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning | 2.00% | 22.00% | 18.00% | 58.00% |
| 2. | 1.58 | Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning | 2.00% | 18.00% | 16.00% | 64.00% |
| 3. | 1.74 | Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning | 6.00% | 20.00% | 16.00% | 58.00% |
| **Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 1.67** | | | | | | |

# Findings

**Improvement Priority**

Develop, implement and monitor a formal process at all levels whereby each student has at least one adult advocate who supports the student's educational experiences and acts as a mentor for learning, thinking and life skills.

(Indicator 3.9)

*Primary Indicator*

Indicator 3.9

*Evidence and Rationale*

Interviews

Student, parent and staff interviews all underscore the caring environment in which Pike County Schools operates.  Several examples of teacher/student interactions provided evidence that students do have school personnel who advocate for them.  However, no one could describe a formalized program whereby every student was identified by name and linked to a specific adult advocate.  Without a formalized structure, it is highly likely that some students will not have the mentoring and advocacy that is required for student success.

Surveys

Staff and parent surveys reflect a positive reaction to the systems' advocacy initiatives with 84 percent of staff agreeing/strongly agreeing that "In our school, a formal structure exists so that each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the school who supports that student's educational experience" and 87 percent of parents agreeing/strongly agreeing that "My child has at least one adult advocate in the school."  However, students responded much differently.  Slightly less than half, 49 percent of high school students and 64 percent of middle school students agreed/strongly agreed that "My school makes sure there is at least one adult who

knows me well and shows interest in my education and future."

Documents and Artifacts

The system's Accreditation Report notes, "At all levels, there is a need to find effective ways for ALL students to be well-known by at least one advocate within the school. In some schools this has been accomplished through a Teachers as Advisor (TAA) program. The middle school has made multiple unsuccessful attempts at TAA and is now piloting a new attempt: Relevance and Relationships."  The school system also reports school counselors, graduation coaches and the elementary community mentoring program as evidence to a student support program.  Clearly all these programs provide some student care.  Yet, none of them are formalized to the point whereby each child is assigned a specific advocate.

Rationale

While it is abundantly clear that the system's personnel care about students, it is also clear that there is no formalized program guaranteeing an adult advocate for each student.  Given the high expectations embraced by the system's educators, it is likely that some students may become frustrated and will need encouragement and guidance.  Providing a mentor to support educational experiences will encourage learning, thinking and life skills.

## Powerful Practice

Spearheaded by the superintendent, leaders of the Pike County School District direct a robust, systemic process for monitoring and supporting instructional practices including a protocol in which instructional leaders provide feedback concerning teacher-developed instructional strategies.
(Indicator 3.4)

*Primary Indicator*

Indicator 3.4

*Evidence and Rationale*

Stakeholder Survey Data

The use of data to support instructional decisions was a mainstay in the system.  Survey results indicated that 95 percent of staff agreed/strongly agreed that "Our school leaders monitor data related to school continuous improvement goals.  Ninety-four percent of staff agreed/strongly agreed that "Our school leaders monitor data related to student achievement."  Ninety percent of staff agreed/strongly agreed that "Our school uses data to monitor student readiness and success at the next level."

Stakeholder Interviews

During interviews system and school leaders described a protocol that involves weekly professional leadership community meetings during which teacher-developed performance events are analyzed for effectiveness. Teams are often a mix of system and building-level administrators and often analyze work designed for a different level than where they administer.  For example, the middle school principal may be on a team that would analyze primary or high school work.  The primary school principal may be on a team that analyzes middle or high school work.

Documents and Artifacts
As noted in several documents and artifacts, school system personnel have identified Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) as the lens through which instructional practices are viewed and measured. Additionally, EdLeader 21 provides the foundational constructs of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (i.e., 4 C's). This cutting-edge research is supported by partnerships with the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Center for Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW). A main goal of this work is to identify Big Ideas and create Enduring Understandings and Cornerstone Tasks. All of this work is pivotal in the monitoring and supporting instructional practices.

Rationale
Effective instructional leadership is not something that happens occasionally. System and school leaders must continuously examine and analyze all available data to determine the appropriateness and quality of instructional practices. The comprehensive nature of the system's monitoring and feedback plan helps ensure quality instruction in the classrooms.

## Powerful Practice
The system has several programs to effectively engage families to inform them of their children's learning. (Indicator 3.8)

*Primary Indicator*
Indicator 3.8

*Evidence and Rationale*
Stakeholder Survey Data
Stakeholder survey data highlighted satisfaction with the availability of information related to student learning is high. Staff survey results showed that 88 percent agreed/strongly agreed that "school leaders provide opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in schools." Eighty-three percent of the staff agreed/strongly agreed that "all stakeholders are informed of polices, processes, and procedures related to grading and reporting." Eighty percent of the parents surveyed agreed/strongly agreed that "the system provides opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in the schools." These practices are in alignment with the system's purpose.

Stakeholder Interviews
Interviews with staff, students, parents and community leaders revealed a strong perception of and satisfaction with the formal and informal communication efforts employed by the system. Families reported that they are routinely kept informed of their children's academic progress through the system's information portal (PowerSchool). Other avenues mentioned by parents include open house, academic nights, robo calls, parent conferences, social media, text messages, and emails. In addition, numerous comments reflected the importance of informal meetings at local community functions and church.

Documents and Artifacts

Several strategies to communicate with parents are listed above and described at length in the system's evidence.  Perhaps none is more intriguing than the 20-month community engagement process. Proposing the question, "What must we do to prepare our students to succeed in a globally competitive marketplace" the idea of the 4 C's is introduced.  Families, the community and all interested stakeholders are invited and encouraged to participate.  The system rated itself a '4' on this Indicator.  The External Review Team agrees.

Rationale

Families are students' first teachers.  Additionally, research is replete with evidence supporting the notion that student learning is enhanced when students live in homes with involved families.  A comprehensive outreach program that strengthens school/family ties will pay dividends in the form of enhanced student learning.

# 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. | 3.20 | 2.68 |
| 1.2 | The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success. | 3.00 | 2.68 |
| 1.3 | The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills. | 3.80 | 2.90 |
| 1.4 | Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning. | 2.80 | 2.65 |

# Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1 | The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools. | 3.00 | 2.97 |
| 2.2 | The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively. | 3.80 | 2.96 |
| 2.3 | The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively. | 4.00 | 3.17 |
| 2.4 | Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction. | 3.00 | 3.03 |
| 2.5 | Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction. | 3.00 | 2.74 |

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|-----------|-------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 2.6 | Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success. | 3.00 | 2.70 |

# Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

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

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

| Evaluative Criteria | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Questionnaire Administration | 4.00 | 3.42 |
| Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis | 3.00 | 3.03 |

# Findings

## Powerful Practice

The Pike County Board of Education fosters a high performing organizational structure that supports system leadership at all levels and respects the autonomy of the administration.
(Indicator 2.3)

*Primary Indicator*
Indicator 2.3

*Evidence and Rationale*
Stakeholder Survey Data
Survey results indicated that 89 percent of the system's staff agreed that the governing body maintains a distinction between its roles and responsibilities and those of school leadership.  Ninety-two percent of the staff expressed that the board complied with all policies, procedures, and laws, and regulations. Overall, survey results implied that the board is perceived as functioning as a cohesive unit and supports and respects the leadership's responsibility to achieve the goals for improvement in teaching and learning.

Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews with board members, system and school level administrators, community members and parents indicated the Pike County Board of Education worked cooperatively to support the efforts of the superintendent and his staff to focus on preparing students to be creative problem-solvers ready for college and careers.  As a result, the superintendent acknowledged that the board provided him autonomy to manage the day-to-day operations of the system.  In addition, members of the system leadership team stated that the board was very supportive and respectable. In addition, board members expressed appreciation for the superintendent who is currently one of Georgia's longest continuously serving school superintendents.

Documents and Artifacts

The board of education has maintained an up-to-date policy manual which defines its roles and responsibilities. Annually, the governing board and each individual member participate in professional development conducted by Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA) and Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) that addresses the roles and responsibilities of the governing body. This clear delineation of responsibilities has allowed the system leadership to deal with issues and concerns without the interference of the governing body.

Rationale

The complexity of a school system demands that each component of the system work together while understanding and respecting the differing functions of each component.  In multiple ways, system personnel reflect this adherence to role expectations.  Adhering to designated responsibilities will continue to undergird a culture of trust.

# Resource Utilization

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

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

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in the more than 32,000 institutions in the AdvancED Network that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The institution provides a safe learning environment for students and staff. The institution provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff members to improve their effectiveness and ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

## Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

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

| Indicator | Description | Review Team Score | AdvancED Network Average |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4.1 | The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs. | 2.20 | 2.87 |
| 4.2 | Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations. | 2.00 | 2.87 |
| 4.3 | The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff. | 3.00 | 3.06 |
| 4.4 | The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system. | 3.00 | 2.76 |

| 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 | 2.73 |
| 4.6 | The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs. | 2.20 | 2.72 |
| 4.7 | The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served. | 3.00 | 2.58 |
| 4.8 | The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students. | 3.00 | 2.60 |

# Findings

**Improvement Priority**

Develop and implement strategies designed to increase instructional time, fiscal and material resources to ensure students are competitive in a global environment.

(Indicator 4.2)

*Primary Indicator*

Indicator 4.2

*Evidence and Rationale*

Interviews

During interviews teachers reported that it was difficult to teach all content and standards with fewer school days.  They also reported that with the minimized time, it was difficult to give students appropriate feedback on their work.

Documents and Artifacts

The superintendent's FY18 Budget Review states that Fund Reserves were at $1,043,142 in FY09 and fell to $140,319 by FY14.  Showing a decrease of $902,823.  As indicated in the report the FY16 fund reserve balance was $259,496 "leaving the District on the verge of financial insolvency."  Further, the school calendar reflects a reduction in the number of instructional days due to the shortfalls in the budget.  Currently, the system's instructional calendar reflects 161 days for students.

The system rated itself a '2' on this Indicator.  The External Review Team agrees.

Superintendent Presentation

The superintendent reported in his FY18 Budget Review that "The District's resources have eroded to a degree that it is having a negative impact on students and staff."  The superintendent reported that the system has had

to apply for several Tax Anticipation Notes (TANs) in order to meet its financial obligations.

Rationale

School personnel have embraced forward-thinking expectations that Pike County, Georgia students will be competitive in the global marketplace.  Further, they have implemented several initiatives designed to meet this goal.  These initiatives require human, financial, and time resources. Strategies to increase these resources will require a commitment focused primarily on the student needs.

**Improvement Priority**

Establish a fully functional technology infrastructure that provides modern equipment to support the system's instructional purpose and direction.
(Indicator 4.6)

*Primary Indicator*

Indicator 4.6

*Evidence and Rationale*

Classroom Observation Data:

Classroom observations using the eleot™ revealed a deficiency of student digital access during instructional and learning activities.  The system's eleot rating of 1.67 is below that of the AdvancEd rating of 1.86.  Additionally, it was evident/very evident in 24 percent of classrooms that students "Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning."  In 20 percent of classrooms, it was evident/very evident that students "use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning."

Stakeholder Survey Data:

Survey results indicated that 66 percent of the staff agree/strongly agree that "Our school provides a plan for the acquisition and support of technology to support student learning." Parent survey results reflect that 73 percent of parents agree/strongly agree that "My child has up-to-date computers and other technology to learn."  Forty-six percent of high school students agreed/strongly agreed that "In my school, computers are up-to-date and used by teachers to help me learn."

Stakeholder Interviews:

Both student and staff interviews reflected dissatisfaction with the available technology.  Students reported having to wait for several minutes for routine processes to complete or to connect to the internet.  Teachers indicated that because of the limited amount of technology some classroom exercises have to be modified or dropped altogether.

Documents and Artifacts:

Standard 4 Self Assessment narrative stated that a lack of funding has impacted the availability of instructional resources and the purchase of instructional technology has been delayed.

The system rated itself a '2' on this Indicator.  The External Review Team agrees.


Rationale

As noted several times in this report, the system's leadership has challenged internal and external stakeholders to think beyond the borders of Pike County, Georgia and even beyond the US.  This cannot be realized without a world-class technological infrastructure that supports world-class digital tools.  This will require an uncompromising determination focused on the system's purpose and direction.

# Conclusion

Instructional leadership is often a missing quality among school and system leaders. This is not the case in Pike County, Georgia. The superintendent leads weekly cabinet meetings during which small groups analyze teacher-developed performance tasks, citing strengths and areas for improvement. This weekly occurrence requires a comprehensive understanding of best practices and how these practices are applied across all content areas. Further, principals provide quarterly reports that provide detailed information regarding student learning in their school. The superintendent also provides feedback to each of the principals concerning his or her quarterly reports.

Collaboration among system and school leadership and among teachers is strong. A variety of data are analyzed with an eye on improving learning opportunities for students. Professional Learning Communities have a focus on looking at student tasks, using the analysis to inform future instructional planning.

The Board of Education was clear in citing the autonomy given to the superintendent and principals to administer the system and its schools. This clear delineation and understanding of roles and responsibilities has led to a healthy and respectful culture between the board and superintendent.

Noted previously, in 2015 fifteen-year-old students from Pike County, Georgia participated in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). System personnel report that the results were terrible. Yet, rather than shy away from the results or sweep them under the rug, system and school leadership embraced the challenge moving away from content-driven instructional practices to problem-based instruction. A great example of this is the agriculture STEM efforts that provide a foundation upon which other content areas may build and learn.

The system's financial health is anemic. The loss in revenue has had a corresponding impact on several areas including textbooks that are well beyond the state's recommended adoption cycle, technology that is in short supply, and perhaps most importantly, the loss of 20 percent of core teachers in the last five years. While having a low tax rate is admirable and clearly appreciated by its citizenry, when this comes at the expense of programs for students, that cost is too high. Fortunately, board members recognize the dire predicament of the budget and are planning for a 1.4 mill increase. Board members are encouraged to ask themselves if this is sufficient to provide the quality educational experiences their children deserve. Given the pride in the school system that was observed and heard from everyone during the External Review Team's visit, it seems obvious that the people of Pike County should never be content with a school system that is simply "good enough." Nevertheless, the system's students will realize their full academic potential only with a solid financial base that includes a strong fund balance.

The External Review Team identified three Improvement Priorities which provide further depth to the system's improvement strategies. The first Improvement Priority focuses on the relationship that the system's educators have with its students. The strength of any educational organization is reflected in the success of its students. Students who feel valued and a part of the system are more successful and have higher graduation rates. While it is obvious that the educators of Pike County Schools care about their students, the system does not

have a formalized program in which each student is well known by at least one adult advocate.  Adding a formalized structure should help to ensure no students "fall through the cracks."

Second, due to decreased funding, the school system has made some significant cuts in the past few years. The loss of revenue has led to fewer instructional days and postponed technology and other instructional material purchases.  While school personnel note that the current 161 school days meet the state's required time, little research has been completed to determine the potential impact that a shortened school year has had on student learning.  Additionally, the lack of funding has delayed the purchase of textbooks, leaving in doubt how current textbooks are aligned to revised national standards.  Recovery of funding, instructional time, and current research-based instructional material should help the system's quest to become a world-class educational system.

Finally, the third Improvement Priority focuses on technology.  A nearly universal theme among students, parents and many educators was the amount, condition and speed of access to the Internet regarding the system's technology.  Students often reported spending hours on a project that would take 30 minutes in areas that had modern equipment and fast internet speed.  Using digital tools as instructional resources was nearly non-existent as the Digital Learning Environment scored a 1.67 on a 4-point scale.  As modern technology becomes more plentiful, the system will need to consider increased professional development of teachers seeking to use these digital tools.

The Pike County School system leads in many ways.  Its move to problem-based learning in which students learn fewer things, but what they do learn is understood at a much deeper level is bold.  This change should help the system's alumni become better problem solvers enabling them to think critically and creatively, communicate clearly, and collaborate effectively.

## 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 and implement strategies designed to increase instructional time, fiscal and material resources to ensure students are competitive in a global environment.
- Develop, implement and monitor a formal process at all levels whereby each student has at least one adult advocate who supports the student's educational experiences and acts as a mentor for learning, thinking and life skills.
- Establish a fully functional technology infrastructure that provides modern equipment to support the system's instructional purpose and direction.

# 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 | 303.41 | 278.94 |
| Teaching and Learning Impact | 301.90 | 268.48 |
| Leadership Capacity | 330.00 | 293.71 |
| Resource Utilization | 267.50 | 286.27 |

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

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

# Addenda

## Individual Institution Results (Self-reported)

| Institution Name | Teaching and Learning Impact | Leadership Capacity | Resource Utilization | Overall IEQ Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pike County Elementary School | 314.29 | 318.18 | 257.14 | 305.13 |
| Pike County High School | 280.95 | 318.18 | 242.86 | 284.62 |
| Pike County Middle School | 261.90 | 290.91 | 271.43 | 271.79 |
| Pike County Primary School | 280.95 | 327.27 | 257.14 | 289.74 |
| Zebulon High School | 223.81 | 292.31 | 300.00 | 258.54 |

# Team Roster

| Member | Brief Biography |
|---|---|
| Dr. David Barnett | After serving 42 years in education, Dr. David Barnett retired in July 2016 from his position as Founding Dean for the Patton College of Education at the University of Pikeville in Pikeville, KY. Prior to accepting the Dean's position, Barnett worked thirteen years as a faculty member at Morehead State University (MSU) in Morehead, KY. His responsibilities at MSU also included department chair, assistant dean, and director of the doctoral program. Prior to moving to higher education, Barnett served in the public schools for twenty-seven years. His P-12 experience spans several roles including middle school math teacher, P-12 instructional supervisor, federal programs coordinator, finance officer, assistant superintendent, and school district superintendent. He holds several teaching and administrative certificates. He completed his doctorate in educational leadership at the University of Kentucky in 1986.  Barnett also serves as a founding board member for The Way, a Christian organization that financially supports an elementary school in Phnom Penh for children who live on or near the city dump.  The Way also supports an orphanage located on the Meng Kong River about two hours north of Phnom Penh. |
| Dr. Lori Rodgers | Dr. Lori Ward-Rodgers serves as the Assistant Superintendent of District Effectiveness and Federal Program for the Bibb County School. She is a veteran educator with varied experiences within K-12 and higher education. She has served as a college instructor, teacher, and director of assessment, gifted education, human resources, Pre-K, professional learning, and federal programs.<br><br>Dr. Rodgers holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from the University of Georgia, Master of Science in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy from Harvard University, and a Ph.D. in Educational Policy Studies from Georgia State University.  In 2010, she completed the first cohort of the Georgia Association School Superintendents Association's District Office Professional Development Program.<br><br>Dr. Rodgers has served as an AdvancEd External Review team member and Associate Lead Evaluator for school district accreditation. She has been involved in several civic and educational organizations, to include Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the Heart of Georgia, Georgia Association of Curriculum and Instructional Supervision, the National Association of Gifted Children, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.  In addition, Dr. Rodgers serves on the Board of Directors for the Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia. She is also a member of Georgia Compensatory Educational Leaders. |
| Mrs. Pat C Summers | Pat Summers (Georgia) currently serves as an AdvancED Lead Evaluator and Field Consultant for the Georgia Office. An alumna of Indiana University Bloomington, she retired as Policy Analyst/Legislative Liaison from the Atlanta Public Schools. She also served as a district administrator in Curriculum and Instruction in addition to serving as the district's SACS liaison. She is an experienced Lead Evaluator having led numerous accreditation reviews including early learning, school, charter school, special purpose, digital learning, school system, and postsecondary. Additionally, she has had experience leading special reviews as well as providing technical assistance and participating on corporate teams. She also has conducted sessions during the annual AdvancED Georgia Annual Conference. Over the years, she has attended AdvancED lead evaluator training and updates, webinars, conferences, council meetings, and field consultant training. |

| Member | Brief Biography |
|---|---|
| Mr. Benjamin G. Croxton | Mr. Croxton was born and raised in Warner Robins, GA. He graduated from Houston County High School in 1998, attended Clemson University and majored in Secondary Education history and Geography. After graduating from Clemson University in 2004, Mr. Croxton moved to Camden County and accepted a job teaching Social Studies and coaching football and baseball at Camden County High School. Mr. Croxton taught at Camden County High School for 2 years and then moved to St. Marys Middle School to become the Head Football Coach in the fall of 2007. Mr. Croxton served as the ISS Instructor and Head Football Coach until September of 2015 when he accepted his current position at Camden Middle School as the 8th grade Assistant Principal. Mr. Croxton is married and has 3 children. |
| Dr. Sherri Flagg | Middle School Principal<br><br>Dr. Sherri Dennis-Flagg<br>Role: Team Member<br>P: 478-779-4650<br>sherri.flagg@bcsdk12.net<br><br>Dr. Sherri Flagg serves as the Principal of Weaver Middle School for the Bibb County School. She is a veteran educator with varied experiences within K-12 and higher education. She has served as a college instructor, teacher, counselor, assistant principal and principal. Dr. Flagg holds a Bachelor of Science in Special Education from Mercer University, Master of Science in Guidance and Counseling from Fort Valley State University, Specialist in Educational Leadership. Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University. |
| Mr. Jeff Garthwaite | Jeff Garthwaite began teaching middle school American History and Civics in 1971. He served as a middle school assistant principal and principal. He was the District Coordinator for Department of Juvenile Justice schools and Title I funded Private Schools. He was assigned as turn-around principal for a rural Pre K – 8 school, charged with raising the failing school grade.  Mr. Garthwaite has presented a variety of educational workshops and informational sessions at national, state, and local education conferences. Upon retirement, he joined an educational corporate partnership, providing professional development services and resources for high school principals across six states. He has also provided educational consulting and professional development services to several Florida charter schools.  Mr. Garthwaite served as a Regional Director on the Florida League of Middle Schools, Executive Board.  He received his Bachelor's degree from the University of West Florida and Master's degree in Educational Administration and Supervision from Troy State University.  He has served on many School and District AdvancED External Review Teams. |

# 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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