



External Review

Troup County School System

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Introduction to the External Review Process

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

Institutions seeking to gain or retain accreditation must meet AdvancED standards specified for their institution, demonstrate high levels of or improvement of student performance if applicable, and provide evidence of stakeholder satisfaction with the operation of the institution. The accreditation standards focus on conditions and processes within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards, student performance, and stakeholder feedback.

Institutions participate in an External Review by a team of highly qualified evaluators who examine the institution's adherence and commitment to the accreditation criteria. The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation as it energizes and equips the leadership and stakeholders of an institution to achieve higher levels of performance and address those areas that may be hindering efforts to reach desired performance levels. External Review is a rigorous process that includes examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with stakeholders, and observations of instruction, learning, and operations.

The AdvancED External Review Team used the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators and related criteria to guide its evaluation, looking not only for adherence to standards, but also for how the institution functioned as a whole and embodied the practices and characteristics of quality.

Using the evidence at their disposal, the AdvancED External Review Team arrived at a set of findings contained in this report. The report is presented in three sections: Findings, Conclusion, and Addenda.

Findings

The Findings section presents the External Review Team's evaluation of the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators. It also includes Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement identified by the External Review Team, observations of the Learning Environment, as well as Required Actions.

Accreditation Standards and Indicators

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

This section contains an evaluation of each of AdvancED's Accreditation Standards and Indicators, conclusions concerning Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement related to each of the standards, and a description of the evidence examined by the External Review Team. Indicators are evaluated and rated individually by the External Review Team using a four-level performance rubric. The Standard Performance Level is the average of indicator scores for the standard.

Standard 1: Purpose and Direction

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 own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution commits to a shared purpose and direction and establishes expectations for student learning aligned with the institutions' vision that is supported by internal and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and overall institution effectiveness.

Standard			Standard Performance Level
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.			2.75
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Governing body policies, procedures, and practices •District purpose statements - past and present •Written District Quality Assurance Review procedures and documents that monitor its schools' adherence to the district purpose and direction •Observations •Copy of strategic plan referencing the district purpose and direction and its effectiveness •Accreditation Report •Communication plan to stakeholders regarding the district's purpose 	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Agendas and/or minutes that reference a commitment to the components of the schools' purpose statements •Written District Quality Assurance Review procedures and documents that monitor schools' adherence to the district purpose and direction and that of the school •Examples of school purpose statements if different from the district purpose statement •Accreditation Report •Observations •Interviews 	3
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Observations •Interviews •District Quality Assurance Review plans that document two-way communication on district and school effectiveness and learning, thinking, and life skills •Examples of schools' continuous improvement plans •Accreditation Report •The district strategic plan 	3
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Examples of schools continuous improvement plans •District Quality Assurance Review plans that document two-way communication on district and school effectiveness and learning, thinking, and life skills •Observations •Agenda, minutes from continuous improvement planning meetings •The district data profile 	2

Standard 2: Governance and Leadership

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 school leadership research, Leithwood & 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 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 school communities to attain school 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 school 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 has found through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world 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		Standard Performance Level	
The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.		3.17	
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Observations •Staff handbooks •Accreditation Report •District operations manuals •Communications to stakeholder about policy revisions 	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Governing authority minutes relating to training•Communication plan to inform all staff on code of ethics, responsibilities, conflict of interest•Assurances, certifications•Accreditation Report•Findings of internal and external reviews of compliance with laws, regulations, and policies•Observations•Historical compliance data•Interviews•Governing authority policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest	4
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Communications regarding governing authority actions•Roles and responsibilities of school leadership•Roles and responsibilities of district leadership•Observations•Interviews•Social media•Accreditation Report•Stakeholder input and feedback•Agendas and minutes of meetings	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Examples of collaboration and shared leadership •Examples of decisions aligned with the school's purpose statement •Interviews •Observations •Examples of decisions in support of the schools' continuous improvement plans •Examples of improvement efforts and innovations in the educational programs •Examples of decisions aligned with the district's purpose and direction •Accreditation Report 	3
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accreditation Report •Examples of stakeholder input or feedback resulting in district action •Interviews •Copies of surveys or screen shots from online surveys •Involvement of stakeholders in a school improvement plan •Involvement of stakeholders in district strategic plan •Observations 	3
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation •Accreditation Report •Governing body policy on supervision and evaluation •Job specific criteria •Observations 	3

Powerful Practices**Indicator**

1. Troup County School System has established policies and practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.

2.1

The Troup County Board of Education consistently protects, supports, and respects the autonomy of the system and school leaders in order to meet the established goals for teaching, learning, and managing the system. Members of the board of education consistently state that they support the superintendent. Stakeholders believe that the superintendent's professional experience with curriculum and instruction helps to enhance the system improvement process. In addition, the Superintendent's Advisory Task Force provides an extended opportunity to engage stakeholders within the school community. Effective administration of a school system exemplifies community support for system actions which must be made with the interests of students at the core. Not only should a school system adopt efficient policies of operation, but it should put the policies into action on a daily basis. The Troup County School System utilizes best practice trends along with various processes of stakeholder involvement to ensure that attention in decision making promotes system operations which enhances student learning.

2. The Troup County School System operates responsibly and functions effectively to support the school community.

2.2

A thorough examination of the data collected during the external and internal review revealed a mutual respect for the superintendent and support for how system fiscal resources are managed. Stakeholders consistently empower the superintendent to lead the decision-making process for the school community. The system operates effectively without tension between the governing and administrative bodies. It is important for trust to exist between the governing board and system stakeholders as to decisions made affecting school and system operation. Further, research shows that when this trust is displayed on a daily basis, governing boards react more efficiently and the effectiveness of all operation throughout the system is increased.

Standard 3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning

A high-quality and effective system has services, practices, and curriculum that ensure teacher effectiveness. Research has shown that an effective teacher is a key factor for learners to achieve to their highest potential and be prepared for a successful future. The positive influence an effective educator has on learning is a combination of "student motivation, parental involvement" and the "quality of leadership" (Ding & Sherman, 2006). Research also suggests that quality educators must have a variety of quantifiable and intangible characteristics, which include strong communication skills, knowledge of content, and knowledge of how to teach the content. The school'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 et al, 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 et al, 2008). According to Marks, Louis, & Printy (2002), school staff that engage in "active organizational learning also have higher achieving students in contrast to those that do not." Likewise, a study conducted by Horng, Klasik, & Loeb (2010), concluded that leadership in effective schools, "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 through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students feedback to improve their performance.

Standard	Standard Performance Level
The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.	2.67

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.1	The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Interviews•Course, program, or school schedules•Course or program descriptions•Lesson plans•Observations•Posted learning objectives•Enrollment patterns for various courses and programs•Accreditation Report•Descriptions of instructional techniques	3
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Curriculum guides•A description of the systematic review process for curriculum, instruction, and assessment•Accreditation Report•Common assessments•Observations•Interviews•Program descriptions•Curriculum writing process•Profile of educational model or delivery system	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation•Authentic assessments•Examples of student use of technology as a learning tool•Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the approved or prescribed instructional strategies and programs•Interviews•Accreditation Report•Observations•Interdisciplinary projects	3
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Curriculum maps•Accreditation Report•Supervision and evaluation procedures•Recognition of teachers with regard to these practices•Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs•Interviews•Observations	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Observations •Common language, protocols and reporting tools •Agendas and minutes of collaborative learning committees •Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings •Professional development funding to promote professional learning communities •Interviews •Evidence of informal conversations that reflect collaboration about student learning •Examples of cross curricular or program projects, interdisciplinary instruction, and classroom action research projects •Accreditation Report 	3
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Observations •Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance •Survey results •Examples of assessments that prompted modification in instruction •Interviews •Accreditation Report 	2
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accreditation Report •Descriptions and schedules of mentoring, coaching, and induction programs with references to district and school beliefs and values about teaching and learning •Interviews •Professional learning calendar with activities for instructional support of new staff •Personnel manuals with information related to new hires including mentoring, coaching, and induction practices 	1

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.8	The system and all of its schools engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keep them informed of their children's learning progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance•Observations•List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days•Accreditation Report•Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child's progress•Interviews	3
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Curriculum and activities of structures for adults advocating on behalf of students•Accreditation Report•Description of formalized structures for adults to advocate on behalf of students•Interviews•Observations•Master schedule with time for formalized structure	2
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Interviews•Evaluation process for grading and reporting practices•Observations•Accreditation Report•District quality control procedures including the monitoring of grading practices across all schools•Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Evaluation tools for professional learning •District quality control procedures showing implementation plan for professional development for district and school staff •District professional development plan involving the district and all schools •Brief explanation of alignment between professional learning and identified needs •Crosswalk between professional learning and district purpose and direction •Accreditation Report •Observations •Interviews 	3
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Schedules, lesson plans, or example student learning plans showing the implementation of learning support services •List of learning support services and student population served by such services •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Observations •Data used to identify unique learning needs of students 	3

Powerful Practices

Indicator

1. Academic and graduation coaches have been maintained despite a financial deficit across the state and within the system.

3.4

School improvement team interviews highlight that the support of academic coaches is undeniably a critical component of system and school continuous instructional processes. Teachers believe that without the support of academic coaches, their ability to maintain day-to-day instructional practices needed to meet the varying needs of students would not be as aligned as it presently is. Academic coaches are instrumental during the transition to the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards, providing cohesiveness through the development of unit planning for teachers.

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Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems

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, 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 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staffs 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 to improve their effectiveness. The institution ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

Standard			Standard Performance Level
The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.			2.88
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.1	The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accreditation Report •District budgets or financial plans for the last three years •Observations •Interviews •Assessments of staffing needs •Documentation of highly qualified staff 	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Observations •Examples of school schedules •District quality assurance procedures showing district oversight of schools pertaining to school resources •Accreditation Report •Examples of school calendars •Interviews •Alignment of school budgets with school purpose and direction •Alignment of district budget with district purpose and direction 	3
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Observations •Accreditation Report •Example systems for school maintenance requests •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments •Example maintenance schedules for schools •School safety committee responsibilities, meeting schedules, and minutes 	4
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •District strategic plan showing the areas of budget, facilities, quality control, and other strategic systems •Evaluation results of the effectiveness of the district strategic plan or indicators of changes resulting in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategic plan •Interviews •Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments •Accreditation Report •Observations 	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Observations •Evaluation procedures and results of education resources •Interviews •Accreditation Report •District education delivery model intended for school implementation including media and information resources to support the education program •Data on media and information resources available to students and staff 	3
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model •Policies relative to technology use at the district-level and school-level •District technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure for the district-level and school-level •District quality control procedures that monitor the effectiveness of technology services at the district-level and school-level •Accreditation Report •Interviews •Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness •Examples of school-level technology plans and budgets to improve technology services and infrastructure to students and staff •Observations 	2

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Observations•Interviews•Student assessment system for identifying student needs•Agreements with school community agencies for student-family support•Accreditation Report•Rubrics on developmentally appropriate benchmarks; e.g. early childhood education•List of support services available to students	3
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•List of services available related to counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning•Accreditation Report•Budget for counseling, assessment, referral, educational and career planning•District quality assurance procedures that monitor program effectiveness of student support services•Observations•Interviews	2

Powerful Practices**Indicator**

1. Troup County School System has demonstrated exemplary practices in the area of fiscal responsibility through the process of Performance Based Budgeting.

4.2

In the face of diminishing revenues, the Troup County Superintendent leads the system through a Performance Based Budgeting process which considers every aspect of system operational and instructional needs while reducing expenditures resulting in a balanced budget with a 30-day reserve. This process prioritizes reductions in all areas as well as budgets increases for areas of focus. This budgeting strategy utilizes input from central office and school staff and is vetted through the Superintendent's Advisory Task Force. This practice ensures that emphases remain on school classrooms which support teaching and learning while also engaging all stakeholders in a very transparent budgeting process. Constant budget revision is needed during times of fiscal uncertainty. Best practice addressing public budget examination focuses on performance issues and not on "across the board" cuts or increases.

2. Troup County School system facilities are beautifully maintained in spite of their age through purposeful and efficient management.

4.3

The system utilizes a facility management company to supervise, direct, allocate, and evaluate custodial services. This management results in very well kept campuses and buildings. All system school personnel, and students are accountable for maintaining a safe, clean, and healthy school environment. Monthly school sites are ranked for their cleanliness, safety, and healthy environment inspiring competition among the schools and ownership of the facilities by all stakeholders. Continuous evaluation of practices, schedules, and cleaning products result in the system becoming increasingly green and more cost efficient. This powerful practice in facility management has a direct impact on teaching and learning because of the healthy and safe environment provided to all.

Standard 5: Using Results for Continuous Improvement

Systems with strong improvement processes are moving beyond anxiety about the current reality and focusing on priorities and initiatives for the future. Using results, that is, data and other information, to guide continuous improvement is key to an institution's success. A study conducted by Datnow, Park, & 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 (Dembo et al., 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 school 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).

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world 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	Standard Performance Level
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.	2.8

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model •Interviews •Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local or school assessments on student learning and school performance •Observations •Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness •Accreditation Report •Evidence that assessments are reliable and bias free 	3
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Observations •Accreditation Report •District quality control procedures that monitor schools in effectively using data to improve instruction and student learning •List of data sources related to district effectiveness •Examples of changes to the district strategic plan based on data results •Examples of use of data to design, implement, and evaluate continuous improvement plans and apply learning •Interviews 	3
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accreditation Report •Professional learning schedule specific to the use of data •Documentation of attendance and training related to data use •Observations •Interviews •Policies and written procedures specific to data training 	2

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.4	The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Interviews•Policies and procedures specific to data use and training•Accreditation Report•Description of process for analyzing data to determine verifiable improvement in student learning•Examples of use of results to evaluate continuous improvement action plans•Observations•Evidence of student readiness for the next level	3
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•District quality control procedures for monitoring district effectiveness•Accreditation Report•Communication plan regarding student learning, systems that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders•Sample communications to stakeholders regarding student learning, conditions that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals•Observations•Examples of district marketing tools and websites that cite student achievement results or that make promises regarding student achievement•Interviews	3

Powerful Practices

Indicator

1. Troup County School System has instituted a data-monitoring process that regularly disseminates comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and system-wide achievement.

5.1

System and school leaders of the Troup County School System continuously monitor student performance and teacher walk-through data to make adjustments to curriculum and instructional practices. Site-level Improvement teams use student assessment data to identify areas of individual student need and growth in identified sub-groups. An effective system establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Learning Environment

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

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. External review team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a 4 point scale with 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 7 learning environments included in ELEOT.

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool

<i>Environments</i>	<i>Level</i>
A. Equitable Learning Environment	2.799999952316284
B. High Expectations Environment	2.799999952316284
C. Supportive Learning Environment	3.0999999046325684
D. Active Learning Environment	3.200000047683716
E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	3.0
F. Well-Managed Learning Environment	3.299999952316284
G. Digital Learning Environment	1.899999976158142

Conclusion

Summary of the External Review

In off-site and on-site review sessions, the AdvancED External Review Team examined artifacts and evidence provided by the institution. During the on-site portion of the review, the team reviewed additional artifacts, collected and analyzed data from interviews, and conducted observations.

During off-site review sessions, the AdvancED External Review Team (Team) examined artifacts and other evidence provided in hard copy and electronically by the Troup County School System. During the on-site portion of the review, the Team examined additional artifacts, collected and analyzed data from interviews and observations, and received information through numerous presentations by central office administrators and school leaders.

The six-member Team was composed of 3 in-state and 3 out-of-state representatives. The Team visited system facilities, hosted numerous interviews, and conducted observations at 6 system schools. In all, 23 administrators, 55 teachers, 10 support staff, 54 students, 45 parents, and 5 Governing Board members were formally interviewed or visited. Evidence reviewed by the Team revealed dedication, cooperation, and leadership provided by system personnel, school leaders, teachers, and other staff members.

Using the evidence collected, the team engaged in dialogue and deliberations concerning the degree to which the institution met the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators.

The Troup County School System demonstrates a clear commitment to high expectations to purpose and direction for continuous improvement. Common values and beliefs for teaching and learning are evident throughout the system. A comprehensive, systematic process exists to align purpose and ensure student success. System and building level leadership guide internal and external stakeholders including student representatives to establish goals to guide the system's work. Goals are generated based on an ongoing review of data through several layers of collaboration with school level improvement teams in conjunction with support of system leadership. Further examination and review of these goals occurs at the system level with multiple stakeholders involved through the Superintendent's Advisory Task Force and ultimately approval of the board of education. The process is standard across the system with continuous checks at least three times each school year.

The system is rich with data and strives for effective use of data to support student achievement. Although data are disaggregated at the system level, the void of metrics aligned to the system goals creates a challenge to measure system progress. System and school improvement plan goals should be measurable. Communication is clear and evident through a variety of sources such as the system website, student handbooks, annual report, newsletters, brochures, and community collaboration including the Superintendent's Advisory Task Force.

The governing body of the Troup County School System has effectively demonstrated that management practices, and support systems are established to operate the school system. The leaders of the Troup

County School System have presented a transparent self-assessment and executive summary. Data from the external and internal review revealed that some stakeholders have an opportunity to be contributing members of the decision making process. Stakeholder engagement was evidenced through the system website, minutes and agendas from various stakeholder group meetings, and interviews. .

Supervision and evaluation processes are regularly implemented. The criteria and processes of supervision and evaluation included references to system-wide professional practices and continuous improvement. However, professional practices have not consistently resulted in exemplars of high quality work in all schools. School administrator interviews revealed a cohesive alignment between the school and system continuous improvement process. A triangulated review of the data revealed a system desire to establish systematic instructional planning and delivery norms to ensure student success at all levels. As a result, the system is formalizing a cohesive and collaborative process. The system offers courses that are equitable and challenging opportunities to prepare students for the next level. although, the expectation of more exemplars within the system, at all classroom levels, would ensure stronger student performance. Both the system and school levels agree that the curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system is monitored and adjusted in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning. The data analysis evidence supports that the district has developed a commitment to continuous improvement for improving student achievement.

The system is in the beginning stages of coordinating collaborative learning communities to address specific needs at the school level that is in alignment with the system's goals. The organization's instructional process is evaluated by the system and school level administrator's walk throughs that are designed to help teachers improve rigor and Depth of Knowledge (DOK) for students. The development of a formalized student advocacy plan to mentor and support students would enhance student success. Academic coaches provide professional learning opportunities customized to meet the needs of the system through on-going job-embedded coaching. A formalized new teacher mentoring process should be established to support the instructional process by providing focus on the system's values, beliefs, and goals.

The Troup County School System continues to recruit, hire and retain a highly qualified work force. System and school interviews revealed high employee satisfaction. Teachers, support staff, and leaders feel supported. The superintendent has led the system through a Performance Based Budgeting process which has resulted in protection of instructional time while providing sufficient material and fiscal resources. Classroom walk throughs by the External Review Team revealed literacy rich classrooms with small class sizes. School campuses and district buildings are very clean and well maintained. Concerns in the area of technology and program evaluation were noted. Although there is a strategic plan in place which includes long range planning for the system the current technology infrastructure does not fully support the teaching, learning and operational needs. In addition, central office and school leaders identified programs to address social, behavioral and career planning needs of students but have no method to evaluate their effectiveness.

Troup County School System has implemented a comprehensive data management system that generates a range of data related to student learning and system effectiveness. Student attendance, assessment and progress information is collected, analyzed and disseminated to schools by central office

personnel. Principals are regularly provided system reports that identify state averages, subgroups, performance points, trends, and intra-campus comparisons. This information is communicated to teachers, students, and other stakeholder groups. Central office and site-based administrators have received significant training in the disaggregation and triangulated use of data to support student achievement. However, there were inconsistencies in teacher's understanding and use of data to make instructional decisions and adjustment to meet the needs of students. Interviews revealed teacher's need and desire for additional training in data analysis. Subsequently, the review of the system self-assessment and relevant artifacts indicated a need for the system to develop a systematic approach to the evaluation, interpretation and targeted use of performance data.

During the on-site review, members of the External Review Team evaluated the learning environment by observing classrooms and general operations of the institution. Using data from these observations, the team evaluated the quality of instruction and learning that took place classified around seven constructs or environments: equity, high expectations, support, engagement, progress monitoring and feedback, management, and use of technology.

During the on-site system review, members of the External Review Team evaluated the learning environment in 6 schools by observing classrooms and general operations of the institutions. Using data from these observations, the Team evaluated the quality of instruction and learning that took place classified around 7 constructs or environments: equity, high expectations, support, engagement, progress monitoring/feedback, management, and use of technology. The Team utilized the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool (ELEOT) to observe 30 system classrooms in elementary, middle, and secondary schools. The Team also determined ratings for each of the 7 learning environments measured through the use of ELEOT. Summaries of these observation findings are found in this report.

Troup County teachers provide a supportive learning environment with many opportunities for student engagement. However, more opportunities for differentiated learning opportunities would enhance student learning opportunities. Active engagement was observed in all situations and student were well-managed during all visits. Although school staff were prepared for the visit and all provided instruction in a rich environment, an absence of the use of technology to enhance instruction was noted. The system is attempting to increase the infrastructure to support technology; however, observations supported the notion that more use could be made of the computers presently at the school.

The Team wishes to thank those responsible for providing logistical assistance as well as food and refreshment. The Team has completed the comprehensive review of artifacts, interviews, and observations and will communicate those findings to AdvancED. Based on findings from the review of evidence, the Team recommends that the Troup County School System be accredited, pending further review and final action by the AdvancED Commission.

Required Actions

1. Establish and implement metrics for goals contained in the system improvement plan.

Primary Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):

1.4

The system goals which were provided are general in nature with no process to determine if part or all of the goals have been met. School staff indicate through interviews that the need exists for data from the present improvement goals. System staff also state that system improvement plans are not written with measurable goals. System improvement plan goals should be measurable for those monitoring it to effectively determine the status of improvement efforts. Measurable goals will allow the system to quantify expected outcomes. In addition, goals and short term performance objectives should be evident in a multi-year system improvement plan to monitor incremental progress toward any yearly goals.

2. Design and provide exemplars for lessons and performance tasks required of students.

Primary Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):

3.6

There was evidence that a few teachers are utilizing exemplars at various schools; however, school leaders are not emphasizing exemplar use as a tool to enhance learning and set benchmarks for assessment. System staff also agree that the process is not utilized with fidelity. Exemplars are guiding resources that set a rigorous standard for students to achieve at higher levels. Standards are designed to promote rigor and depth of knowledge while exemplars provide guiding resources for expectations of student achievement. Interviews with school staff indicated no organized system process is in place to utilize exemplars with instruction.

3. Design and implement a new teacher mentoring program that focuses on teacher support, instructional processes, and training for data disaggregation.

Primary Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):

3.7

Through interviews with system supervisors and school administrators as well as information supported by the system's self-assessment and executive summary, a system-wide new teacher mentoring program is not operational and is needed. Mentorship will provide support to allow new personnel to become acclimated to the system, ensure efficient collaboration, and help ensure retention. Such a system will help to increase stability and will increase employee satisfaction with district operations.

4. Design and implement a technology infrastructure to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.

Primary Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):

4.6

Through examination of the system self-assessment as well as interviews with system and school administration, the need for better planning in the area of information services was identified. A long range 3 to 5 year System Technology Plan based upon a comprehensive needs assessment should be developed to provide a fully functional technology infrastructure, appropriate equipment, and qualified technical support staff for all system schools and departments. A system plan addressing the above issues is presently lacking. A well developed technology plan with measurable goals is critical to the mission of educating all students in a challenging environment as well as to the operational needs of all stakeholders throughout the system.

5. Develop a systematic process to formally evaluate program effectiveness designed to address counseling, assessment, and referral as well as the educational and career planning needs of all students.

Primary Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):

4.8

The self-assessment generated by the system reflects a need for the formal evaluation of all student service programs. The Troup County Curriculum and Instruction Department has a strong history of systematic test data analysis; however, a system-wide process to address the total well-being of students is not evident. The inclusion of measures such as graduation rates, attendance data, referral rates, post-graduation statistics, and counseling logs in conjunction with assessment data analysis would provide a more complete picture of program effectiveness. Research has shown that systems with implemented plans for addressing the total well-being of students experience students that are happier in school and more focused on their desire to graduate. Successful schools and school systems are beginning to dedicate additional resources toward career planning and referral services.

6. Develop and implement a system-wide professional learning protocol for all instructional personnel addressing the interpretation and effective use of data.

Primary Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):

5.3

System and school administrators receive training and support in the analysis of student performance and trend data. However, interviews with teachers revealed the need for additional professional learning in using student performance data to guide decisions regarding instruction and appropriate student interventions. The system is providing good data for instructional study. Administrators are distributing these data; however, teachers need training about the most effective and efficient use of data. Enhanced professional development addressing the analysis of data for teachers will encourage teacher use of data for unit and daily lesson planning. Multi-point data summaries are sometimes overwhelming for teachers.

Addenda

Next Steps

The institution should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the Powerful Practices section to maximize their impact on the institution.
3. Develop action plans to address the Required Actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the Required Actions.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the institution's efforts to improve student performance and system effectiveness.
5. Following the External Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the Required Actions. Institutions are required to respond to all Required Actions. The Required Actions should be completed before the Accreditation Progress Report is submitted. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to monitor and ensure that the system has implemented the necessary actions to complete the Required Actions. The accreditation status will be reviewed and acted upon based on the completion of the Required Actions and the resulting improvement.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the External Review, the Team submits the final report to AdvancED for review and for action by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and upon the institution. Upon receiving its accreditation, the institution should share its achievement with internal and external communities.

About AdvancED

In 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), both founded in 1895, along with 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 (founded 1917) joined NCA CASI and SACS CASI as part of AdvancED. AdvancED is the world's largest education community, representing 30,000 public and private schools and systems across the United States and in 75 countries worldwide and educating 16 million students. The Northwest Accreditation Commission joined the AdvancED network in 2011.

External Review

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Today, NCA CASI, NWAC, and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, NCA CASI, NWAC, and SACS CASI share research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, and national boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help educational institutions continuously improve.