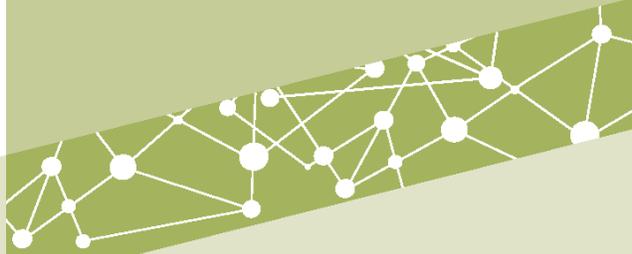


March 4-7, 2018



AdvancED® Engagement Review Report



AdvancED® Performance Accreditation

» **Results for:**
Habersham County Schools
Clarkesville, Georgia 30523

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Introduction

AdvancED Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

Accreditation is pivotal to leveraging education quality and continuous improvement. Using a set of rigorous research based standards, the accreditation process examines the whole institution—the program, the cultural context and the community of stakeholders—to determine how well the parts work together to meet the needs of learners. Through the AdvancED Accreditation Process, highly skilled and trained Engagement Review Teams gather first-hand evidence and information pertinent to evaluating an institution’s performance against the research-based AdvancED Performance Standards. Using these Standards, Engagement Review Teams assess the quality of learning environments to gain valuable insights and target improvements in teaching and learning. AdvancED provides Standards that are tailored for all education providers so that the benefits of accreditation are universal across the education community.

Through a comprehensive review of evidence and information, our experts gain a broad understanding of institution quality. Using the Standards, the review team provides valuable feedback to institutions that helps to focus and guide each institution’s improvement journey. Valuable evidence and information from other stakeholders, including students, also is obtained through interviews, surveys and additional activities.

As a part of the Engagement Review, stakeholders were interviewed by members of the Engagement Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's learning environment and organizational effectiveness. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the Engagement Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Groups	Number
School Board	5
Superintendent	1
Administrators	39
Instructional Staff	92
Support Staff	8
Students	73
Parents	47
Community Partners	16
Total	281

Once all of the information is compiled and reviewed, the team develops the Engagement Review Report and presents preliminary results to the institution. Results from the Engagement Review are reported in four ratings represented by colors. These ratings provide guidance and insight into an institution's continuous improvement efforts as described below:

Color	Rating	Description
Red	Needs Improvement	Identifies key areas that need more focused improvement efforts
Yellow	Emerging	Represents areas to enhance and extend current improvement efforts
Green	Meets Expectations	Pinpoints quality practices that meet the Standards

Color	Rating	Description
Blue	Exceeds Expectations	Demonstrates noteworthy practices producing clear results that exceed expectations

AdvancED Continuous Improvement System

The AdvancED Continuous Improvement System (CIS) provides a systemic fully integrated solution to help institutions map out and navigate a successful improvement journey. In the same manner that educators are expected to understand the unique needs of every learner and tailor the education experience to drive student success, every institution must be empowered to map out and embrace their unique improvement journey. AdvancED expects institutions to use the results and the analysis of data from various interwoven components for the implementation of improvement actions to drive education quality and improved student outcomes. While each improvement journey is unique, the journey is driven by key actions. AdvancED identifies three important components of a continuous improvement process and provides feedback on the components of the journey using a rubric that identifies the three areas to guide the improvement journey. The areas are as follows:

Commitment to Continuous Improvement	Rating
The institution has collected sufficient and quality data to identify school improvement needs.	Meets Expectations
Implications from the analysis of data have been identified and used for the development of key strategic goals.	Meets Expectations
The institution demonstrates the capacity to implement their continuous improvement journey.	Meets Expectations

Continuous Improvement Journey Narrative

The Habersham County School District operates from the Vision 20/20 strategic plan created for the purpose of increasing the overall effectiveness and making a positive measurable impact, thereby creating “Success for ALL Students.” The framework of the plan is the product of both quantitative and qualitative data collection through aggregation of student achievement results, comparisons of system results with those of neighboring districts and with the state as a whole, survey data and community input. While the larger framework of the plan is constant, objectives are modified from year to year based on data results. Data collection intervals combine both annual summative and more frequent formative collections. Internal and external stakeholder data are all represented in data sources, and not simply through surveys; the system gathers input from the entire community. Operational data, e.g., those relating to physical plant, capital equipment, personnel, transportation, etc., are also gathered and tracked over time.

Academic data includes a variety of academic data sources, notably Georgia Milestones reports, results of benchmark assessments, Georgia Continuous Improvement Cycle, promotion rates, graduation rates, industry certification data, enrollment records, data by demographic student records, among others. Many of these sources provide longitudinal results, as well as comparative data.

Student data includes student database, key questions in climate surveys, lists of recognitions, awards, incentives, walkthrough data, tracking of numbers of students in various programs, attendance data and suspension data.

Human Capital data includes performance appraisal data, records from professional learning initiatives, comparative salary data, teacher absences, pertinent questions on climate surveys.

District Systems data includes capital outlay data, budgets, written policy and procedures, workers’ compensation data, data on parent-teacher conferences and child nutrition data.

The data sources appear reliable, lending themselves to tracking of progress toward meeting objectives, as shown in the strategic plan’s specific tracking information. There is sufficient evidence that the data collected are helpful

for most of the goals and objectives within the strategic plan. In addition, the system benchmarks itself in relation to the state averages for tracking its improvement efforts. Overall, the data collected appear to be useful and manageable, without resulting in data overload for stakeholders or distraction from key tasks by the demands of data collection.

The system has established policies and routines for analysis of data and development of strategic goals. The strategic planning policy mandates that fiscal resources be allocated for enactment of planning processes, including data collection. Each component of the plan specifies funding sources for the specific objectives. Numerous stakeholders verified that strategic planning took a decisive turn in 2012, when the school board adopted its new policy. Since that time continuous improvement goals and routines for data collection, analysis, and monitoring have become part of the professional culture of Habersham County School System, uniting both system and school leadership. School improvement plans and implementation processes align with the system plan. The system has provided evidence of the impact of the plan, tracing progress in most, if not all, of the areas. One feature of the student achievement aspects of the plan is comparison of district performance in relation to state averages. While there is evidence to show growth in many areas, there may be too single-minded a focus on normative data in student achievement to the exclusion of criterion-referenced data.

Nonetheless, the continuous improvement process in place represents a systematic and systemic collection of routines that can provide meaningful information to all stakeholders. For example, in the Student focus area, a recent major revision of the district student code of conduct has had notable impact on suspension rates system-wide and at most individual schools.

As a result, the system has demonstrated that it is committed to continuous improvement through the evidence provided regarding the collection, analysis and use of data to inform instructional and organizational decisions. Discussions with leadership, staff, students and parents corroborated that the process had been utilized with fidelity.

AdvancED Standards Diagnostic Results

The AdvancED Performance Standards Diagnostic is used by the Engagement Review Team to evaluate the institution’s effectiveness based on AdvancED’s Performance Standards. The diagnostic consists of three components built around each of the three Domains: **Leadership Capacity**, **Learning Capacity** and **Resource Capacity**. Point values are established within the diagnostic and a percentage of the points earned by the institution for each Standard is calculated from the point values for each Standard. Results are reported within four ranges identified by the colors representing Needs Improvement (Red), Emerging (Yellow), Meets Expectations (Green), and Exceeds Expectations (Blue). The results for the three Domains are presented in the tables that follow.

Leadership Capacity Domain

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution’s progress toward its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution’s leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its 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 implement strategies that improve learner and educator performance.

Leadership Capacity Standards	Rating
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Leadership Capacity Standards		Rating
1.1	The system commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about teaching and learning, including the expectations for learners.	Emerging
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the system's purpose and desired outcomes for learners.	Meets Expectations
1.3	The system engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.	Emerging
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support system effectiveness.	Meets Expectations
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.	Meets Expectations
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
1.7	Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.	Exceeds Expectations
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the system's purpose and direction.	Exceeds Expectations
1.9	The system provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
1.10	Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making that results in improvement.	Exceeds Expectations
1.11	Leaders implement a quality assurance process for its institutions to ensure system effectiveness and consistency.	Meets Expectations

Learning Capacity Domain

The impact of teaching and learning is the primary expectation of every system and its institutions. The establishment of a learning culture built on high expectations for learning, along with quality programs and services, which include an analysis of results, are all key indicators of the system's impact on teaching and learning.

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.1	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the system.	Meets Expectations
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation and collaborative problem-solving.	Emerging
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs and skills needed for success.	Meets Expectations
2.4	The system has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers that support their educational experiences.	Emerging
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.	Meets Expectations
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is aligned to standards and best practices.	Emerging

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.7	Develop, implement and regularly monitor clearly defined system-wide practices in classrooms, which provide instructional support services that serve the multi-tiered learning needs of each learner.	Emerging
2.8	The system provides programs and services for learners' educational future and career planning.	Meets Expectations
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.	Meets Expectations
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.	Meets Expectations
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement of student learning.	Meets Expectations
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.	Emerging

Resource Capacity Domain

The use and distribution of resources align and support the needs of the system and institutions served. Systems ensure that resources are aligned with its stated purpose and direction and distributed equitably so that the needs of the system are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The system examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, and system effectiveness.

Resource Capacity Standards		Rating
3.1	The system plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the system's effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
3.2	The system's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.	Meets Expectations
3.3	The system provides induction, mentoring, and coaching programs that ensure all staff members have the knowledge and skills to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.	Emerging
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.	Emerging
3.5	The system integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
3.6	The system provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the system.	Meets Expectations
3.7	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the system's purpose and direction.	Exceeds Expectations
3.8	The system allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the system's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.	Meets Expectations

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®)

Results

The eProve™ Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) is a learner-centric classroom observation tool that comprises 28 items organized in seven environments aligned with the AdvancED Standards. The eleot provides useful, relevant, structured, and quantifiable data on the extent to which students are engaged in activities and/or demonstrate knowledge, attitudes, and/or dispositions that are conducive to effective learning. Classroom observations are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes. Results from eleot are reported on a scale of one to four based on the degree and quality of the engagement.

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	72
Environments	Rating
Equitable Learning Environment	2.58
Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs	2.15
Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	3.10
Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner	3.14
Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions and dispositions	1.92
High Expectations Environment	2.42
Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher	2.49
Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	2.69
Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work	2.17
Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	2.49
Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning	2.29
Supportive Learning Environment	2.80
Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful	2.54
Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	2.64
Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks	2.94
Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher	3.07
Active Learning Environment	2.44
Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and the teacher predominate	2.44
Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences	2.14
Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities	2.88
Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments	2.29
Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	2.36
Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored	2.12
Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work	2.68
Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content	2.60
Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed	2.03

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	72
Environments	Rating
Well-Managed Learning Environment	2.92
Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other	3.22
Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others	3.14
Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another	2.47
Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions	2.86
Digital Learning Environment	1.77
Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	2.03
Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	1.86
Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for Learning	1.42

eleot® Narrative

A highlight of every Engagement Review visit is the opportunity for the team to conduct classroom observations. They provide evidence of the Standards applied to practice, as viewed through student engagement, not teacher practice. Seventy-two classroom observations of a minimum of twenty minutes each took place during the visit to the Habersham County Schools. Learners at all grade levels, kindergarten through twelve, and all discipline areas were observed. Each of the observations was assessed through the use of the eleot® tool, as organized around seven environments.

The highest rated area was Well-Managed Learning, with a rating of 2.92 on a 4-point scale. Observations of respectful interactions among teachers and peers (3.22) and of learners understanding and following rules (3.14) were the most evident elements in this area. This was consistent with what was learned in interviews conducted with staff and students. There were few situations of students needing corrective action or redirection. Learners displayed positive behavior and respect for routines across all settings and school environments. Transitions among activities were smooth and efficient across grade levels.

Supportive Learning was next highest, with a rating of 2.80. The items within this environment that received highest ratings were those of students demonstrating positive relationships with their teachers (3.07) and learners being supported to understand and accomplish tasks (2.96). While items in this area were rated high, few opportunities were observed of learners taking risks without fear of negative feedback. Through interviews with students and teachers it was clear that strong relationships have been intentionally established and impact achievement. Throughout the classrooms it was clear that learner supports have been nurtured. Respectful interactions between learners and teachers, as well as peers was evidence of systemic buy-in to the mission of "Success for ALL Students."

Equitable Learning received a rating of 2.58. The team observed that learners were treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner (3.14). They had equal access to resources and support (3.10). However, learners were not observed demonstrating, or having opportunities to develop, empathy, respect or appreciation for individual differences. In addition, few examples of differentiated instruction within classes were noted. Only in special education classrooms was substantial differentiation noted, as would be expected. Whole group instruction appeared to be the most common instructional strategy, although many classrooms made use of groupings of students. Consistent and fair treatment of learners was observed throughout the system.

Fourth highest was a rating of 2.44 for Active Learning. The item rated highest was that of observed instances of learners actively engaged in their activities (2.88). Students and staff were frequently observed interacting

respectfully with one another. Connections of content to real-life experiences were not widely observed (2.14). Where connections were made, student interest and participation appeared at a higher level. Few situations of students collaborating with peers on assignments were noted (2.29). In an eighth-grade agriculture class students were enthusiastically engaged in the construction of livestock out of paper mache. Upon completion, they were required to identify each body part. The active learning also included group work and collaboration.

High Expectations was fifth rated at 2.42. The highest rated item was learners being engaged in challenging, but attainable, activities (2.69). Lowest rated was learners' ability to describe high quality work (2.32). High expectations for achievement was discussed in interviews with leadership, staff and parents. Students in many classes were engaged in coursework that was challenging and aligned to the standards. A Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) class was observed where the student group leader shared with the team member his roles and responsibilities. Later the instructor shared that at the beginning of the term the student leader seldom spoke and certainly would not have not risen to his position without the JROTC experience.

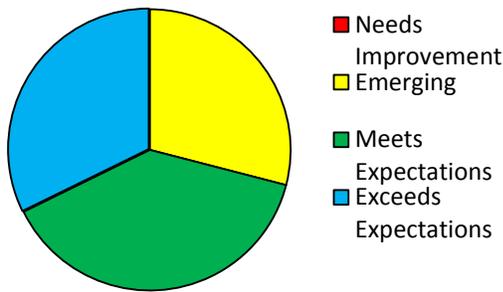
The Progress Monitoring average rating was 2.36. The highest rated individual items were those of learners receiving/responding to feedback (2.68) and learners demonstrating and/or verbalizing understanding of their lesson (2.60). Learners monitoring their own progress or having mechanisms whereby to do so (2.03) was lowest rated. An example of this environment put to practice was the observation of a middle school art class where students working on medieval presentations were able to articulate how the projects were assessed. Such instances were also observed in several other performance areas.

Digital Learning received the Habersham County Schools lowest rating of 1.7. The highest rated item in this area received a 2.03. This item noted students using technology where devices were being used to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning. The experience of this environment being the lowest rated in AdvancED reviews reflected that, although schools generally continued to invest substantially in technology, the integration of it as a learning tool continued to be a journey. While many examples of teachers using technology to enhance instruction were seen, few observations of student use were noted. One interesting use of technology was a science class where students were in two groups. One group was discussing wave lengths observed through the use of lasers and mirrors. The other group was measuring wave lengths utilizing their computers. A fourth-grade class was observed utilizing computers as tool in researching college and tuition costs, including the purchase of furniture for their dorm, appropriately measured for the size of the room.

Observations of students engaged in their coursework provided a wonderful opportunity for the team to reach an overall assessment of whether the artifact and interview data that had been gathered accurately reflected the quality of learning that existed in the Habersham County Schools. The team noted that students were provided with supportive and well-managed learning environments. They had many opportunities to interact with teachers and peers, had well defined coursework, as well as the tools with which to achieve.

Findings

The chart below provides an overview of the institution ratings across the three Domains.



Rating	Number of Standards
Needs Improvement	0
Emerging	9
Meets Expectations	12
Exceeds Expectations	10

Powerful Practices

Powerful Practices reflect noteworthy observations and actions that have yielded clear results in student achievement or organizational effectiveness and are actions that exceed what is typically observed or expected in an institution.

Powerful Practice #1

The Habersham County School District consistently and deliberately practices strategies that provide opportunities for two-way communication with internal and external stakeholder groups, including staff, students, parents, community, governmental and higher education institutions.

Primary Standard: 1.8

Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the system’s purpose and direction.

Evidence:

Discussions with school staff, parents and community members confirmed that leaders at all levels provide meaningful roles and active participation for internal and external stakeholders. Statements from stakeholders revealed that the superintendent was extremely transparent, accessible and involved with all stakeholder groups. As a result of engaging stakeholders, the business community raised \$50,000 dollars to implement “The Leader in Me” program. Every stakeholder interviewed could effectively communicate what “Success for All Students” looks like and means in the Habersham County Schools. A review of numerous documents validated that partnerships with higher education for dual enrollment opportunities was extremely beneficial to the college and career readiness of students. Leaders shared that Piedmont College was supplying the system with a pipeline of teachers. The review further revealed that the superintendent was very involved in the business community and civic organizations. According to a local businessman, “Mr. Cooper gets how education impacts the business community by getting kids into work-based learning to help in the development of a quality workforce.” According to parents, opportunities to serve on parent advisory councils, as community mentors and parent conferences afford them opportunities to further the mission. Students stated that activities, such as Junior Achievement, Future Farmers of America (FFA), Career Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE), Key Club, instructional conversations, goal setting with teachers and student councils provide them with leadership development opportunities. A review of artifacts revealed that leadership teams have been very instrumental in helping all students experience a measure of success in their respective schools and programs. System leaders expressed an intentional determination to engage stakeholders through newspaper articles, announcements, radio, multimedia presentations, the Habersham Economic Development Council, and civic organizations.

Powerful Practice #2

The Habersham County School District plans and delivers exemplary professional learning that is clearly designed to improve the learning environment, learner achievement and the system’s overall effectiveness.

Primary Standard: 3.1

The system plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the system's effectiveness.

Evidence:

In interviews, school system leadership and staff shared how they had examined student achievement and system effectiveness data to determine priorities for professional learning improvement, which would be clearly ongoing and job embedded. Through discussions with school improvement teams it was apparent that professional learning such as the Balanced Literacy Summer Institute, use of consultants for curriculum development, mentoring programs and the Leadership Academy were opportunities for all employees to continue learning and supporting the system's mission. Professional development initiatives, often utilizing external experts, were designed and offered for all job categories, as evidenced by professional development event agendas.

Powerful Practice #3

The Habersham County School District demonstrates an exceptional, while fiscally responsible, commitment to strategic planning and innovative use of resources to support its "Success for All Students" mission.

Primary Standard: 3.7

The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the system's purpose and direction.

Evidence:

All stakeholders indicated through surveys and interviews that fiscal resources were managed with integrity, and a long-range plan to provide students with high quality materials, equipment and facilities for enriching the learning environment was evident. Both principals and teachers stated, "If we need it, we ask and we get it." Efficient use of Educational Local Option Sales and Use Taxes (ELOST) and Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST) money provided facility and technology upgrades that made the system one of the leaders in the area. All stakeholders indicated there was equity among schools in regard to providing materials and students learning in updated, clean and orderly facilities equipped with the up-to-date technology. The system's commitment to reach the whole child was evidenced through the use of the Community Eligibility Program to provide free breakfast for all students. Its plan to replace aging buses by purchasing forty new buses during the FY18 and FY19 budgeting cycle also demonstrated a commitment to keep students safe and secure. Additionally, they planned to add two additional School Resource Officers (SROs) to the current staff, so that every middle and high school would have one, and the elementary schools would share.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for Improvement are those actions that will guide and direct institutions to specific areas that are worthy of additional attention.

Opportunity for Improvement #1

Develop and implement a process to continually monitor instructional programs and practices to improve student achievement.

Primary Standard: 2.12

The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.

Evidence:

Document reviews and classroom observations demonstrated that a variety of programs and initiatives were in place throughout the system. The Improvement Journey presentation and artifacts indicated each school had implemented a series of programs and initiatives to improve student achievement. However, during interviews

administrators and teachers did not substantiate a formal process to assess program and initiative effectiveness. In reviewing curriculum documents, there was limited evidence of a formal process to monitor programs and initiatives.

Improvement Priorities

Improvement priorities are developed to enhance the capacity of the institution to reach a higher level of performance and reflect the areas identified by the Engagement Review Team to have the greatest impact on improving student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Improvement Priority #1

Design, implement and monitor a structure whereby each student has an adult advocate who provides a long-term interaction and builds strong relationships over time with the student.

Primary Standard: 2.4

The system has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers that support their educational experiences.

Evidence:

During interviews with parents, students, school-based leaders and the system-level leaders, the team found that students were well-known by staff at each of the schools. Their conversations with stakeholders revealed that the counselor and homeroom teachers were considered the “trusting adult” for a given student. When asked about a specific structure for student advocacy, teachers shared that it was more of an informal understanding than a formalized structure. The team learned the only students with an assigned mentor were at-risk students seen by teachers as “struggling” in some areas. Some teachers noted that Response- to-Intervention (RtI)/Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) means of building strong relationships with selected students, while others mentioned the coaches serving as mentors for their athletes.

Improvement Priority #2

Develop, implement and regularly monitor clearly defined system-wide practices in classrooms, which provide instructional support services that serve the multi-tiered learning needs of each learner.

Primary Standard: 2.7

Develop, implement and regularly monitor clearly defined system-wide practices in classrooms, which provide instructional support services that serve the multi-tiered learning needs of each learner.

Evidence:

Through classroom observations, the review of lesson plans and interviews, the team learned that differentiation of instruction based on student data was not apparent in many classrooms. Although some teachers grouped students, what was most frequently observed was cooperative learning. It was learned that the system gathers considerable student data; however, its use in general education was not frequently observed. Interviews with teachers and administrators indicated that greater differentiation was a goal. The team noted that observed differentiated instruction was a framework or philosophy for effective teaching that involved the provision of instruction for each student with different avenues to learning, often within the same classroom, to assure the acquisition of critical content and skills.

Accreditation Recommendation and Index of Educational Quality™ (IEQ™)

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

AdvancED provides the Index of Education Quality™ (IEQ™) as a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of standards and review criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus. The IEQ is comprised of the Standards Diagnostic ratings from the three Domains: 1) Leadership Capacity; 2) Learning Capacity; and 3) Resource Capacity and the results of eleot classroom observations. The IEQ results are reported on a scale of 100 to 400 and provides information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria.

Institution IEQ	322.70
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Conclusion Narrative

The Habersham County Schools had taken deliberate and strategic actions to ensure that every child, every day is being prepared and achieving success for their future through its mission: “Success for All Students.” This was the foundation of the positive and nurturing school climate and family atmosphere which permeated throughout the system. The positive culture from the mission had provided large community support for the school system. Continual references were made regarding the idea that, “We are one team.”

A clear, deliberate and transparent connection between the fiscal responsibility and the direction of the school system was substantiated through the superintendent’s overview, interviews, review of system documents and site observations. Safety had been made a top priority throughout the system, as evidenced by School Resource Officer (SRO) visibility at most schools, security systems, surveillance cameras and locked entries. The team ascertained through surveys and interviews including teachers, parents and students that, “Our schools are truly safe-zones for learning.”

The team determined that the school system has many strengths and noted the following as some of those observed. The system Ninth Grade Academy provides targeted support for a critical developmental group of students. Parents and students praised the personal relationships created between members of the staff and the students. The “house” structure creates a sense of community within the school. Students were very familiar with the concept and expectations of this initiative, and enjoyed the comradery.

The Success Academy provides a non-traditional approach to learning that is geared to reaching students who may otherwise drop out of school and never earn a diploma. A record forty students graduated as a direct result of this program. Additionally, the Mountain Education program is another avenue designed to reach non-traditional students and help them achieve graduation. This year the system graduation rate reached an all-time high of 94.4%.

The system implementation of Instructional Conversations has been recognized for greatly improving students’ ability to critically analyze and communicate learning with their peers.

The system and community joint commitment to increase workforce preparation were evident through the multitude of Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) programs, including work-based learning, the Cannery, ROTC, and Junior Achievement, as well as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increase from the Georgia

Agriculture Tax Exemption (GATE) value of agriculture products.

Leadership opportunities are afforded to both staff and students through innovative initiatives, such as Leader in Me and the Leadership Academy. Both initiatives clearly provide evidence of a system effort to build and retain leaders within the community.

In the midst of the dynamic landscape of 21st Century education, the team identified some areas Habersham County Schools would need to address in order to ensure that they could continue to deliver on their mission in that ever-changing world.

The system would benefit from strategically hiring a more diverse workforce to more closely mirror the student population. In addition to a more diverse workforce, the current staff would benefit from increased training in working with diverse learners.

While a beginning effort is in place, continued attention on incorporating critical thinking skills and Science Technology Education Math (STEM) related activities would help to improve rigor and depth of knowledge understanding for students of all levels.

The system would benefit from more focused efforts to develop pacing guides tailored to the needs of students. These guides should produce more consistency in content delivery.

By addressing the Improvement Priorities cited in this report and following the system's plan, the Habersham County Schools should be able to achieve a higher level of system performance and function more effectively to the greater fulfillment of the mission "Success for ALL Students."

The Engagement Review Team is grateful for the exceptional preparation done by the system leadership and staff for the visit. The System and School Quality Factors reports were well developed with supporting documentation, reflecting the thorough process the system and its schools had conducted prior to the visit. The transparency with which both the achievements and challenges of the system were presented is gratefully appreciated.

Next Steps

The results of the Engagement Review provide the next step to guide the improvement journey of the institution in their efforts to improve the quality of educational opportunities for all learners. The findings are aligned to research-based criteria designed to improve student learning and organizational effectiveness. The feedback provided in the Accreditation Engagement Review Report will assist the institution in reflecting on their current improvement efforts and to adapt and adjust their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

Upon receiving the Accreditation Engagement Review Report the institution is encouraged to implement the following steps:

- Review and share the findings with stakeholders.
- Develop plans to address the Improvement Priorities identified by the Engagement Review Team.
- Use the findings and data from the report to guide and strengthen the institution's continuous improvement efforts.
- Celebrate the successes noted in the report
- Continue your Improvement Journey

Team Roster

The Engagement Review Teams are comprised of professionals with varied backgrounds and professional experiences. All Lead Evaluators and Engagement Review Team members complete AdvancED training and eleot® certification to provide knowledge and understanding of the AdvancED tools and processes. The following professionals served on the Engagement Review Team:

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
<p>John Sedey Lead Evaluator</p>	<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 a hundred AdvancED reviews in 28 states since 2008.</p>
<p>Joy Davis Associate Lead Evaluator</p>	<p>Joy Davis is a recently retired educator with 35 years of experience. Mrs. Davis retired as the Assistant Superintendent for Buford City Schools, GA. Previously, she served as an elementary principal for Buford City Schools. Additionally, she served as an elementary assistant principal, middle school assistant principal, taught all content areas in middle grades, and taught Home Economics in Gwinnett County Public Schools. Mrs. Davis holds an Ed.S. in Administration from the University of Georgia. She also has a B.S. in Home Economics Education from Brenau University and an M.Ed. in Education from the University of Georgia. She has served on numerous AdvancED Engagement Reviews in multiple states and served as the Chair for the AdvancED Leadership Team for Buford City Schools.</p>
<p>LaLisa Burston</p>	<p>LaLisa Burston is the principal of Union elementary school in Bibb County Macon, Georgia. As principal she oversees the implementation of curriculum and works to support teachers in meeting instructional benchmarks. Mrs. Burston establishes and maintains a safe and secure learning environment for students and staff. Mrs. Burston holds a Specialist Degree in Middle Grades education from Georgia College and State University. In addition, she hold a supplemental certification in Educational Leadership also from Georgia College and State University. In her 25 years of service to Bibb County, Mrs. Burston has experience as an Assistant Principal, Instructional Lead Teacher, and classroom teacher.</p>

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Dr. Jean Lollar	<p>Jean Lollar is a retired Assistant Superintendent of the Jasper City School System in Jasper, Alabama. In that position, she coordinated the implementation process of all programs for three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school in the district. Dr. Lollar holds an Ed.D. in Educational Administration and Leadership with a minor in curriculum and instruction from the University of Alabama. She also has her Ed.S., MA, and BA degrees in Elementary Education. Dr. Lollar has experience as a teacher and administrator in K-12 education. She has served on AdvancED Engagement Reviews for over 30 years and directed the system’s AdvancED Accreditation process for the Jasper City School System. Dr. Lollar has presented in numerous sites throughout the United States as an advocate for education. She has addressed educators at Fordham University, in New York; the Education Trust Foundation in Washington D.C; and served annually in school districts throughout Pennsylvania conducting sessions on effective schools and school improvement. She has served on numerous state committees to make positive changes in education for Alabama.</p>
Dr. Fred Williams	<p>Dr. Frederick C. Williams, Superintendent of Dublin City Schools, earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Health and Physical Education from Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia; his master's degree in Educational Leadership from Troy State University; and a doctorate in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University. He began his educational career in 1993 as a teacher at Susie Dasher Elementary School in Dublin, Georgia. Over the span of his career, he has served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, associate superintendent for academics and students, and director of federal programs. He holds certification in P-12 Health and Physical Education as well as P-12 Tier 2 Educational Leadership. Dr. Williams serves on the Georgia Department of Education Assessment Innovation and Flexibility Task Force, the board of directors for the Charter System Foundation of Georgia, and as a member Charter Advisory Committee for the State of Georgia. He has served on the AdvancED Leadership Team for Dublin City Schools. Dublin City was among the first charter school systems in Georgia to have their Georgia Department of Education Charter Renewal and AdvancED Engagement Review simultaneously.</p>



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About AdvancED

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