

Report of the
External Review
for
Coffee County School System

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US

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North Central Association on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

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Table of Contents

Introduction to the External Review	1
Part I: Findings	2
Accreditation Standards and Indicators	2
Learning Environment	23
Student Performance	24
Stakeholder Feedback	25
Individual Institution Results	26
Part II: Conclusion	27
Summary of the External Review	27
Required Action	31
Part III: Addenda	32
The External Review Team	32
Next Steps	33
Celebrating Accreditation	34
About AdvancED	34
References	35

Introduction to the External Review

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 student performance 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.

Part I: Findings

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

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. Before implementation, 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, identification of Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement related to each of the standards (if appropriate), and a description of the evidence examined by the External Review Team.

The AdvancED Standards and Indicators are the first of three primary areas of evaluation for AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. Using indicator-specific performance levels, the External Review Team evaluates the degree to which the institution meets each indicator on a scale of 1 to 4. The scores assigned to the indicators are averaged to arrive at a single score. This score, along with scores from evaluations of student performance and stakeholder feedback, will be used to determine the accreditation status of the institution.

Average Indicator Score for this Institution	3.0
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Standard 1: 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.

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 30,000 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.

Standard 1			
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		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 • Survey results • 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 	3.0
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"> • Survey results • Agendas and/or minutes that reference a commitment to the components of the schools' purpose statements • Accreditation Report • Observations • Interviews 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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 • Examples of schools' continuous improvement plans • Survey results • Accreditation Report • Statements of shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning • The district strategic plan 	3.0
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 • Survey results • Observations • Agenda, minutes from continuous improvement planning meetings • The district data profile • The district strategic plan 	3.0

Opportunities for Improvement

Indicator

1. Devise and implement a process that will ensure the inclusion of stakeholders in the development, review, and communication of all school improvement plans.

1.4

Through interviews with stakeholders, reviews of artifacts, and discussions with school leadership teams, the External Review Team noted that school stakeholder groups were not directly involved in the development and periodic review of all school-level continuous improvement plans. Further, these plans should be monitored by system leadership, housed at each school and the central office, and posted on the system and all school websites. School-level continuous improvement plans reflect efforts of an individual school to meet expectations of a school system at the local level. When stakeholders know about and have input concerning the formulation of various directives of their local school, they may greatly assist with support in the areas of resources, time, and encouragement. This support will enhance the productivity of the local school in meeting its objectives.

Standard 2: The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system 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 2			
The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.			
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 • Professional development plans • Student handbooks • Accreditation Report • District operations manuals • School handbooks 	4.0

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 • List of assigned staff for compliance • Proof of legal counsel • Governing authority training plan • Assurances, certifications • Accreditation Report • Findings of internal and external reviews of compliance with laws, regulations, and policies • Observations • Interviews • Governing code of ethics 	4.0
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 • District strategic plan • Examples of school improvement plans • Roles and responsibilities of school leadership • Roles and responsibilities of district leadership • Observations • Interviews • Social media • Accreditation Report • Survey results regarding functions of the governing authority and operations of the district • Stakeholder input and feedback • Agendas and minutes of meetings 	4.0

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 decisions aligned with the district's strategic plan • Professional development offerings and plans • Examples of collaboration and shared leadership • Examples of decisions aligned with the school's purpose statement • Interviews • Survey results • 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 	3.0
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Minutes from meetings with stakeholders • Interviews • Copies of surveys or screen shots from online surveys • Survey responses • Communication plan • Observations 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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 • Accreditation Report • Governing body policy on supervision and evaluation • Job specific criteria • Observations • Supervision and evaluation documents with criteria for improving professional practice throughout the system and student success noted • Representative supervision and evaluation reports 	3.0

Powerful Practices

Indicator

1. The governing board of education establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.

2.1

Evidence from stakeholders, artifacts, and observations document an intentional and systematic effort by CCSS leadership and the board to establish a newly focused mission and vision for the CCSS. The Leader Handbook thoroughly outlines comprehensive procedures that build the desired Performance Culture of CCSS. In the recent past, employees and community members have complained about actions by past boards to make decisions with less concern for student needs and success. The present board has worked meticulously to center recent actions focused on student achievement. A healthier atmosphere is now found among and between board members as they conduct the business of CCSS.

2. The governing board operates responsibly and functions effectively.

2.2

Stakeholders expressed very high regard for the responsible operation and effectiveness of the board and CCSS leadership that have stimulated a strong collaboration among community, system, and schools. This collaboration has resulted in several newly funded programs that have addressed the needs of all students of CCSS. Through examination of artifacts and interviews with stakeholders (school and community) the team noted numerous recent multi-million dollar collaborative grant efforts by CCSS central office and board members to address programs offered through area schools to enhance the teaching and learning program. Those interviewed stressed the fact that the present board has the CCSS operational budget within its means and conducts its business in an improved professional manner as compared to board action in the recent past.

3. The governing board ensures that CCSS leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.

2.3

Interviews, building visits, and artifacts reflected that individual building leaders have the autonomy to meet goals. Building leaders are empowered to manage resources to effectively achieve instructional goals at each school site. Structured Leadership Teams at each school provide data analysis and recommendations to assure that building decisions are focused on providing resources that support student achievement.

Standard 3: The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.

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 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 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.

Standard 3
The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.

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"> • Learning expectations for different courses and programs • Interviews • Course, program, or school schedules • Student work across courses or programs • Survey results • Lesson plans • Observations • Graduate follow-up surveys • Posted learning objectives • Enrollment patterns for various courses and programs • Accreditation Report • Descriptions of instructional techniques 	3.0
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"> • Accreditation Report • Common assessments • Standards-based report cards • Surveys results • Observations • Interviews • Program descriptions • Curriculum writing process • Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum 	3.0

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 • Findings from supervisor formal and informal observations • Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge • Surveys results • Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the approved or prescribed instructional strategies and programs • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Observations 	3.0
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"> • Accreditation Report • Supervision and evaluation procedures • Documentation of collection of lesson plans, grade books, or other data record systems • Surveys results • Examples of improvements to instructional practices resulting from the evaluation process • Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs • Interviews • Observations • Professional development offerings and plans tied to the prescribed education program, instructional strategies, developmentally appropriate practices, and student success 	3.0

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 • Survey results • Professional development funding to promote professional learning communities • Interviews • Evidence of informal conversations that reflect collaboration about student learning • Examples of improvements to content and instructional practice resulting from collaboration • Accreditation Report 	3.0
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 • Samples of exemplars used to guide and inform student learning 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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 • Survey results • Descriptions and schedules of mentoring, coaching, and induction programs with references to district and school beliefs and values about teaching and learning • Records of meetings and informal feedback sessions • Observations • Interviews 	3.0
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"> • Performance-based report cards • Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance • Observations • Survey results • 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 • Parental/family/caregiver involvement plan including activities, timeframes, and evaluation process • Interviews • Samples of exemplars used to guide and inform student learning 	3.0
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"> • Accreditation Report • Survey results • Interviews • Observations 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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 • Survey results • Observations • Accreditation Report • Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting 	3.0
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation tools for professional learning • Survey results • Crosswalk between professional learning and district purpose and direction • Accreditation Report • Observations • Interviews 	3.0
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 • Survey results • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Observations • Training and professional learning related to research on unique characteristics of learning • Data used to identify unique learning needs of students 	3.0

Standard 4: The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.

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 30,000 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. The institution ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

Standard 4			
The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.			
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 • Survey results • District budgets or financial plans for the last three years • Observations • District quality assurance procedures for monitoring qualified staff across all schools • Interviews • Assessments of staffing needs • Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement and retention of professional and support staff for the district and schools 	3.0

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 efforts of school leaders to secure necessary material and fiscal resources • Survey results • Interviews • Alignment of district budget with district purpose and direction • District strategic plan showing resources support for district 	3.0
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 • Survey results • Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements • Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments • Example maintenance schedules for schools 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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 quality control procedures showing the monitoring of compliance with district expectations for school facilities, learning environments • 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 • Survey results • Interviews • Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments • Accreditation Report • Observations 	3.0
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 • Survey results • Interviews • Accreditation Report 	3.0
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 • Survey results • Accreditation Report • Interviews • Observations 	3.0
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 • Survey results • Accreditation Report • List of support services available to students 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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 • Survey results • Accreditation Report • Description of IEP process • Observations • Interviews • Description of referral process 	3.0

Opportunities for Improvement

Indicator

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of current system-wide support services designed to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.

4.7

While the system provides some support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of students, there is no evidence that the system formally evaluates the effectiveness of these programs. Evaluation of these programs will help ensure more effectiveness in meeting the physical, social, and emotional needs of all students.

Standard 5: 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.

Systems 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 5			
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		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"> • Survey results • Interviews • Observations • Accreditation Report • Evidence that assessments are reliable and bias free 	3.0
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 • Survey results • Interviews 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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 • Survey results • Observations • Interviews 	2.0
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 • Student surveys • Observations • Evidence of student readiness for the next level • Evidence of student growth • Evidence of student success at the next level 	3.0
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"> • Minutes of meetings regarding achievement of student learning goals • Accreditation Report • Survey results • Communication plan regarding student learning, systems that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders • Observations • Executive summaries of student learning reports to stakeholder groups • Interviews 	3.0

Opportunities for Improvement**Indicator**

1. Review, expand, and refine current professional development practices to ensure that all professional and instructional support staffs are trained to evaluate, interpret, and use data to improve student learning.

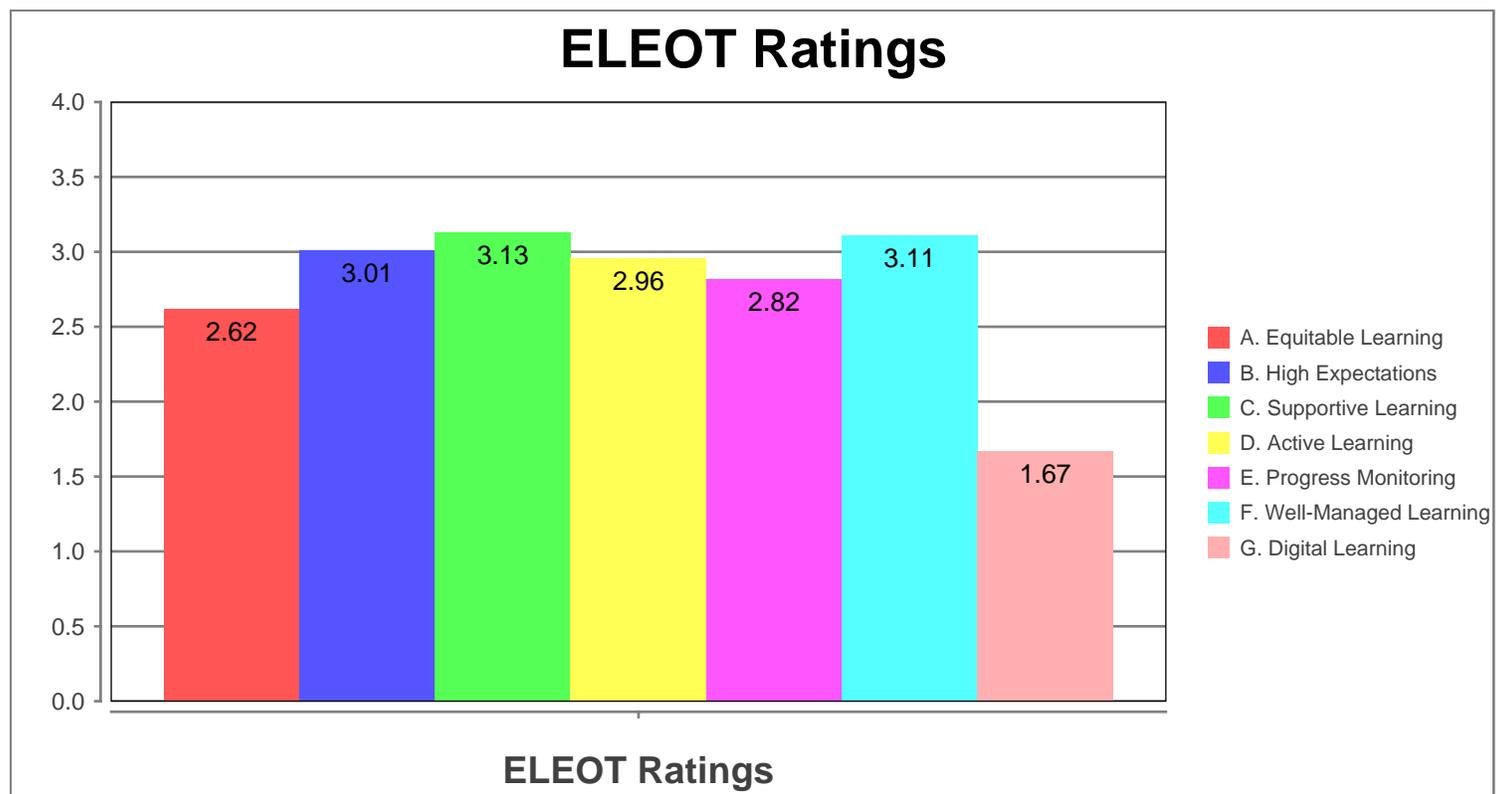
5.3

Evidence from stakeholder interviews and school visits indicated that all professional and instructional support staff members are not trained in a professional development program related to the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data. Trained instructional support staff can assist professional staff in using data to enhance instruction and can thereby provide more opportunities for student academic gain.

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 four-point scale. The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in ELEOT.



Student Performance

Student Performance on assessments is the second of three primary areas of evaluation for AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. Institutions are asked to collect and analyze student performance data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the assessments used by the institution, the degree to which the institution properly administered the assessments, analyzed and acted on the results, and the overall performance of students using a set of rubrics. Results of that evaluation are reported below.

Student Performance Evaluation	
Evaluative Criteria	Performance Level
Assessment Quality	3.0
Test Administration	4.0
Quality of Learning	4.0
Equity of Learning	3.0

Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder Feedback is the third of three primary areas of evaluation in AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. The AdvancED surveys are directly correlated to the AdvancED Accreditation 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 and the degree to which the institution analyzed and acted on the results. Results of that evaluation are reported below.

Stakeholder Feedback Evaluation	
Evaluative Criteria	Performance Level
Questionnaire Administration	4.0
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.0

Individual Institution Results

AdvancED requires internal and external stakeholders from each individual institution within the system to evaluate their institution on the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools, student performance, and stakeholder feedback. The following table provides the results of those self-analyses. Higher scores indicate higher perceived performance on each of the measures. The range of possible scores for each of the institutions within the system are 1 (low performing) to 4 (high performing).

Institution	Indicator Averages	Questionnaire Administration	Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	Assessment Quality	Test Administration	Quality of Learning	Equity of Learning
Ambrose Elementary School	2.91	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Broxton-Mary Hayes Elementary School	2.93	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Coffee County Career Academy	1.97	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Coffee High School	2.55	3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	3.0
Coffee Middle School	2.91	4.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Eastside Elementary School	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
George Washington Carver Freshman Campus	2.48	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Indian Creek Elementary School	3.07	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Nicholls Elementary School	3.36	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Satilla Elementary School	3.05	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
West Green Elementary School	3.02	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Westside Elementary School	3.15	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0

Part II: 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.

The AdvancED External Review Team began the system review of Coffee County School System (CCSS) headquartered in Douglas, GA, with a well-attended joint evening community meeting and dinner held on March 16, 2014. Those in attendance included the superintendent, team, central office supervisors, principals, board of education members, and numerous representatives of business and the community. An extensive examination of the review process was conducted with an emphasis on the five AdvancED standards, the use of the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool (ELEOT), various interviews with CCSS and school stakeholder groups, observations of classrooms, and the examination of submitted system and school artifacts and surveys.

The team toured selected CCSS schools on Monday, March 17, conducted interviews in the CCSS central office on Tuesday, March 18, and departed CCSS in the afternoon of March 19. CCSS and all schools were well-prepared for the visit with all events planned and scheduled. Teachers, staff, students, and other stakeholder groups understood the review process in which CCSS and its schools were involved and were eager to participate in the various activities. There were open and honest discussions, interviews, and informal visits with administration and staff which provided valuable information to the team. This information, along with a review of artifacts and visits to classrooms, provided an overall view of the learning environment of CCSS and how thoroughly CCSS addressed the AdvancED standards for accreditation.

There was a wide variety of stakeholder groups present during the visit and numerous interviews took place. The team interviewed all 5 Board members, 28 central office and school administrators, 57 teachers, 20 support staff, 29 parents/caregivers/stakeholders, and 21 students. Each group was well-informed about the mission and goals of CCSS and its schools, as well as future CCSS and school short- and long-range plans. The stakeholder group was open and readily discussed all questions asked by the team. Several persons interviewed volunteered additional information about CCSS and its schools that were not included in any team questions. In addition to the stakeholder groups mentioned above, the team randomly observed 64 classrooms utilizing the ELEOT protocol, and examined numerous bulletins, policy manuals, and other school documents.

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.

Several themes were identified by the team as documents were examined, classrooms were observed, and interviews were conducted with various stakeholders. These noteworthy themes are elaborated upon below.

Through interviews and examination of artifacts, the team noted that a thoroughly developed system-wide strategic plan had been implemented and published by the CCSS. This comprehensive plan helped guide the continuous improvement efforts for CCSS, the schools, and stakeholders. It was clear that stakeholders were familiar with and

embraced the mission and vision of CCSS. In addition, CCSS maintained and communicated at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement. This commitment to a culture that was based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning supported challenging, equitable educational programs for all students. However, each individual school in CCSS needs to implement processes that help ensure the inclusion of more stakeholders in the development, review, and publication of school-level improvement plans. This practice will help to empower and include additional school stakeholders in the school improvement process and will help the system-wide strategic plan to move forward, as well.

CCSS and school leadership along with the board have established procedures and policies that guide all levels of CCSS to accomplish a common mission and vision. Stakeholders repeatedly reported a strong sense of community characterized by a collaborative effort led by focused leadership to accomplish common goals. The evidence reviewed indicated procedures and expectations that are clearly defined, executed, and monitored. One stakeholder indicated "This is the best board that we've ever had," and board members clearly communicated that each decision was made with students' best interests in mind.

Teacher and administrative interviews indicated that students were provided with challenging and equitable opportunities to develop learning skills, thinking skills, and life skills that served to promote the shared mission and vision statements of CCSS. Positive trends in assessment results, curriculum alignment, and stakeholder involvement were all noted as strengths within CCSS. The team observed that a collaborative environment existed both within the schools and community at-large. Stakeholder interviews supported the team's finding of strong parent engagement. CCSS personnel were highly engaged in mentoring, coaching, and induction programs that aligned with CCSS educational beliefs. An inclusive professional development process was in place which provided a continuous program of professional learning for all professional and support staff. Survey data were used to evaluate existing professional learning opportunities and to develop additional CCSS and school level offerings. However, the team recognized that a system-wide student advocacy program whereby each student was well known by at least one adult advocate who supported that student's educational experience was currently not in place.

CCSS uses its available resources effectively to support its purpose and direction. Teachers in CCSS were committed to student success, and CCSS enjoyed a high retention rate. Facilities and equipment were maintained in order to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for students and staff. Staff noted that the strategic planning process allowed all personnel to become aware of what colleagues are doing and that all CCSS staff work together to meet approved goals. CCSS provides technology infrastructure and necessary equipment to support its needs. Although CCSS provided support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of its students, there was no formal process to evaluate the effectiveness of these support systems.

Finally, CCSS has established a culture that is focused upon continuous improvement of student achievement. CCSS has identified areas of strength and needed improvement. Based on student achievement results, teachers were provided personalized professional development offered by both CCSS and school instructional staff. In addition, CCSS engaged in a continuous improvement process to assure advancement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level. School leaders monitored performance and achievement of all students in order to ensure that teachers, instructional aids, and students are succeeding in the classroom. Each school leader reported periodically to central office instructional supervisors about the academic progress being made within the school, and changes were made routinely, as needed. However, the CCSS needs to review,

expand, and refine current professional development practices to ensure all professional and support staff are trained to evaluate, interpret, and use data to improve student learning. Further, CCSS needs a data management platform that provides a comprehensive and complete picture of student learning, instruction, the effectiveness of programs, and conditions that support learning.

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.

The team utilized the ELEOT in observing 64 school classrooms and determined ratings for each of the seven learning environments measured through the use of the instrument. The compilation of the scores supports the following findings:

The observation protocol indicated that the classroom learning environment within CCSS was positive. As a result, the areas of highest rating on the ELEOT scale were the "Well-Managed Learning Environment" and "Supportive Learning Environment." The third highest area was "High Expectations of Learning." CCSS students were outstanding in several ways. Not only were they polite and orderly in class and as they moved about the various campuses, but they were attentive and focused in classrooms, as well. Students, as a whole, demonstrated evidence of a well-organized group who respectfully followed school rules. During class activities, students interacted with each other and worked well together and independently. It was obvious to the team that good student behavior was an expectation and part of the routine for attendance at all the system schools.

CCSS provided evidence of an equitable learning environment with many opportunities for student engagement. However, more opportunities for differentiated learning as well as opportunities for students to learn about their backgrounds and culture would enhance and enrich student learning opportunities. The lack of observed instances of these activities led to a lower ELEOT rating on the "Equitable Learning Environment" component. A high expectation for learning was observed in many situations and students were well-managed within the classroom. Exemplars for assessment were not evident in all classes observed which led to a lower ELEOT score in some areas. The team also noted the absence in some classes of progress monitoring in some situations which led to a lower score in the "Progress Monitoring and Feedback" area.

Although school staffs were prepared for the visit and all teachers observed provided instruction in a rich environment, an absence of the instructional use of technology to enhance teaching and learning was noted in many instances. System planners are continuing to enhance and add additional infrastructure capability to support technology in the future; however team observations supported the notion that more could be made of existing classroom technology. These observations led to a lower score in the "Digital Learning Environment."

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 criteria. Beginning with school year, 2013-14, AdvancED is introducing a new framework to describe the result of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student

success, AdvancED introduces an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ). The IEQ is comprised of three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; 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.

The three domains of performance are derived from the AdvancED Standards and Indicators; the Analysis of Student Performance; and the Engagement and Involvement of Stakeholders. Within each domain institutions will be able to 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 can be a valuable source of guidance for continuous improvement. Upon review of the findings in this report, institutional leaders should work with their staff to review and understand the evidence and rationale for each Required Action as well as the corresponding pathway to improvement described in the performance levels of the selected Indicator.

The IEQ provides a new framework that recognizes and supports the journey of continuous improvement. Your institution's IEQ is the starting point for continuous improvement. Your actions for improvement that have a positive impact will be reflected in your IEQ score.

IEQ Institutional Score: 307

Teaching and Learning Impact: 295
(Standards 3 and 5; Student Performance Criteria)

Leadership Capacity: 333
(Standards 1 and 2; Stakeholder Engagement Criteria)

Resource Utilization: 300
(Standard 4)

The team recommends that the Coffee County School System be accredited by the AdvancED Accreditation for a five-year term of accreditation.

The team would like to thank CCSS and school administration, all faculty, students, parents, and community for the warm, friendly welcome and for all comforts afforded during the system visit. The team would like to extend a special thank you to the various persons who provided meals, refreshments, and technology assistance during the visit.

Required Action

1. Design and implement a comprehensive, system-wide student advocacy program.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 3.9

Description:

Artifacts reviewed such as the self-assessment narrative and multiple formal and informal conversations and interviews with stakeholders indicate the lack of a pervasive, system-wide student advocacy program. These programs should contain 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. While schools within the system have some components in place to address student advocacy, participation is not inclusive of every student at every school. The structure of the student advocacy program should allow school employees to gain significant insight into and serve as an advocate for the student's needs regarding learning skills, thinking skills, and life skills.

2. Adopt a system-wide data management platform to house student assessment data in order to provide a comprehensive and complete picture of student learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and instruction.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 5.2

Description:

No evidence was presented to show that a system-wide data management platform was in place to provide a comprehensive and complete picture of each student's academic performance as measured by state, district, and classroom assessment data. A comprehensive data management platform can enhance the system's abilities to improve student performance, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of programs and instruction.

Part III: Addenda

The External Review Team

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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 addressing 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 appropriate state, national, and/or international levels 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 that confers accreditation 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, 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 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.

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

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