

Report of the External Review for Paulding County School District

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

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Introduction to the External Review

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

Institutions seeking to gain or retain accreditation must meet AdvancED standards specified for their institution, demonstrate high levels of student performance or improvement of student performance if applicable, and provide evidence of stakeholder satisfaction with the operation of the institution. The accreditation standards focus on conditions and processes within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards, student performance, and stakeholder feedback.

Institutions participate in an External Review by a team of highly qualified evaluators who examine the institution's adherence and commitment to the accreditation criteria. The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation as it energizes and equips the leadership and stakeholders of an institution to achieve higher levels of performance and address those areas that may be hindering efforts to reach desired performance levels. External Review is a rigorous process that includes examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with stakeholders, and observations of instruction, learning, and operations.

The AdvancED External Review Team used the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators and related criteria to guide its evaluation, looking not only for adherence to standards but also for how the institution functioned as a whole and embodied the practices and characteristics of quality.

Using the evidence at their disposal, the AdvancED External Review Team arrived at a set of findings contained in this report. The report is presented in three sections: Findings, Conclusion, and Addenda.

Part I: Findings

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

Accreditation Standards and Indicators

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

This section contains an evaluation of each of AdvancED's Accreditation Standards and Indicators, identification of Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement related to each of the standards (if appropriate), and a description of the evidence examined by the External Review Team.

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

Average Indicator Score for this Institution	2.91
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Standard 1: The system maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.

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

AdvancED has found through its evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution commits to a shared purpose and direction and establishes expectations for student learning that are aligned with the institutions' vision and supported by internal and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and overall institution effectiveness.

Standard 1
The system maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Governing body policies, procedures, and practices • District purpose statements - past and present • Survey results • Documentation or description of the process for creating the district's purpose including the role of stakeholders • Written District Quality Assurance Review procedures and documents that monitor its schools' adherence to the district purpose and direction • Examples of communications to stakeholders about the district's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook) • Observations • Minutes from meetings related to development of the district's purpose and direction • Copy of strategic plan referencing the district purpose and direction and its effectiveness • Accreditation Report • Communication plan to stakeholders regarding the district's purpose • Survey of staff, parents, and students • Elementary, middle and high observations • Interviews with cabinet, principals, superintendent, central office staff, parents and teachers 	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey results • Agendas and/or minutes that reference a commitment to the components of the schools' purpose statements • Written District Quality Assurance Review procedures and documents that monitor schools' adherence to the district purpose and direction and that of the school • Examples of school purpose statements if different from the district purpose statement • Examples of written stakeholder communications or marketing materials that portray the school purpose and direction • Accreditation Report • Observations • Interviews • Checklist for school improvement plans. <p>Interviews and surveys as noted in previous indicator</p>	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.3	The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders about educational programs and equitable learning experiences • Observations • Interviews • District Quality Assurance Review plans that document two-way communication on district and school effectiveness and learning, thinking, and life skills • Examples of schools' continuous improvement plans • Survey results • Accreditation Report • Statements or documents about ethical and professional practices • Professional development plans and implementation timelines on topics related to equity, organizational effectiveness, and improved instruction and programs • Statements of shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning • The district strategic plan • System meeting schedules • Special program description (i.e. gifted program) • Curriculum maps 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Examples of schools continuous improvement plans • District Quality Assurance Review plans that document two-way communication on district and school effectiveness and learning, thinking, and life skills • Survey results • Professional development plans and implementation timelines on topics related to equity, organizational effectiveness, and improved instruction and programs • Observations • Agenda, minutes from continuous improvement planning meetings • Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders • The district data profile • The district strategic plan • Focus-walks • Ticketing system • Data rooms-(Data with a face) 	3.0

Powerful Practices**Indicator**

1. The system clearly engages in a systematic, systemic, inclusive, and comprehensive process for assuring high expectations for learning.

1.1

The values and beliefs established in this process are shared by all and are evident by the advances in student achievement. During interviews with central office staff, board members, principals, parents, and teachers, the review team experienced similar beliefs and values being expressed as the process to ensure student success. Strategic plans, board meeting agendas, surveys and observations were all strong examples of the practice related to a clear purpose and direction focused on student achievement. The district is to be commended for the strong advancements made in student achievement and through the high expectations set for learners. The purpose has been communicated at such a level that all stakeholders have a pervasive commitment for advancing the clear purpose and direction for student success.

2. The system ensures that each school and department engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.

1.2

System leadership, school leadership, teachers, parents, and students use a common language to describe a clear and cohesive purpose for student success. Schools utilize a specific School Improvement Checklist to create a detailed school improvement plan focused on student achievement. Classroom decisions and instruction are based on regular assessment designed to meet student needs in the quest of academic success. System expectations are clearly articulated and shared with fidelity to all stakeholders. System leadership monitors and maintains data about each school. The data are used to provide specific, targeted feedback to guide training at the school level to promote the overall purpose and direction of the school system. Data notebooks, data walls in schools, and interviews with school administrators and teachers validate the system's leadership in promoting the purpose and direction of increasing student achievement. When a school district is focused and can clearly articulate its purpose and direction as the means for guidance in the decision-making process, student achievement and growth will be positively measurable.

Standard 2: The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.

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

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

Standard 2			
The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Observations • Professional development plans • Student handbooks • Staff handbooks • Accreditation Report • District operations manuals • Communications to stakeholder about policy revisions • School handbooks • Interviews with Board, superintendent, and cabinet 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication plan to inform all staff on code of ethics, responsibilities, conflict of interest • Proof of legal counsel • List of assigned staff for compliance • Observations • Historical compliance data • Interviews • Governing authority minutes relating to training • Governing authority training plan • Assurances, certifications • Accreditation Report • Findings of internal and external reviews of compliance with laws, regulations, and policies • Governing code of ethics • Governing authority policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest • Attendance at system retreats and conferences 	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.3	The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications regarding governing authority actions • District strategic plan • Examples of school improvement plans • Roles and responsibilities of school leadership • Roles and responsibilities of district leadership • Observations • Interviews • Social media • Accreditation Report • Survey results regarding functions of the governing authority and operations of the district • Stakeholder input and feedback • Maintenance of consistent academic oversight, planning, and resource allocation • Agendas and minutes of meetings 	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of decisions aligned with the district's strategic plan • Professional development offerings and plans • Examples of collaboration and shared leadership • Examples of decisions aligned with the school's purpose statement • Interviews • Survey results • Observations • Examples of decisions in support of the schools' continuous improvement plans • Examples of improvement efforts and innovations in the educational programs • Examples of decisions aligned with the district's purpose and direction • Accreditation Report 	3.0
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Minutes from meetings with stakeholders • Examples of stakeholder input or feedback resulting in district action • Interviews • Copies of surveys or screen shots from online surveys • Survey responses • Involvement of stakeholders in a school improvement plan • Communication plan • Involvement of stakeholders in district strategic plan • Observations • Interviews with stakeholders 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation • Accreditation Report • Governing body policy on supervision and evaluation • Job specific criteria • Observations • Supervision and evaluation documents with criteria for improving professional practice throughout the system and student success noted • Representative supervision and evaluation reports • Interviews with central office and school administrators 	3.0

Powerful Practices**Indicator**

1. The Board of Education and system leadership team exceed in their unified approach of governing the school system in order to assure effective fulfillment of roles and responsibilities.

2.2

The board participates in annual professional development that meets or exceeds the requirement of Georgia Law and the State Board of Education. The governance leadership team differentiates professional curriculum and delivery for the whole board and individual members based on the experience and needs of members. The essence of an effective school system is one in which the governing body recognizes its roles and entrusts the system leadership to administer their duties while promoting the mission of the district.

2. The governing body ensures that leadership possesses the autonomy to meet achievement goals and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.

2.3

The Board of Education consistently protects, supports, and respects the district and school leadership, allowing them to establish and complement goals for academic achievement and the ability to function on a day-to-day basis. A genuine trust was evident in interviews with board members for both the superintendent and other leaders. All the board members were interviewed and it was very evident to the External Review Team that an outstanding level of respect exists by every member of the board for the district and school leadership. Several voiced the sentiment that we "hire the best and get out of the way." Principals expressed that they feel supported by both the district leadership and board to make decisions. External Review Team members who work closely with boards of education were very impressed with the levels of support this staff receives. Research has proven that a strong, positive correlation exists between the relationship of the governing body with the success of school systems and the improvement of student performance.

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

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

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

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

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.1	The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course, program, or school schedules • Survey results • Course or program descriptions • Student work across courses or programs • Observations • Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices • Enrollment patterns for various courses and programs • Learning expectations for different courses and programs • Interviews • Lesson plans • Survey responses from program leaders receiving students from previous programs, schools, or grade-levels • Graduate follow-up surveys • Posted learning objectives • Accreditation Report • Descriptions of instructional techniques • Focus-walks <p>Instruction that FITS</p> <p>Interviews with instructional staff and teachers</p>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the systematic review process for curriculum, instruction, and assessment • Standards-based report cards • Observations • Interviews • Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices • Curriculum writing process • Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps • Profile of educational model or delivery system • Curriculum guides • Common assessments • Accreditation Report • Surveys results • Program descriptions • Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum • Focus walks • Interviews with central office, principals and teachers 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation • Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource • Findings from supervisor formal and informal observations • Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge • Surveys results • Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the approved or prescribed instructional strategies and programs • Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Observations • Student use of technology observed at minimal level • Student work demonstrating application of knowledge observed in some classes 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum maps • Accreditation Report • Documentation of collection of lesson plans, grade books, or other data record systems • Recognition of teachers with regard to these practices • Surveys results • Examples of improvements to instructional practices resulting from the evaluation process • Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs • Interviews • Observations • Professional development offerings and plans tied to the prescribed education program, instructional strategies, developmentally appropriate practices, and student success • Focus-walks 	3.0
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Common language, protocols and reporting tools • Agendas and minutes of collaborative learning committees • Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings • Survey results • Professional development funding to promote professional learning communities • Evidence of informal conversations that reflect collaboration about student learning • Examples of improvements to content and instructional practice resulting from collaboration • Accreditation Report 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance • Survey results • Examples of assessments that prompted modification in instruction • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Samples of exemplars used to guide and inform student learning • Exemplars observed in some classes 	3.0
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Survey results • Descriptions and schedules of mentoring, coaching, and induction programs with references to district and school beliefs and values about teaching and learning • Records of meetings and informal feedback sessions • Observations • Interviews • Professional learning calendar with activities for instructional support of new staff • Personnel manuals with information related to new hires including mentoring, coaching, and induction practices • Interviews with teachers (including 1st year teacher) and principals 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.8	The system and all of its schools engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keep them informed of their children's learning progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance-based report cards • Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance • Observations • Survey results • List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days • Accreditation Report • Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child's progress • Interviews • Samples of exemplars used to guide and inform student learning • Interviews with parents, teachers, and central office 	3.0
3.9	The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Survey results • Interviews • Observations • MATS program <p>No master schedule or formal structure was evident across the district</p> <p>Interviews at all three levels with teachers and principals</p>	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Evaluation process for grading and reporting practices • Survey results • Sample communications to stakeholders about grading and reporting • Accreditation Report • District quality control procedures including the monitoring of grading practices across all schools • Sample report cards for each program or grade level and for all courses and programs • Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting 	3.0
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation tools for professional learning • Survey results • District quality control procedures showing implementation plan for professional development for district and school staff • District professional development plan involving the district and all schools • Brief explanation of alignment between professional learning and identified needs • Accreditation Report • Interviews • Interviews with teachers, principals, and central office administrators 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedules, lesson plans, or example student learning plans showing the implementation of learning support services Survey results List of learning support services and student population served by such services Interviews Accreditation Report Training and professional learning related to research on unique characteristics of learning Data used to identify unique learning needs of students 	3.0

Opportunities for Improvement

Indicator

1. Establish a structure to ensure that an adult advocate has been assigned to every student.

3.9

Interviews with teachers indicated varying levels of adult advocacy. Although the advocacy and student mentoring program (MATS) has been developed for grades 6-12, limited implementation was noted during interviews and observations. Informal structures are in place, particularly at the elementary levels, but a structure that clearly describes these relationships has not been established. District personnel are aware of the necessity for implementing a structure at all levels. No documents listing the students and their advocates were found. Research has shown that academic success and personal growth increase markedly when students' affective needs are met. The creation of a structure that can clearly identify one adult advocate per student will enable increased student success.

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

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

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in the 30,000 institutions in the AdvancED network that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The institution provides a safe learning environment for students and staff. The institution provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff members to improve their effectiveness. The institution ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

Standard 4			
The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.1	The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Survey results • District budgets or financial plans for the last three years • Observations • District quality assurance procedures for monitoring qualified staff across all schools • School budgets or financial plans for last three years • Interviews • Assessments of staffing needs • Documentation of highly qualified staff • Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement and retention of professional and support staff for the district and schools • FTE allotments 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Examples of school schedules • District quality assurance procedures showing district oversight of schools pertaining to school resources • Accreditation Report • Examples of efforts of school leaders to secure necessary material and fiscal resources • Survey results • Examples of school calendars • Interviews • Alignment of school budgets with school purpose and direction • Alignment of district budget with district purpose and direction • District strategic plan showing resources support for district • FY13 allotment sheets Classroom observations Survey results from staff and external stakeholders Interviews with staff and external stakeholders 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District quality control procedures showing the monitoring of compliance with district expectations for school facilities and learning environments • Interviews • Observations • Accreditation Report • Example systems for school maintenance requests • Survey results • Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements • Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments • Example maintenance schedules for schools • School safety committee responsibilities, meeting schedules, and minutes • Example school records of depreciation of equipment • District Safety Program Overview • Interviews with maintenance, transportation, and nutrition directors • Observation of facilities (Eight schools and central office) 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District strategic plan showing the areas of budget, facilities, quality control, and other strategic systems • District quality control procedures showing the monitoring of compliance with district expectations for school facilities, learning environments • Evaluation results of the effectiveness of the district strategic plan or indicators of changes resulting in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategic plan • Survey results • Interviews • Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments • Accreditation Report • Observations • District Academic Improvement Plan 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Evaluation procedures and results of education resources • Survey results • Interviews • District education delivery model intended for school implementation including media and information resources to support the education program • Data on media and information resources available to students and staff • Schedule of staff availability to assist students and school personnel related to finding and retrieving information • Technology Plan is not relevant to existing conditions or needs Classroom observations of existing technology Interviews with teachers and central office 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model • Policies relative to technology use at the district-level and school-level • Survey results • District technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure for the district-level and school-level • District quality control procedures that monitor the effectiveness of technology services at the district-level and school-level • Assessments to inform development of district and school technology plans • Accreditation Report • Interviews • Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness • Examples of school-level technology plans and budgets to improve technology services and infrastructure to students and staff • Observations • BYOT (Bring Your Own Technology) plan • Instructional technology description • Outdated and inadequate Technology Plan • Survey results indicating serious needs • District Quality Control procedures needing 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
		<p>procedures needing improvement</p> <p>Interviews with staff and external stakeholders all indicting needing improvement in all areas of technology</p> <p>School level technology plans also outdated and inadequate</p>	
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Interviews • Student assessment system for identifying student needs • Agreements with school community agencies for student-family support • Survey results • Accreditation Report • Schedule of family services, e.g., parent classes, survival skills • Rubrics on developmentally appropriate benchmarks; e.g. early childhood education • Examples of improvements made to education program and delivery models based on results of program effectiveness evaluations • Social classes and services, e.g., bullying, character education • List of support services available to students • Interview with Director of Guidance Services 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.8	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of services available related to counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning • Survey results • Accreditation Report • Budget for counseling, assessment, referral, educational and career planning • Description of IEP process • District quality assurance procedures that monitor program effectiveness of student support services • Observations • Interviews • Description of referral process 	3.0

Standard 5: The system implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and system effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.

Systems with strong improvement processes move beyond anxiety about the current reality and focus on priorities and initiatives for the future. Using results, i.e., data and other information, to guide continuous improvement is key to an institution's success. A study conducted by Datnow, Park, and Wohlstetter (2007) from the Center on Educational Governance at the University of Southern California indicated that data can shed light on existing areas of strength and weakness and also guide improvement strategies in a systematic and strategic manner (Dembosky, J., Pane, J., Barney, H., & Christina, R., 2005). The study also identified six key strategies that performance-driven systems use: (1) building a foundation for data-driven decision making, (2) establishing a culture of data use and continuous improvement, (3) investing in an information management system, (4) selecting the right data, (5) building institutional capacity for data-driven decision making, and (6) analyzing and acting on data to improve performance. Other research studies, though largely without comparison groups, suggested that data-driven decision making has the potential to increase student performance (Alwin, 2002; Doyle, 2003; Lafee, 2002; McIntire, 2002).

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

Standard 5

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

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model • Documentation or description of evaluation tools/protocols • Survey results • Interviews • Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local or school assessments on student learning and school performance • Observations • Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness • Accreditation Report • Evidence that assessments are reliable and bias free 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.2	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of data used to measure the effectiveness of the district systems that support schools and learning • Observations • Accreditation Report • District quality control procedures that monitor schools in effectively using data to improve instruction and student learning • List of data sources related to district effectiveness • Survey results • Written protocols and procedures for data collection and analysis • Examples of changes to the district strategic plan based on data results • Examples of use of data to design, implement, and evaluate continuous improvement plans and apply learning • Interviews • List of data sources related to student learning, instruction, program effectiveness, and conditions that support learning • Examples of changes in the Strategic Plan based on data results were not evident • Interviews with teachers and principals • Data walls/rooms at early stages of development 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Professional learning schedule specific to the use of data • Documentation of attendance and training related to data use • Survey results • Observations • Training materials specific to the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data • Interviews • Policies and written procedures specific to data training • All professional and support staff are not regularly and systematically assessed and trained in evaluation, interpretation and use of data 	2.0
5.4	The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Policies and procedures specific to data use and training • Accreditation Report • Student surveys • Agendas, minutes of meetings related to analysis of data • Description of process for analyzing data to determine verifiable improvement in student learning • Examples of use of results to evaluate continuous improvement action plans • Observations • Evidence of student readiness for the next level • Evidence of student growth • Policies and procedures do not clearly define a process for analyzing data to determine success at the next level. Evidence of student readiness for the next level was not readily available 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.5	System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District quality control procedures for monitoring district effectiveness • Minutes of meetings regarding achievement of student learning goals • Accreditation Report • Survey results • Communication plan regarding student learning, systems that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders • Sample communications to stakeholders regarding student learning, conditions that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals • District quality control procedures for monitoring information about student learning, systems that support learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals • Observations • Examples of district marketing tools and websites that cite student achievement results or that make promises regarding student achievement • Executive summaries of student learning reports to stakeholder groups • Interviews 	3.0

Opportunities for Improvement**Indicator**

1. Provide professional learning opportunities for all professional and support staff members related to the evaluation, interpretation, and utilization of data.

5.3

Teachers expressed a need for a deeper understanding of the data and how to determine student needs. Some professional learning was noted, formal and informal. Data rooms are in beginning stage. When stakeholders understand the information they are presented, more informed decisions can be made.

2. Implement a process that ensures stakeholder involvement for determining readiness for the next level.

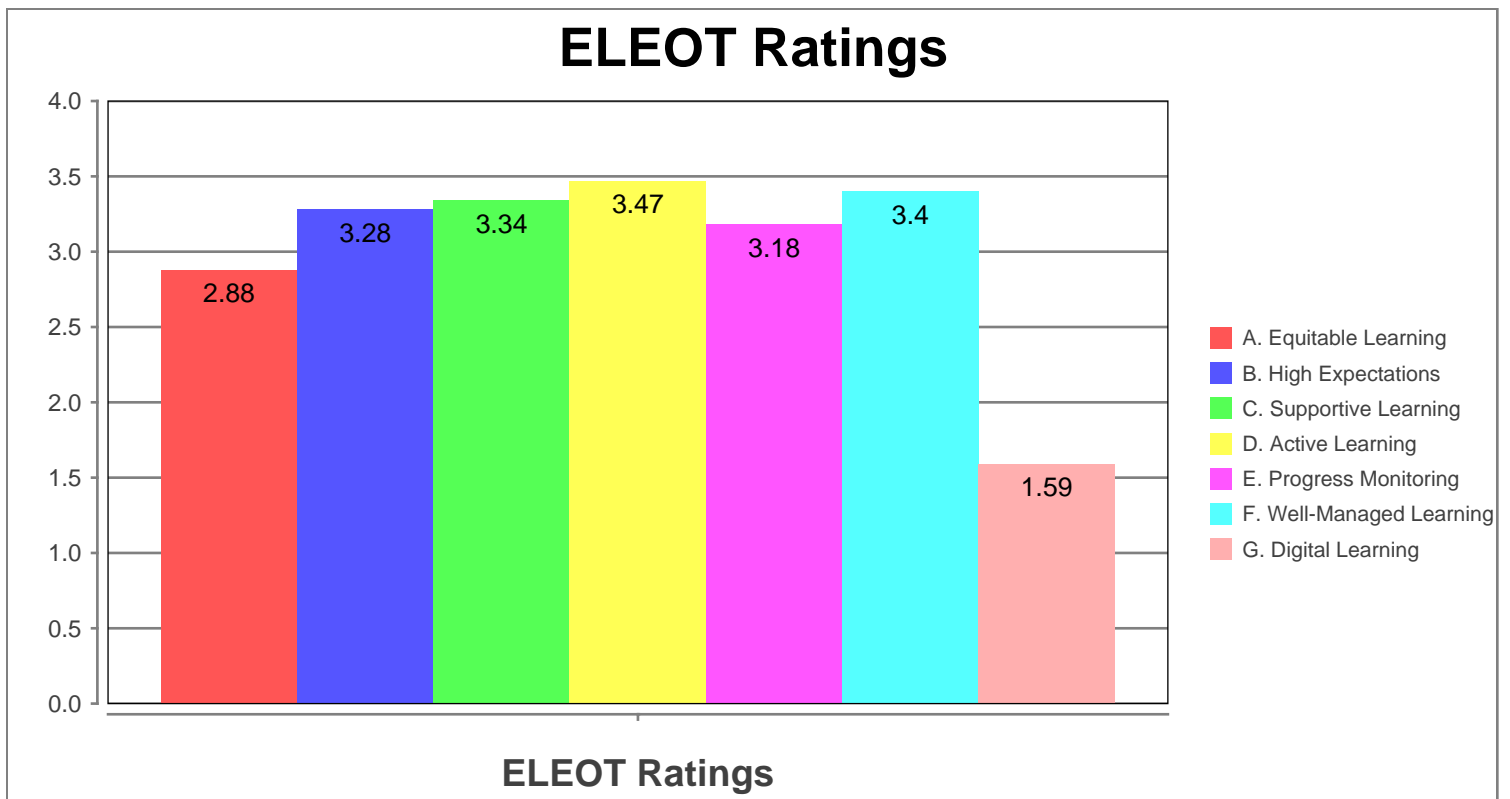
5.4

Data results were observed to be used for determining student needs on a regular basis. Limited evidence of data use for determining readiness at the next level was observed. However, some sharing of information between grade levels and within curricular areas was noted. Preparation for the next level ensures smoother transitions for students and prepares them for success.

Learning Environment

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

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. External Review Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale. The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in ELEOT.



Student Performance

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

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

Stakeholder Feedback

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

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

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

Individual Institution Results

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

Institution	Indicator Averages	Questionnaire Administration	Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	Assessment Quality	Test Administration	Quality of Learning	Equity of Learning
Allgood Elementary School	2.67	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Bessie L. Baggett Elementary School	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Burnt Hickory Elementary	2.79	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
C. A. Roberts Elementary School	2.85	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0
Carl Scoggins Sr Middle School	3.24	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Connie Dugan Elementary School	2.73	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Dallas Elementary School	2.36	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	1.0
East Paulding High School	2.64	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
East Paulding Middle School	2.64	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Floyd L. Shelton Elementary at Crossroads School	2.97	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.0
Hal Hutchens Elementary School	2.97	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Herschel Jones Middle School	3.06	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Hiram Elementary School	2.91	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Hiram High School	2.73	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Irma C. Austin Middle School	3.03	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
J. A. Dobbins Middle School	2.52	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Lena Moses Middle School	2.82	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0

Institution	Indicator Averages	Questionnaire Administration	Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	Assessment Quality	Test Administration	Quality of Learning	Equity of Learning
Lillian C. Poole Elementary School	2.88	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
McGarity Elementary School	2.85	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Nebo Elementary School	2.88	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
New Georgia Elementary School	2.82	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
North Paulding High School	2.52	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Northside Elementary School	2.88	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
P.B. Ritch Middle School	2.27	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	1.0
Paulding County High School	2.64	4.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Roland W. Russom Elementary School	3.3	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Sam D. Panter Elementary School	2.61	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Sammy McClure Middle School	2.76	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Sara M. Ragsdale Elementary School	2.79	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
South Paulding High School	2.64	4.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
South Paulding Middle School	2.88	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.0
Union Elementary School	3.06	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0
W. C. Abney Elementary School	2.45	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0

Part II: Conclusion

Summary of the External Review

In off-site and on-site review sessions, the AdvancED External Review Team examined artifacts and evidence provided by the institution. During the on-site portion of the review, the team reviewed additional artifacts, collected and analyzed data from interviews, and conducted observations.

The External Review Team met on Sunday, October 6, 2013, for the initial work session in preparation for the Monday interviews. The review concluded at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 9, 2013, following the exit report to the Paulding County Board of Education. The district was very well prepared and provided the team with extensive artifacts on flash drives. Each flash drive was standard-specific and included a printed table of contents with complete cross-references to each artifact included on all the drives. Very few documents the individual team members needed were not available on the drives. The superintendent made an initial presentation to the team highlighting important statistical data concerning Paulding County as well as trend data and expectations for the future. The team conducted a total of 246 interviews in the central office and in eight schools. The interviews included 55 administrators, 100 teachers, 19 support staff, and 72 parents and community leaders. The team observed 50 classrooms using the Effective Learning Environments Learning Tool (ELIOT). Each class was visited for a period of 20 minutes or more. The self-Assessments provided by both the district and individual schools were prepared with careful consideration of every Indicator, and rated with fidelity.

Using the evidence collected, the team engaged in dialogue and deliberations concerning the degree to which the institution met the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators.

The External Review Team found, through interviews and documentation, a thoroughly developed, comprehensive strategic plan, initiated this current year and scheduled to be completed in five years. It was clear to the team that planning is a considerable strength for all components of district activity. Team members commented on more than one occasion, "They have a plan for everything." Those plans provided excellent direction to the team for review purposes, but more importantly provide an organized focus for the staff to develop well-organized processes and to achieve every initiative.

There is no doubt that Paulding County School District is blessed with a cadre of leadership that is totally committed to student learning. The team members made frequent references to the fact that they have never worked for or observed a Board of Education that more consistently protects, supports, and respects the district and school leadership. Board members expressed their philosophy of "hire the best and get out of the way." Every indication throughout the team's visit substantiated that belief. The superintendent, unanimously supported by the board, is a highly respected leader throughout the district and in the community.

Technology issues are of concern in the district. The infrastructure and hardware needs to be improved and expanded. However, the economy has brought many of these issues to a stand still. In many ways, a more serious concern is the fact that there is little or no instructional technology support. Many SMART Boards are installed, complete with projectors and internet access. The team observed several of these being used during classroom observations. However, their use was primarily as a projector for placing text, math problems, pictures, questions, etc. on a screen the students could see. Very little interactive use was observed, and virtually none by students.

The capabilities of this one piece of technology is woefully underutilized. The team was made aware of this situation in every interview, from central office staff to parents. The wireless capabilities of the schools was so inconsistent, only one team member was able to use the on-line version of ELEOT for observations.

During the on-site review, members of the External Review Team evaluated the learning environment by observing classrooms and general operations of the institution. Using data from these observations, the team evaluated the quality of instruction and learning that took place classified around seven constructs or environments: equity, high expectations, support, engagement, progress monitoring and feedback, management, and use of technology.

The External Review Team observed 50 classrooms for a minimum of 20 minutes each using the observation tool. Four elementary, two middle, and two high schools were visited. Learning was occurring in an active environment in the large majority of classrooms. Most of the classes, at all three levels, were involved in some small group or centers activity, allowing the teachers to provide support and assistance throughout the rooms. The differentiated activities that provided alternative instruction were observed primarily in the elementary classes. In the middle and high school classes each group was working on the same assignment in collaboration with one another. While technology was in use in most classrooms, it was largely provided by the teacher. One high school observed had students showing film clips from recent movies to compare themes from their study of classic literature that are still present in modern works. As one of the center rotations at the elementary level, a few students were working on computers. The Digital Learning Environment was by far the lowest rated environment (1.59). The classes observed were well-managed and transitions between activities were smoothly and efficiently carried out.

The External Review in the Paulding County School District, October 6-9, 2013, was successfully concluded with an exit report delivered to the entire Board of Education, district administrators, principals, and numerous other stakeholders in a standing room only board room. The district was exceedingly well-prepared logistically for the visit and in providing the team with all the documentation and artifacts needed to conduct a thorough, professional review. School leaders were instrumental in guiding the entire process at the district and school levels for the past year, and in providing the review team with a highly well-organized schedule, accommodations, and creature comforts. It is the recommendation of the AdvancED Review Team that Paulding County School District be granted a new five-year term of accreditation by the Accreditation Commission.

Required Actions

1. Identify, implement, and evaluate non-negotiable technology instructional strategies to support curricular expectations.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 3.3

Description:

The system identified in the self-assessment that the reduction in funding has hindered its ability to fully implement the system-wide technology plan. Little evidence was found to support direct connections between available technology (hardware and software) and instructional expectations. Curriculum review indicated a lack of expectations for use of technology as an instructional tool. An examination of the curriculum indicated a lack in emphasis on student technology skills directly connected to curricular and instructional expectations. Although some student technology use was observed, a clear plan to ensure that all students acquire 21st century (NETS Standards) technology skills was not evident. Interviews with teachers and administrators provided evidence of a need for more technology available in the schools, but direct connections to instructional needs could not be identified. Classroom observations and ELEOT results indicated very limited student use of technology throughout the district. An examination of the curriculum indicated a lack of emphasis on student technology skills directly connected to curricular and instructional expectations. It is imperative that 21st century learners incorporate technology into their learning experiences. Identifying and implementing appropriate technology support for the present curriculum will not only enhance learning but also provide for more efficient use of limited funds.

2. Implement a technology plan to reduce the gap between existing technology and the technology required for students in support of the curriculum.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 4.6

Description:

Although some student technology use was observed, a clear plan to ensure all students acquire 21st century technology skills was not evident. During school visits it was observed that technology availability is not equal in all classrooms. Teachers reported that they are unable to access previously used software due to changes in infrastructure designed to upgrade software programs. From interviews with all stakeholders as well as observations in classrooms, it was very evident to the team that much of the hardware in schools is either outdated or in need of repair. It was also reported that current funding does not allow the district to follow the technology plan as written. CTAE (Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education) teachers indicate that even higher levels of technology support will be necessary in the future. The External Review Team noted that although the availability of technology is improving, teachers lack key components necessary to implement programs that will provide the greatest impact on student success.

Part III: Addenda

The External Review Team

Lead Evaluator:

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Associate Lead Evaluator:

Mrs. Erma W Jenkins

Team Members:

Mrs. Joy C Davis

Mrs. Debbie Bennett

Mrs. Becky Davis Darrah

Mrs. Nora Cordova

Mrs. Jo Ann McCaffrey

Dr. Paula H Stokes

Next Steps

The institution should:

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

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the External Review, the team submits the final report to AdvancED for review and for action by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission that confers accreditation upon the institution. Upon receiving its accreditation, the institution should share its achievement with internal and external communities.

About AdvancED

In 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), both founded in 1895, and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form AdvancED: one strong, unified organization dedicated to education quality. In 2011, the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) that was founded in 1917 joined NCA CASI and SACS CASI as part of AdvancED. AdvancED is the world's largest education community, representing 30,000 public and private schools and systems across the United States and in 75 countries worldwide and educating 16 million students.

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

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