Report of the
External Review Team
for
Towns County School System

67 Lakeview Circle Suite C
Hiawassee
GA 30546
US

Dr. Darren Berrong
Superintendent

Date: October 4, 2015 - October 7, 2015

AdvancED®

Table of Contents

Introduction

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

Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools and designed primarily to distinguish schools adhering to a set of educational standards. Today the accreditation process is used at all levels of education and is recognized for its ability to effectively drive student performance and continuous improvement in education.

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

Standards help to delineate what matters. They provide a common language through which an education community can engage in conversations about educational improvement, system effectiveness, and achievement. They serve as a foundation for planning and implementing improvement strategies and activities and for measuring success. AdvancED Standards were developed by a committee comprised of talented educators and leaders from the fields of practice, research, and policy who applied professional wisdom, deep knowledge of effective practice, and the best available research to craft a set of robust standards that define institutional quality and guide continuous improvement. Prior to implementation, an internationally recognized panel of experts in testing and measurement, teacher quality, and education research reviewed the standards and provided feedback, guidance and endorsement.

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

The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation. It energizes and equips the institution's leadership and stakeholders to achieve higher levels of performance and address those areas that

may be hindering efforts to reach desired performance levels. External Review is a rigorous process that includes the in-depth examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with all stakeholder groups, and extensive observations of learning, instruction, and operations.

Use of Diagnostic Tools

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

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

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

Index of Education Quality

In the past, accreditation reviews resulted in an accreditation recommendation on status. Labels such as advised, warned, probation, or all clear were used to describe the status of a school relative to the AdvancED Standards and other evaluative criteria. Beginning in the 2013-14 school year, AdvancED introduced a new framework to describe the results of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduced an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™). The IEQ™ comprises three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the capacity of leadership to guide the institution toward the achievement of its

vision and strategic priorities; and 3) use of resources to support and optimize learning. Therefore, your institution will no longer receive an accreditation status. Instead, your institution will be accredited with an IEQ™ score. In the case where an institution is failing to meet established criteria, the accreditation will be under review thereby requiring frequent monitoring and demonstrated improvement.

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

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

Benchmark Data

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

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

Powerful Practices

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

Opportunities for Improvement

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

Improvement Priorities

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

The Review

The public school system's External Review for the Towns County School System was conducted from October 4-7, 2015. The five member team arrived for its first work session on October 4 at the Ridges Resort in Hiawassee, Georgia and was followed by board member interviews and dinner at the system's office. The dinner provided an opportunity for informal conversations with board members and the system's leadership. Prior to the beginning of the on-site review, the Lead Evaluator conferred with the system's primary contact for the AdvancED® onsite review via calls, texts, and e-mails. The Lead Evaluator also sent a welcome letter, conducted a phone conference, and exchanged numerous email correspondences with the external review team in preparation for the on-site work. Prior to arrival, all Team members reviewed the Accreditation Report, the system's website, and all evidences provided. Because the system had three schools, the review schedule was adapted so that the Team could visit each school.

Team members had the primary responsibility to focus on one particular Standard and were reminded of the need for being knowledgeable on all Standards and Indicators. Each Team member was also reminded of the responsibility of rating each Indicator in AdvancED's Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools™ (ASSIST™). The Team was housed at a local mountain resort with transportation to the system office and schools provided by the system. The Team's time was spent in interviews with the board, faculty/staff, and

parent/community members at the system office and classroom reviews using the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool™ (eleot™) in all three schools. A variety of artifacts were reviewed in digital format prior to the review. Throughout the review, the Team visited 46 classrooms and spoke with 136 stakeholders individually or in group settings. Each night the Team met in the conference room, discussing events of the day, including themes, challenges, and possible action statements to assist in the continuous improvement for the system.

As part of the continuous improvement process, the school system utilized the System Leadership Team (SLT) for their annual review of the system's mission and vision statements. The SLT also serves as the vertical alignment team for the system and, therefore, includes members from all schools. Meetings occur at least twice a year with outcomes being presented to the administration and board for approval. Stakeholder surveys were conducted at each school with sufficient sample sizes attained. In addition, Title I surveys were administered with results corroborating the findings of the AdvancED surveys.

The External Review Team wishes to thank the Towns County School System for its genuine hospitality and organized preparation as well as the lovely accommodations for the Team. All schedules, interviews and school visits were coordinated in an effective and efficient manner. Stakeholders were friendly and genuinely engaged in the accreditation process. All stakeholder conversations were sincere with intentions of continuing the positive atmosphere throughout the system.

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	12
Instructional Staff	35
Support Staff	20
Students	38
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	25
Total	**136**

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	2.68
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	3.00	2.50
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	3.00	2.55
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	3.00	2.73
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	2.20	2.57
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	3.00	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.	3.00	2.92
3.9	The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience.	2.60	2.40
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	2.00	2.53
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	3.00	2.64
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	3.00	2.66

Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	3.00	2.66
5.2	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning.	2.60	2.41
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	2.60	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	2.46
5.5	System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders.	2.20	2.72

Student Performance Diagnostic

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

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

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

Page 12

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.
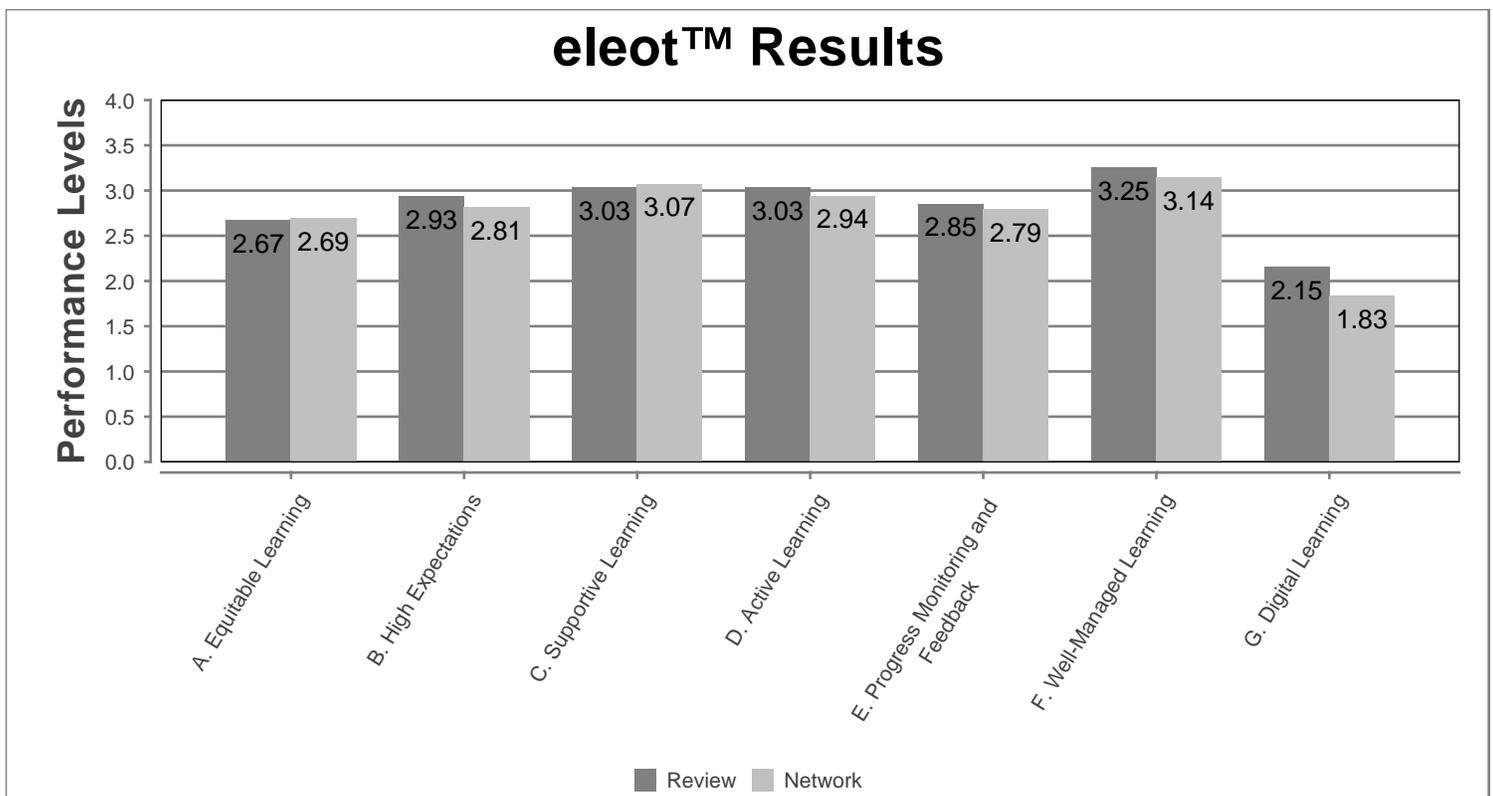
During the system's review, 46 classroom observations were completed in all three schools using the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool™. Learning Environment results ranged from the highest rating in the area of well-managed (3.25) to the lowest in the digital area (2.15). Overall ratings for each of the Learning Environments include: Equitable Learning Environment (2.67), High Expectations Environment (2.93), Supportive Learning Environment (3.03), Active Learning Environment (3.03), Progress Monitoring and

Feedback Environment (2.85), Well-Managed Learning Environment (3.25), and Digital Learning Environment (2.15). The High Expectations Environment, Active Learning Environment, Well-Managed Learning Environment, Digital Learning Environment ratings exceeded the AdvancED Network Average (AEN) with all other system Learning Environment scores slightly below the AEN averages.

The Equitable Learning Environment result yielded an overall strength in the indicator where students know "that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied" (3.35) to a low score of 1.63 in the area of ongoing opportunities to learn about his/her background and culture. The High Expectations Environment was impacted by the highest indicator score with students knowing and striving "to meet the high expectations established by the teacher" (3.26) and the lowest rating indicating students are provided exemplars for learning (2.09). Within the Supportive Learning Environment, indicator scores ranged from 3.35 for positive attitudes about the classroom and learning as well as positive learning experiences to 2.39 in the area of providing additional/ alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level or challenge for the student's needs. The Active Learning Environment received overall scores ranging from a high of 3.39 on the indicator where students are actively engaged in learning activities to a low of 2.63 in the area of connections made from content to real-life. In the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Learning Environment, results were marked by a high indicator in the area of demonstrating or verbalizing understanding of the lesson/content (3.11) to the lowest indicator rating in the area of understanding how his/her work is assessed (2.63). The Well-Managed Learning Environment result was impacted by the highest indicator score in the area of students follow "classroom rules and works well with others" (3.48) to the lowest score in collaboration among students during student-centered activities (2.72). Finally, the Digital Learning Environment result indicated students utilizing technology to gather and/or use information for learning at the high end (2.46) and students utilizing technology to work collaboratively for learning at the low end (1.96).

The system's effort to provide an Equitable Learning Environment for all children was evident during classroom observations. Students clearly knew the rules and consequences and recognized the fairness and consistency of application. Very few differentiated learning activities were observed in classrooms. Quality examples of differentiated lessons to meet varied student needs were mostly observed in the lower grades. During classroom observations, limited opportunities were provided to explore other cultures.

Students clearly understood expectations of teachers and strove to meet these high expectations. The Team observed rigorous work, allowing students to be challenged at appropriate levels in the lower grades. Most classrooms had students engaged in some kind of learning activity with whole group instruction more prevalent at the upper grades. Infrequent connections to real-life and very limited use of exemplars to demonstrate high quality work were observed.

Often students were told assignments and expectations for completion of work with very little explanation on exactly how the work would be assessed. Limited opportunities to revise or improve work based on feedback were observed, with most feedback provided in the form of praise versus descriptive feedback to enhance learning. Quizzing of students on understanding was often inconsistent. Students and teachers were positive and respectful, yet students were somewhat hesitant to take risks.

The Well-Managed Learning Environment was a definite strength for the school system. Students were extremely well-behaved, respectful, and compliant. Behavioral expectations were very evident in all classrooms. Students entered classrooms and went directly to their seats to listen and participate. Some time for collaborative activities was provided, but most of the time students were engaged in independent work at all levels. The use of technology as an instructional tool by students was the lowest environment as rated on the eleot™. Infrequently, students were observed using technology to redefine, modify, or augment instruction. Technology was mostly used by teachers rather than students. Interviews indicated that much of the technology was recently acquired and further training for use of technology as an instructional tool for use by students is planned.

Using the data gleaned from 46 observations, it was determined learning environments were well-managed and focused on student learning. Students spoke and interacted respectfully with teachers and peers, followed classroom procedures, and worked well with each other. Of specific notice, students expressed positivity in the classrooms and in learning experiences. Overall, observation results supported the factthat school system did have high expectations for student learning and students had positive attitudes about learning and class activities.

Conclusively, the system's eleot™ results supported the overall positive impact many initiatives within the system were having on teaching and learning. While the digital learning environment was the lowest rated among the seven learning environments, it was noteworthythat this score has potential for great improvement as the district continues the training of teachers in the use of technology as instructional tools for use by students. Strengths noted in terms of students' positive attitudes towards learning and a high degree of student engagement clearly support the vision and mission of the school system.

eleot™ Data Summary

A. Equitable Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.52	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	26.09%	30.43%	13.04%	30.43%
2.	3.17	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	39.13%	45.65%	8.70%	6.52%
3.	3.35	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	47.83%	41.30%	8.70%	2.17%
4.	1.63	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	0.00%	15.22%	32.61%	52.17%

Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.67

B. High Expectations			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.26	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	45.65%	39.13%	10.87%	4.35%
2.	3.22	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	45.65%	34.78%	15.22%	4.35%
3.	2.09	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	13.04%	30.43%	8.70%	47.83%
4.	3.07	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	39.13%	32.61%	23.91%	4.35%
5.	3.02	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	36.96%	36.96%	17.39%	8.70%

Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.93

C. Supportive Learning			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	3.35	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	45.65%	43.48%	10.87%	0.00%
2.	3.35	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	43.48%	47.83%	8.70%	0.00%
3.	2.91	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	36.96%	39.13%	2.17%	21.74%
4.	3.17	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	41.30%	39.13%	15.22%	4.35%
5.	2.39	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	10.87%	41.30%	23.91%	23.91%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.03						

D. Active Learning			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	3.07	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	39.13%	34.78%	19.57%	6.52%
2.	2.63	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	26.09%	36.96%	10.87%	26.09%
3.	3.39	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	45.65%	47.83%	6.52%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.03						

E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	2.67	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	17.39%	47.83%	19.57%	15.22%
2.	3.09	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	30.43%	52.17%	13.04%	4.35%
3.	3.11	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	32.61%	52.17%	8.70%	6.52%
4.	2.63	Understands how her/his work is assessed	23.91%	41.30%	8.70%	26.09%
5.	2.74	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	26.09%	41.30%	13.04%	19.57%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.85						

F. Well-Managed Learning			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	3.46	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	52.17%	41.30%	6.52%	0.00%
2.	3.43	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	52.17%	39.13%	8.70%	0.00%
3.	3.17	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	54.35%	21.74%	10.87%	13.04%
4.	2.72	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	36.96%	26.09%	8.70%	28.26%
5.	3.48	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	58.70%	30.43%	10.87%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.25						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	2.46	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	30.43%	17.39%	19.57%	32.61%
2.	2.04	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	26.09%	6.52%	13.04%	54.35%
3.	1.96	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	21.74%	6.52%	17.39%	54.35%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.15						

Findings

Improvement Priority

Adopt and implement a collaborative learning system to support instruction and student learning at all levels. (Indicator 3.5)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.5

Evidence and Rationale

Teachers and administrators on the system leadership team expressed that the collaborative efforts were limited and often undocumented. In interviews, system leadership explained the need to further explore collaborative models and fully implement. Staff indicated the informal collaboration presently occurring. Vertical team meetings occur quarterly with no other formal collaborative learning methods in place and written documentation of collaboration was minimal. Collaboration among teachers can provide teachers with opportunities to share ideas, examine best practice research, discuss differentiation strategies and student needs, review vertical alignment, invest in professional learning, and make informed decisions. A collaborative model will also allow opportunities for action research, examination of student work, reflection, study teams, and peer coaching. These kinds of opportunities strengthen the professional growth of teachers and result in stronger and better informed decisions about teaching.

Improvement Priority

Design and implement additional structures that communicate comprehensive information about system performance, school performance, and student learning to invite, engage, and involve a broad base of all stakeholders groups in support of the system purpose and direction.

(Indicator 2.5, Indicator 5.5, SF1. Questionnaire Administration)

Primary Indicator
Indicator 5.5

Evidence and Rationale
During a review of district data reports and interviews with stakeholders, limited documentation of performance data and pertinent information about academic performance and programs to involve a broader base of stakeholder groups in system support and activities was found. Parent interviews indicated information was limited or unavailable for academic programs. Parents were unaware of the new assignment of the counselor between the middle and high schools.

Vertical team meetings and system leadership meetings occur only three or four times a year. Artifacts revealed limited participation by stakeholder groups in many academically oriented activities and limited publications for system and school performance. The system website contained valuable information in a format that was often difficult to navigate. Increased involvement and publication of academic performance and program information will enhance parent and family support of teachers and the vision and mission of the system. These initiatives will enrich the emphasis on student achievement throughout the system, thereby refining a culture focused on academic performance.

Improvement Priority

Develop and implement a systemwide board policy that includes process and procedures regarding grades and reporting for all K-12 students.
(Indicator 3.10)

Primary Indicator
Indicator 3.10

Evidence and Rationale
During interviews and reviews of evidence, the Team found limited use of a systematic process and procedures for assigning grades for all students and the system Self Assessment revealed a need in this area. However, schools were inconsistent with their ratings when compared to the system. Teachers and administrators seemed to know their individual process for their schools or their grade levels, but were unsure of the process for the system and the process varied across the system. Artifacts revealed no board policy or system process and procedure in place to allow for a consistent and reliable process for the system. Periodic evaluation of student achievement and attainment of content knowledge and skills by staff members is necessary to monitor progress and assess student needs. Development of forms and procedures to be used at each level provides consistent assessment throughout the system. Establishment of policies and procedures for grading and reporting will enable parental understanding of the evaluation of student performance and achievement.

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.	3.00	2.62
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	3.00	2.63
1.3	The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	3.00	2.89
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	2.80	2.61

Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	3.00	2.95
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.60	2.92
2.3	The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	4.00	3.12
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	3.00	2.97
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	2.20	2.67

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	3.00	2.76

Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

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

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

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Questionnaire Administration	3.00	3.36
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.00	3.04

Findings

Powerful Practice

The system demonstrates evidence of operating with exceptional responsibility and effectiveness while ensuring that the superintendent and school leadership have the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and manage the day-to-day operations effectively.
(Indicator 2.2, Indicator 2.3)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.3

Evidence and Rationale

Interviews provided evidence of board members who were knowledgeable about their roles, responsibilities, and practices as a governing and policy-making board. The continuous process for board development resulted in annual whole board training with an external provider as well as board members attending the Georgia School Board Association conferences. Throughout the review, Team members heard accolades from school system personnel regarding the existing autonomy that enabled the superintendent and school leadership to meet goals for achievement and to manage day-to-day operations effectively and without

interference. Additionally, the Team heard repeatedly that much improvement came with the hiring of the current superintendent. who had practiced transparent leadership and was highly involved within the community. The school board's relationship with the superintendent was described as impressive, with "trust" being voiced many times. Effective school systems have effective boards who understand and practice their specific roles and responsibilities enabling leadership to work with autonomy in meeting system and school goals and managing daily operations.

Resource Utilization

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

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

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

Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.1	The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs.	3.00	2.92
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations.	3.00	2.93
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	3.20	3.05
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	3.00	2.63

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	3.00	2.74
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	2.80	2.54
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	3.00	2.66
4.8	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	3.00	2.60

Conclusion

The system is clearly focused on ensuring success for all students as evidenced by the system and schools' missions, visions, and student outcomes. A close-knit, protected, and family type atmosphere aptly describes the culture in the system and community. Stakeholders indicated the knowledge of the theme of student success as evidenced by the system's vision and mission was pervasive. Student achievement scores and graduation rate are consistently high with the system being one of the top ranked in the state. Strong and effective leadership by the superintendent and board were very apparent with schools visibly fostering a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning. The elected school board members work responsibly and effectively striving to facilitate the achievement of the vision and mission of the system. The positivity throughout the system embodied the tradition of success in the community.

The small student population of the district provided many positive factors as well as some challenges. With fewer students comes fewer dollars for funding needed resources. Previously, the system had been accredited as three individual schools. The paradigm shift to a school system approach from working as a system of schools is a process and the system is currently working to ensure systemwide processes, procedures, and policies. This caused a new thought pattern for the individual schools as they grow into a unified system with needed policies and procedures and an even greater need for planning across schools. A challenge stems from the paradigm shift of functioning as a school system in the area of grading and reporting. The Self Assessment as well as interviews with system stakeholders acknowledged teachers' grading as has been done for many years with some informal discussions among grade level teachers. Systemic grading and reporting practices and procedures were not in place and the administration noted the need for improvement in this area. Discussions have begun to develop the changes necessary to further grading and reporting as a system.

Another challenge faced by the system relates to communication. Even though the school system is a small one, there was still a great need to communicate the progress, successes, and challenges of the system to parent and community stakeholders, as evidenced by interviews with stakeholders. The system was presently using its website and school newsletters as the predominant modes of communication and social media was used infrequently. With the increased use of free social communication options, the system can more readily ensure that the positive message of the school system is known to all stakeholders, including the rapidly growing retiree population.

A third challenge was the development of collaborative learning communities. Interviews and artifacts revealed informal collaboration at the school level. The System Leadership Team, comprised of stakeholders from each of the schools, meets at least twice yearly and assists in the development of the system mission and vision as well as strategic planning. Several collaborative learning models were being studied and action is to be taken systemwide to strengthen this area. Technology was currently being added as an instructional tool for use by students. The formal collaborative learning groups will facilitate the training of teachers to maximize the effect of these new instructional tools.

The superintendent has worked to provide a stable and proactive culture with a focus on academic

achievement since the beginning of his tenure and has strived to maintain transparency and trust as he has brought information to the Board for decisions. Accreditation for the system is now a reality rather than a continuation as a system of schools. Improved communication, more formal collaboration as a learning community between and among school system stakeholders, and improved systemwide policies and procedures will further enhance student success and take academic achievement to the next level. The efforts of the system to address these challenges in a positive manner ensure continued improvement and increases in student success.

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:

- Adopt and implement a collaborative learning system to support instruction and student learning at all levels.
- Design and implement additional structures that communicate comprehensive information about system performance, school performance, and student learning to invite, engage, and involve a broad base of all stakeholders groups in support of the system purpose and direction.
- Develop and implement a systemwide board policy that includes process and procedures regarding grades and reporting for all K-12 students.

Page 28

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	291.71	278.34
Teaching and Learning Impact	280.95	268.94
Leadership Capacity	305.00	292.64
Resource Utilization	300.00	283.23

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

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

Addenda

Individual Institution Results (Self-reported)

Institution Name	Teaching and Learning Impact	Leadership Capacity	Resource Utilization	Overall IEQ Score
Towns County Elementary School	342.86	336.36	314.29	335.90
Towns County High School	338.10	354.55	314.29	338.46
Towns County Middle School	338.10	336.36	300.00	330.77

Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Julie S Von Frank	Julie von Frank has worked as a math/computer teacher, assistant principal, principal, principal specialist (turn around principal), assistant superintendent, and adjunct professor for the University of South Carolina. She was recognized as a State Presidential Awardee for the Teaching of Math and Science and was Assistant Principal of the Year for South Carolina. Dr. von Frank has served as an educator for forty years. After thirty-three years as a full-time employee in the schools of South Carolina she retired and worked four years as a consultant for the South Carolina State Department of Education in under-performing schools. Having worked since the 1980's with first SACS, then SACS CASI, and now AdvancED, she serves as Lead Evaluator for AdvancED in Georgia, Indiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wyoming as well as international reviews in the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Kuwait.
Dr. Judy C Forbes	Judy Forbes has served on the SACS Elementary Commission and chaired it for two three-year terms. She retired in June 2008 from Habersham County Schools where she taught for 35 years. She taught high school, middle school, and elementary English/language arts. Dr. Forbes has also taught special education at all three levels as well. She served as Director of Special Education, Curriculum Director, Assistant Superintendent, and Superintendent. She has also taught adjunct classes in leadership at Piedmont College and is now a staff member for the University of Phoenix. Dr. Forbes has served as a Director and Past Chairman of the Habersham Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Habersham Medical Center Foundation Board, and is active in the Clarkesville United Methodist Church. Dr. Forbes holds four professional degrees, including the doctorate, from the University of Georgia. Dr. Forbes is a Field Consultant for Georgia Advanced and has been lead evaluator for many schools and systems.
Dr. Mark W Taylor	Mark W. Taylor P. O. Box 1596 Afton, WY 83110 Telephone: (307) 248-0435 PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: 2005-Present Lead Evaluator/QAR Team Chair-Accreditation visits in United States and overseas for Department of Defense Schools. 2015-Present Instructional Facilitator for Sublette County School District #1, Pinedale, WY 2011-2015 Assistant Superintendent for Lincoln County School District #2, Afton, WY. 2003-2011 Director of Instruction for Lincoln County School District #2, Afton, WY. 1999-2003 High School Principal for Lincoln County School District #2, Afton, WY. 1995-1999 High School Assistant Principal & Activities Director for Lincoln County School District #2, Afton, WY. High School Principal & Activities Director for Uinta County School District #4, Mountain View, WY. 1992-1993 High School Assistant Principal, Activities Director, & Head Boys Basketball Coach for Uinta County School District #4, Mountain View, WY. EDUCATION: Ed.D. Educational Leadership Conferred May 2008 University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY
Dr. Kim Perry Barham	Kim has been in education for 26 years serving as a teacher, athletic director, administrator, curriculum director, and currently assistant superintendent. She has degrees in physical education, curriculum and instruction, leadership, and organizational leadership. She spent the first part of her career working in Middle Tennessee and has worked in Georgia the last twelve years. She has coached most female sports on both the high school and collegiate level. Kim is a Vanderbilt University Fellow focusing on the Achievement Gap in minority and rural settings. She has presented at multiple conferences at the state, local, and national levels on Understanding At Risk and Improving the Graduation Rate. Kim is married to William and they have two sons, Jordan and Will.

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Kathleen F Gingras	Kathleen Gingras currently serves as Director of Planning, Evaluation and Accountability for Lake County Schools and served as a member of the first State Advisory Board for School Improvement. She is responsible for district accountability, school improvement, district accreditation, strategic planning, and student assessment. Some of her prior experiences include assistant principal in several high schools, middle school assistant principal, high school dean, high school and middle school teacher, and Operations Director for county government.
Mrs. McCall C Govignon	McCall Campbell Govignon is a educator with 22 years of service in Georgia. A proud graduate from Auburn University with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, she continued her education at the University of West Georgia where she received her Master's and Educational Specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction. McCall also earned her gifted endorsement, reading endorsement and leadership from Jacksonville State University. She began her career as a 4th grade teacher at Calhoun Elementary, where she also taught 3rd grade. She then moved Floyd County Schools in Rome, Georgia where she taught gifted education resource, became a gifted lead teacher, gifted coordinator and currently Director of Advanced Academics, Assessment, and Counseling and Guidance. McCall was President, Legislative Liaison, and Regional Representative for the Georgia Association for Gifted Children and served on the Program Committee for the National Association for Gifted Children. She has been an instructor at Shorter University and Northwest Georgia RESA for Gifted Endorsement Courses for graduate level courses and undergraduate courses. A Teacher of the Year finalist for Floyd County Schools and Distinguished Service Award winner, McCall has also worked with Georgia's Odyssey of the Mind, served on Georgia's Department of Education Gifted Advisory Board, and co-chair of the Georgia Gifted Coordinator's Consortium. She currently resides in Calhoun, Georgia, with her husband George and their two daughters, Campbell, 14, and Catherine, 10.

Next Steps

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the Powerful Practices section to maximize their impact on the institution.
3. Consider the Opportunities for Improvement identified throughout the report that are provided by the team in the spirit of continuous improvement and the institution's commitment to improving its capacity to improve student learning.
4. Develop action plans to address the Improvement Priorities identified by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward addressing the Improvement Priorities.
5. Use the report to guide and strengthen the institution's efforts to improve student performance and system effectiveness.
6. Following the External Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the Improvement Priorities. Institutions are required to respond to all Improvement Priorities. The report will be reviewed at the appropriate state, national, and/or international levels to monitor and ensure that the system has implemented the necessary actions to address the Improvement Priorities. The accreditation status will be reviewed and acted upon based on the responses to the Improvement Priorities and the resulting improvement.
7. Continue to meet the AdvancED Standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

About AdvancED

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

In 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), both founded in 1895, and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form AdvancED: one strong, unified organization dedicated to education quality. In 2011, the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) that was founded in 1917 became part of AdvancED.

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

References

- Alwin, L. (2002). The will and the way of data use. School Administrator, 59(11), 11.
- Baumert, J., Kunter, M., Blum, W., Brunner, M., Voxx, T., Jordan, A., Klusmann, U., Krauss, S., Nuebrand, M., & Tsai, Y. (2010). Teachers' mathematical knowledge, cognitive activation in the classroom, and student progress. American Educational Research Journal, 47(1), 133-180.
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. (2012). Shared purpose: the golden thread? London: CIPD.
- Colbert, J., Brown, R., Choi, S., & Thomas, S. (2008). An investigation of the impacts of teacher-driven professional development. Teacher Education Quarterly, 35(2), 134-154.
- Conley, D.T. (2007). Redefining college readiness (Vol. 3). Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center.
- Datnow, A., Park, V., & Wohlstetter, P. (2007). Achieving with data: How high-performing school systems use data to improve instruction for elementary students. Los Angeles, CA: Center on Educational Governance, USC.
- Dembosky, J., Pane, J., Barney, H., & Christina, R. (2005). Data driven decision making in Southwestern Pennsylvania school districts. Working paper. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
- Ding, C. & Sherman, H. (2006). Teaching effectiveness and student achievement: Examining the relationship. Educational Research Quarterly, 29 (4), 40-51.
- Doyle, D. P. (2003). Data-driven decision making: Is it the mantra of the month or does it have staying power? T.H.E. Journal, 30(10), 19-21.
- Feuerstein, A., & Opfer, V. D. (1998). School board chairmen and school superintendents: An analysis of perceptions concerning special interest groups and educational governance. Journal of School Leadership, 8, 373-398.
- Fink, D., & Brayman, C. (2006). School leadership succession and the challenges of change. Educational Administration Quarterly, 42 (62), 61-89.
- Greene, K. (1992). Models of school-board policy-making. Educational Administration Quarterly, 28 (2), 220-236.
- Horng, E., Klasik, D., & Loeb, S. (2010). Principal time-use and school effectiveness. American Journal of Education 116, (4) 492-523.
- Lafee, S. (2002). Data-driven districts. School Administrator, 59(11), 6-7, 9-10, 12, 14-15.
- Leithwood, K., & Sun, J. (2012). The Nature and effects of transformational school leadership: A meta-analytic review of unpublished research. Educational Administration Quarterly, 48 (387). 388-423.
- Marks, H., Louis, K.S., & Printy, S. (2002). The capacity for organizational learning: Implications for pedagogy and student achievement. In K. Leithwood (Ed.), Organizational learning and school improvement (p. 239-266). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- McIntire, T. (2002). The administrator's guide to data-driven decision making. Technology and Learning, 22(11), 18-33.
- Pan, D., Rudo, Z., Schneider, C., & Smith-Hansen, L. (2003). Examination of resource allocation in education: connecting spending to student performance. Austin, TX: SEDL.