

# Report of the External Review Team for City Schools of Decatur

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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

On March 20 - 23, 2016, an External Review Team (Team) composed of six educators representing AdvancED™, a non-profit international accrediting organization, conducted a System External Review for City Schools of Decatur in Decatur, Georgia. Prior to the visit, the Team completed preparatory work to enhance the efficacy of the review, including on-line training, participation in telephone conversations with the Lead Evaluator, and reviewing the documents shared by the system, such as the Assurances, Student Performance Evaluation, Stakeholder Feedback Evaluation, Executive Summary, and Self Assessment.

Artifacts were made available for the Team electronically through Google Drive prior to arriving in Decatur. Team members reviewed artifacts, interviewed representatives of all stakeholder groups systemwide, and conducted classroom observations using the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™) to gather data regarding teaching and learning. The Team analyzed and utilized the data to assist in developing the system's External Review Report.

The system was comprised of nine schools: one early childhood center for children birth to Pre-K; five K - 3 schools; one 4 - 5 academy; one middle school for grades 6 - 8; and one high school for grades 9 - 12. The system has approximately 5083 students, with 71 students paying tuition and 238 receiving courtesy tuition for

the 2015-2016 school year. The student racial composition included 62 percent white, 26 percent African American, 5 percent Hispanic, and 7 percent other races. Two percent of the students speak English as a second language.

The Team was divided to ensure that five of the nine schools were visited. Two Team members were paired and assigned to visit the early childhood learning center, remaining at the center for a full day. The other four Team members were divided into two teams of two, with each Team visiting two schools. While visiting the five schools, the Team conducted 27 classroom observations using the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™) and 10 classroom observations at the early childhood learning center, using the Environmental Rating for Early Learning (erel™) observation tool.

The Lead Evaluator communicated with the chief operating officer prior to the visit. The Self Assessment, Assurances, and Executive Summary for both the system and the early childhood learning center were provided for the Team's review in a timely fashion. The chief operating officer was helpful in coordinating the logistics of the visit, providing information during the visit, providing transportation for the Team, and ensuring that stakeholders were available to meet with the Team. The combined efforts of the district staff and the Team resulted in a successful experience.

The Team extends appreciation to the board members, superintendent, principal, staff, students, parents, and community members for the hospitality, transparency, support, and professionalism demonstrated during the visit. The Team recognizes the hard work required to organize and host the External Review Team and acknowledges the system for pursuing district accreditation.

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	4
Administrators	22
Instructional Staff	32
Support Staff	21
Students	28
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</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.	2.83	2.68
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.	2.83	2.50
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	2.67	2.55
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	3.00	2.73
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	2.83	2.57
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	2.67	2.48
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	1.67	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.	4.00	2.92
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.	1.33	2.40
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.	3.00	2.53
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	2.17	2.64
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	3.00	2.66

### 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.	2.83	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.	2.83	2.41
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	2.17	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.	3.00	2.46
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.	3.33	2.72

### 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

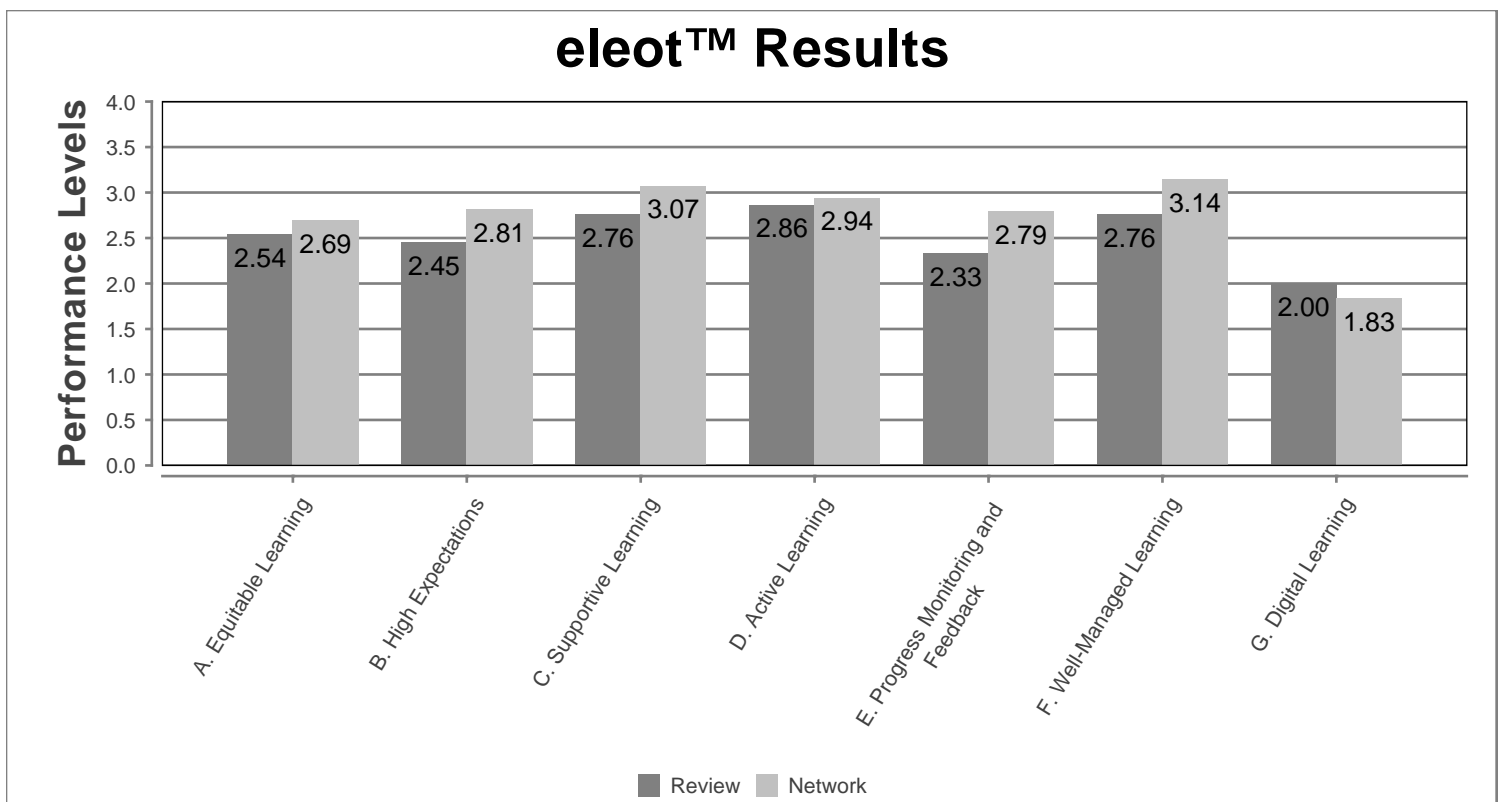
learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	4.00	3.28
Test Administration	4.00	3.50
Equity of Learning	2.83	2.44
Quality of Learning	4.00	2.97

## 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 27 classroom observations using the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™). The eleot™ classroom observation results indicated that the system's average scores fell slightly below the AdvancED Network (AEN) averages in six of the seven learning environments. All scores are based on a four-point scale.

The Active Learning Environment received the highest average rating of 2.86, slightly lower than the AEN average of 2.94. The Supportive Learning Environment and the Well-Managed Learning Environment both placed second, with average ratings of 2.76, compared with the AEN averages of 3.06 and 3.13, respectively.

In third place was the Equitable Learning Environment, receiving a rating of 2.54, compared with the AEN average of 2.69. The High Expectations Learning Environment ranked fourth, receiving an average rating of 2.45, compared with the AEN average of 2.81. In fifth place was the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Learning Environment, with an average rating of 2.33, slightly lower than the AEN average of 2.79.

The Digital Learning Environment received the lowest average rating of 2.00, slightly above the AEN average of 1.82. Although the system scored higher than the AEN average in this area, the Digital Learning Environment received the lowest average rating for the system. Students were provided minimal opportunities to use technology to gather, evaluate and/or use information; conduct research; solve problems; create original works; or communicate and work collaboratively for learning. Few students were observed integrating technological tools in the learning process, even though the system has implemented the 1:1 digital device initiative for fourth through eighth grades.

The lowest rated item was in the High Expectations Learning Environment, suggesting students were infrequently "provided exemplars of high quality work." This item received a rating of 1.30 on a four-point scale.

The second lowest rated item was in the Equitable Learning Environment, indicating that occasions for students "to have differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs" were minimal. This area received an average rating of 1.63 on a four-point scale.

The third lowest rated item was in the Supportive Learning Environment, showing that students were rarely "provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs." This item received an average rating of 1.78 on a four-point scale.

These ratings correlate with statements from parents, who indicated a need for increased rigor in some classes. Staff indicated the need for a mentoring and coaching program to assist new staff, as well as professional development that focuses on the identified needs of staff.

The eleot™ data also revealed that, although the majority of classroom instruction observed was teacher-directed, students have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, and support. Learning activities were positive and students know that rules and consequences are fair, clear and consistently applied.

The two highest rated areas indicated that students "demonstrate positive attitudes about the classroom and learning" and that students "speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and peers." The ratings support statements from various stakeholder groups, indicating that parents communicate with teachers, resulting in students being respectful and positive during classroom activities.

**eleot™ Data Summary**

<b>A. Equitable 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.	1.63	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	11.11%	7.41%	14.81%	66.67%
2.	3.26	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	40.74%	44.44%	14.81%	0.00%
3.	3.00	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	33.33%	40.74%	18.52%	7.41%
4.	2.26	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	25.93%	22.22%	3.70%	48.15%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.54</b>						

<b>B. High Expectations</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.	2.89	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	33.33%	25.93%	37.04%	3.70%
2.	2.78	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	11.11%	62.96%	18.52%	7.41%
3.	1.30	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	3.70%	3.70%	11.11%	81.48%
4.	2.74	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	11.11%	59.26%	22.22%	7.41%
5.	2.56	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	14.81%	44.44%	22.22%	18.52%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.45</b>						

C. Supportive Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.00	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	37.04%	37.04%	14.81%	11.11%
2.	3.15	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	40.74%	40.74%	11.11%	7.41%
3.	2.96	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	37.04%	33.33%	18.52%	11.11%
4.	2.93	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	37.04%	29.63%	22.22%	11.11%
5.	1.78	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	14.81%	7.41%	18.52%	59.26%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.76</b>						

D. Active Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.93	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	29.63%	44.44%	14.81%	11.11%
2.	2.78	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	29.63%	33.33%	22.22%	14.81%
3.	2.89	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	33.33%	33.33%	22.22%	11.11%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.86</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.	2.41	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	3.70%	51.85%	25.93%	18.52%
2.	2.52	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	11.11%	48.15%	22.22%	18.52%
3.	2.78	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	14.81%	59.26%	14.81%	11.11%
4.	1.89	Understands how her/his work is assessed	3.70%	29.63%	18.52%	48.15%
5.	2.04	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	3.70%	33.33%	25.93%	37.04%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.33</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.	3.15	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	40.74%	40.74%	11.11%	7.41%
2.	2.85	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	33.33%	29.63%	25.93%	11.11%
3.	2.48	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	29.63%	18.52%	22.22%	29.63%
4.	2.41	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	29.63%	14.81%	22.22%	33.33%
5.	2.93	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	33.33%	33.33%	25.93%	7.41%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.76</b>						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	1.96	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	22.22%	7.41%	14.81%	55.56%
2.	2.19	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	29.63%	7.41%	14.81%	48.15%
3.	1.85	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	11.11%	18.52%	14.81%	55.56%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.00</b>						

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Develop and implement appropriate programs and structures systemically to ensure that each student is assigned an adult advocate to enhance his/her educational experience.

(Indicator 3.9)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.9

#### Evidence and Rationale

The Team determined from three sources (student interviews, staff interviews, and a review of artifacts) that although advisement programs were somewhat evident at the high school, advocacy programs designed to ensure that each student is well-known by at least one adult on campus, did not exist in the elementary and middle schools .

Developing and implementing an advocacy program systemically will promote student success by providing additional support to the learning process; enhancing positive educational experiences for all students; and helping students learn the concept of self-advocacy.

### Improvement Priority

Establish and implement a comprehensive mentoring, coaching and induction program to support instructional improvement systemically.

(Indicator 3.7)

### Primary Indicator

#### Indicator 3.7

#### Evidence and Rationale

A review of artifacts, interviews with instructional staff, discussions with administrative staff, and statements from support staff revealed that the system does not provide a formal structure for ongoing support to staff members new to the profession or to the school system. The Team determined a lack of such a structure for staff members at all levels, including principals, assistant principals, teachers and support staff.

The implementation of a comprehensive mentoring, coaching and induction program for all staff will enhance support through appropriate professional learning, modeling and other focused mentoring strategies.

#### **Opportunity For Improvement**

Design and implement a systemic model for the development and delivery of targeted professional development activities as determined by the specific needs of staff members.

(Indicator 3.11)

### Primary Indicator

#### Indicator 3.11

#### Evidence and Rationale

A review of artifacts, discussions with instructional staff, and statements from administrative staff revealed that although many staff could identify examples of professional learning that had been conducted within the school system, none could clearly identify a systemic process for determining the professional learning needs of the staff. In addition, staff members were unable to articulate how the system ensured the frequent and comprehensive delivery of professional development. The artifacts did not include evidence of a systemic process for determining professional learning needs.

School administrators shared that the system establishes a goal for professional learning prior to the beginning of the school year. However, when areas of need are identified through teacher observations using Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), adjustments were not included in the professional development plans to target the areas of need.

Providing a systemic structure for professional learning that empowers administrators and staff to adjust their plans based on data driven needs will enhance the effectiveness of the instructional program. Employing frequent and targeted professional development activities for staff at all levels will enhance the system's continuous improvement efforts.

#### **Powerful Practice**

The system actively engages families in meaningful ways regarding their children's progress and success within the learning environment.

(Indicator 3.8)

*Primary Indicator*

## Indicator 3.8

*Evidence and Rationale*

Statements during interviews with multiple parent groups, instructional staff, and administrative staff revealed a comprehensive process of communicating student progress and success within the learning environment. Through the use of parent-focused events, involvement with School Leadership Teams (SLTs) and parent-teacher conferencing, parents were actively engaged in their children's education and convey a strong sense of community when discussing their children's participation in the local school system.

Providing numerous opportunities for parents to obtain information about their children's academic progress and engaging them in the learning process will enhance student success and parental support for their children and the school.

# 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.	1.67	2.62
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.	1.67	2.63
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.	2.67	2.89
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	2.61

## 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.	3.00	2.95
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.00	2.92
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	3.12
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	3.33	2.97
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	2.83	2.67

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.	3.00	2.76

## 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	3.00	3.36
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.00	3.04

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Develop and implement a system improvement process that includes the review, revision, and communication of the purpose and direction statement, engaging representatives from all stakeholder groups in the process. (Indicator 1.1, Indicator 1.2)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.1

#### Evidence and Rationale

A review of artifacts and interviews with instructional staff, administrative staff, parents, and support staff revealed the lack of a systematic process to regularly review and revise the system's vision and mission statements. The Team found no evidence of meeting agendas or minutes documenting such sessions. All stakeholder groups interviewed confirmed that the vision and mission statements had not been updated in several years. The superintendent, who had been employed for only four months, indicated that the vision and mission statements would be revisited, indicating uncertainty as to how the current vision statement would be measured.

The Team determined through staff interviews, parent interviews, and the review of documentation that a comprehensive system improvement process was not in place. The superintendent indicated; however, that the system was in the process of developing a strategic plan for the next five years, which will include strategic goals, as well as the review, revision, and communication of the system's purpose and direction.

Developing and implementing a systemic, systematic continuous improvement process, including the review, revision and communication of the vision and mission statements for the system and schools, will ensure that the system is moving in the same direction, with schools maintaining their unique identities. Additionally, the potential for increased communication could further enhance academic achievement and student success.



# 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.	2.50	2.92
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	2.93
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	2.67	3.05
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	2.17	2.63

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	2.74
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	2.83	2.54
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.	2.33	2.66
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

## Findings

### Opportunity For Improvement

Manage the multi-year planning process to accommodate the growing student enrollment within the confines of available space.

(Indicator 4.4)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.4

#### Evidence and Rationale

A review of artifacts, statements from administrators, interviews with parents and discussions with the superintendent revealed that the system was monitoring student growth trends and school capacity. All stakeholders interviewed considered student growth to be the system's major challenge, as there was no additional space in the city of Decatur. The superintendent stated during the system overview, "We need to evaluate the growth each year." Members of the various School Leadership Teams (SLTs) reported that the superintendent visited each SLT to discuss growth projections and to solicit input. A task force had also been established to address the issue.

With the unprecedented growth the system is experiencing, it is critical that the data and plans are continuously monitored. The systemic and systematic review of student enrollment projections and school capacity will assist the district in preparing for future growth.

### Opportunity For Improvement

Monitor and provide resources to maintain and upgrade the technology infrastructure, devices, and professional learning to support instructional and assessment needs.

(Indicator 4.6)

Primary Indicator

## Indicator 4.6

Evidence and Rationale

A review of artifacts, discussions with instructional staff, and interviews with administrative staff revealed that the system had developed a technology plan and was seeking various funding opportunities to support upgrades. Instructional staff indicated that as the enrollment increases, so does the need for additional technological resources. Administrative staff indicated that the 1:1 digital device initiative at the 4/5 Academy at Fifth Avenue and Renfroe Middle School provided numerous additional educational options for students. However, the additional devices require more technical support, which is currently unavailable.

The systemic and on-going evaluation of technology needs will assist in supporting the additional devices already provided for students as well as prepare for future technology needs with the anticipated student growth.

# Conclusion

The City Schools of Decatur had established a mission of "...challenging every student to succeed..." A review of various school and system documents, discussions during interview sessions, and observations during school visits revealed that both internal and external stakeholders have internalized the mission, expressing a desire for the students to excel in various aspects. The superintendent indicated that community involvement was "incredibly strong," with numerous collaborative partnerships established.

When asked to provide one-word descriptors of the system, stakeholders responded with such terms as exceptional, admirable, community, education, curiosity, potential, great, hardworking, passionate, pride, hopeful, preparation, irreplaceable, embracing, dependable, important, learning, and diversity.

The Team found that a positive culture was both a priority and a strength of the City Schools of Decatur. The positive culture, along with the high academic achievement, is an asset for recruiting and retaining teachers.

Another strength of the system was its commitment to helping students develop healthy lifestyles. The Team was impressed with both the Farm-to-School Program and the Walk-to-School initiative. The strong collaboration between the school system, parents, students, and community to achieve these goals is remarkable. The system also provided a registered nurse at each school. Stakeholders were impressed with the emphasis on health and wellness.

A review of artifacts, observations during school visits, and statements during interviews with various stakeholder groups revealed that the system provides high quality media programs and a rich variety of technology resources. In addition, the Team commends the system for effectively managing financial resources and maintaining a healthy fund balance during a period of substantial student growth.

The system communicated high expectations for learners systemically and engaged parents and stakeholders through School Leadership Teams (SLTs) as a part of the system's charter. Collaborative planning was pervasive throughout the system, with teachers working in learning communities to enhance standards-based instruction.

The system had a clearly defined assessment system with a very high level of student proficiency on state mandated assessments, including the Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) and the Georgia Milestones Assessment System. Numerous methods were used to analyze student data, which was used to inform instruction. Student performance data were reported to various stakeholder groups. The system is to be commended for its use of standards/criterion based report cards systemically. Various stakeholder groups were able to articulate how student performance is reported, expressing a thorough understanding of the student assessment measures in place.

The City Schools of Decatur had identified several initiatives to pursue during the next few years. The superintendent, school and system staff, and parents indicated the need to revise the vision and mission statements, as they were developed several years ago and were not measurable. The superintendent

indicated that both statements would be revised as the system develops the comprehensive strategic plan for 2016 - 2021, which was already in progress. He also indicated that there were 72 participants at the first community meeting, as well as a high response rate to the survey regarding the strategic planning process.

Although the Team determined that the system had significant parental and stakeholder engagement, school and system staff were still seeking methods to increase parental involvement for the lower performing students. The system continuously provided opportunities for parental involvement, but has been unable to establish a connection with some parents. The superintendent indicated that cultural sensitivity training for staff is in the discussion stages, which might lead to enhanced parental involvement and additional support to meet the needs of the diversity of the student population.

Parents and staff shared concerns regarding meeting the needs of students who do not fit within the International Baccalaureate (IB) model, indicating the need for all students systemically to be appropriately challenged. They also indicated the need to review various curriculum delivery models to ensure that the needs of all learners are met, including students with disabilities, students identified for Response to Intervention (Rtl) assistance, as well as average performing students. Providing a "challenging 21st century learning environment that results in achievement for all students" is Goal 1 of the system's 2011-2016 Strategic Plan.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for the system was the increase in student enrollment. Parents, staff and administrators indicated the need for additional space to accommodate the growing student population. The student enrollment has nearly doubled since 2005, with the diversity of the population decreasing and the cost of living increasing. Continued student growth is projected, presenting a significant challenge for the district, as the City of Decatur is only 4.2 square miles. The superintendent, staff and parents indicated that one possible solution being discussed is to use the current early childhood learning center as an elementary school, which it was in years past. However, doing so would displace the current early childhood program, which was viewed very positively by the community. A task force has been established to research potential solutions.

The Team identified several Improvement Priorities for the system, focusing on reviewing the system's purpose and direction statement; developing a mentoring and coaching program; and providing adult advocates for each student. The implementation of the established priorities will serve as a foundation for the continued growth and development of the system. The Team commends the system for its efforts toward continuous school improvement.

## 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:

- Develop and implement a system improvement process that includes the review, revision, and communication of the purpose and direction statement, engaging representatives from all stakeholder groups in the process.
- Develop and implement appropriate programs and structures systemically to ensure that each student is

assigned an adult advocate to enhance his/her educational experience.

- Establish and implement a comprehensive mentoring, coaching and induction program to support instructional improvement systemically.

# 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	281.30	278.34
Teaching and Learning Impact	290.48	268.94
Leadership Capacity	273.61	292.64
Resource Utilization	268.75	283.23

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
Carl G. Renfroe Middle School	342.86	390.91	371.43	361.54
Clairemont Elementary School	338.10	400.00	400.00	366.67
Decatur High School	261.90	272.73	285.71	269.23
Glennwood Elementary School	295.24	272.73	328.57	294.87
Oakhurst Elementary School	352.38	327.27	400.00	353.85
The 4/5 Academy at Fifth Avenue	314.29	345.45	314.29	323.08
Westchester Elementary School	304.76	300.00	371.43	315.38
Winnona Park Elementary School	314.29	318.18	342.86	320.51

## Other System Institutions

The following institutions did not utilize ASSIST to complete the Accreditation Report for this External Review. Therefore self-reported results are not included as part of this report. Some institutions appearing below may have been required to submit the Accreditation Report outside of ASSIST.

Institution	Institution
College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center	



# Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Rozalyne P Wright	<p>Dr. Rozalyne P. Wright, Education and Diversity Consultant, earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Spanish from Bethune-Cookman College (University) in Daytona Beach, Florida; her master's degree in administration from the University of Tampa; and a doctorate in educational leadership from Nova Southeastern University. She began her educational career in 1972 as a classroom teacher at R. B. Cox Elementary School in Dade City, Florida. Her 17 years of experience at Cox Elementary School included classroom teacher, migrant language arts resource teacher, assistant principal, and principal. In 1989, she relocated to Highlands County, serving as coordinator of personnel and director of elementary and federal programs. In March 2001, she was employed by the Collier County School Board as director of diversity prior to assuming responsibilities as executive assistant to the superintendent. She retired from the Collier County School District in 2008 and, subsequently, established ZORAD Consultative Services, LLC. She provides contracted services for AdvancED and supervises interns for several universities.</p>
Dr. Cemond Thaddeus Robinzine	<p>Cemond Robinzine has worked in the field of education for eighteen years. He has educational experience on the elementary, middle, and high school level. He is currently an elementary school principal for the Henry County Schools System. He has also served as an assistant principal, school improvement specialist, and special education teacher.</p>
Dr. Michael E. Lodico	<p>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.</p>

Member	Brief Biography
<p>Dr. Lakesha Brackins</p>	<p>Dr. Lakesha Lynette Brackins</p> <p>Director of Federal Programs / Assistant to Superintendent</p> <p>Education:                      Doctor of Philosophy, Auburn University, May 2012                      Educational Specialist Certification, Auburn University, June 2011                      Masters Degree in Educational Leadership, Auburn University Montgomery, May 2002                      Masters Degree in Elementary Education, Troy State University, May 2001                      Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, Troy State University, May 1998</p> <p>Experience:                      July 2012 - Present Director of Federal Programs / Assistant to Superintendent, Elba City Schools                      November 2011 - June 2012: Interim Superintendent, Elba City Schools                      May 2005 - June 2012: Principal, Elba Elementary School / Director of Federal Programs / Transportation Supervisor                      May 2001 - May 2005: Central Office Administrator / Gifted Education Teacher, Elba City Schools                      May 1998 - May 2001: 6th Grade Teacher, Elba Elementary School</p> <p>Bio:                      Dr. Lakesha Brackins is originally from Midland City, Alabama and 1994 graduate of Dale County High School. During high school, Dr. Brackins was involved in numerous activities including Varsity Cheerleading, gymnastics, and Beta Club. After high school, Dr. Brackins attended Troy State where she become a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and the currently remains an active member of the sorority as they strive to "Provide Service to all Mankind". In her leisure time, Dr. Brackins enjoys presenting at various conferences in addition to being a motivational speaker for numerous churches and organizations. She also enjoys reading and SHOPPING. Dr. Brackins is engaged to Mr. Julius Brown of Newville, Alabama. She has one daughter "Sassy", who is part miniature doberman and part pomeranian who definitely wears her name well.....</p>
<p>Mrs. Paula J. Charles</p>	<p>Paula Charles is the President of the Suzuki Schools, located in Atlanta, GA. She has extensive background in strategy, process design, compliance, and collaborative team environments. Paula has a Masters in Professional Accounting from the University of Texas, and a BA in Business from the University of Washington.</p>
<p>Mr. Peter Coombe</p>	<p>Peter Coombe currently serves as the Director of Communications for Calhoun City Schools, and will be assuming the role of Principal at Calhoun Middle/High School this spring. In his directors role he facilitates all public relations, coordinates web and staff communications, and conveys pertinent information through various forms of media as well as directing the Partners in Education program for the district. In addition to his role as Director of Communications, Coombe also serves as the Director of Assessment for grades K-8, and supports the district counseling programs. He is heavily invested in the development and implementation of school-wide curriculum and scheduling initiatives which embrace non-traditional frameworks. Before stepping into school and system leadership, Mr. Coombe began his career as a high school teacher, followed by the role of school counselor and assistant principal. He believes in actively promoting the areas of academics, arts and athletics in regards to student achievement and performance. Coombe actively serves as a board member on the local chamber of commerce and various other civic organizations. He holds degrees from the University of Florida, University of West Alabama, University of West Georgia and Georgia State University.</p>

Member	Brief Biography
<p>Dr. Claire Michael Miller</p>	<p>Dr. Claire Miller is currently the Chief Academic Officer for the Oconee County School System. She earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education with a Major in Spanish Education from the University of Georgia, a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Georgia, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Policy Studies with a Major in Educational Leadership at Georgia State University.</p> <p>She has many goals to accomplish in life but her greatest desire is to provide effective leadership to school leaders and teachers in order to improve achievement for all students. She believes that in order to evolve into a consistently effective leader one must accept the challenge of being a life-long learner. In turn, she believes that you must be willing to commit yourself to teach others, mentor young leaders and provide constant support and motivation for others to attain their goals of helping students reach their fullest potential.</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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