



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

Standards Assessment Report

Macon County Schools

501 College Street
Lafayette, Tennessee, United States 37083

Prepared for the AdvancED Quality Assurance Review

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Standards Assessment Report

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Introduction & Purpose of the Report

Introduction

Purpose of the Report

The Standards Assessment Report is designed to serve as a valuable self-assessment and as a tool to help school systems prepare for their Quality Assurance Review. The report is based on the AdvancED standards, which serve as the foundation of the accreditation process. In order to earn and maintain accreditation, school systems must meet the AdvancED standards, engage in a process of continuous improvement, and demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.

The Standards Assessment Report engages the school system in an in-depth assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. In completing the report, the school system identifies the data, information, evidence, and documented results that validate that it is meeting each standard. This self assessment helps the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

The Standards Assessment Report also serves as the primary resource for the Quality Assurance Review Team, which uses the report to prepare for the visit to the school system. The team uses insights gathered from the report and information obtained during the on-site visit to provide feedback to the school system and to make an accreditation recommendation.

Structure of the Report

The Standards Assessment Report includes four sections: 1) a review of each standard; 2) a description of the school system's methods for quality assurance; and 3) conclusion.

The review of each standard is divided into three components: 1) the Indicators rubric; 2) focus questions; and 3) overall assessment rubric. The Indicators rubric enables the school system to assess the degree to which practices and/or processes are in place that indicate adherence to the standard and Indicators. For each Indicator, the school system may check if the practices and/or processes are highly functional, operational, emerging, or not evident. The school system should use the rubric as an opportunity to ask itself challenging questions and to respond with accurate answers geared toward self-improvement. After completing the rubric, the school system can quickly see areas of strength and opportunity. The section asks, "To what degree are the noted practices/processes in place?"

The focus questions allow the school system to expand on and think more deeply about the responses to the Indicators rubric. The focus questions provide an opportunity for the school system to describe the systematic and systemic processes that are in place to support its ability to meet the Indicators. The section asks, "How are the practices/processes implemented?"

The overall assessment describes how well the school system and its schools are implementing practices and/or processes and the impact these practices and/or processes have on student results and overall school effectiveness. The overall assessment helps the school system judge where it is in relation to each standard. The "operational"

level is required in order to demonstrate meeting the standard. The section asks, "How well are we meeting the standard overall?"

The description of the school system's methods for quality assurance should include an overview of the practices and methods the school system uses to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the district, ensure that the AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results.

The conclusion provides an opportunity for the district to share final insights and information.

Completion and Submission of the Report

This Standards Assessment Report is to be completed by the school system between six months and six weeks prior to hosting a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) visit. It is strongly recommended that a wide and broad cross-section of the school system's community participate in completing this report. The report will become the basis of the Quality Assurance Review Team's review.

Directions for Completing the Report

Follow the instructions to complete each section of the report. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

Demographics

# Elementary Schools:	5
# Middle Schools:	1
# High Schools:	2
# Other:	0
Grade(s):	PK,K,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,Ungraded
Enrollment:	3806

Executive Summary

Please provide an overview of the school system's profile. Please include:

- The school system's vision and goals;
- A description of the programs and services (including number and type of schools) under the jurisdiction of the system;
- Demographic information about school system's community;
- A summary of student performance across the system;
- An overview of any major trends or issues impacting the school system; and
- A summary of the major strengths and needs of the school system.

Macon County is a small, rural county in the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee. It is a beautiful area of the state, with a hilly terrain and largely unspoiled landscape which transforms into a multitude of vibrant colors in the Fall of each year. Largely agricultural in nature, our county and its residents struggle to find and maintain gainful employment within our borders. A large percentage of our workforce must travel daily to areas anywhere from one to two hours away just to provide basic needs. According to a recent publication, the per capita personal income in Macon County, \$26, 323, ranks 64th out of 95 counties in Tennessee. Although our county has experienced an influx of people moving to our area, the population found here can trace their ancestors back for many generations.

Major employers in our county are scarce since we are highly unindustrialized. Aside from a couple of manufacturing plants and local cooperatives, industry is predominately nonexistent. According to the County Mayor's office, the latest unemployment figures list Macon County with a rate of 9.7%. While high, this figure is better than the 11% for the same time period one year ago. This figure, coupled with the per capita personal income, translates into a high percentage of our students being eligible for free or reduced lunch. Currently, we are operating with 63% of students receiving free or reduced meals at school. All of our schools qualify to be school wide Title I schools, meaning that their free or reduced lunch percentage allows them to decide how to best spend their allotted Title I dollars. This is determined annually by a committee which invites any interested stakeholders to attend.

The Macon County School System is comprised of The Office of the Director of Schools, two high schools, one junior high school, and five elementary schools. The schools are Macon County High School, Red Boiling Springs School, Macon County Jr. High School, Central Elementary School, Fairlane Elementary School, Lafayette Elementary School, Red Boiling Springs Elementary School, and Westside Elementary School.

In addition to serving our Kindergarten - 12th grade students, we also house three voluntary Pre-Kindergarten classrooms, one at each of the primary schools across the county. The school system also oversees a successful adult education program, which, on average, aids sixty-two (62) adults in obtaining their GED every year. Our system also houses two alternative schools, one for secondary aged students and one for elementary aged children as well. Children are remanded to the alternative schools, which are staffed with licensed teachers and administrators, due to disciplinary reasons and are prohibited from attending class with the local population of students. Every attempt is made to ensure that these students are instructed in the required course work as to not fall behind on their educational careers.

Our system also has a coordinated school health program in existence. This program provides our students with the needed education and available services to ensure that basic needs are met. Each of our schools is staffed with

a full-time, licensed LPN on staff to better serve both the general school population, students and staff alike, as well as for any needed special education procedures. The nursing program is under the direction of a fully licensed Registered Nurse. Food Service, Transportation, and Maintenance are also represented in our system. Each of these departments are fully staffed and under the direction of a qualified and/or certified supervisor. Each of these departments oversee many of the "behind the scenes" aspects that make our system run effectively.

Recently, our district moved from having individual mission, vision, and belief statements for each school to having one cohesive set of each for the district as a whole. These are listed below. It was felt that since the same goals are in existence for each of the schools in the system, that the vision, mission, and beliefs should be as well.

Vision - It is the vision of the Macon County School System to provide all children with a safe and inviting environment to ensure their success. We want to instill in each student high expectations, morals, and respect enabling them to graduate with the knowledge and skills to become productive and responsible citizens.

Mission - The Macon County School System inspires and empowers students to meet high academic standards, lead ethical lives, and demonstrate responsible citizenship.

Beliefs

- Education, which is an on-going process that begins at birth and continues through the adult years, is the responsibility of the educators, parents, businesses, and community populations.
- All students have the right to educational opportunities that will provide them with the skills, knowledge, and resources which enable them to become healthy, successful, productive citizens.
- Student achievement is directly related, but not limited to, a high degree of parental and community involvement through meaningful communication in planning and implementing educational programs and opportunities.
- Our system maintains a high focus on improving the achievement of all students.

...Inspiring and Empowering Students...

As found in our Tennessee Comprehensive Systemwide Planning Process (TCSPP), our district goals represent the identified needs found in our system. They include:

1. The graduation rate will improve to the state average.
2. Reduce the percent of students in the below proficient category for all tests by 3% in the elementary and middle school grades until we meet or exceed state expectations for percent proficient or advanced.
3. Gateway, End of Course, ACT, and Writing Tests scores for grades 9-12 will increase by 5% while improving the value added status for the three year average to NDD or above. Emphasis will focus on CTE students and students with disabilities identified through AYP in meeting/maintaining federal benchmark requirements (NPL).

According to our latest state report card, Macon County students operate on, or near, the state average in a majority of areas. For the 2009-10 school year, our district made adequate yearly progress (AYP). It was the first time in a number of years for the district to accomplish this. This means that, as a whole, our students made the benchmarks outlined by the State Department of Education.

Specifically, in grades K-8, our students achieved proficiency or above levels in both math and reading. The benchmark for Mathematics was 20% while the number was 32% in Reading/Language plus Writing. Our student's percentages were 32 and 50, respectively. To an outsider, these benchmark percentages may seem low, but in fact, they were adjusted to reflect the introduction of new, more rigorous standards in many of the core

curriculum areas. High school benchmarks were also met with our students achieving 31% in Mathematics and 66% in Reading/Language plus Writing. The benchmarks called for levels of 25% in Mathematics and 49% in Reading/Language plus Writing.

Currently, we have one school listed as not being in "Good Standing" according to No Child Left Behind. Red Boiling Springs Elementary School is currently listed as School Improvement I - Improving status. This means that the school met the required benchmark in the deficient area this past year, but must also meet it again this year.

Academic achievement for grades 3-8 is very much like the state average. Macon County received a grade of "C" in every subject area. This state score for the same time span was also a "C" in every area except Social Studies, where the state average was a "B". Writing Assessment scores for grades 5, 8, and 11 are also similar, but a little below, the state average. High school indicators, reflected in ACT scores, also show that our students are achieving at, or very near, state levels. The 3-year composite for ACT was a 20.0 for our students compared to a 20.3 for the state average. Last year, individually, our students' composite average score was a 19.5 while the state average was 19.6.

Kindergarten - 8th grade value added scores, or the scores that measure student improvement from year to year, increased in Mathematics and Reading/Language but decreased slightly in Social Studies and Science. High school scores on the End of Course examinations in the following specified areas: Algebra I, Biology I, English II, English I, and US History, all scored "Below", when compared to the predicted score for our students.

Non-academic areas such as attendance and promotion rate continue to be above the state goal but the biggest improvement in this area continues to be in graduation rate. In 2009-10 the graduation rate was 87.9%, which was up from 86.6% in 2009 and 83.3% in 2008. Great strides have been made in this area over the past few years at each of the two high schools.

Major trends noticed in our school system are more than likely similar to other districts in our area. First and foremost, the lack of funding, specifically local funding, is always a concern which spreads into every aspect of our system. Also a concern would be the lack of specific, subject area teaching candidates from which to fill vacancies. It must be noted that we feel that the majority of our teachers do an outstanding job and are very "kid-first" types of educators. They are willing to go the extra mile in order to assist their students to achieve.

During this process, we have had to look very hard at our system from the inside. We have identified both strengths and areas of need that require our attention. Among the strengths one would have to include our expansive professional development schedule. Our professional development schedule is comprised of offerings from regular education, special education, technology, career and technical education, health and safety, etc. A needs assessment is completed annually to determine our most prevalent needs in order to better serve our school population. Another strength would have to be our technology department. For a small, rural district, our technology is up to date with new, innovative equipment to better assist teachers with their instruction as well as aid our students in comprehending the material.

Areas of need would include continuing to meet state benchmarks for standardized, mandated assessments in all levels, as well as teacher recruitment and retention. The last area of need is vital to the success of any school system. Our system operates from the top and filters down. During the past several years, the turnover in the Director's position has been frequent. It has been very difficult to obtain any level of consistency during this time. While it is understood that the most important position in the school system requires the person best suited for the job, it is also important for the overall vision of the system to be consistent and ongoing.

Standard 1. Vision & Purpose

STANDARD: The system establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the system.

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it commits to a purpose and direction that is shared system-wide. The leadership establishes expectations for student learning aligned with the system's vision that is supported by system and school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and district effectiveness. The system's vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system's responses to the focus questions.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the system:

1.1 Establishes a vision and purpose for the system in collaboration with its stakeholders:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Leadership demonstrates stakeholder support

Mission Statement visible throughout the district

Policies/Procedures manuals/handbooks demonstrating stakeholder involvement in development of mission

Stakeholder perception data used to develop mission

Stakeholders are knowledgeable about vision, mission

Strategic Plans include mission

Vision, mission statements include all elements of stakeholder inclusion

1.2 Communicates the system's vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Handbooks include vision, mission

Meetings incorporate elements of vision, mission

Newsletters include vision, mission

Signage includes vision, mission

Stakeholders are knowledgeable about vision, mission

Website/page includes vision, mission

1.3 Identifies system-wide goals and measures to advance the vision:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

District and school improvement planning incorporates vision, mission

District Improvement Plan includes vision, mission

Goals distributed through publications and communication

Goals that are data-driven and measurable

Stakeholders demonstrate involvement in and knowledge of goal setting

Strategic Plan includes vision, mission

Strategic planning incorporates vision, mission

1.4 Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the system, its students, and the community :

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Annual Report

Community-based data

District Improvement Plan

District profile is used during parent/community meetings

District profile is used during staff meetings

Newsletters, articles

Publications, brochures, handbooks

Stakeholders demonstrate knowledge of District profile

1.5 Ensures that the system's vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process and the strategic direction of schools, departments, and services:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

District and school improvement planning demonstrates alignment with vision, mission

District Curriculum demonstrates alignment with vision, mission

District Improvement Plan demonstrates alignment of vision, mission with teaching and learning

Extra -curricular activities incorporate vision, mission

Policies on instructional practices demonstrate alignment with vision, mission

Policies on lesson plan development and deployment demonstrate alignment with vision, mission

Staff and Parent Handbooks demonstrate alignment of vision, mission with teaching and learning

Strategic Plan demonstrates alignment of vision, mission and teaching and learning

Student report cards demonstrate alignment with vision, mission

1.6 Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes for strategic planning demonstrate review

Strategic Plan demonstrates review

Strategic planning process demonstrates review by stakeholders

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for establishing and building understanding of and commitment to the vision statement among the school system and its stakeholders?

The Macon County School System evaluates and updates the TCSP on an annual basis. All stakeholders are to be involved in the process of reviewing the mission, vision, beliefs, and goals. All supervisors, principals,

teachers, and support personnel are committed to the implementation of the TCSPP.

2. What is the system's process for maintaining and using information that describes the school system, its programs, services, and schools and their performance?

The Macon County School System, after receiving two years of training from the Johns Hopkins Institute for Data-Driven Reform in Education, (CADDRE), knows the importance of implementation of benchmark testing and rigorous learning. The school system has put into place benchmark testing, data analysis by reading coaches followed by intervention strategies with reading tutors. Some other examples include the following:

- EXPLORE TEST (Mandatory for all 8th Graders)
- PLAN TEST (Mandatory for all 10th Graders)
- ACT Test (Mandatory for all 11th Graders)
- Additional training on new standards
- Evaluation of graduation rates
- End of Course Exams
- Writing Assessment (Mandatory for all 5th, 8th, and 11th Graders).

School administrators study and analyze school TCAP data and compile this data for use in staff development meetings. Data compiled from testing is used to target the highest non-proficient skills. Non academic data is collected through a parent survey and this data is used to improve areas of concern at the school level and again at the district level.

All stakeholders, including community organizations, work together to put in place safety and crisis management plans and ensure procedures are sufficient through routine practice.

3. How does the leadership ensure that the system's vision, purpose, and goals guide the work of the school system and its schools?

The Director of Schools of the Macon County School System meets on a monthly basis with supervisors, principals, and integrated health services staff. In these leadership team meetings, information which may have an impact of the school system is reviewed and updated, and the needs of personnel, support staff, and the student population are discussed. Also, the school system's safety plan, community involvement, and transportation concerns are addressed. Primarily, the meetings focus on reviewing data in student achievement to ensure that the system remains current and effective in meeting instructional needs.

4. What process is used to ensure that the vision and purpose of the school system remain current and aligned with the system's expectations in support of student learning and the effectiveness of the school system and its schools?

On November 5, 2010, the Macon County School System's mission and revision committee met to review both items as well as the belief statements. At this meeting, stakeholders, which included teachers, counselors, principals, supervisors, and parents provided input in ways that these statements could be improved. The revised statements were taken back to the schools for review. This process will be repeated annually. Along with the annual review of these statements, principals and supervisors meet monthly to review, discuss, and plan implementation of academic benchmarks.

Overall Assessment:

Highly Functional: The school system has achieved a wide commitment by all groups of stakeholders to a shared purpose and direction. The system and its schools have clearly defined expectations for student learning aligned with the system's vision that is fully supported by system and school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance, system and school effectiveness. The vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources.

Standard 2. Governance & Leadership

STANDARD: The system provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and system effectiveness.

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it has leaders who are advocates for the system'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 function with clearly defined authority and responsibility and encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for system and school improvement among stakeholders. The system's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system's responses to the focus questions.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

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Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the system operates under the jurisdiction of a governing authority that:

2.1 Establishes and communicates policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the system :

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes of governing authority meetings

District-wide Staff and/or student handbooks

Governance Policy handbooks: board, district, school

Governing authority affirms understanding of their role in the operation of the school/district

Local, state, and federal policy handbooks

Organizational chart

Procedural policies: emergencies, contact information, calling tree, discipline, due process, logistics, placement and transfer

Staff and students affirm their understanding of emergency and operational procedures

Stakeholders affirm understanding of operational procedures

Students and staff affirm their understanding of discipline policies and due process

Other: State Report Card

2.2 Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership authority of the administrative head of the system:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

District staff are knowledgeable about leadership prerogatives

District staff are knowledgeable about organizational chart

District staff demonstrate knowledge about due process

Governing Board Policies demonstrate leadership prerogatives

Organizational chart

Policies demonstrate protocols for remediation and due process

Roles and responsibilities of governing board, advisory councils, and ad hoc committees are clearly outlined

Succession plan demonstrates leadership transitions

Other: Leadership Academy

2.3 Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

District staff are knowledgeable about curriculum standards

District staff demonstrates knowledge and use of curriculum standards in the teaching and learning process

District staff responsible for the implementation of state and/or federal programs are knowledgeable about compliance

Documentation of adherence to ethical business practices

Documentation of compliance with all regulations regarding copyright law, intellectual property, and international restrictions

Documentation of State and Federal Compliances and Assurances, including NCLB/Title I, EEO, Title IX

Documentation of utilization of all requirement elements of curriculum standards

Documentation with all regulations that apply to accreditation by NCA CASI, SACS CASI, or AdvancED

Stakeholders affirm compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity practices and procedures

Stakeholders affirm compliance with ethical business practices

Stakeholders are involved in the establishment and monitoring of adherence to all regulations

Other: Individual Educational Plan, Curriculum Mapping, and Lesson Plans

2.4 Implements policies and procedures that provide for the orientation and training of the governing board:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

District staff and governing board members affirm their knowledge of governing board policies and procedures

District staff and governing board members affirm their participation in orientation and training

Policies and procedures for governing board training and orientation

Roles and responsibilities of governing board, advisory councils, and ad hoc committees are clearly outlined

2.5 Builds public support, secures sufficient resources, and acts as a steward of the system's resources:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Documentation of adherence to ethical business practices

Policies and procedures for fiscal planning: short-term and long-range

Stakeholders affirm compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity practices and procedures

Stakeholders affirm compliance with ethical business practices

Other: MCEF Grants, Race to the Top, Grant Budgets

2.6 Maintains access to legal counsel to advise or obtain information about legal requirements and obligations:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

District staff are knowledgeable about due process and complaint resolution

District staff are knowledgeable about access to legal counsel

Documentation of access to legal counsel

Documentation of resolutions of any complaints

Staff and students affirm their involvement in the accreditation process

Other: County Attorney on staff

2.7 Maintains adequate insurance or equivalent resources to protect its financial stability and administrative operations:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

District staff affirm knowledge and support for the district's fiscal responsibility

District staff affirm knowledge of district's insurance carrier, policies, and procedures

Policies and procedures for investments

Policies and procedures for protecting assets and financial resources

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the system has leadership that:

2.8 Provides for systematic analysis and review of student performance and school and system effectiveness :

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Advisory Committee: agenda, minutes

District staff affirm the use of student performance and organizational effectiveness data for planning

District Staff meetings: agenda, minutes, decision points

Evaluation results: professional development, efficiency, effectiveness, instructional programming, etc.

Record of student performance data analysis

Staff and students affirm their involvement in the accreditation process

Student database management system

Student performance data are used during district staff meetings

Student performance data are used for extra-curricular planning

Student performance database for formative assessments

2.9 Creates and supports collaborative networks of stakeholders to support system programs:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Accreditation team members are representative of staff and students

Artifacts displayed throughout the district demonstrate inclusion of all stakeholder communities

Calendar, agendas, minutes of stakeholder meetings

Committee members are representative of all stakeholder groups

Parent/community compacts

Policies for staff/student leadership opportunities outside the district environment

Record of Advisory Committees: calendars, membership, minutes

Record of co-curricular organizations and activities: calendars, membership, sponsors

Stakeholder survey data

Stakeholders affirm a sense of belonging and engagement

Stakeholders affirm that leadership hears and acts upon their suggestions and recommendations

Stakeholders affirm their involvement in a district-wide decision-making process

Stakeholders affirm their involvement in the accreditation process

Stakeholders affirm their involvement on committees

2.10 Provides direction, assistance, and resources to align, support, and enhance all parts of the system in meeting organizational and student performance goals:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Budget reflects allocation of support for student performance targets

District staff are knowledgeable about student performance targets

District staff are knowledgeable about the alignment of resources to support student performance

District-wide walk-about demonstrate monitoring of instructional practices

Guidelines outline expectations for instructional standards

Guidelines outline expectations for student performance

Organizational chart reflects allocation of support for student performance targets

Policies demonstrate established student performance targets, measures, and strategies

2.11 Provides internal and external stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Accreditation team members are representative of stakeholder groups

Calendar, agendas, minutes of stakeholder meetings

Committee members are representative of all stakeholder groups

Parent/community compacts

Policies and procedures established for the inclusion of all stakeholders into appropriate district-wide decision making processes

Stakeholders affirm their involvement in a district-wide decision-making process

Stakeholders affirm their involvement on committees

2.12 Assesses and addresses community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Artifacts displayed throughout the district demonstrate inclusion of all stakeholder communities

District staff are knowledgeable about the results of a community satisfaction survey

Record of Advisory Committees: calendars, membership, minutes

Stakeholder survey data

Stakeholders affirm their satisfaction with their level of involvement

2.13 Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

District staff are knowledgeable about access to and participation in a professional growth program

District staff are knowledgeable about the criteria, timeline, process, procedures, and dispositions by which they will be evaluated

Documentation of salary schedules

Handbooks demonstrate staff evaluation system

New staff orientation materials

Policies demonstrate evaluation criteria, timelines, and termination processes

Policies demonstrate professional growth opportunities

Professional development plan for all staff

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for establishing, communicating, and implementing policies and procedures for the effective operation of the school system and its schools?

All students throughout the school system are given student handbooks which include both school and district specific procedures and policies. An employee handbook, filled with personnel policies and procedures, is available for all faculty and staff members. The manual is kept in the principal's office or in the library. Teachers are also trained in crisis management and each is given a crisis management handbook to keep in their classroom. Drills, such as fire and tornado, are practiced regularly within each individual school building. All teachers and staff are given the opportunity to attend various professional development activities aimed at making our buildings safer for our students as well as our staff members. Teachers who are interested in becoming administrators are given the opportunity to attend a local "Leadership Academy" in which current administrators lead discussions and activities geared toward the leadership aspect of a school climate. Also, our system uses "Alert Now". This is an automated parent contact system that keeps our parents aware of certain happenings at our schools. These would include parent-teacher conference dates, early dismissals, club meetings, etc. Parents can also communicate with school personnel through www.maconcountyschools.com, our system's website.

2. What process does the system's leadership use to evaluate system effectiveness and its impact on student performance?

Administrators and educators alike are always looking for new, innovative ways to improve student achievement. Therefore, student achievement as well as teaching practices must be evaluated regularly. Our system uses state mandated TCAP scores. These would include Achievement scores (grades 3-8), End of Course scores (grades 9-12), Writing Assessment scores (grades 5, 8, & 11), as well as EXPLORE for 8th grade, PLAN for 10th grade, and ACT for 11th graders. These are all mandated by the State Department of Education.

In addition to these mandated scores, our system also uses DIBELS to test for reading comprehension in the primary grades. Last school year, our system used 4Sight as a benchmarking tool, but currently are waiting for the state adopted Pearson series to use for benchmarking for this and subsequent years.

Each of the schools is required to offer "Analyzing Test Results" as a professional development activity. The analyzed scores specific of the individual schools are discussed as well as potential remedies for any shortcomings. Sign-in sheets are available in the Office of the Director of Schools. Macon County also utilizes Reading Coaches which cover every grade level as well as Curriculum Mapping and using the Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III intervention models.

3. In what ways are stakeholders, including system and school staff, given opportunities to provide leadership and to contribute to the decision-making process?

The Macon County School System believes that our community has a great deal to contribute to our schools and try to involve as many shareholders as possible in the decision making process. This is accomplished through grade level representatives, department heads, and members of building level school improvement teams. Our Title I and Pre-K programs both have mandatory advisory boards which include stakeholders from within as well as outside the school environment. Professional development, calendar, and textbook committees meet regularly throughout the year to plan for the following year's instruction.

Parents are welcome at the individual schools as well as at the district office. Communication between the system/schools and parents is available through many different avenues. Our school board meetings are open and concerned parents are welcome to address the board if a prior request has been made. With the implementation of a school survey and their attendance at IEP meetings and/or parent-teacher conferences, parents can both voice their concerns and inquire about their child's academic standing.

4. What policies and processes are in place to ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation?

The Macon County School System strives to ensure that all students have equal learning opportunities to achieve a high quality education. Through the implementation of research based educational programs and the latest in technological advances, our system feels the we offer our students the tools to be successful in today's competitive society.

By using standardized test scores, now focused on new standards, our system can verify that our students are achieving using much the same criteria as other students across the country. In addition to standardized testing, our system employs the use of benchmark assessments such as DIBELS, 4Sight, and Star reading tests. Teacher made assessments, focusing on the new standards, are also used in order to check progress from year to year.

Overall Assessment:

Highly Functional: The school system has leaders who are advocates for the system's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction, lend support, and systematically allocate resources for systemic and sustainable implementation of curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders ensure collaboration and shared responsibility for system and school improvement among stakeholders with clearly defined expectations for each stakeholder group. The leaders provide stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership. The system's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation and are deeply embedded in the way the system and its schools functions.

Standard 3. Teaching & Learning

STANDARD: The system provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Impact Statement: Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The system ensures that teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process; provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations; and give students feedback to improve their performance.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system's responses to the focus questions.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the system:

3.1 Develops, articulates, and coordinates curriculum based on clearly- defined expectations for student learning, including essential knowledge and skills:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Curriculum pacing guides

District provides guidelines for lesson plan development that include learning objectives

District staff/others meet regularly to discuss student progress and remediation

District staff/others meetings highlight discussions of student learning expectations

District-wide curriculum committee: review cycle, adoption/approval policies/criteria, membership

District-wide master schedule; hours of instruction

Formative assessments: quarterlies, etc.

Policies on grading criteria

Policy on credit requirements for program completion

Student Handbook outlines student learning expectations

Textbooks and text selection criteria are aligned to learning goals, curriculum

3.2 Establishes expectations and supports student engagement in the learning process, including opportunities for students to explore application of higher order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Guidance on lesson plan development show how students are involved in establishing their own learning goals

Samples of student work

Student discussion groups

Student mentoring programs

3.3 Ensures that system-wide curricular and instructional decisions are based on data and research at all levels:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Assessment data

District staff/others can identify research used to align instruction

District staff/others meet to analyze data and align instruction

District staff/others meet to review current research

District staff/others meetings regularly include data analysis

Grade reports

Professional development calendar and topics

Surveys

Transcripts, certificates

3.4 Supports instruction that is research-based and reflective of best practice:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes of staff/grade level/department/program meetings

District staff/others meet to share best practices

District staff/others meetings regularly include discussions about effective instructional design and delivery

Guidance on lesson plan development

Guidance that promotes a variety of instructional design and delivery strategies

Professional development plans

Professional learning opportunities focus on best practice instruction

Professional organization membership

3.5 Supports a curriculum that challenges and meets the needs of each student, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Curriculum includes attention to diversity

District staff are knowledgeable about state and national curriculum standards

District staff are representative of the school and community demographics

Graduation requirements

Master schedule

Policies that reflect attention to issues of equity

Promotion, graduation criteria

Standards-based curriculum: state and national standards

Students affirm that there are opportunities to excel

3.6 Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Instructional calendar: days, hours

Lesson plans are followed during teacher absence

Master schedule

Policies and guidelines that demonstrate that all program requirements are met

Policies demonstrate that substitute teachers are responsible for delivery instruction

Staff affirm that their instructional time is protected

3.7 Maintains articulation among and between all levels of schooling to monitor student performance and ensure readiness for future schooling or employment:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes of staff meetings indicating vertical and horizontal articulation

Articulation agreements between agencies

District staff are knowledgeable about student learning expectations of previous and subsequent grade levels

Policies and guidelines granting dual-credit, transfer of credit

Transition policies

3.8 Supports the implementation of interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning :

Operational

Evidence Provided:

After-school programs

Counseling programs: curriculum, schedules, staffing

District staff affirm that there are multiple opportunities for students to get support

Individualized Development/Career Plans

Policies for student orientation, interventions, remediation

Schedule of opportunities, activities that support special learning needs

Students affirm that they have opportunities to explore their interests and career options

Students affirm that they have opportunities to get support for their school experience

3.9 Maintains a system-wide climate that supports student learning:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Curriculum reflects attention to issues of school climate

Database of student behavioral incidents

District staff affirm that they are involved in promoting positive school climate

District staff/others meetings provide time for discussions about climate

Parents/community indicate that the school/district focuses on positive school/district climate

Peer intervention programs; peer counseling

Policies for student behavior, remediation, due process, appeals

Reward system for positive behavior

Stakeholder Compact: adult and student expectations

Stakeholder satisfaction survey data

3.10 Ensures that curriculum is reviewed and revised at regular intervals:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Other: District staff affirm the use of media services in the development of curriculum and instructional programs, Media services staff demonstrate the use media resources to support student achievement, Students and staff affirm their involvement in media services program

Other: Budget allocating appropriate funds for media services, Calendar and schedule of media services to students, Facilities map indicating media services location, Labor agreement that outlines media services responsibilities

3.11 Coordinates and ensures ready access to instructional technology, information and media services, and materials needed for effective instruction:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Budget allocating appropriate funds for technology - software, hardware, and infrastructure

Calendar and schedule of technology services to students

District staff affirm that technology supports their curriculum and instructional programs

Facilities map indicating technology services/lab

Staffing chart demonstrating allocation of appropriate technology staff

Students and staff affirm that technology is embedded within the teaching and learning process

Technology staff/services demonstrate their involvement in support of student achievement

Focus Questions:

1. How does the system ensure the alignment and articulation of curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments in support of the expectations for student learning?

The Macon County School System bases its curriculum on the State Board of Education approved curriculum standards, which identify the specific learning objectives and performance indicators for each grade and subject level. These standards can be found at <http://www.state.tn.us/education/curriculum.shtml>. The system annually reviews and adopts instructional materials to assist in the teaching of these standards. The district provides the needed funds for purchasing the materials.

The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) exams include required tests for various grade levels from 3rd grade until graduation. These would include all core subjects. Benchmark testing has taken place in one form or another for several years at various grade levels. Kindergarten through 3rd grade students have been assessed using DIBELS for the past several years. Our system employs three reading coaches to work with our teachers in using the scores when formulating their lesson plans. Last school year, our system used 4Sight testing as a benchmark for our 3rd through 8th graders. The data provided by the various assessments listed above is used to identify and implement any necessary changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. In addition to these uses, it also provides school personnel with an idea of which students are candidates for remediation.

Our system provides opportunities for administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders to examine both school and system data and discuss strategies for improving student achievement. These strategies are found in each school's School Improvement Plan, SIP. District strategies are located in our system's Tennessee Comprehensive Systemwide Planning Process, TCSPP.

The State Department of Education Framework Evaluation Process and walk through observations are used to determine classroom effectiveness. The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System, TVAAS, measures students' growth from one year to the next. It is also used as a measure of teacher effectiveness.

2. In what ways does the system promote and support the implementation of research-based instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that facilitate achievement for all students?

Macon County administrators and teachers are given multiple opportunities to attend various workshops and trainings both during the summer months and throughout the school year. The district office pays for these trainings, and any costs associated with them, through many different ways. All of our federally funded programs, including Title, Carl Perkins, and Special Education, support the attendance of our instructional personnel, as well as paraprofessionals, to research-based opportunities. State and local dollars are also used for the same purpose. Our system also ensures that research-based programs and instructional materials are purchased and readily available for our teachers to implement in their classrooms in order to promote our students' academic achievement.

Textbooks are selected from an expansive list of state-approved choices. The various subject area textbooks are on a 6-year rotating schedule which is determined by the Tennessee State Department of Education. A local committee made up of tenured, highly qualified teachers and administrators serve yearly terms and participate in the textbook adoption process. Samples are requested and sent to the individual schools where all faculty can examine and provide feedback. Parents are also invited to visit the schools and review the possible selections.

After narrowing down the selections and participating in the textbook hearings, either by local hearings or a caravan stop, the final choice is voted on at the school, and ultimately, the district level.

Our system also provides a variety of programs at both district and school levels. For example, both of our high school math departments compete in a regional math contest on an annual basis. Several areas in our Career-Technical classes not only compete, but win, at the local, state, and national level. Other opportunities that are provided to our students include the Scripps Spelling Bee, local essay contests, public speaking contests, and a stakeholder sponsored "Reality Store" for our countywide Sophomore class each year. Local business furnish the awards for the winners of both the spelling bee and for the essay contest.

Our system also employs reading coaches to serve all educational levels. Their main focus is to help identify and implement research based instructional strategies with our classroom teachers. These strategies are an integral part of our instructional best practices. The reading coaches conduct our DIBELS testing for the primary grades and our benchmark testing for both our elementary and middle schools.

3. What processes are implemented to ensure that all staff members are well-prepared to support and implement the district's expectations for student learning?

The Macon County School System operates like other systems in Tennessee. Each full-time, certified person is required to earn 5 professional development days in addition to 3 administrative days. Our system compiles an expansive professional development calendar based on the results of a countywide needs assessment, as well as fulfilling the needs of individual schools' SIPs and the district's TCSPP. It is understood that all buildings are different, so our principals are given the authority to require up to 2 professional development days of their faculty to best serve their students' needs.

In the area of reading, our system employs instructional coaches to serve each school to facilitate effective implementation of research based instructional strategies. Positions in the area of mathematics have been approved by our local board of education, but have not been employed at this time. Our instruction is directly related to the Tennessee State Board of Education approved curriculum standards. Subject level meetings, benchmark testing, and principal walkthroughs are ways in which the instruction is guided to best suit the needs of Macon County students.

4. How does the system ensure that all students and staff have access to comprehensive information, instructional technology, and media services?

The Macon County School System formulates and operates under a state-approved local technology plan that is viewed and approved by the Tennessee State Department of Education for E-Rate and Title II-D purposes. The plan is also approved by the local Macon County Board of Education. The technology plan focuses on the vision, goals, objectives, budgets and evaluation of our district's technology program. Our District's plan is revised and approved every three years based on input from both the system and building level needs assessments and the district's TCSPP.

Each of our certified school personnel has access to Internet, email, grade book portal, and pertinent local and state websites. Technology professional development is provided to all teachers through the district's Technology Learning Center which is located at the Board of Education and is used for teacher training only. All students and teachers are required to sign an Acceptable Use Policy before they are allowed access to use the Internet or email services. Our district in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act, (CIPA), which, among other things, addresses content filtering software that keeps children/students safe while accessing the Internet.

All schools in our District have a local area network (LAN) and wireless connectivity as a technology

infrastructure. All schools are tied to the district office with a 100 mps fiber optic Wide Area Network (WAN) which enables sharing of files between schools and sharing of software.

Our district also maintains a district web page, <http://www.maconcountyschools.com> , which includes links to each of our individual school websites. Also found on the district website are links to locally purchased web based software that is research based software and correlates to the Tennessee State Curriculum Standards. These educational websites can be accessed by all students and staff at school or at home. The names of some of the sites are:

- Learn360
- netTrekker
- IXL Math (Grades K-8)
- BrainPOP

Other software purchased district-wide is A+ which is shared over the WAN and accessed by all students. A+ is curriculum based software and is also used for Credit Recovery at the high school level. All school libraries have a computer/technology multi-media center and library circulation software.

Even though we are a small, rural district, our technology is not behind that of our larger neighbors. Smartboards have been installed in approximately 90%+ of all classrooms in our district. One of our schools was selected by Smart Technologies as a "Smart Showcase School." Smart Tables are being installed in the Kindergarten classrooms, document cameras are being purchased to assist in instruction when using the Smart Boards, and clickers (remote response systems) are being used at all levels for formative assessment. Teacher technology professional development is offered to help each teacher to support the integration of these tools with the curriculum.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school system implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The system demonstrates evidence of alignment between the curriculum and instructional practices with systematic implementation across the system. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students regular feedback to improve their performance.

Standard 4. Documenting & Using Results

STANDARD: The system enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and system effectiveness.

Impact Statement: A school system is successful in meeting this standard when it uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly-defined performance measures. The assessment system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, identify gaps between expectations for student learning and student performance, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to system and school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, system and school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system's responses to the focus questions.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the system:

4.1 Establishes and implements a comprehensive assessment system, aligned with the system's expectations for student learning, that yields information which is reliable, valid, and bias free :

Operational

Evidence Provided:

All stakeholders are knowledgeable about behavioral standards

All stakeholders are knowledgeable about grading and appeals

All stakeholders are knowledgeable about learning expectations and targets for student performance

Assessment system that records multiple assessments

Assessment system that safeguards validity, confidentiality, identification

Calendar of assessment activities

Database that records graduation, completion, GPA, placement, retention rates

District staff use data to inform policies and practice

Policies outline administration of multiple assessments and their purpose

Policies that outline targets for behavioral standards: attendance, discipline

Policies that outline targets for student performance and are aligned to state/national standards

Record of multiple assessments administered, including program-specific required assessments

Special database for career preparation, special education, bilingual education programs

Staff affirm the use of multiple measures for student performance

Stakeholders are familiar with the administration and purpose of multiple assessments

Stakeholders are knowledgeable about the assessment schedule

Stakeholders implement multiple assessment system

Student/Staff Handbook that outlines grading scales, syllabus criteria, and appeal process

The development and administration of multiple assessments consider limited-language learners, students with disabilities, and multiple learning styles

4.2 Ensures that student assessment data are used to make decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes from staff meetings indicate use of data to drive instructional planning discussions

Agendas, minutes from staff meetings indicate utilization of data systems

Criteria for evaluation of staff performance include the use of data for instructional planning

Criteria for feedback on performance

District staff affirm their understanding of how data are used to evaluate their effectiveness

District staff are knowledgeable about how to use student performance data for the purpose of instructional planning

District staff demonstrate the use of data when planning guidelines for instruction, through vertical and horizontal articulation

District staff utilize assessment data for the purpose of instructional and program planning

Examples of student work are prominently displayed

Student performance data reports, charts, graphs indicate system-wide use of data for instructional planning

Students affirm knowledge about their learning expectations

4.3 Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness, including support systems, and uses the results to improve student and system performance:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Data from community/business

Data from multiple surveys indicate wide scale use of data to analyze instructional and organizational effectiveness

Database that records graduation, post-graduate engagement

District staff utilize business and community data to guide program planning

District staff utilize perception data from surveys to guide program planning

Stakeholders affirm their familiarity with student performance and organizational effectiveness

Stakeholders affirm their involvement in meetings in which the topic of student performance and organizational effectiveness were highlighted

4.4 Provides a system of communication which uses a variety of methods to report student performance and system effectiveness to all stakeholders:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes from meetings where student performance and school effectiveness were highlighted

Criteria that establishes student performance data as a component of parent-teacher conferences

District staff affirm the use of various communication methods to report student performance

Newsletters demonstrate communication of student performance and school effectiveness

Stakeholders affirm the use of various communication methods to report student performance

4.5 Uses comparison and trend data from comparable school systems to evaluate student performance and system effectiveness:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Agenda, minutes of meetings in which comparative data were highlighted

District staff affirm their involvement in meetings in which comparative data were highlighted

Reports that outline comparable data analysis - across programs

Reports that outline comparable data analysis - across schools, districts, states, nationally

4.6 Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance that is supported by multiple sources of evidence:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Data reports include behavioral and environmental data

Data reports utilize identified growth model that is valid, reliable, and psychometrically appropriate

Data reports verify growth in student performance

District staff can identify reasons why student performance has increased/decreased

District staff can identify strategies for increasing student performance

Stakeholders can speak to and support the growth data

4.7 Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

District staff affirm their comfort with the level of data accuracy and security

Policies that outline the conditions for safeguarding and transferring transcripts

Policies that safeguard accuracy and security of all data

Reports that satisfy local, state, and national requirements

Stakeholders are knowledgeable about the conditions under which transcripts are safeguarded and transferred

Stakeholders indicate that they have seen reports that satisfy local, state, and national requirements

Focus Questions:

1. How is the assessment system currently used throughout the school system and its schools to guide analysis of changes in student performance?

The Macon County School System recognizes that student performance is best exhibited through a multi-faceted approach to assessment. Summative and formative assessments are balanced to develop a clear picture of where students are in their learning. This provides school leaders, teachers, and stakeholders a comprehensive awareness of student performance and reflects the knowledge and skills attained specified by grade/course level standards.

Analysis of state and district benchmark summative assessments and comparative data provide a broad framework for driving instruction, making curriculum decisions, allocation of resources, and developing a high quality professional development series. School-level formative assessments allow for monitoring the learning process as it is happening throughout the year, allowing for individualized instruction and appropriate interventions. The varying performance measures used provide feedback related to students' cognitive, meta-cognitive, and self-regulatory abilities. Data is triangulated to ensure validity and reliability of results.

STAR student allows for the Macon County School System to keep secure, complete student records in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

2. What are you doing to ensure that assessment results are timely, relevant, and communicated in a way that can be used by the system, its schools, and stakeholders to aid the performance of individual students?

As soon as they are made available by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), schools are provided with aggregated and disaggregated summary reports and trend analyses for monitoring instruction and proficiency. Each school hosts a professional development day focused on the review of state summative data. The Macon County School System provides parents and stakeholders a variety of opportunities to review and discuss current summative data, including electronic access to data via the Macon County School System websites, parent involvement and data review nights hosted by individual schools, invitations to join program planning committees, opportunities to attend alongside teachers ongoing professional development organized by school leaders to review student performance and curriculum changes, and an explanation of reports at parent conferences. Great consideration is given in scheduling stakeholder events at a variety of times, days, and dates to accommodate all those interested in attending.

Research indicates descriptive feedback to be the most significant instructional strategies in bolstering student achievement; therefore, emphasis is placed on cultivating a climate that articulates clear expectations at all levels, promotes positive daily feedback to students, and weekly feedback to parents via websites, local newspapers, cable television and radios stations, newsletters, homework folders, and teacher notes.

3. How are data used to understand and improve overall effectiveness of the school system and its schools?

The Macon County School System executes systematic analysis of student performance through reviews of longitudinal data, comparative data, formative and summative measures, and annual reviews of professional development needs. Data is used at all levels to identify and prioritize instructional and curricular decisions.

In collaboration with John's Hopkins Center for Data Driven Reform in Education (CDDRE) the Macon County School System began aggressively evaluating student engagement and content rigor at all grade levels. Results of this assessment prompted the adoption of a district-wide benchmark program and modification of the planning process at each school level. This comprehensive approach led to the addition of programs for areas of recognized deficiencies, including additional interventionists and programs for at-risk students, data-driven faculty and staff training, and expanded integration of technology.

TCSIP and TSIP plans provide a framework for identifying areas for future growth by methodically analyzing demographics, resources, desired outcomes, and the process by which to reach goals. The allocation of district and school-level resources is directly linked to these plans and performance data.

4. How are staff members across the system and its schools trained to understand and use data to impact teaching and learning in the classroom?

Professional development is an essential aspect of understanding and improving overall effectiveness of programs within the district. A committee, composed of members representational of the diverse student population, students, and stakeholders, collaborates monthly in the spring semester to evaluate district needs. This collaboration includes a review of longitudinal and comparative data, conducting needs assessments district-wide, and review of evaluations from programs offered throughout the previous year. Data gathered from these meetings guide the development of future programs and professional development for school leaders, faculty, and staff.

All faculty are required to participate in a minimum of 30 hours of professional development yearly, with 18 hours being from a chosen concentration area. All faculty are required to attend monthly faculty meetings.

Professional development opportunities not only address the collection of valid and reliable data, but more importantly how that data can be used for improving the learning process. Faculty and staff are trained in formative assessment measures, such as monitoring student engagement, setting appropriate goals and criteria for learning, embedding questioning strategies to promote higher-order thinking skills, and collecting anecdotal data.

All non-certified staff work under mentor teachers and are provided training specific to their job assignment.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school system uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures that yield valid and reliable results. The assessment system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to system/school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, school and system effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts.

Standard 5. Resource & Support Systems

STANDARD: The system has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it 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 system employs and allocates staff well-qualified for their assignments. The system provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. The system ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system's responses to the focus questions.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

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INDICATORS: Human Resources. In fulfillment of this standard, the system:

5.1 Establishes and implements processes to recruit, employ, retain, and mentor qualified professional and support staff to fulfill assigned roles and responsibilities:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes, decisions for district and school level IEP meetings

Appropriate space is provided for special need support programs

District staff can affirm that special needs students receive needed support

IEP: Individualized Education Plans

Native language usage is evident for the purpose of supporting learning

Personnel policies ensuring appropriate hiring practices

Personnel policies ensuring certification, licensure, evaluation, training

Professional learning opportunities

Program descriptions: Special Needs Populations

Schedules: District, School, Extra-Curricular; Transportation

Staff Handbooks

Staff schedules and assignments

Student Handbook

Other: Tutoring, Credit Recovery, GED, Adult Education, Time 4 Time

5.2 Establishes and implements a process to assign professional and support staff based on system needs and staff qualifications as may be required by federal and state law and regulations (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience):

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Labor agreement

Personnel policies ensuring appropriate placement

Personnel policies ensuring certification, licensure, evaluation, training

Policies regarding NCLB highly qualified teachers

Professional learning opportunities

Staff can affirm that they are teaching in their major area of study

Staff Handbook

Staff schedules and assignments

Staffing of both administrative and teaching positions is appropriate and adequate

5.3 Establishes and implements a process to design, evaluate, and improve professional development and ensures participation by all faculty and staff:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Budget demonstrates appropriate allocation for PD

Calendar, agenda, summaries of PD opportunities

District monitoring of professional development implementation

District staff are actively engaged in discussions that have resulted from their professional development experience

District staff can affirm their involvement in professional learning opportunities

Evaluation of PD data

Personnel policies that stipulate PD requirements

Professional development plan

Staff are aware of the requirements for continuous learning

Staff implement effective strategies based on their professional development experience

5.4 Ensures that staff are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school system and to meet federal and state law and regulations, if applicable:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Budget demonstrates appropriate allocation for staffing

Class size indicates appropriate and effective support of student learning

Master schedule

Personnel policies and practices

Policies regarding NCLB highly qualified teachers

INDICATORS: Financial Resources. In fulfillment of this standard, the system:

5.5 Engages in long-range budgetary planning and annually budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Annual budget - current, forecasted, fund-equity

Consolidated Application (federal)

Facilities plan - current, future

Facilities protection documentation: insurance, amortization

Fiscal policies: use of all funding, including donations, reserves, discretionary

Infrastructure plans: short and long range

Practices that support appropriate use of allocated funds

Purchasing/replacement policies: adherence to EEO

School-level budgets

Space is adequate and appropriate to support student learning

State and Federal program budgets for targeted support

5.6 Ensures that all financial transactions are safeguarded through proper budgetary procedures and audited accounting measures:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Audit reports

Fiscal protection plans: insurance

Organizational oversight of fiscal authority

Payroll and purchasing policies and processes

Practices that support appropriate use of fiscal resources

Secure management of all fiscal processes

INDICATORS: Physical Resources. In fulfillment of this standard, the system:

5.7 Maintains sites, facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, orderly, and healthy environment:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

All district-wide facilities are properly maintained

Calendar of safety drills: fire, tornado, emergency crisis

Curriculum includes attention to cleanliness and safety

District staff are involved in developing and implementing safety policies

District support staff are knowledgeable about safety policies

District-wide environment is clean and safe

Facilities maintenance reports and plans

HAZMAT (hazardous materials): policies and training

Policies and processes regarding safety

Policies and processes related to student/staff injury

Policies regarding dispensing prescription medications

Stakeholder survey data supporting safety

State and Federal regulations regarding special program safety requirements

5.8 Establishes and implements written security and crisis management plans with appropriate training for stakeholders:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Crisis intervention committee

Crisis intervention plan

District staff and students are knowledgeable about emergency procedures

District staff are involved in the crisis intervention team

Emergency procedures

Health support staff are available

Secure record system

Staff Handbook

Student Handbook

Wellness policy

5.9 Implements processes and plans for maintaining and improving sites, facilities, and equipment:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Appropriate district staff affirm their knowledge of the plan for physical asset maintenance and replacement

Physical assets plan: short-term and long-range

Policies and procedures for maintaining and improving physical assets: site facilities, infrastructure, equipment, etc.

5.10 Provides technology infrastructure and equipment that is up-to-date and sufficient to accomplish the system's goals:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

District staff are knowledgeable about the short and long range plans for maintenance and replacement of technology infrastructure

Policies and procedures for maintaining and improving technology infrastructure: hardware and software

Policies and procedures regarding appropriate internet access

Policies and procedures regarding the purchase of technology tools

Stakeholders are knowledgeable about policies regarding appropriate internet access

INDICATORS: Support Systems. In fulfillment of this standard, the system:

5.11 Provides and coordinates support services that meet the health, counseling, nutrition, safety, co-curricular, transportation, and special learning needs of all students:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Advisory plan and program

Alternative Education Program

District monitors instruction for special needs inclusion

District provides guidelines for classroom instruction that demonstrates variety of instructional methodologies to support all students

District provides guidelines for Response To Intervention program and is demonstrated at classroom level

IEP: committee, minutes, calendar, agenda, sign-in sheets

Individualized Development Plans

Labor agreements demonstrating appropriate special needs staffing

Master schedules demonstrating support for special needs

Policies and procedures that are ADA and IDEA compliant

Policies regarding use of languages other than English for district communication

Professional development calendar and topics

Special Needs Department/Committee

Staff affirm their use of instructional strategies that support special needs inclusion

Staffing of Counseling and Guidance programs

Stakeholder survey data supporting special needs programs

Stakeholders affirm their support for the district's special needs programs

Student referral policies and practices

Student referral process and procedures

Students and staff affirm their understanding of special needs populations

Teacher certification, licensure, etc. supporting special needs

Translated materials demonstrate communication to special needs population

5.12 Provides student support services coordinated with the school, home, and community:
Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Career Preparation Department/Committee

Community based programs

Curriculum for Career Preparation

District staff affirm that they receive regular training opportunities to support student behavior

District staff are knowledgeable in all aspects of appropriate social/emotional support for student learning behavior

Enrollment data - current status, trends

Guidance and Counseling Department/Committee

Job Placement program

Master schedule indicates availability of career preparation

Orientation to Career Preparation programs

Professional development: calendar, topics

Staff assigned to career preparation programs

Stakeholders are supportive of community-based programs to support student engagement

Students are enrolled in career preparation

Students are knowledgeable about career planning programs

Focus Questions:

1. What is the school system's process for recruitment, induction, placement, development, evaluation, and retention of qualified professional and support staff across the system and its schools?

The Macon County School System uses several policies and practices to address these areas as they pertain to professional and support staff. A brief summary of each of the areas is listed below.

1. Recruitment - Openings are posted on the system website, www.maconcountyschools.com as well as hard copies in each of our buildings. They are listed as highly qualified, classified, support staff, etc. The director of schools, appropriate supervisors, and building level principals are all involved in the various stages of the posting, interviews, and hiring of open positions.
2. Induction - Interviews are conducted with the department chair, and/or director of schools, as well as the building level principals. Every effort is made to hire personnel based on certification area, highly qualified status, and experience. As with any smaller system, at times alternative licenses are the only option. Our system works in conjunction with the Tennessee Department of Education's Offices of Teacher Licensing and of School Approval as well as with institutions of higher learning to ensure the most appropriate path for those individuals who might lack the certification area.
3. Placement - The application the potential employees must fill out has a section in which they can identify the position of interest.
4. Development - Each of our new employees must meet OSHA requirements as do our returning employees. All new certified employees also attend both a building level and a system level new teacher orientation. Agendas and sign in sheets are available for review. Any substitute employed in our system must also attend an orientation prior to being added to our district substitute listing. Sign in sheets are also available for review.
5. Evaluation - According to the state framework for evaluation, new teachers are evaluated multiple times per year until they achieve tenure. After they reach tenure, they are also evaluated using the framework for evaluation determined by the state board of education. In addition to the framework evaluations, teachers in our system are also subject to yearly walk-through observations. Regardless of the type of observation, framework or walk-through, the building level principal and the teacher have a face to face meeting to discuss both areas of strength and weakness. Each teacher is provided with a copy of the observation in addition to the copy the building level principal keeps on file. The state of Tennessee is revamping the evaluation process to include the mandatory evaluation of all teachers, regardless of license and tenure level, on a yearly basis. One school in our system is participating in the pilot of the new evaluation module prior to it taking effect during the 2011-12 school year.
6. Retention of qualified personnel and support staff - Teachers and staff attend both local and state offered inservices. Our local inservice schedule is compiled based on a yearly needs assessment survey conducted by our local inservice committee. Standardized tests scores, as well as any changes in the state curriculum standards, dictate the majority of our professional development offerings. Our teachers also attend state and, at times, national workshops and conferences to enrich their content area. Principals conduct formal and informal observations for support staff on a yearly basis. Lesson plans, which include appropriate state standards, are also required with copies of the plans made available for building level administrators to approve.

2. How does the leadership ensure that the allocation of financial resources is supportive of the school system's vision, programs, services, and its plans for continuous improvement?

It is the vision of the Macon County School System to provide all children with a safe and inviting environment to ensure their success. We want to instill in each student high expectations, morals, and respect enabling them to graduate with the knowledge and skills to become productive and responsible citizens. Our vision is supported through the funding of courses through CTI which provides credit hours, honors, work opportunities through service learning, and dual enrollment.

Funding for services are provided for homebound, speech for walk-in students, incarcerated juveniles, adult education programs support the community. Title I provides assistants for schools that fall in the economically disadvantaged ranged. Purchases are also monitored to ensure they are in line with the action steps from the TCSPP.

3. How does the school system ensure, support, and monitor the provision of resource and support services that meet the needs of all students?

There is significant collaboration among principals and the various academic departments. Monthly leadership team meetings are held at the Office of the Director of Schools. They are attended by the Director of Schools, district supervisors, building level principals, and other district personnel. Other academic meetings, such as professional development, Pre Kindergarten Advisory, and 3 Star, are held on a regular basis to ensure that our system is operating in the best interest of our students.

Test scores are evaluated by principals and faculty to monitor student progress. Inventories are taken annually to ensure proper instructional materials are in each classroom. Parent and student surveys are sent out to ensure that proper support is being provided and to take in to consideration the opinions that they may have. Students' final grades are examined to determine proper placement and promotion is also determined. The budget supplements programs that are being provided and determines if they are meeting their goals.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school system has human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The system employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The system provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness, including both professional and support staff. The system ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications & Relationships

STANDARD: The system fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Impact Statement: Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. System and school personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system's responses to the focus questions.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the system:

6.1 Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes, calendar of parent meetings

Calendar of events that promote stakeholder involvement

District staff affirm that stakeholders are involved in many aspects of district events, activities, decisions

Parents and community members regularly volunteer time in district

Policies regarding credit for service learning

Policies regarding suggestions, grievances

Stakeholder survey data

Stakeholders affirm that they are involved in many aspects of district events, activities, decisions

6.2 Uses system-wide strategies to listen to and communicate with stakeholders:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Calendars, agendas, minutes of parent meetings

District Improvement Committee: agendas, minutes, membership

Emails, phone answering system

Newsletters, brochures, letters, memos

Parent - Teacher conferences schedule

Policies regarding formal inclusion of stakeholder involvement

Stakeholders affirm they have variety of opportunities to be formally involved in life of district

Steering Committee meetings: agendas, minutes, membership

Web page dedicated to parents/community members

Wide variety of stakeholder communication documents/avenues

6.3 Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the system:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Advisory Committees

Calendar, agendas, minutes, committee membership

Policies regarding volunteer involvement

Schedule of volunteer activities

Stakeholder survey data

Stakeholders affirm that their suggestions and recommendations are acted upon

Stakeholders affirm that they are actively involved in providing expertise

6.4 Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Newsletters about student performance

Online calendar, schedule, and news/updates

Parent -teacher conferences: calendar, procedures, participation data

Parent Handbook

Parents and students are informed and involved in developing individualized learning plans for students

Parents and students are informed and involved in making course selections

Stakeholders affirm that they are knowledgeable about student learning

6.5 Provides information that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Parent -teacher conferences: calendar, procedures, participation data

Policies regarding reporting schedule

Report cards

Focus Questions:

1. How does the school system's leadership ensure that the system and its schools are responsive to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction?

The district's belief and mission statements recognize the importance of stakeholder collaboration and the communication of goals and expectations to same stakeholders. Input from stakeholders is gathered through district wide surveys, school level surveys, and stakeholder participation in planning meetings for both the school and the district as a whole. Community members are invited to attend monthly school board meetings and parental involvement meetings at individual schools. The use of a system-wide, computer-based calling system, school level newsletters, and board of education reports in local newspapers provide news about the school system to various stakeholders. Stakeholders are also valued members of the district wide TCSPP planning process.

2. What avenues are used to communicate information to stakeholders about the effectiveness of the school system and its schools, including the sharing of student performance results?

The Macon County School System seeks to foster an attitude of openness within the community. Parent participation is strongly encouraged at each school. Throughout the year, the district and schools convey expectations and share performance results through Open House meetings, parent-teacher conferences, PTO meetings, school transition meetings, and planning meetings. Consideration is given to parents who work and administrators and principals maintain flexibility in their schedules to accommodate parent schedules. For example: parent-teacher conferences are held twice each school year from 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM to allow parents flexibility within their work schedules.

District and school administrators use many tools to communicate information regarding the school system. These include the local newspaper, newsletters, websites for the district and individual schools, the Alert Now calling system, local radio stations, and community meetings. The Macon County School System website, www.maconcountyschools.com, is regularly updated to reflect to the community all policies, plans, and calendars. School board meetings maintain an "open door" policy with opportunities given for the community to provide input on school system issues.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school system has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. System and school personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts and can demonstrate good participation by some stakeholder groups.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

STANDARD: The system establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the system with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the system and its schools demonstrate progress in improving student performance. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through analysis of student performance, system effectiveness, and assessment of the improvement process.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system's responses to the focus questions.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the system:

7.1 Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the system is pursuing (Vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, system effectiveness, and the community (Profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (Plan); and documents and uses the results to inform future improvement efforts (Results):
Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Continuous Improvement Plan - district and individual schools

District staff affirm their involvement in a specific program that supports continuous improvement

District staff affirm their involvement in continuous improvement committees

Graduation and retention rates

Information/Data system

Postsecondary engagement: employment, college

Professional Development Plan: agenda, topics

Record of student performance improvement efforts

Specific program initiatives to support continuous improvement

Stakeholder survey (satisfaction) data

State/Federal Accountability Plan

7.2 Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Calendar, agendas, minutes, sign-in sheets demonstrating stakeholder involvement in district and school improvement

District and School Improvement plan indicating membership of committees

Parent compact

Policies, procedures for district and school improvement committee work

Stakeholder survey data demonstrating stakeholder involvement in district and school improvement

Stakeholders affirm their involvement in continuous improvement process

7.3 Ensures that each school's plan for continuous improvement is aligned with the system's vision and expectations for student learning:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Calendar, agendas, minutes of school improvement meetings

Data: student performance, stakeholder opinion are used in development of school improvement plan

District staff affirm their understanding of the impact of programs that support student learning

District staff demonstrate capacity for providing methodologies to increase student performance

Evaluation data demonstrating impact of plan and actions taken to remediate

School improvement plans demonstrate alignment with district vision, purpose

Staff, students affirm their understanding of student performance targets

Student performance targets are communicated to all stakeholders

Vision, purpose posted in district-wide facilities

7.4 Ensures that each school's plan for continuous improvement includes a focus on increasing learning for all students and closing gaps between current and expected student performance levels:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

District guidelines and professional learning provide strategies for effective instruction for closing achievement gaps

District staff affirm that they regularly use data to inform their practices

District staff affirm their involvement in evaluating the impact of instruction on student growth

District staff meetings regularly use data to inform their discussions and decisions

School improvement plans demonstrate evaluation of goals, objectives, and strategies impact on student growth

7.5 Provides research-based professional development for system and school personnel to help them achieve improvement goals:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Continuous Improvement Plan - district and individual schools

District staff affirm their involvement in professional learning

Personnel Policies that outline staff evaluation process

Professional Development Plan: agenda, topics

7.6 Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Annual Report

District staff and stakeholders affirm the use of performance data during Parent-Teacher conferences

Information/Data system

Newsletters, brochures

Parent-Teacher conferences

Staffing assignments support monitoring and reporting of continuous improvement efforts

Stakeholders affirm receipt of district communication regarding improvement efforts

7.7 Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement :
Operational

Evidence Provided:

District and School Improvement Committee meetings: calendar, agenda, minutes, dispositions

Evaluation of effectiveness of continuous improvement plan and process

Stakeholders affirm knowledge of an evaluation of the district's improvement efforts

7.8 Allocates and protects time for planning and engaging in continuous improvement efforts system-wide:
Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

District and School Improvement Committee meetings:calendar, agenda, minutes, dispositions

District staff affirm that time is allocated for improvement planning, implementation, and monitoring

Policies and procedures for engaging in district-wide and individual school improvement planning, implementation, and monitoring

7.9 Provides direction and assistance to its schools and operational units to support their continuous improvement efforts:
Operational

Evidence Provided:

District and School Improvement Committee meetings:calendar, agenda, minutes, dispositions

District expectations and guidelines for all schools and departments to engage in a continuous improvement process

District staff affirm their knowledge of the district's expectations and guidelines for supporting student performance

Focus Questions:

1. Describe the process for continuous improvement used by the school system and its schools and the impact of this process on student learning and system effectiveness.

The Macon County School System provides links to the district's report card on the system's website. In addition, results are posted throughout the schools on bulletin boards. They are shared with the members of the Macon County Board of Education as well.

The Macon County System seeks to foster an attitude of openness within the community. Parent participation is strongly encouraged at each school. Beginning with school enrollment and registration, administrators and counselors share information concerning high expectations of student performance. During the school year individual schools communicate student performance in various different ways. The PTO organizations at the elementary schools are frequently used as a conduit for the dissemination of information. At least one elementary school holds a TCAP night after student results have been released. During school open house and Title I meetings parents are continually given information concerning student, school, and district performance. The school websites contain links to teacher emails so that parents can correspond with their child's teacher(s). Consideration is given to parents that work; teachers maintain flexibility in their schedules to accommodate parent schedules. The district parent-teacher conferences are held from 12:00-6:00 p.m. to accommodate parents who work alternate shifts.

2. What process is used to ensure that the improvement goals reflect student learning needs and are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school system and its schools?

A great deal of time and effort is spent in the analysis of standardized test results. School improvement goals and district goals reflect the data which is examined on an individual student, teacher, school, and district level. Improvement goals are based on data from individual years as well as from historical trends. Teachers will now have more access to individual data through the TVAAS system.

3. What process is used to ensure that system and school personnel are provided professional development and technical assistance to implement interventions and achieve improvement goals?

A committee of supervisors, principals, teachers, and parents coordinates and analyzes data to determine the professional development needs of the district. This group uses surveys, school improvement plan action steps, system-wide goals, as well as current educational trend information to determine the professional development schedule. Student performance also is used to drive assistance provided by reading coaches at individual schools. In addition, building level technology coordinators provide assistance to individual teachers who are using technology interventions to assist and improve student performance.

Teachers who attend approved professional development workshops throughout the year return to their individual schools and to the system to present information concerning new interventions or strategies which can aid student achievement and improve performance.

4. How does the leadership ensure that the improvement plan is implemented, monitored, achieved, and communicated to stakeholders?

The strategic plan is reviewed at annual meetings. All stakeholders are involved in the meetings. These meetings occur at both the individual school and the district levels. For those schools on the High Priority list, the plan is revised yearly to accommodate any changes in student achievement or in the student population. The previous plan is analyzed and reviewed to determine that the action steps have taken place and that the desired results have been met. If the desired results have not occurred, the plan is revised and new action steps are added.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school system implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns most functions of the system and its schools with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the system demonstrates progress in improving student performance, system and school effectiveness. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process.

QA Methods

1. What processes does the district use to monitor and document improvement?

Improving our school system is the overall objective for all of our employees. All stakeholders, inside and outside, of the system recognize that a quality school system leads to the betterment of our student's opportunities in life, regardless of which path our students choose to follow.

State mandated, standardized tests are used to measure our student's scores as compared to other students in the same grade. Until recently, our student's scores were compared to other scores in Tennessee. In doing so, our students scored in the average range. With the revision of curriculum standards in core areas, Macon County, as well as Tennessee, students are being tested on standards that are similar to standards across the nation. During the last two summers, our system has held professional development, to first introduce but later accentuate, the new standards to our faculty and staff members. Sign in sheets of these activities are available for review in the Office of the Director of Schools. Our state also uses value-added scores, TVAAS, as a way to measure improvement. TVAAS measures each individual student's scores in relation to a predetermined level of which one would expect each student to show improvement. Calculations are also used to show how a specific teacher's entire class achieved, or progressed.

Improvement in our teaching practices and methods are best monitored through our required evaluations and walkthroughs. Comprehensive evaluations are required of every teacher until they reach a professional license. A comprehensive evaluation cycle consists of a series of two or three observations, face to face discussions concerning the observation results, and a culminating rating, by the immediate supervisor, of the teacher's observed strengths and weaknesses. A growth plan is also completed as an aid to improve the area(s) of weakness. Our system also has a policy in place that requires any non-tenured teacher, regardless of license type, to complete the series of formative evaluations until such a time that tenure can be granted. Teachers who do not show improvement during this cycle are not rehired by our system. As it stands now, this entire process is being updated and new observation method will be implemented in the near future. A teacher never fully leaves the observation cycle, even after achieving tenure and receiving a professional license. In order to renew a professional license, a teacher must have two comprehensive evaluations completed within the life of their ten year professional license, one in the first five years and one in the second.

In addition to the evaluations, our principal's are required to complete walkthrough evaluations, which differ from comprehensive evaluations, on their faculty members. This is a relatively new series of observations required by the State Department of Education. It was put into place to carefully monitor and document, on a yearly basis, both quality and effectiveness of instruction by tenured teachers in our system.

2. How does the district provide meaningful feedback and support to its schools and across the district?

Feedback to individual schools is provided through scheduled, monthly leadership team meetings which occur at

the central office. Administrators from every school, as well as district wide staff, meet to discuss any issues and exchange all pertinent information relative to the education of our students.

Depending on the subject matter and timeliness of the scheduled leadership meeting, the director of schools as well as any department supervisor may meet with all or a select few of the building level administrators. Departmental meetings both at a district level as well as individual school level are another way in which feedback is provided.

Support is rendered in numerous ways. Funding, for both staff and materials, and professional development each are important ways in which support is provided to address our district needs. Once a weakness is identified, whether it be curricular, in personnel, or any another area, a plan of action is formulated. These plans are listed in the district TCSPP and in each of the individual school improvement plans. Actual dollars spent is relative to the identified needs and measurable action plans. According to the state report card, our system spends around \$1,300.00 less per student than the state average. Funds must be used in the best interest of our students in order to maximize profitability.

Needs assessments are completed to identify the professional development areas our stakeholders, parents included, feel are most needed. Our professional development calendar is broken down

3. How does the district ensure that the AdvancED standards are met by all the schools and the district as a whole?

AdvancEd standards are a very important component that our district and schools use when writing our long term goals. These goals are found in our Tennessee Comprehensive System Planning Process, TCSPP, as well as in each building's school improvement plan. In addition to state mandated benchmarks for proficiency levels and graduation rates, input from stakeholders is taken into account when writing our system and school level goals.

District level personnel meet on a regular basis to discuss, monitor, and modify various aspects of both the TCSPP as well as building level school improvement plans. Both the district TCSPP as well as individual school improvement plans are based on identifying weaknesses, formulating and implementing plans of improvement, and determining success level. Both plans require an annual self assessment to determine if the goals and action plans align with our anticipated achievement level.

4. How does the district regularly collect, use, and communicate results?

School and system level results are collected in a variety of ways. Observations and walkthroughs are ways in which building and district level administrators monitor the teaching practices and methods of educational staff. The annual report card, from which both system as well as school level information can be gathered, is also a way in which effectiveness is measured. Results of our local benchmark testing provided both information and data to a wide variety of stakeholders, from classroom teachers all the way to district personnel. Many of our programs require parental input in order to meet approval guidelines. This parental input is gathered in various ways. Parent participation in different committees and advisory councils is an integral part of the collection process.

Surveys, either in mass or by various programs, are another useful way that results are obtained.

The information concerning the results is used in making curricular, budgetary, and employment decisions. New programs are evaluated using the results and a decision relating to their continued use is often derived from the data obtained and level of success determined. Needs assessments are conducted by stakeholders in order to build our annual professional development calendar. It is an extensive listing of choices from which our certified personnel can choose based on their interests and identified areas to strengthen. Our local system provides our building level principals the authority to require two days of professional development for the staff in their individual building. This is done to address the specific needs within each of our specific schools. Our system strives to provide our students with every tool needed to achieve. As much attention is paid to determine areas in which we are struggling as there is to identify our strengths. We fully believe that by eliminating, or at least lessening, or weaknesses, our strengths are accentuated.

During the last couple of years, our system has spent a portion of the allotted stimulus fund toward school year grade and departmental level meetings. In previous years, professional development opportunities in this area were held in the summer months. By using the stimulus fund to provide release time for certified staff, our faculties have benefited by having the opportunity to meet, during the school day, multiple times a year. This is especially beneficial when discussing the newest adopted textbook and accompanying materials as well as the changes in curriculum standards.

Achievement results are communicated in various forms. Once the standardized scores are removed from embargo, our system provides our local media, two newspapers and a local radio station, with a press release which identifies both our strengths and weaknesses. These results are made available to our stakeholders with a link on our district website, www.maconcountyschools.com. By using the link, stakeholders can view state, system, and school data in a variety of areas.

Much of the funds used by our schools to provide needed staff, programs, and materials comes from the federal government. Certain requirements, such as advisory meetings complete with stakeholder invitation, are mandatory. Many of our individual schools are schoolwide Title 1 schools. All programs that use federal dollars undergo scheduled monitoring to ensure that fund are being used accordingly.

Conclusion

The following focus questions reflect the school's overall analysis of its internal evaluation of the accreditation standards.

Focus Questions

As you review your responses to the standards, what major trends, themes, or areas of focus emerge that cut across the seven standards?

Perhaps the most prevalent trend or theme found in our system would be the issue of funding, or lack thereof. According to our latest state report card, our system spends \$7,398 per student educating our youth compared to the state average of \$8,773. That is a difference of almost \$1,400, on average. When this is examined further, the percentage of our total that is provided by our local funding is 17.8%, compared with 39% statewide. When one does the math, the amount, in dollars, spent locally to educate our children is approximately \$1,317. When you compare that with the state average of \$3,421, you get a difference of over \$2,000 per student.

While this figure is eye opening, it is not the fault of any one governing body. Our county is a small, rural one in the Upper Cumberland area of Tennessee. We, like many other districts in our area, suffer from a community that does not generate very high tax revenue and this amount must be divided with other county entities in addition to the local school system. Although the addition in the last few years of other fund such as the American Recovery Reinvestment Act (ARRA) as well as the Race to the Top monies that our state was awarded has helped, they provide only temporary assistance in most cases.

Our system does feel that we provide a quality education to our students. We also know that so much more could be accomplished if the funding to support our endeavors was readily available. It is the understanding of everyone that our county provides as much money to local education as they feel comfortable allotting. Great care is taken to ensure that this money is spent in the most beneficial area to promote the highest achievement of our students.

Another area that we have noticed across the board is staffing, both in certified and non-certified positions. It is felt that this is a direct correlation with the above issue. Most of our personnel are local, either being from our county or neighboring counties. We get very few applications from persons willing to relocate to our area. This is due in part to the salaries that we can pay our employees. According to the 2009-10 issue of the Tennessee Education Association Research Report, our system ranks 101st out of 133 school system in licensed educator salaries. Like in many other systems in the Upper Cumberland region, we struggle to find educators to teach the higher levels of math and science. Annually we have an abundance of qualified applicants for very few open positions in the elementary levels, but very few in the secondary areas mentioned previously.

This forces our system to employ persons on a transitional license or with a waiver. While this is perfectly legal, it is not the ideal situation. We have maintained a high level of highly qualified teachers even with these restrictions. Our system, through Title IIA fund, provides monetary assistance to enable these individuals to meet the requirements to become fully licensed and certified.

Even with this area of concern, it is felt that the majority of our teachers do a very good job. Through numerous professional development opportunities, as well as upgraded technology in each of our buildings, we feel that the

students are subject to much more rigorous educational environments as compared to previous years. Our system has also employed reading coaches to promote the teaching of reading in all areas in all grade levels, not just in the elementary grades. Our system has also been researching the addition of math coaches to work with teachers and students to increase the proficiency in our math instruction.

Like was mentioned before, our system believes that we provide a quality education to our students, limitations included. We also know that the issues that we face are similar to those faced by other Tennessee counties. We try to play to our strengths in order to overcompensate for any of our perceived areas of need.

Based on your review of these cross-cutting themes/trends and each of the seven standards, what would you consider to be your school system's greatest strengths?

Our system feels that we have many strengths in various areas at both the school and district levels. We feel that one of our greatest strengths is in the area of professional development. Plans for developing our professional development calendar begin in January of the previous school year. Representatives from each of the schools, as well as central office staff and other stakeholders are involved in the process. Each school is required to administer a needs assessment both employees and a sampling of parents. This gives the professional development committee a better understanding of where our needs lie.

Regular education curriculum is not the only area addressed in the preparation and completion of the inservice schedule. Areas such as technology, special education, career-technical education, school safety, and coordinated school health are all well represented on both the committee and in the final professional development opportunities that are offered.

Our system professional development offerings are not limited to summer months. Both state and federal funds are used to allow our staff members the opportunity to attend numerous workshops, conferences, and meetings at local, state, and, at times, national levels. The information gained can then be presented to building and/or district level staff members. Our district strives to ensure that our professional development opportunities are of high quality and are scientifically research based.

Technology is another area that we feel is a strength in our system. Even though we are a small, rural system with around a 60% free and reduced lunch ratio, we feel our technology is on the forefront. Technology funds are joined by federal, state, and local monies to ensure that our students have access to top quality equipment and programs.

Currently, we have fiber-optic lines throughout the system. This provides our teachers and students the ability to access information at a rate above the state norm. It also allows our system to operate a WAN from which each of our buildings can utilize. One of our schools, Westside Elementary School, has been recognized as a "Smart Showcase School". In order to achieve this standing, the school had to provide a plan and submit documentation that shows how their technology is being used by their teachers and students. When awarded, this school was one of only two in Tennessee to received such an honor. In addition to this honor, this school also houses a working weather station from which data is gathered and images viewed via multiple media devices such as computers and cell phones. This not only benefits the school, but also our community as well as surrounding communities.

What would you consider to be your school system's greatest challenges?

With the introduction of new, more rigorous curriculum standards, scores needed to achieve proficiency have become more difficult to attain. While it is commonly felt that our teachers have taken to this challenge and experienced some degree of success, it is also understood that this is only the first step. During this year, and subsequent years, the percentage required to achieve adequate yearly progress, AYP, will continue to increase.

The minimum levels of proficiency required by the State Department of Education were lowered with the introduction of the new standards. All of our schools, as well as the district, made AYP in the most recent release of the report card.

Schools tested during the 2009-10 school year were required to attain a benchmark of 32% in Reading/Language Arts and 20% in Mathematics in order to meet AYP. 50% of Macon County K-9 students were at least proficient in Reading/Language Arts while only 32% of the same students were proficient in Mathematics. High school percentages were 66% in Reading/Language Arts while the Mathematics section scored at the 31% level. Next year, and in subsequent years, the benchmark percentages increase by 17% in Reading/Language Arts and by 20% in Mathematics. The yearly increase will continue until the benchmark reaches 100%.

Another challenge our system faces occurs primarily only in the secondary level. Due to the fact that our system is in a rural area, with little to no industry, it is often difficult to recruit and ultimately retain certified, highly qualified teachers in specific areas. Most of our employees are from this general area, so the candidate pool is often limited. This forces our system to employ persons either on a transitional license or on a waiver. While each of these two options is perfectly legal and allows the teacher to gain years of experience both with the state and system, it is not optimal. Ideally, candidates with prior knowledge and interest in the area of need would be hired. However, our system sets aside a certain amount of Title IIA funds to assist these teachers in fulfilling the requirements to become fully certified and highly qualified. These funds can be used to pay for both course work as well as Praxis series tests.

Another area of concern faced by our system is continuity. Our school system operates under a Director of Schools, appointed by the Macon County Board of Education. Since the 2006-07 school year, there have been five Directors of Schools, two of which served, or are now serving, on an interim basis. While our system has conducted business as usual, school environments are structured from the top down. With the frequent changes, it has been a challenge to function at the highest level on a continual basis.

Naturally, as with any system, there are always areas of concern that need to be addressed. The above mentioned areas are the ones felt to be our greatest challenges and our primary focus for improvement.

How will you use the insights gained from this self-assessment to inform and enhance your quality assurance and continuous improvement efforts?

The district accreditation process has definitely made our system more aware of district strengths and area of need. In the past, focus, by most of the school employees, centered in their specific classroom and school. Whereas now, it is felt that in addition to each of those areas, all stakeholders throughout our community as a whole, are mindful of the district levels in both strengths and areas of need.

This process has forced our system to concentrate our efforts into looking at the big picture instead of a majority just looking at their own reflection. It is agreed that this system wide look at ourselves was long overdue. It is both the intention and responsibility of all stakeholders involved to continue this introspective look in future years. Through completing this entire assessment, we feel that we have been given a blueprint of our system as it stands now. By using both the TCSPP as well as the individual school improvement plans from each of the schools, district areas of need can be better identified and more cohesive action plans written to address those areas.

Standards Assessment Report Summary

Standards & Indicators	Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
1. Vision & Purpose				
1.1 Establishes a vision and purpose for the system in collaboration with its stakeholders				✓
1.2 Communicates the system's vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support				✓
1.3 Identifies system-wide goals and measures to advance the vision				✓
1.4 Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the system, its students, and the community				✓
1.5 Ensures that the system's vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process and the strategic direction of schools, departments, and services				✓
1.6 Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate				✓
2. Governance & Leadership				
2.1 Establishes and communicates policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the system				✓
2.2 Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership authority of the administrative head of the system			✓	
2.3 Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations				✓
2.4 Implements policies and procedures that provide for the orientation and training of the governing board				✓
2.5 Builds public support, secures sufficient resources, and acts as a steward of the system's resources				✓
2.6 Maintains access to legal counsel to advise or obtain information about legal requirements and obligations				✓
2.7 Maintains adequate insurance or equivalent resources to protect its financial stability and administrative operations				✓
2.8 Provides for systematic analysis and review of student performance and school and system effectiveness				✓
2.9 Creates and supports collaborative networks of stakeholders to support system programs				✓
2.10 Provides direction, assistance, and resources to align, support, and enhance all parts of the system in meeting organizational and student performance goals				✓
2.11 Provides internal and external stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership				✓
2.12 Assesses and addresses community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction			✓	
2.13 Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel				✓
3. Teaching & Learning				
3.1 Develops, articulates, and coordinates curriculum based on clearly- defined expectations for student learning, including essential knowledge and skills			✓	
3.2 Establishes expectations and supports student engagement in the learning process, including opportunities for students to explore application of higher order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning			✓	
3.3 Ensures that system-wide curricular and instructional decisions are based on data and research at all levels				✓
3.4 Supports instruction that is research-based and reflective of best practice				✓
3.5 Supports a curriculum that challenges and meets the needs of each student, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity				✓
3.6 Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning			✓	
3.7 Maintains articulation among and between all levels of schooling to monitor student performance and ensure readiness for future schooling or employment			✓	
3.8 Supports the implementation of interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning			✓	
3.9 Maintains a system-wide climate that supports student learning			✓	
3.10 Ensures that curriculum is reviewed and revised at regular intervals				✓
3.11 Coordinates and ensures ready access to instructional technology, information and media services, and materials needed for effective instruction				✓
4. Documenting & Using Results				
4.1 Establishes and implements a comprehensive assessment system, aligned with the system's expectations for student learning, that yields information which is reliable, valid, and bias free			✓	
4.2 Ensures that student assessment data are used to make decisions for continuous improvement of				

teaching and learning			✓	
4.3 Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness, including support systems, and uses the results to improve student and system performance			✓	
4.4 Provides a system of communication which uses a variety of methods to report student performance and system effectiveness to all stakeholders				✓
4.5 Uses comparison and trend data from comparable school systems to evaluate student performance and system effectiveness			✓	
4.6 Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance that is supported by multiple sources of evidence			✓	
4.7 Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations				✓
5. Resource & Support Systems				
5.1 Establishes and implements processes to recruit, employ, retain, and mentor qualified professional and support staff to fulfill assigned roles and responsibilities				✓
5.2 Establishes and implements a process to assign professional and support staff based on system needs and staff qualifications as may be required by federal and state law and regulations (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience)				✓
5.3 Establishes and implements a process to design, evaluate, and improve professional development and ensures participation by all faculty and staff				✓
5.4 Ensures that staff are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school system and to meet federal and state law and regulations, if applicable				✓
5.5 Engages in long-range budgetary planning and annually budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement				✓
5.6 Ensures that all financial transactions are safeguarded through proper budgetary procedures and audited accounting measures			✓	
5.7 Maintains sites, facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, orderly, and healthy environment				✓
5.8 Establishes and implements written security and crisis management plans with appropriate training for stakeholders				✓
5.9 Implements processes and plans for maintaining and improving sites, facilities, and equipment			✓	
5.10 Provides technology infrastructure and equipment that is up-to-date and sufficient to accomplish the system's goals				✓
5.11 Provides and coordinates support services that meet the health, counseling, nutrition, safety, co-curricular, transportation, and special learning needs of all students				✓
5.12 Provides student support services coordinated with the school, home, and community				✓
6. Stakeholder Communications & Relationships				
6.1 Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning				✓
6.2 Uses system-wide strategies to listen to and communicate with stakeholders				✓
6.3 Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the system				✓
6.4 Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders				✓
6.5 Provides information that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders				✓
7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement				
7.1 Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the system is pursuing (Vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, system effectiveness, and the community (Profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (Plan); and documents and uses the results to inform future improvement efforts (Results)				✓
7.2 Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement			✓	
7.3 Ensures that each school's plan for continuous improvement is aligned with the system's vision and expectations for student learning			✓	
7.4 Ensures that each school's plan for continuous improvement includes a focus on increasing learning for all students and closing gaps between current and expected student performance levels				✓
7.5 Provides research-based professional development for system and school personnel to help them achieve improvement goals				✓
7.6 Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders			✓	
7.7 Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement			✓	
7.8 Allocates and protects time for planning and engaging in continuous improvement efforts system-wide				✓
7.9 Provides direction and assistance to its schools and operational units to support their continuous improvement efforts			✓	