

# Report of the External Review Team for Murray County School System

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# Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Use of Diagnostic Tools

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

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

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

## Index of Education Quality

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

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

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

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

## **Benchmark Data**

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

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

## **Powerful Practices**

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

## Opportunities for Improvement

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

## Improvement Priorities

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

## The Review

Murray County School District (MCSD) in Chatsworth, Georgia, hosted a four-day AdvancED Public School Systems External Review on December 4-7, 2016. The six-member team consisted of three members, including the Associate Lead Evaluator, from Georgia, one team member from Alabama, and one from Florida. The Lead Evaluator was from North Carolina. The Team members had experience as instructors of various disciplines and levels. Team members had served in roles as school and district administrators, curriculum directors, technology supervisors, Federal programs administrators, professional learning directors, and research and assessment analysts.

The liaisons from MCSD and the Lead Evaluator began contact in the late summer of 2016, with discussion of logistics, school selections and the district's Internal Review process. Numerous emails and calls took place in the weeks leading up to the Team's arrival on site. Roughly three weeks prior to the start of the Review, the system made available a Dropbox file containing the system artifacts, all organized by Standard and Indicator. The system also provided state reports on student performance trends and demographics for each school, as well as a list of schools that were visited during the 2012 AdvancED Quality Assurance Review. From this information the Lead Evaluator selected six schools that represented a cross-section of the system as a whole, while ensuring that over the course of two accreditation cycles, all schools would have hosted members of a

review team.

Team members participated in a conference call roughly a month prior to the Review, during which expectations, roles, team assignments and logistics were discussed in detail. All members of the Team reviewed the district accreditation reports, the reports of the schools that they were assigned to visit, as well as artifacts shared by the system.

The External Review Team wishes to extend its appreciation for the professionalism, thorough preparation, hospitality and transparency to the staff of Murray County School District with regard to all aspects of the Review. The central office liaisons were unfailingly conscientious and responsive to questions from the Lead Evaluator. The school leadership members were extremely cordial during the school visits. More importantly, the Internal Review was conducted in excellent fashion. To prepare for the External Review, MCSD conducted surveys with high participation from stakeholders. The system availed itself of training from the Georgia AdvancED Office. The central office leadership established committees to examine the system performance on all five standards who met over six months time to conduct an Internal Review and Self-Assessment. It should be noted that the Internal Review took place during a time of high institutional change, three individuals having served as superintendent in the preceding year.

Stakeholders were interviewed by members of the External Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's effectiveness and student performance. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the External Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Interviewed	Number
Superintendents	1
Board Members	7
Administrators	33
Instructional Staff	94
Support Staff	3
Students	87
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>



# Results

## Teaching and Learning Impact

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.1	The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	2.17	2.69
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	2.67	2.49
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	2.67	2.59
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	2.83	2.71
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	3.00	2.58
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	2.33	2.48
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	3.00	2.60

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.8	The system and all of its schools engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keep them informed of their children's learning progress.	3.00	2.97
3.9	The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience.	2.50	2.50
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	2.83	2.47
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	2.67	2.65
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	3.00	2.64

### Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	3.00	2.66
5.2	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning.	2.50	2.49
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	2.50	2.15
5.4	The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	2.83	2.50
5.5	System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders.	3.17	2.75

### Student Performance Diagnostic

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

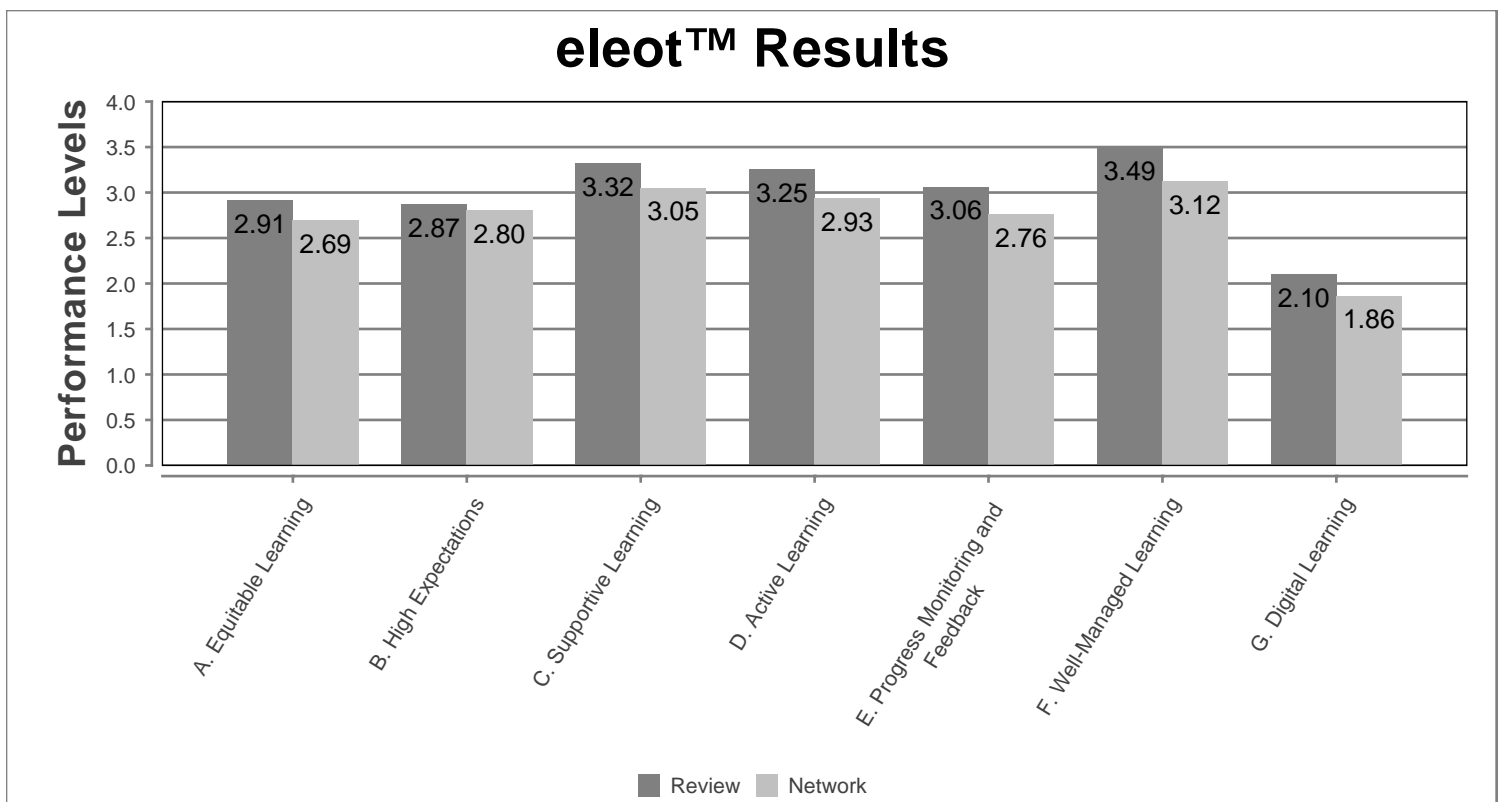
learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	2.83	3.33
Test Administration	3.17	3.52
Equity of Learning	2.50	2.54
Quality of Learning	3.00	2.96

## Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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

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



The Team conducted 62 classroom observations. The Well-Managed Learning Environment and the Supportive Learning Environment were the two with the highest averages, 3.49 and 3.32, respectively. Both of these were above the AdvancED Network (AEN) averages of 3.12 and 3.05. The Active Learning Environment was rated at 3.25, compared to the AEN average of 2.93. The Progress Monitoring and Equitable Learning Environments were rated at 3.06 and 2.91, respectively, compared to AEN averages of 2.76 and

2.69. Digital Learning Environments and High Expectations Environment received the lowest ratings, 2.10 and 2.87, respectively. Both of these were above the AEN averages of 1.86 and 2.80.

The Well-Managed Learning Environment rating was supported by superior student behavior and engagement. All five indicators in this environment were rated above 3. The two highest-rated indicators were "Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers" and "Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences." One might surmise that the system's focus on Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) at all schools has yielded important benefits for school and classroom cultures, as noted in one of the Powerful Practices cited by the External Review Team. A related highly-rated indicator is A3 ("Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied"), which also contributes to a sense of fairness and equity applying the PBIS standards.

The Active Learning Environment was another high-rated environment in relation to the AEN. Team members noted that teachers provided many opportunities for students to engage in discussions with one another and/or to work collaboratively on classroom tasks. Teachers also provided a relatively large number of connections between classroom activities and real-life experiences. The Team applied these data in making judgments about ratings for several indicators in Standards 1 and 3 that speak to challenging learning experiences that prepare students for their futures.

The Supportive Learning Environment rating reflected student displays of positive attitudes and overall willingness to participate in classroom activities. Generally speaking, teachers observed were supportive of students and provided targeted assistance whenever necessary.

The Digital Learning Environment rating reflected sporadic student use of digital technology, especially in the area of creating original works.

The High Expectations Environment rating was somewhat lower than the others, reflecting the unevenness across schools in providing opportunities for higher order thinking and teacher use of exemplars. During interviews a number of system and school level leaders, including instructional coaches, expressed the need to raise the level of rigor across classrooms.

All environment ratings were above the AdvancED Environment Network ratings. The Team concluded that there is a connection between the system's well-managed, positive school and classroom environments and the high level of active learning in classrooms with strong student engagement. In other words, teachers are confident enough in their classroom management skills to empower students to take ownership of their learning and to work collaboratively.

**eleot™ Data Summary**

A. Equitable Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.58	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	32.26%	17.74%	25.81%	24.19%
2.	3.61	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	62.90%	35.48%	1.61%	0.00%
3.	3.60	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	62.90%	33.87%	3.23%	0.00%
4.	1.84	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	8.06%	24.19%	11.29%	56.45%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.91</b>						

B. High Expectations			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.24	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	38.71%	48.39%	11.29%	1.61%
2.	3.13	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	33.87%	48.39%	14.52%	3.23%
3.	2.19	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	9.68%	32.26%	25.81%	32.26%
4.	2.90	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	29.03%	40.32%	22.58%	8.06%
5.	2.87	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	32.26%	33.87%	22.58%	11.29%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.87</b>						

C. Supportive Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.44	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	48.39%	48.39%	1.61%	1.61%
2.	3.58	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	59.68%	38.71%	1.61%	0.00%
3.	3.37	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	46.77%	46.77%	3.23%	3.23%
4.	3.39	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	50.00%	40.32%	8.06%	1.61%
5.	2.81	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	30.65%	38.71%	11.29%	19.35%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.32</b>						

D. Active Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.35	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	51.61%	35.48%	9.68%	3.23%
2.	2.82	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	37.10%	30.65%	9.68%	22.58%
3.	3.58	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	67.74%	24.19%	6.45%	1.61%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.25</b>						



<b>E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	2.98	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	41.94%	27.42%	17.74%	12.90%
2.	3.18	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	45.16%	33.87%	14.52%	6.45%
3.	3.27	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	40.32%	48.39%	9.68%	1.61%
4.	2.76	Understands how her/his work is assessed	19.35%	50.00%	17.74%	12.90%
5.	3.10	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	43.55%	29.03%	20.97%	6.45%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.06</b>						

<b>F. Well-Managed Learning</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	3.68	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	70.97%	27.42%	0.00%	1.61%
2.	3.66	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	67.74%	30.65%	1.61%	0.00%
3.	3.21	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	46.77%	40.32%	0.00%	12.90%
4.	3.23	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	50.00%	33.87%	4.84%	11.29%
5.	3.69	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	69.35%	30.65%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.49</b>						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.19	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	32.26%	8.06%	6.45%	53.23%
2.	2.06	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	27.42%	8.06%	8.06%	56.45%
3.	2.03	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	25.81%	11.29%	3.23%	59.68%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.10</b>						

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Construct a consistent, comprehensive, system-wide body of curriculum support materials and strategies to ensure rigorous instruction in all classrooms.

(Indicator 3.1, Indicator 3.3, Indicator 3.4)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.1

#### Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with central office leaders and school leadership teams provided evidence of significant collaboration relating to improving teaching and learning. In addition, school teacher interviews revealed a collaborative culture across the school system whereby instructional strategies are generated and shared among teachers, instructional coaches, school-based and central office leadership.

The Murray County School District’s Standards-Based Classroom Handbook provides a solid framework for communicating foundational elements as well as district expectations including but not limited to the following: Non-Negotiable Practices for High-Impact Student Achievement; the Instructional Delivery Model; a Standards-Based Classroom Checklist; and Quality-Plus Teaching Strategies for English Language Learners.

Murray County School District’s Performance Leadership Handbook also provides a framework by which school-based leadership can develop a collaborative culture for teaching and learning.

MCSO has emphasized summative student performance outcomes, as measured by the Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade and End-of-Course Assessments in English and language arts, mathematics, science and social

studies, to build professional learning communities that often guided by instructional coaches at each school. These have been focused on analysis of formative, benchmark and summative data.

While there was evidence of instructional protocols in place for high-impact instructional delivery, there was also significant evidence that revealed gaps in a comprehensive body of curriculum and support materials available to all teachers, including a lack of cohesive, collaborative process for researching and sharing the work of school teams on instructional strategies and materials to benefit the system as a whole. The result is inefficiency as well as inadequate checks on the validity of instructional practices. Additionally, instructional materials were in relatively short supply, though a reading grant has provided a source of instructional materials. This grant is sunsetting at the end of the current school year. Evidence also revealed that the Murray County School District was scored as emerging on the April 2015 Georgia Department of Education Review in the areas of support for curriculum, instruction, and assessments; the review specifically cited the need to provide a collaborative and systematic approach for guiding, supporting and evaluating the implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Evidence also revealed that although MCSD had a widespread Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiative, more intentional evidence should include district-wide digital curriculum resources supported by a comprehensive learning management system or platform.

The 62 eleot observations across MCSD indicated a rating of 2.19 for providing exemplars of high quality work to students; 1.84 for ongoing opportunities for students to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences as evidenced in curriculum practices; and 2.06 for the use of digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning. These highlighted indicators illuminate challenges associated with the lack of a comprehensive, systematic body of curriculum materials and strategies codified by grade-level and content area for consistent implementation among all schools.

In summary, there was limited evidence of comprehensive evidence of a repository of instructional materials codified by grade-level, content area, and differentiated learning levels. There was also limited evidence of comprehensive of a learning management system by which teachers can receive system-wide, common instructional content aligned to state content standards. Addressing these issues over time can improve the system's professional culture, increase efficiency and better serve students.

### **Opportunity For Improvement**

Adopt a framework for instructional technology that can be used to develop a shared vision for the 21st century classroom.

(Indicator 3.2, Indicator 3.6)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.2

#### Evidence and Rationale

Murray County School District is in its second year of its Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program. Schools are supported in the use of technology through the improvement of technology infrastructure, a system

instructional technologist, school-based media specialists and teacher-leaders.

While there are commonality of technology platforms and software programs, Team visits show a high level of flexibility for school usage in technology, resulting in somewhat diverse results. This variation of technology has potential to negatively impact professional learning, effective usage, and technology support. Artifacts, interviews with students, teachers and leaders along with eleot ratings (2.10) support this opportunity for improvement.

The development of a shared vision, adoption of a framework/standards and a process to help teachers and leaders incorporate research-based instructional technology strategies in the classroom will help increase student growth and achievement as a direct result of the initiative. These might include a review of the International Society for Technology Education (ISTE) Essential Conditions and adoption of ISTE Standards, Levels of Teaching Innovation, T-PACK (Content-knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge, and Technological Knowledge), Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition (SAM-R), or the Technology Integration Matrix. Digital Citizenship curricula should also be explored, i.e., Common Sense Education.

Modeling, coaching and evaluating technology best practices during job-embedded professional learning can help the system make the most of recent technology innovations, including its relatively new Bring Your Own Device initiative.

### **Opportunity For Improvement**

Establish protocols and procedures for using student outcome data to determine student readiness and success in both post-secondary education and careers.

(Indicator 5.2, Indicator 5.4, SF2. Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis, SP2. Test Administration, SP3. Quality of Learning)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.4

#### Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with Murray County School District superintendent, central office leaders, teachers as well as classroom observations and artifact review revealed very intentional and comprehensive efforts to establish a culture aligned to ensuring that all students graduate. The Commit to Graduate (C2G) initiative and its corresponding activities were visible in all schools. Students in grades PK - 12 who were interviewed during school and classroom visits were able to articulate their graduation goals with clarity. The C2G initiative also includes a focus on building a college-going culture within all schools, and students become aware of post-secondary options as early as the primary school.

While C2G builds college awareness among students, interviews with central office leaders as well as school-level leadership at both North Murray and Murray County High Schools revealed an underutilization of longitudinal student outcomes as well as research-based post-secondary transition practices that support the direct, ongoing follow-up and monitoring of student readiness for and success at the next level, a key

component of AdvancED Standard 5.4. The high school visitations and interviews revealed minimal evidence of research on postsecondary student college results, including gathering of data on post-secondary success rates of students enrolled in collegiate remedial and/or developmental courses. Evidence review and school-based interviews at both MCSD high schools also revealed limited foci on continuous benchmarking of student career success, by examining success rates of students who matriculate through the system's multiple Career, Technical and Agricultural (CTAE) academic pathways. The system evidence revealed minimal comprehensive and systematic approaches to aligning postsecondary transition initiatives to include systematic career pathway alignment to business and industry placement as well as systematic alignment to in and out-of-state postsecondary institutions toward building strong articulation agreements.

Research into student progress after high school could yield valuable information for evaluating the success of the system's programs.

### **Opportunity For Improvement**

Evaluate the current status of the alternative school to ensure equitable placement of students, provide appropriate program resources, focus on career readiness, and minimize negative stigma.

(Indicator 1.3, Indicator 3.12, Indicator 4.8)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.12

#### Evidence and Rationale

Graduation data, team visits, and the ongoing school building renovations show that Pleasant Valley Innovative School (PVIS) has evolved to provide a growing collection of services, impressive student performance, blended and online learning, and a safe, caring, yet demanding staff and school environment. Current enrollment for the three (3) programs housed at PVIS -- the Newcomer Center, the alternative high school, and the short-term disciplinary placement program -- show an extremely high student/teacher ratio, though there are plans to move that student/teacher ratio to 20:1.

Superintendent, central office, principal and school staff interviews led to the team's perception that the two high schools have arguably unrealistically high graduation rates through placement of students who are behind in credits and not on track for timely graduation at the Pleasant Valley Innovative School. Currently, high school students that enroll in PVIS are taken off the rolls of their sending school. In addition, there are discrepancies in how some high school staff perceive the referral process, averring that it was voluntary on the part of students; system staff communicated that placements were mandatory.

While there is some focus on career preparation, there is a need for the students who attend the alternative school to participate in career programs either on site or at their home high school in order to increase the likelihood of producing career-ready high school graduates.

A thorough evaluation of the alternative school's status, i.e., school v. program, with an eye toward ensuring that students have access to essential curriculum can increase the effectiveness of the alternative education in

the district.

# Leadership Capacity

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

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

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

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

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

## Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	3.67	2.68
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	3.00	2.68
1.3	The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	3.17	2.90
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	2.67	2.65

## Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	3.17	2.97
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.33	2.96
2.3	The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	3.00	3.17
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	3.00	3.03
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	3.00	2.74



Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	2.83	2.70

## Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

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

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

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Questionnaire Administration	4.00	3.42
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	4.00	3.03

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Utilize the district strategic planning process to foster systemic, district-wide collaboration and alignment among all schools.

(Indicator 1.4, Indicator 3.2, Indicator 3.11)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.4

#### Evidence and Rationale

The district is at the end of its five-year cycle on its current strategic plan, with a new strategic plan to be devised to cover 2017-2022. The Superintendent indicated that the AdvancED External Review was timed to provide assistance to the district as it embarks on its impending strategic planning process.

School visits provided evidence that collaboration within schools is outstanding, with strong expectations and structures for collaboration among teacher teams supported by instructional coaches and administrators. However, there is a lack of cross school collaboration in regard to curriculum development, professional

learning, meeting protocols, district frameworks, and procedures. According to district leaders, there is no district professional learning plan. School and district leaders acknowledged that the district strategic plan and the school improvement plans are not well aligned. While the district uses a Balanced Scorecard to track its progress on strategic goals, district leaders stated that after a change in state assessments the district had not revamped its analytical tools comparably. According to interviews with school leaders, vertical planning among schools takes place, e.g., through district grade-level meetings, but that it is not yet strategic and fully developed. A robust strategic planning process can provide a means for evaluating the efficacy of such initiatives as the district teacher induction program.

Using the district strategic planning process to foster systemic, district-wide collaboration and horizontal and vertical alignment between schools can aid the district's movement from a system of schools to a school system.

### **Powerful Practice**

Murray County School District has clear buy-in to the its mission, which is centered on success for all students.

(Indicator 1.1, Indicator 1.3)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.3

#### Evidence and Rationale

The widespread dissemination and publication of the mission statement ("Committed to student success -- No Excuses! No Exceptions!") was unmistakable, appearing on stationery letterheads, in buildings, in community kiosks, on the system and school websites and in publications. Its currency was clearly communicated in interviews with board members, system and school staff, as well as in the presentations by the superintendent and standards committees. The Accreditation Report cited regular processes, notably a "Lend Your Voice" event, for internal and stakeholders to review and reaffirm the mission and purpose of the district and revise its focuses as needed.

The particular and consistent expression of the mission statement is centered on empowering every student to reach graduation. Every school acknowledges its role in promoting graduation. All schools -- even the preschool, which communicates to its current charges that they are members of the Class of 2030 -- have displays and/or conveys messages which show the importance of graduation. As the only national "Commit To Graduate" (C2G) model district, the system has documented success in increasing graduation rates over time.

In addition the system looks beyond academic success to provide supports for its students. Murray County faces serious economic challenges: a declining tax base, high unemployment, and a lack of resources that other communities take for granted, e.g., the county does not have a pediatric practice within its borders. The system has worked intensively to provide supports for students' social, emotional and physical needs by working with partners to meet students' medical, dental and psychological needs.

A system-wide set of purposes and beliefs tied to specific measurable outcomes is a sign of a district that is intentional in providing high quality services to its students and their families.

### **Powerful Practice**

The district has institutionalized a culture with common norms for student behavior and an impetus to address the needs of all students.

(Indicator 1.3)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.3

#### Evidence and Rationale

The Accreditation Report, interviews with multiple stakeholders and school visits provided clear evidence of the impact of MCSD's long-term, systemic implementation of the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS). Central office leaders have cited the program as a reason for the decline in office referrals from 3,907 in 2012 to 334 (including bus referrals) in 2016. System data show substantial student and administrator hours regained over a number of years through this reduction in discipline referrals. It is not surprising that MCSD is recognized as a leader in implementation of PBIS through annual evaluations by state and local personnel.

In addition, MCSD looks beyond academic success to provide supports for its students. Murray County faces serious economic challenges: a declining tax base, high unemployment, and a lack of resources that other communities take for granted, e.g., the county does not have a pediatric practice within its borders. The system has worked intensively to provide supports for students' social, emotional and physical needs by working with partners to meet students' medical, dental and psychological needs.

The eleot data show extremely high scores in the areas of the Equitable Learning Environment and Well-Managed Learning Environment, notably, "Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied," "Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences," and "Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers." These three indicator scores can be attributed to the effective implementation of PBIS in the system.

Each school has room for individual choice in implementing the PBIS framework, particularly in the development of a school level rewards system. In addition, PBIS is used to reward positive adult behaviors as well as those of students.

Effective long-term implementation of PBIS as well as efforts to provide wraparound services to students has resulted in high levels of consistency across schools as well as high achievement.

# Resource Utilization

The use and distribution of resources must be aligned and supportive of the needs of an institution and the students served. Institutions must ensure that resources are aligned with the stated mission and are distributed equitably so that the needs of students are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes an examination of the allocation and use of resources, the equity of resource distribution to need, the ability of the institution to ensure appropriate levels of funding and sustainability of resources, as well as evidence of long-range capital and resource planning effectiveness.

Institutions, regardless of their size, need access to sufficient resources and systems of support to be able to engage in sustained and meaningful efforts that result in a continuous improvement cycle. Indeed, a study conducted by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (Pan, D., Rudo, Z., Schneider, C., & Smith-Hansen, L., 2003) "demonstrated a strong relationship between resources and student success... both the level of resources and their explicit allocation seem to affect educational outcomes."

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in the more than 32,000 institutions in the AdvancED Network that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The institution provides a safe learning environment for students and staff. The institution provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff members to improve their effectiveness and ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

## Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.1	The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs.	2.83	2.87
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations.	3.00	2.87
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	2.67	3.06
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	2.83	2.76

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	3.00	2.73
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	2.83	2.72
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	3.00	2.58
4.8	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	3.00	2.60

# Conclusion

Murray County School District has a record of strong improvement since its first system accreditation visit in 2012, which coincided with the launch of a five-year strategic plan. The system has remained true to a common mission and purpose, while deepening stakeholders buy-in. Graduation rates -- the central measure of the system's own success -- have increased through intentional efforts and have led to widespread understanding of the roles of stakeholders in promoting student achievement. Despite very serious fiscal challenges, MCSD has increased some of its support services to students, often through innovative partnerships and aggressive pursuit of grants. The adoption of a 160-day calendar equivalent in instructional time to a traditional 180-day calendar has allowed for considerable cost-saving while not appearing have a negative impact on student learning. Furlough days have largely been restored, except for two remaining furlough days for classified staff. The system has been able to increase the salary scale to maintain competitiveness with neighboring districts. Maintaining and increasing resources while keeping millage rates constant as the tax base declines will be an ongoing challenge for MCSD's governance and leadership.

Curriculum improvements have centered on internalizing new standards and assessments aligned with the Georgia Milestones, though staff are keenly aware of areas of need in reading and mathematics. Dual enrollment programs for high school students have proved extremely popular and have provided opportunities for students to get a taste of post-secondary instruction while still in high school. The system has put in place a cadre of very talented instructional coaches and is in the process of defining their duties so that they are able to maximize their support for teachers. MCSD has used its funds to increase the availability of instructional technology and has put in place a functional infrastructure. As the recently-started Bring Your Own Device initiative evolves, the technological infrastructure will need to be continuously updated. The combination of capable instructional leaders, adequate formative, benchmarking and summative assessment tools, and expectations for data analysis and use put MCSD in good stead as it gauges student achievement. Ongoing challenges have included ensuring a steady stream of school staff and leaders, though the system's new leadership development process is a hopeful sign.

MCSD has used a Balanced Scorecard to capture its work in achieving strategic goals. It is significant that this External Review coincides with the expiration of the current strategic plan, and that in 2017 the system intends to develop a new plan to guide its decisions for the next five years. The time is ripe for a full examination of ways that leadership, teaching and learning, and resource use coalesce to promote student success.

In addition, the system has developed and used two important documents: a leadership handbook and standards-based classroom handbook, designed to set clear expectations and guidelines for leaders and instructional staff. MCSD has clear standards for student learning, assessment systems, and pacing guides for various classes. A support structure is in place at each school to guide professional collaboration. As noted in one of the Improvement Priorities, there is no cohesive structure for capturing the work of individual school curriculum teams, though there are system-wide grade-level meetings and sporadic vertical articulation conversations. Conversations and interviews with numerous instructional leaders indicated a widely-held concern about the consistent instructional rigor across schools, a perception corroborated by the External Review Team's elect observations. Development of a curriculum bank of the best work developed by school

teams or gleaned from research outside of the system aligned to specific standards will promote efficiency, eliminate duplication of effort, and increase collective ownership. It is incumbent upon the central office curriculum staff (1) to curate such materials to ensure that they are truly based on sound instructional practice, and (2) to identify and use these resources as exemplars of appropriate rigor.

The foregoing are the themes of the two Improvement Priorities noted in this report. Four subsidiary areas (captured in Opportunities for Improvement) can help the district implement the priorities. First, the system should consider a close examination of the alternative program in order to ensure that there is no inadvertent abdication of ownership for a sometimes challenging student population by the regular schools. Second, perhaps in connection with its work on collaboration on curriculum resource bank, the district can work on common frameworks for technology integration. MCSD has done some exciting preliminary work in revamping its media centers so that they are truly engaging learning centers; developing some common understandings of how technology is best deployed in the 21st century classroom can only assist the entire instructional staff. Finally, the Team has noted -- and praised -- Murray County School District's remarkable success in helping students reach graduation. The Team suggests that the district go one step further by researching the post-graduation paths of its students, whether by accessing data from post-secondary institutions, conducting interviews with employers, holding focus groups of recent graduates, among other means. Gathering such data will help give a more accurate picture of the success and needs of the system than can be gleaned by summative achievement data alone.

## **Improvement Priorities**

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

- Construct a consistent, comprehensive, system-wide body of curriculum support materials and strategies to ensure rigorous instruction in all classrooms.
- Utilize the district strategic planning process to foster systemic, district-wide collaboration and alignment among all schools.

# Accreditation Recommendation

## Index of Education Quality

The Index of Education Quality (IEQ™) provides a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of indicators and evaluative criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus.

The IEQ™ comprises three domains: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; and 3) the use of resources and data to support and optimize learning.

The overall and domain scores can range from 100-400. The domain scores are derived from: the AdvancED Standards and indicators ratings; results of the Analysis of Student Performance; and data from Stakeholder Feedback Surveys (students, parents, and staff).

	External Review IEQ Score	AdvancED Network Average
Overall Score	293.09	278.94
Teaching and Learning Impact	276.98	268.48
Leadership Capacity	323.61	293.71
Resource Utilization	289.58	286.27

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

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



# Addenda

## Individual Institution Results (Self-reported)

Institution Name	Teaching and Learning Impact	Leadership Capacity	Resource Utilization	Overall IEQ Score
Bagley Middle School	400.00	400.00	385.71	397.44
Chatsworth Elementary School	342.86	336.36	371.43	346.15
Coker Elementary School	295.24	327.27	285.71	302.56
Eton Elementary School	319.05	345.45	285.71	320.51
Gladden Middle School	366.67	363.64	342.86	361.54
Murray County High School	304.76	345.45	300.00	315.38
North Murray High School	309.52	318.18	314.29	312.82
Northwest Elementary School	328.57	345.45	357.14	338.46
Pleasant Valley Innovative School	266.67	300.00	285.71	279.49
Spring Place Elementary School	333.33	363.64	328.57	341.03
Woodlawn Elementary School	347.62	336.36	314.29	338.46

# Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Michael E. Lodico	Michael Lodico spent 31 years in the public schools of North Carolina, serving as teacher, curriculum specialist, school administrator, regional center consultant, and central office director. He retired as assistant superintendent for curriculum of Asheville City Schools in 2008. He has degrees from Cornell University and Western Carolina University. His doctoral dissertation (2003) was a study of the characteristics of most improved high schools in North Carolina. He has worked as a Lead Evaluator for AdvancED since 2010, leading review teams in 14 states.
Dr. Adria Griffin	Adria Griffin currently serves as the Director of State and Federal Programs for Marietta City Schools in Marietta, GA. Previous school and system experience includes serving as the Executive Director of Curriculum and Federal Programs in Jasper County, GA; and Middle School Curriculum Director, Professional Learning Director, Assistant Principal and teacher in Newton and Walton Counties, GA. Areas of expertise are school improvement, curriculum and instruction and federal program management.
Dr. Agnes E Smith	Dr. Agnes E. Smith recently retired as an associate professor in the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education at the University of South Alabama. She taught graduate courses in instructional leadership, mentoring, and curriculum development. Prior to her work at USA, Dr. Smith was principal of a Grades K-8 school in Baldwin County, Alabama. She is the author of numerous articles related to instructional leadership, and she is co-author of a case studies book. Dr. Smith's research centered on factors that sustain effective local school leadership. She serves as a Lead Evaluator with AdvancED working most recently with teams in Georgia, Arkansas, South Carolina, Nevada and Wyoming.
Mr. Barry M. Farley	Barry Farley currently serves as Director of Evaluation & Accountability in Lake County Schools in the central Florida area, overseeing assessment, accountability, and program evaluation. He has degrees in K-12 Music Education and in Educational Guidance & Counseling, and served as an Army Bandsman and professional musician. At Lake County Schools, he also served as a band director, coach, statistician, program specialist, and evaluation and compensation analyst. For 25 years he was the District Coordinator for Assessment.
Mrs. Charlotte A. Oglesby	Charlotte Oglesby, a retired educator, currently serves AdvancEd as a team member, both for Alabama and out of state teams, and Lead Evaluator for Alabama. She has been serving on review teams since the late 1980's. She received her BS in Elementary Education from Judson College, her Masters of Library Services as well as a higher certificate in Elementary Education from the University of Alabama. She started her career as an elementary teacher in Florida and then moved to Alabama where she completed 40+ years. She has taught elementary and middle school students, served as the librarian at the middle school and high school level, and completed her career at the central office as the system technology coordinator for Perry County Schools. While in the schools, she served as school professional development contact, parental involvement chairman, school technology coordinator and Federal Programs contact. She currently serves as night librarian at Marion Military Institute, a member of the Alabama Junior College Association.

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Knox Phillips	<p>Knox Phillips has several years of experience in the field of educational leadership, both in K-12 Education and in Higher Education, including securing and managing over \$75 million in federal educational grant funds and building several academic programs focused on minority student achievement. Knox has served in previous capacities as a state executive director of college access and completion with The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, director of multiple STEM education programs in both K-12 and higher education, and has worked extensively as a secondary schools administrator and school teacher, college instructor, and school district curriculum director. His research interests include minority student college achievement as well minority student success in STEM fields. Knox is currently the Director of Research, Assessment, and Grants with the DeKalb County School District. His doctorate studies are in curriculum and instruction, and he also holds graduate and undergraduate degrees in educational leadership, environmental education, and agriscience education.</p>
Mr. Michael Rotjan	<p>Michael Rotjan has served as a teacher, instructional technology specialist, professional learning coach at the system level, and currently serves as instructional data coordinator for the system. He adjuncts at Kennesaw State University in the Department of Instructional Technology where he instructs Data Analysis and School Improvement. Additionally, he teaches the Teacher Leader Endorsement for Metro RESA. He has degrees from Columbia University, Walden University and Kennesaw State University.</p>

## Next Steps

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

## About AdvancED

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

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

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

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