

Report of the External Review Team for Cartersville City School System

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Use of Diagnostic Tools

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

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

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

Index of Education Quality

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

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

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

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

Benchmark Data

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

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

Powerful Practices

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

Opportunities for Improvement

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

Improvement Priorities

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

The Review

A team of five educators arrived in Cartersville, Georgia to engage in the External Review Process (October 23-26, 2016) for the Cartersville City Schools. Two team members were from out of state while three team members were from Georgia. The five team members collectively had 135 years of experience in public education.

In preparation for this onsite system-wide review, the Lead Evaluator made personal phone calls and sent emails to greet team members. Additionally, a conference call was then scheduled in late September with all team members. During this conference call, team member expectations were reviewed, logistical planning conducted, and questions from all team members answered. Additional phone calls and emails between the Lead Evaluator and team members helped to better prepare everyone for the onsite review, especially the team members new to the process.

The Lead Evaluator was in constant communication with the system contact through phone calls, emails, and texts. The contact was very organized in preparation for the review and responded quickly and efficiently to any and all requests made by the Lead Evaluator. In preparation for the review, each team member reviewed the Accreditation Report for the system, the four school reports, and the school system's website. Team

members had primary responsibility for focusing on one specific Standard but were also responsible for being familiar with all Standards and Indicators.

Each team member attended the opening Sunday evening session with an initial rating of all Indicators. On Sunday afternoon, an orientation session was held where team members reviewed their preparation work with the entire team, shared their initial ratings of Indicators, and finalized planning details for the first day of the on-site review. The superintendent and the district contact met briefly with the team on Sunday afternoon to welcome the team and determine any additional needs of team members. The district contact provided a thumb drive for each team member that contained evidence related to each Standard and other accompanying artifacts to rate the school system with respect to each of the Indicators. A notebook was also provided for each team member with school schedules, a list of stakeholders to be interviewed each day, and a list of artifacts that were contained on the thumb drive as evidence for each Indicator.

All four schools were visited, as well as the pre-school program site. Sixty classroom observations were conducted across the school system in classes from kindergarten through grade twelve.

The External Review Team thanks the school system and all of the staff who prepared for the External Review. The system contact worked very closely with the Lead Evaluator as the schedule was prepared. The system put together all the artifacts and evidence and provided it to the team on a thumb drive organized by Standards and Indicators.

Throughout the review, the school system personnel were open and transparent. Team members were welcomed into classrooms in all four schools and at the pre-school program site. The faculty and staff provided valuable insight through interviews.

To prepare for the system review, the school system conducted surveys of parents, students and staff. All required AdvancED questionnaires were used by the institution to receive stakeholder feedback. The minimum response rate for each population was met (parent questionnaire: equal to or greater than 20 percent, student questionnaire equal to or greater than 40 percent, and staff questionnaire equal to or greater than 60 percent). Results of stakeholder feedback collected by the school system were acceptably analyzed and presented with reasonable clarity. All Standard ratings for all stakeholders were in the range of 3.98 - 4.27 on a 5.0 scale.

Each school conducted a self assessment, as well as the system completing its system-wide Self Assessment. There were parent representatives who served on each Standard's committee in the self-assessment process. Internal and external 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. Some of those interviewed by the team were the ones who had served on the Standard's committees. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the External Review.

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	7
Administrators	21
Instructional Staff	56
Support Staff	37
Students	39
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	52
Total	213

Results

Teaching and Learning Impact

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement is the primary expectation of every institution. The relationship between teacher and learner must be productive and effective for student success. The impact of teaching and learning includes an analysis of student performance results, instructional quality, learner and family engagement, support services for student learning, curriculum quality and efficacy, and college and career readiness data. These are all key indicators of an institution's impact on teaching and learning.

A high-quality and effective educational system has services, practices, and curriculum that ensure teacher effectiveness. Research has shown that an effective teacher is a key factor for learners to achieve their highest potential and be prepared for a successful future. The positive influence an effective educator has on learning is a combination of "student motivation, parental involvement" and the "quality of leadership" (Ding & Sherman, 2006). Research also suggests that quality educators must have a variety of quantifiable and intangible characteristics that include strong communication skills, knowledge of content, and knowledge of how to teach the content. The institution's curriculum and instructional program should develop learners' skills that lead them to think about the world in complex ways (Conley, 2007) and prepare them to have knowledge that extends beyond the academic areas. In order to achieve these goals, teachers must have pedagogical skills as well as content knowledge (Baumert, J., Kunter, M., Blum, W., Brunner, M., Voxx, T., Jordan, A., Klusmann, U., Krauss, S., Nuebrand, M., & Tsai, Y., 2010). The acquisition and refinement of teachers' pedagogical skills occur most effectively through collaboration and professional development. These are a "necessary approach to improving teacher quality" (Colbert, J., Brown, R., Choi, S., & Thomas, S., 2008). According to Marks, Louis, and Printy (2002), staff members who engage in "active organizational learning also have higher achieving students in contrast to those that do not." Likewise, a study conducted by Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2010), concluded that leadership in effective institutions "supports teachers by creating collaborative work environments." Institutional leaders have a responsibility to provide experiences, resources, and time for educators to engage in meaningful professional learning that promotes student learning and educator quality.

AdvancED has found that a successful institution implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning. The curriculum provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students feedback to improve their performance.

Institutions with strong improvement processes move beyond anxiety about the current reality and focus on priorities and initiatives for the future. Using results, i.e., data and other information, to guide continuous improvement is key to an institution's success. A study conducted by Datnow, Park, and Wohlstetter (2007) from the Center on Educational Governance at the University of Southern California indicated that data can shed light on existing areas of strength and weakness and also guide improvement strategies in a systematic and strategic manner (Dembosky, J., Pane, J., Barney, H., & Christina, R., 2005). The study also identified six

key strategies that performance-driven systems use: (1) building a foundation for data-driven decision making, (2) establishing a culture of data use and continuous improvement, (3) investing in an information management system, (4) selecting the right data, (5) building institutional capacity for data-driven decision making, and (6) analyzing and acting on data to improve performance. Other research studies, though largely without comparison groups, suggested that data-driven decision-making has the potential to increase student performance (Alwin, 2002; Doyle, 2003; Lafee, 2002; McIntire, 2002).

Through ongoing evaluation of educational institutions, AdvancED has found that a successful institution uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine strategies to improve student performance. The institution implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained, and the institution demonstrates progress in improving student performance and institution effectiveness.

Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.1	The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	3.00	2.69
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	2.20	2.49
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	3.00	2.59
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	2.80	2.71
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	2.00	2.58
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	2.80	2.48
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	2.60	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	2.97
3.9	The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience.	2.60	2.50
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	2.20	2.47
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	2.80	2.65
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	2.80	2.64

Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	2.80	2.66
5.2	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning.	2.20	2.49
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	2.00	2.15
5.4	The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	3.00	2.50
5.5	System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders.	3.00	2.75

Student Performance Diagnostic

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

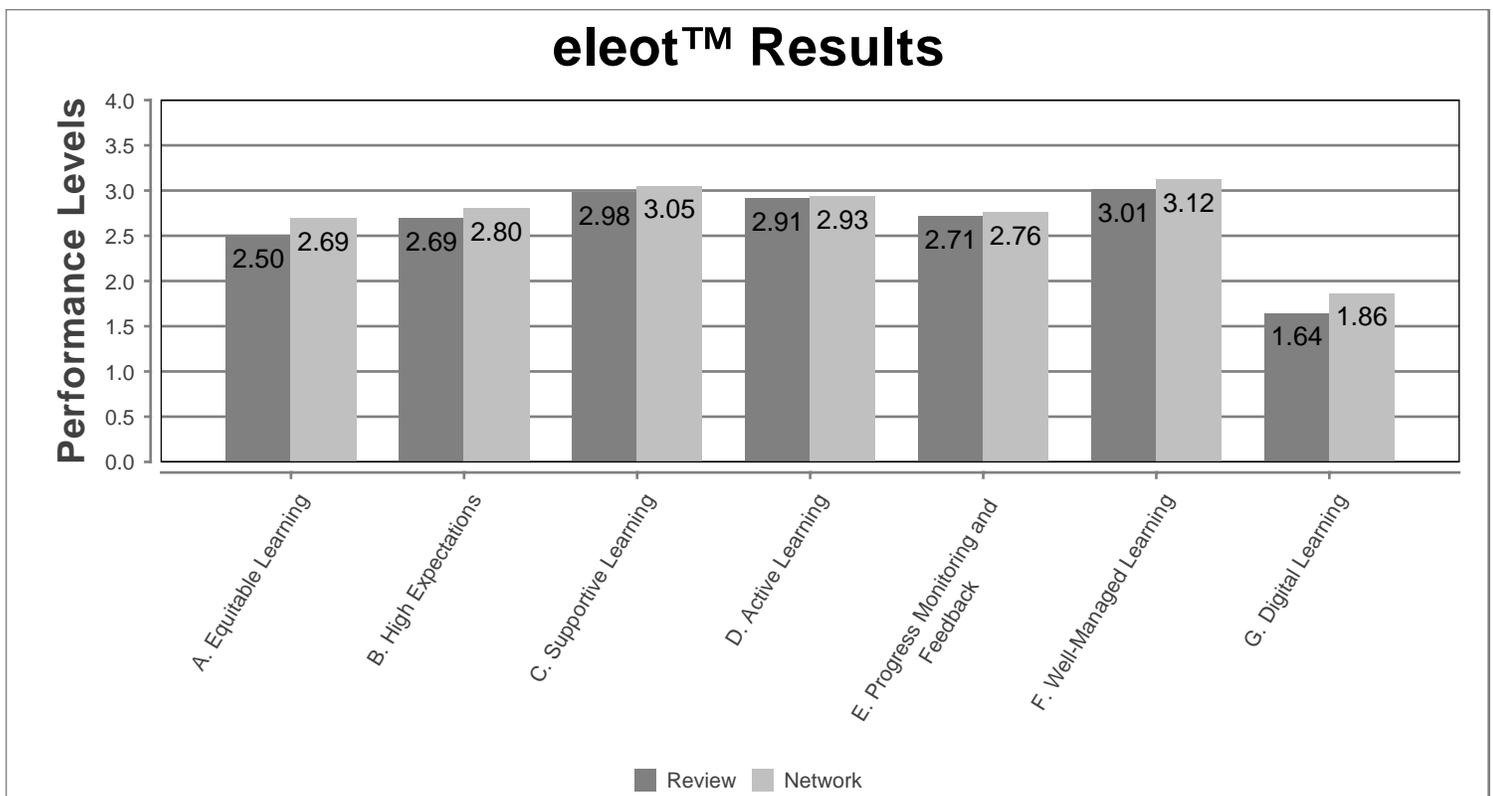
learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	3.40	3.33
Test Administration	3.40	3.52
Equity of Learning	2.40	2.54
Quality of Learning	3.00	2.96

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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

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



The External Review Team completed 60 observations using the eleot™ tool in the system's four schools (primary, elementary, middle, and high school levels). Plus, four pre-kindergarten classrooms were visited at the pre-school program site. Although many of the scores were close, the average ratings for all seven of the learning environments were below the AdvancED Network (AEN) averages. The Well-Managed Learning Environment was the highest rated environment at 3.01 compared to the AEN average of 3.14; the Supportive

Learning Environment was the second highest rated environment with a rating of 2.98 compared to the AEN average of 3.07; and the Active Learning Environment, with a rating of 2.91 compared to the AEN average of 2.94, was the third highest rated learning environment.

The lowest rated environments included the Digital Learning Environment rated at 1.64 compared to the AEN average of 1.83; the Equitable Learning Environment rated at 2.50 compared to 2.69 for the AEN average; and the High Expectations Learning Environment rated at 2.69 compared to the AEN average of 2.81. Even though the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment was rated very close to the AEN average, it was still below with a rating of 2.71 compared to the AEN average of 2.79.

In the Well-Managed Learning Environment, team members observed students who spoke and interacted respectfully with their teacher and their peers. They followed classroom rules and worked well with others. It was obvious that students knew classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences. Transitions were made smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another.

The Supportive Learning Environment was evident as students demonstrated positive attitudes about the classroom and learning. Students took risks in learning without fear of negative feedback. Support and assistance were frequently provided so that students understood the content and could accomplish the learning tasks. With the Active Learning Environment, students were actively engaged in applicable learning activities and had numerous opportunities to engage in discussions with teachers and other students. They also made connections from the content being taught to real-life experiences.

In terms of the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment, students were asked about their individual progress, responded to teacher feedback to improve their understanding, and had multiple opportunities to revise and improve their work based on the feedback. In several of the classrooms, students did not know exactly how their work was to be assessed.

In the High Expectations Environment students strived to meet the high expectations established by the teacher and engaged in rigorous coursework and discussions. Most students were tasked with activities and learning that were challenging but within their reach. At times, students responded to questioning that required higher order thinking. Yet, more questions that require them to make comparisons, contrasts, applications, and evaluations are needed.

For the Equitable Learning Environment there were limited opportunities for differentiated learning for students. Students did have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, and support. They also knew that rules and consequences were fair, clear, and consistently applied.

The Digital Learning Environment with a rating of 1.64 was rated lower than all other environments. In a few classes, students were observed using digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate and/or use information for learning. Almost no students were observed using technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning. When reflecting on the observations at the various schools, there was not any one school in which technology usage by students was highest. Students in some of the mathematics

classes were using calculators. In a limited number of other classes, small groups of students were using computers for remediation and reinforcement of a particular skill.

These eleot™ findings are aligned to and support the Standards and Indicators. In Standard Three on Teaching and Assessing for Learning, the evidence supports the rating (Level 3) on Indicator 3.3 on teachers engaging students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations. The strong rating on the Well-Managed Learning Environment aligns to this Indicator as students transitioned smoothly from one activity to another and collaborated with other students during student-centered activities. The rating on the Active Learning Environment also supports the Indicator 3.3 rating as students had several opportunities to engage in discussions with the teacher and other students and were actively engaged in the learning activities.

The lower ratings on the Equitable Learning Environment and the High Expectations Environment are aligned to the low ratings on Indicators 3.2, 3.5, and 3.10. Opportunities for differentiation of instruction, the provision of exemplars of high quality work, and questioning that required higher order thinking were limited during the 60 classroom observations.

The one area in which the eleot™ observations were not aligned to the Indicator ratings was with Digital Learning. Digital Learning was the lowest rated learning environment with limited student usage of technology as learning tools. Yet, the strong rating on Indicator 4.6 was based on the updated infrastructure and equipment at each school. In fact, the evidence for Indicator 4.6 was so strong that it resulted in a Powerful Practice. This "disconnect" between the available infrastructure and equipment and the actual usage of the technology equipment by students is an area of concern for the school system.

Quality teaching is the heart of the instructional program. Focusing on the information provided from the classroom observations on the seven learning environments and the actions recommended will assist the school system in moving forward in addressing the Improvement Priorities outlined in this report.

eleot™ Data Summary

A. Equitable Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.13	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	5.00%	35.00%	28.33%	31.67%
2.	3.02	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	10.00%	81.67%	8.33%	0.00%
3.	3.10	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	11.67%	86.67%	1.67%	0.00%
4.	1.77	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	1.67%	26.67%	18.33%	53.33%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.50						

B. High Expectations			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.00	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	3.33%	93.33%	3.33%	0.00%
2.	2.95	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	3.33%	88.33%	8.33%	0.00%
3.	2.18	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	1.67%	46.67%	20.00%	31.67%
4.	2.85	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	5.00%	76.67%	16.67%	1.67%
5.	2.47	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	5.00%	46.67%	38.33%	10.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.69						

C. Supportive Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.22	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	21.67%	78.33%	0.00%	0.00%
2.	3.20	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	21.67%	76.67%	1.67%	0.00%
3.	2.98	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	8.33%	83.33%	6.67%	1.67%
4.	3.13	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	18.33%	76.67%	5.00%	0.00%
5.	2.38	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	0.00%	60.00%	18.33%	21.67%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.98						

D. Active Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.93	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	10.00%	75.00%	13.33%	1.67%
2.	2.65	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	8.33%	63.33%	13.33%	15.00%
3.	3.13	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	23.33%	66.67%	10.00%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.91						

E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.70	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	3.33%	70.00%	20.00%	6.67%
2.	2.90	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	6.67%	78.33%	13.33%	1.67%
3.	2.78	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	0.00%	80.00%	18.33%	1.67%
4.	2.37	Understands how her/his work is assessed	1.67%	48.33%	35.00%	15.00%
5.	2.80	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	6.67%	76.67%	6.67%	10.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.71						

F. Well-Managed Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.27	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	26.67%	73.33%	0.00%	0.00%
2.	3.22	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	25.00%	71.67%	3.33%	0.00%
3.	2.98	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	25.00%	56.67%	10.00%	8.33%
4.	2.45	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	25.00%	31.67%	6.67%	36.67%
5.	3.13	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	21.67%	71.67%	5.00%	1.67%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.01						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	1.88	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	1.67%	36.67%	10.00%	51.67%
2.	1.53	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	1.67%	21.67%	5.00%	71.67%
3.	1.50	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	3.33%	16.67%	6.67%	73.33%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 1.64						

Findings

Improvement Priority

Develop a systematic process, including a professional development plan, for all professional and support staff in the implementation and use of data from multiple sources to inform instruction, grading and reporting practices, program evaluation, and organizational effectiveness.

(Indicator 3.10, Indicator 5.2, Indicator 5.3, SF2. Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis, SP2. Test Administration, SP4. Equity of Learning)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.2

Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with 21 administrators and 56 teachers revealed that most teachers across the system use a common grading scale, yet there are inconsistencies in processes and procedures for weighted categories for the grades. No one could give the defined criteria that were to be used to represent a student’s attainment of content knowledge and skills. While artifacts, such as the employee handbook and the grading policy for the school system, support a common grading and reporting procedure across grade levels and courses, there was no evidence of such being practiced in any subject area. This lack of consistency in grading practices was also validated through interviews with parents, as they stated that there is a lack of consistency from teacher to teacher and grade to grade relative to grading.

The process of individual school analysis of student performance data from multiple data sources was evident based on the interviews of 77 administrators and teachers. However, the need for a systematic process and procedure for analyzing and applying learning from data sources by both professional and support staff

throughout the school system is well documented. Even though teachers across the system revealed the use of assessment data in their classrooms, some were not able to communicate how lesson planning was informed by the results of formative data analysis. Interviews of teachers in the high school mathematics department revealed that they have established a protocol for data analysis that informs instruction through their use of the Student Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), as well as analysis of formative assessment data. However, this is an isolated response. Therefore, the need remains for a consistent expectation throughout the system relative to processes and procedures for collecting, analyzing, and applying learning from multiple data sources by both professional and support staff.

In the Accreditation Report, Cartersville City Schools noted a system-wide need to help teachers grow in their use of data collection and usage. “The multiple assessments and the multitude of data may inhibit teachers from using it effectively when there is so much to review,” stated one administrator. Although schools have done training on data analysis of individual assessments, there is a documented need to move to a more multiple data approach. “Training is needed system-wide to lead to consistency among teachers and the data teams,” said an internal stakeholder.

Evidence validates that all schools develop school improvement plans and the system develops a system strategic plan. Interviews reveal that the school level plans are typically not developed in a collaborative environment with input from a variety of stakeholder groups, but rather they are shared with staff for agreement after the plan has been drafted by the school administration. This practice suggests the need for professional learning in the use of data to design, implement, and evaluate continuous improvement plans by both system and school personnel. “Such training can result in a consistent process for data analysis across the system and have an impact on student performance throughout the system,” stated an administrator.

Examination of the goals and objectives that are a part of the system strategic plan substantiates a need for more effective data analysis to drive instruction. The targets or quantitative benchmarks reveal specific grade levels and subject areas in which targets are not being met. English/language arts and mathematics targets were not met in grades three and four; there are mixed results in science at grades three, four, and eight and in social studies at grades three and four; and the results are mixed at the secondary level as measured by the end of course assessments, especially in US History, Economics, and Physical Science. These student performance results support the need for a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and applying learning from multiple data sources, as well as the need for professional development for the professional and support staff in the interpretation and use of data to inform instruction and improve student performance

System and school personnel who participate in meaningful professional development in the interpretation and use of data are better equipped to inform instruction, program evaluation, and organizational effectiveness.

Improvement Priority

Establish and implement procedures and protocols for system-wide collaborative learning structures which require collaboration across grade levels, content areas, and other system divisions to support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.

(Indicator 3.2, Indicator 3.5)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.5

Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with internal stakeholders, including teachers and support staff, revealed that there is no systematic process that ensures collaboration consistently across grade levels and subject areas or between grade levels. Interviews indicated that the schools have provided various opportunities for teachers to collaborate with scheduled common planning times. The high school has even structured the schedule for early release days on Wednesdays in order to provide common planning for collaboration. However, teachers and support staff stated that there were very few, if any, expected protocols for the collaborative times known as Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Neither was there evidence of any monitoring of PLCs by leadership. As one teacher group stated, "What happens in PLC time is left up to the individual teachers." A leadership team member shared, "Some teachers take great pride in the fact that they collaborate continuously, not just at formal times, but throughout the week in informal settings. Yet, this is not indicative of all grade levels or subject areas."

Interviews with parents indicated that there were real problems with gaps in learning between some grade levels. "With the school system being a feeder system and parents having children at multiple schools, we wish there was more consistency between grade levels and teachers in their expectations," stated one stakeholder.

Concerns were shared at the various schools regarding not having sufficient personnel at the system level to support curriculum alignment within and among the schools. One employee stated, "There are too many responsibilities for one system-level instructional person to adequately oversee all aspects of curriculum and instruction for the four schools within the system." Evidence supports the coordinator of curriculum consistently meeting with school level administrators, yet there is a breakdown at the school level about system level expectations for supporting, monitoring, and assessing curriculum alignment and collaboration.

Teachers reported inconsistencies as to what the schools' curriculum expectations are. Staff members shared that the teacher leadership teams are the sole reason that there is any consistency with curriculum expectations at certain grade levels. Information was shared with the team regarding a professional development day last summer in which vertical alignment was discussed, but there has been no follow-up to that summer activity during this school year.

System leaders stated that the system has recognized that a "viable and consistent curriculum with clearly defined expectations is the foundation of a quality education program." Yet, there was no evidence to substantiate a systemic plan in place to ensure the alignment of curriculum, assessments and standards based instruction across and between grade levels to meet the needs of the diverse student population of Cartersville City Schools.

Test data also indicated the need for alignment and collaboration. Although Cartersville City Schools

outperform the state in a number of areas, achievement targets were not met in grades 3 and 4 for English/language arts and mathematics. Science results were mixed in grades 3, 4, and 8, while social studies results were mixed in grades 3 and 4. High school data for end of course assessments also point to a need for professional dialogue and the examination of the curriculum, pacing guides, and instructional quality, particularly in the areas of Physical Science, US History, and Economics.

A school system that operates as a collaborative learning organization in which the curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices are aligned will ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.

Leadership Capacity

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution's progress towards its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution's leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its institutional purpose and direction, the effectiveness of governance and leadership to enable the institution to realize its stated objectives, the ability to engage and involve stakeholders in meaningful and productive ways, and the capacity to enact strategies to improve results of student learning.

Purpose and direction are critical to successful institutions. A study conducted in 2010 by the London-based Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reported that "in addition to improving performance, the research indicates that having a sense of shared purpose also improves employee engagement" and that "lack of understanding around purpose can lead to demotivation and emotional detachment, which in turn lead to a disengaged and dissatisfied workforce."

AdvancED has found through its evaluation of best practices in more than 32,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution commits to a shared purpose and direction and establishes expectations for student learning that are aligned with the institutions' vision and supported by internal and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and overall institution effectiveness.

Governance and leadership are key factors in raising institutional quality. Leaders, both local administrators and governing boards/authorities, are responsible for ensuring all learners achieve while also managing many other facets of an institution. Institutions that function effectively do so without tension between the governing board/authority, administrators, and educators and have established relationships of mutual respect and a shared vision (Feuerstein & Opfer, 1998). In a meta-analysis of educational institution leadership research, Leithwood and Sun (2012) found that leaders (school and governing boards/authority) can significantly "influence school conditions through their achievement of a shared vision and agreed-on goals for the organization, their high expectations and support of organizational members, and their practices that strengthen school culture and foster collaboration within the organization." With the increasing demands of accountability placed on institutional leaders, leaders who empower others need considerable autonomy and involve their communities to attain continuous improvement goals. Leaders who engage in such practices experience a greater level of success (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Similarly, governing boards/authorities that focus on policy-making are more likely to allow institutional leaders the autonomy to make decisions that impact teachers and students and are less responsive to politicization than boards/authorities that respond to vocal citizens (Greene, 1992).

AdvancED's experience, gained through evaluation of best practices, has indicated that a successful institution has leaders who are advocates for the institution's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The institution's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

The system maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	2.20	2.68
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	2.80	2.68
1.3	The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	3.00	2.90
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	2.80	2.65

Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

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

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

Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

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

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

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Questionnaire Administration	3.40	3.42
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.00	3.03

Findings

Opportunity For Improvement

Create and implement a formalized, documented continuous improvement process for the system and its schools that includes timelines for revisions/updates of the mission, vision, and beliefs as a part of the strategic planning process.

(Indicator 1.1)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.1

Evidence and Rationale

When the school system personnel completed the Self Assessment for Cartersville City Schools, Standard One was rated the lowest of the five Standards for Quality School Systems. The system rated itself an overall 2.75 on a 4.0 scale with Indicator 1.1 being rated at a Level 2. As the External Review Team reviewed artifacts, interviewed 213 stakeholders, visited all school sites in the system, and conducted 60 classroom observations, the Level 2 rating was validated. The vision “A Tradition of Excellence-Making It Personal” and the mission “preparing students for the challenges of progress and change through the development of the skills necessary

to become lifelong learners in order that they may live successful and productive lives” were formally evaluated in 2011 as a part of the charter school process. Again in 2015, as a part of the charter renewal process, these statements were informally reviewed.

When asked how often the review/revision process occurred, internal stakeholders could provide no evidence of any other review/revision of the vision, mission, and beliefs. In fact, one staff member stated, “These have been our vision and mission statements for as long as I can remember, and I have no recollection of any changes. Neither do I know of any periodic reviews of these components.”

A review of the district strategic plan, the system-wide Self Assessment, and the charter application revealed an inclusive process, as representatives from various stakeholder groups served on the committees every five years. The process of creating the school improvement plans was not always an inclusive, collaborative process, as several interviews revealed that a small group of individuals often times wrote the school improvement plans. No documentation was found in terms of the planning and review process being formalized and implemented with fidelity on a regular basis.

When asked about a formalized, documented planning process for revising and updating the vision and mission, administrators at the district and school levels shared that there were no timelines or established procedures for the system level or the schools. “It has been on an as needed basis,” stated an administrator. Another said, “We need to have an agreed upon set of expectations and conduct extensive reviews on a regular basis if we are committed to meeting the needs of our changing student population.” Classroom observations and interviews revealed a growth in minority populations as well as in families living in poverty. With that come challenges to revisit “what we have always done” in order to be successful with ALL students. “Revisiting the vision, mission, beliefs, and overall goals is much needed if we are to better meet the needs of our ever-changing student population,” stated a system employee. “Not meeting some of our overall testing objectives, as well as our achievement gap targets, is even more proof of the need to review and refine our mission and vision on a regular basis,” stated a system leader.

If a school system is to be successful, it must engage in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.

Powerful Practice

The superintendent is a visionary leader who fosters a caring culture consistent with the system’s purpose and direction.

(Indicator 1.3, Indicator 2.4)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.4

Evidence and Rationale

“A Tradition of Excellence-Making It Personal” is clearly evident within the Cartersville City Schools. Interviews with 213 stakeholders at all levels and visits to the primary, elementary, middle, and high schools verified this

vision. The commitment of shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning is evident in documentation and decision-making. This commitment is regularly reflected in communication among leaders and staff. Leaders voiced, with pride, a strong level of teamwork and cooperation when working with each other. When speaking with teachers, an attitude of “we care about our students” was shared, and the idea of “going the extra mile” was very clear. Having a family-like atmosphere was a theme that permeated every school setting.

The vision and mission of the Cartersville City Schools are based upon a set of identified core values which guide system operations and decision-making. To help accomplish this mission, vision, and culture of caring, the superintendent is a supportive and highly visible leader who has led the charge to fruition. He is seen as the catalyst that shapes the culture of the system, as he maintains a positive working relationship with the system level staff, school staff, parents, and community members. All evidence points to strong support of the vision, “A Tradition of Excellence- Making It Personal.”

Leaders and staff throughout the system align their decisions and actions toward continuous improvement to achieve the system’s purpose. It was evident after conducting interviews with staff at various schools that leaders throughout the system support shared leadership and professional growth. The collaboration between the Board of Education, the superintendent, and the system administration is very strong. The culture of the Cartersville City Schools is characterized by a sense of pride, a commitment to shared values, and building relationships with all stakeholders. It is clear that the superintendent aligns decisions and actions toward continuous improvement to achieve the system’s purpose and direction. “Our success is directly tied to the quality of our leadership,” stated one stakeholder. Another shared, “When we do not have to furlough teachers during lean times, can lower tax millage, and go from \$32 million of bonded indebtedness to being debt-free, then we have leadership that is doing everything possible to overcome obstacles and help students succeed.”

To operate effectively, the leadership of the school system must foster a culture consistent with the system’s purpose and direction.

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.	3.20	2.87
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations.	3.00	2.87
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	3.40	3.06
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	3.80	2.76

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	3.00	2.73
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	3.00	2.72
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	2.80	2.58
4.8	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	2.80	2.60

Findings

Powerful Practice

The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long range planning in the areas of budget, facilities, technology equipment, and infrastructure.

(Indicator 4.3, Indicator 4.4)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.4

Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with district leaders and board members revealed that district leaders have developed a long range planning process for strategic forecasting and budgeting. Employees continually shared how Cartersville City Schools are in such good financial shape, very stable, and well-prepared for the future.

The Resource Utilization domain was rated higher than any other domain for Cartersville City Schools, as well as being rated higher than the AdvancED Network average for Resource Utilization. The External Review Team validated superior strategic resource management that includes long-range planning through such artifacts and evidence as listed below.

- Long range planning FY 2017 document including the current status and the needs for maintenance, transportation, technology, food service equipment, and band equipment;
- District Strategic Plan, Goal Six: Maintain five and ten-year enrollment projections for each school building to efficiently provide quality instructional space for all students and staff;
- District Strategic Plan, Goal Seven: Implement and maintain an effective and fully operational technology program by the end of 2016-2017;
- Five Year Facilities Plan for renovations and new construction projects;
- Having no bonded indebtedness;
- Resource purchases to support safety and emergency procedures in each building;

- Having 100 percent Highly Qualified staff; and
- Funding salary increases for staff for three consecutive years and having no furlough days during challenging economic times.

Team members observed in all schools in the system and found them to be safe and clean while promoting a healthy environment for students and staff. Grounds are manicured, and every school is warm and inviting. Over 200 interviews and 60 classroom observations validate pride in Cartersville City Schools with a focus on safety and technology through surveillance cameras, access control at the preschool, primary, elementary, and middle schools, cameras on every bus, security measures for visitors, and technology purchases for classroom and school use.

The leadership of Cartersville City Schools has made a conscious commitment to obtaining debt-free standing through budgeting, energy audits, human resource management, and equipment replacement schedules. Yearly purchases are identified at least five years prior to the expense, and funds are allocated for these identified needs each year. In addition, a consulting firm is assisting the school district with fifteen year enrollment projections to prepare for even more long-range planning. Custodians, paraprofessionals, and some nutrition workers were reclassified and employed through an outside entity on a contractual basis in order to save costs and bring about more efficiency. This visionary planning for strategic resource management has been led by the superintendent and finance director.

Effective budgeting and resource management support a school system's purpose and direction to ensure student success for all students.

Conclusion

The team identified several pervasive themes that emerged during the time spent in the school system. It was obvious to the team that there is a strong sense of community and a "family atmosphere" that exist in the school system. Every person interviewed mentioned the spirit of cooperation and how it is such a joy to be a part of Cartersville City Schools. There is genuine care and concern for students. The existence of a sense of pride and trust and a commitment to shared values were heard repeatedly as an integral part of the success of the public schools in Cartersville City.

The findings from the 60 classroom observations regarding a well-managed and supportive learning environment were indicative of the caring culture of the entire school system. The well-managed learning environment was observed in classrooms at all grade levels from kindergarten through high school. Students spoke and interacted respectfully with teachers and peers. Classroom procedures and routines were known by students, and they readily followed classroom rules. The supportive learning environment was also seen throughout the school system. Students demonstrated positive attitudes about the classroom and learning. They were willing to take risks in learning without fear of negative feedback.

The superintendent was characterized as a visionary leader who worked well with the Board of Education, system and school staff, community members, and parents. The strong relationship between the governing body and the superintendent helped to create a caring culture that values collaboration and communication. The entire administrative team from the central office to the school level was characterized as a leadership team that works well together and is very accessible to stakeholders. The importance of building relationships was evidenced in all interviews with both internal and external stakeholders.

The school system has maintained its finances and all other resources extremely well in recent years. The management of the fiscal resources, personnel, school facilities, equipment and infrastructure, food services, and transportation is exceptional. Strategic resource management is at such a strong level that the system moved from \$32 million of bonded indebtedness to being debt free within the past ten years.

The themes of visionary leadership, commitment to shared values, a caring culture, a sense of pride and the importance of building relationships, well-maintained facilities, and financial stability emerged during the review process. They permeate the entire school system and will be the forces that Cartersville City Schools can build upon to bring about student success and organizational effectiveness.

The system recognizes its challenges and has some major activities already planned in order to better focus on success for all students. Although the school system has collaborative learning structures, the system recognizes the need for more formalized protocols and procedures regarding Professional Learning Communities. Additionally, more professional development opportunities in the analysis and use of data from multiple sources to inform instruction, program evaluation, and organizational effectiveness are needed for both certified staff and the instructional assistants. Even with the current training on data analysis for the certified staff, the actual usage of the data to drive instruction and make decisions about program effectiveness was somewhat limited at some schools.

Equity of learning is another challenge for Cartersville City Schools. All evidence indicated that achievement gaps do exist among certain sub-populations of students system-wide. For example, the achievement gap exists between minority students (Black and Hispanic students) and all students in language arts and mathematics at most levels from grades three to eight. Also, the system did not meet their objective of increasing the percentage of grade three through eight minority student groups exceeding standards ("Distinguished Learner") on state assessments in language arts, math, science and social studies.

Developing and implementing a systematic process to include a professional development plan for all professional and support staff in the interpretation and use of data from the multiple data sources is necessary for student success. By doing this, the system can build capacity among professional and support staff and improve instruction and student learning. If achievement gaps are to be eliminated among sub-populations of students and all students in Cartersville City Schools are to be successful, the multitude of assessment tools must be analyzed and the results must be used to inform individual student progress, program evaluations, and system effectiveness.

Using the Improvement Priorities as a road map can form a foundation for growth and improvement. The Improvement Priorities are those things that the team identified as preventing the school system from being as effective as it could be in meeting accreditation Standards and policies. Developing and implementing a systematic process for all professional and support staff in the interpretation and use of data from multiple sources to inform instruction, program evaluation, and organizational effectiveness can have a major impact on improving student performance and system effectiveness. By addressing these identified actions, the school system may enhance its capacity to reach a higher level of performance and find success for every student.

Improvement Priorities

The institution should use the findings from this review to guide the continuous improvement process. The institution must address the Improvement Priorities listed below:

- Develop a systematic process, including a professional development plan, for all professional and support staff in the implementation and use of data from multiple sources to inform instruction, grading and reporting practices, program evaluation, and organizational effectiveness.
- Establish and implement procedures and protocols for system-wide collaborative learning structures which require collaboration across grade levels, content areas, and other system divisions to support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.

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	285.85	278.94
Teaching and Learning Impact	271.43	268.48
Leadership Capacity	293.33	293.71
Resource Utilization	312.50	286.27

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

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

Addenda

Individual Institution Results (Self-reported)

Institution Name	Teaching and Learning Impact	Leadership Capacity	Resource Utilization	Overall IEQ Score
Cartersville Elementary School	285.71	318.18	257.14	289.74
Cartersville High School	290.48	309.09	314.29	300.00
Cartersville Middle School	290.48	300.00	300.00	294.87
Cartersville Primary School	300.00	318.18	314.29	307.69

Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Cheryl C Allread	<p>Dr. Allread's career spans over 40 years. She retired from Marion County Schools in South Carolina after having taught math and science for 7 years, serving as principal for 11 years, as assistant superintendent for instruction for 11 years, and as district superintendent for 7 years. After retirement from 36 years working in Marion County, she began working as a consultant with the S.C. State Department of Education, serving as Liaison for low-performing schools/Palmetto Priority Schools. She also conducted academic audits, served as principal mentor and served as a leadership coach in instructional supervision. Dr. Allread serves as Field Consultant for AdvancED in S.C. and works as Lead Evaluator for AdvancED in schools and districts across the country, as well as continuing to work as a private consultant with schools in instructional supervision.</p>
Dr. Scarlett C Dunne	<p>Scarlett is currently serving as an Elementary School Principal in the Clarke County School District in Athens, GA at Oglethorpe Avenue Elementary School. She has served in this role for the past eleven years. Dr. Dunne, served as the Assistant Principal at Oglethorpe Avenue Elementary for two years before becoming principal. Prior to her administrative experience, she was an elementary school teacher for thirteen years serving in both Jackson and Floyd counties both of which are located in Georgia.</p> <p>Scarlett currently holds a Bachelor of Science degree, Masters in Educational Leadership degree, and a Specialist in Educational Leadership degree from the University of Georgia respectively earned in 1987, 1997, and 1998. Dr. Dunne also holds a doctorate in Educational Administration and Leadership earned in 2008 from Capella University. One area of interest and study for Dr. Dunne is women who lead high poverty inner-city schools.</p>
John Sedey	<p>John Sedey has been a teacher, school and district administrator, and educational consultant. Since retiring from public school administration, he has been in private practice, primarily consulting to career and technical education, alternative schools, and charter schools. He has provided leadership in program planning and development, student systems, environmental education, assessment and testing, state and federal program administration, student support systems and education-business partnerships. John has been a senior developer for one of the eleven New American Schools Development grants. In his advocacy for college and career readiness, he has consulted to federal and state departments of education. John holds a bachelor's degree in history and business, a master's degree in education administration, and has done additional graduate work, including that as a Bush Public School Executive Fellow. He has led more than seventy-five AdvancED external reviews since 2008. A majority of those have been school system and digital learning accreditations.</p>

Member	Brief Biography
<p>Dr. Jessica Ainsworth</p>	<p>Dr. Jessica Ainsworth has a passion for equipping people to be path changers for others, so they are prepared to take the road less traveled. She was recently named the 2015 Georgia and National Assistant Principal, received the 2015 Georgia Association of Educational Leaders Presidential Citation, Chamber’s Top Ten Young Professionals, and one of Georgia Forward’s Young Gamechangers. Dr. Ainsworth was born and raised in Douglas County and continues to make a commitment to the region as the secretary for the Refuge for Women board, One Community Reads, and various other volunteer activities. She focuses on using support interventions while meeting each person’s needs. Using this as her purpose, she has presented at numerous conferences on topics including school improvement, leadership and retaining effective teachers. Dr. Ainsworth is currently employed as the Assistant Director of Assessment with the Douglas County School System and recently graduated with a doctorate degree in School Improvement. When she is not taking on the world to make change, she enjoys time with her husband and son, and continues to be inspired by her faith.</p>
<p>Ms. Cherie Allison</p>	<p>Cherie Allison has been in the field of education for sixteen years. She was first a Middle and then High School English teacher. She became an International Baccalaureate coordinator and then the Vice Principal of Attendance and Discipline at Lexington Middle School in Lee County Florida. Cherie would later move to a Title I school in Collier County Florida where she felt she might make the biggest impact on At-Risk students. She is currently the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction at Palmetto Ridge High School with a population of 1930 students of which 53% are Free and Reduced Lunch. Ms. Allison is currently completing her dissertation with the University of Florida on Teacher Collective Efficacy and Professional Learning communities in Secondary Education as she feels that collaboration at this level is key to student centered and diversified instruction.</p>
<p>Dr. Sherry Everett</p>	<p>Dr. Sherry Everett currently serves as the Executive Director of Special Projects in the Office of the Superintendent for the DeKalb County School District. Dr. Everett has leadership experience at both the secondary and post-secondary levels, and teaching experience at the middle school level. Additionally, Dr. Everett’s secondary experience includes serving as a middle and high school instructional assistant principal, high school principal, Director of High School Transformation, Executive Director of Federal Programs, Executive Director of School Leadership and Operational Support, and Executive Director of Special Projects.</p> <p>Dr. Everett has extensive experience in school-turnaround, with expertise in exhibiting leadership competencies such as: driving for results, influencing for results, problem solving, and analyzing data to inform decisions.</p> <p>Dr. Everett holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Management, a Master’s degree in Educational Administration and Supervision, an Educational Specialist degree in Middle Grades Education, and an EdD in Educational Leadership.</p> <p>High expectations and a steadfast conviction that all children have the right to a quality education continue to be the impetus that inspires Dr. Everett to be a proactive agent for positive change. It is this unwavering philosophy, combined with a servant leadership approach that continues to inspire Dr. Everett, and unceasingly motivates her daily practice.</p>

Next Steps

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

About AdvancED

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

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

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

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