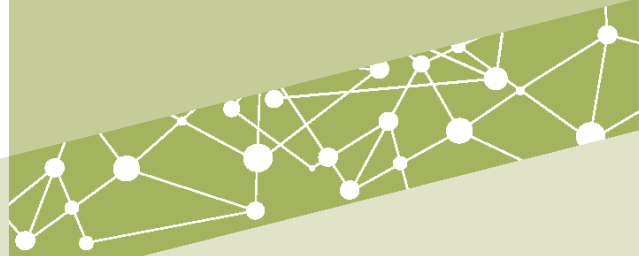


November 4-7, 2018

---



# AdvancED® Engagement Review Report



## AdvancED® Performance Accreditation

---

» **Results for:**  
Houston County Schools  
1100 Main Street  
Perry, Georgia 31069

## Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Introduction .....</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>AdvancED Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review .....</b>        | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>AdvancED Standards Diagnostic Results .....</b>                               | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Leadership Capacity Domain .....</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Learning Capacity Domain.....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Resource Capacity Domain.....</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) Results.....</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Assurances .....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>AdvancED Continuous Improvement System.....</b>                               | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Initiate .....</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Improve .....</b>   | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Impact.....</b>   | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Findings.....</b>   | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Accreditation Recommendation and Index of Education Quality® (IEQ®) .....</b> | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Insights from the Review .....</b>  | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Next Steps.....</b>   | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Team Roster .....</b>   | <b>12</b> |
| <b>References and Readings .....</b>   | <b>15</b> |

## Introduction

### AdvancED Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

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

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

### AdvancED Standards Diagnostic Results

The AdvancED Performance Standards Diagnostic is used by the Engagement Review Team to evaluate the institution’s effectiveness based on AdvancED’s Performance Standards. The diagnostic consists of three components built around each of the three Domains: **Leadership Capacity**, **Learning Capacity** and **Resource Capacity**. Results are reported within four ranges identified by the colors. The results for the three Domains are presented in the tables that follow.

| Color  | Rating               | Description  |
|--------|----------------------|--|
| Red    | Needs Improvement    | Identifies key areas that need more focused improvement efforts                    |
| Yellow | Emerging             | Represents areas to enhance and extend current improvement efforts                 |
| Green  | Meets Expectations   | Pinpoints quality practices that meet the Standards                                |
| Blue   | Exceeds Expectations | Demonstrates noteworthy practices producing clear results that exceed expectations |

### Leadership Capacity Domain

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution’s progress toward its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution’s leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its purpose and direction; the effectiveness of governance and leadership to enable the institution to realize its stated objectives; the ability to engage and involve stakeholders in meaningful and productive ways; and the capacity to implement strategies that improve learner and educator performance.

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

## Learning Capacity Domain

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement and success is the primary expectation of every institution. An effective learning culture is characterized by positive and productive teacher/learner relationships; high expectations and standards; a challenging and engaging curriculum; quality instruction and comprehensive support that enable all learners to be successful; and assessment practices (formative and summative) that monitor and measure learner progress and achievement. Moreover, a quality institution evaluates the impact of its learning culture, including all programs and support services and adjusts accordingly.

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

| Learning Capacity Standards |  | Rating             |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------|
| 2.6                         | The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is clearly aligned to standards and best practices.                   | Meets Expectations |
| 2.7                         | Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.               | Emerging           |
| 2.8                         | The system provides programs and services for learners' educational future and career planning.                                | Meets Expectations |
| 2.9                         | The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.                                     | Meets Expectations |
| 2.10                        | Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.  | Meets Expectations |
| 2.11                        | Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement of student learning.     | Emerging           |
| 2.12                        | The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning. | Meets Expectations |

## Resource Capacity Domain

The use and distribution of resources support the stated mission of the institution. Institutions ensure that resources are distributed and utilized equitably so the needs of all learners are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The institution examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, organizational effectiveness, and increased student learning.

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

## Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®)

### Results

The AdvancED eProve™ Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) is a learner-centric classroom observation tool that comprises 28 items organized in seven environments aligned with the AdvancED Standards. Classroom observations are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes. Trained and certified observers take into account the level of embeddedness, quality, and complexity of application or implementation; number of students engaged and frequency of application. Results from the eleot are reported on a scale of one to four based on the students' engagement in and reaction to the learning environment. In addition to the results from the review, the AdvancED Improvement Network (AIN) results are reported to benchmark your results against the network averages. The eleot provides useful, relevant, structured, and quantifiable data on the extent to which students are engaged in activities and/or demonstrate knowledge, attitudes, and/or dispositions that are conducive to effective learning.

The insights eleot data provide are an invaluable source of information for continuous improvement planning efforts. Although averages by eleot Learning Environment are helpful to gauge quality at a higher, more impressionistic level, the average rating for each item is more fine-grained, specific and actionable. Institutions should identify the five to seven items with the lowest ratings and examine patterns in those ratings within and across environments to identify areas for improvement. Similarly, identifying the five to seven items with the highest ratings also will assist in identifying strengths within and across eleot Learning Environments. Examining the eleot data in conjunction with other institution data will provide valuable feedback on areas of strength or improvement in institution's learning environments.

| eleot® Observations  |               |             |
|--|---------------|-------------|
| <b>Total Number of eleot® Observations</b>   | <b>78</b>     |             |
| <b>Environments</b>  | <b>Rating</b> | <b>AIN</b>  |
| <b>Equitable Learning Environment</b>  | <b>2.95</b>   | <b>2.86</b> |
| Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs   | 2.15          | 1.89        |
| Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support  | 3.36          | 3.74        |
| Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner  | 3.65          | 3.77        |
| Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions and dispositions | 2.63          | 2.06        |
| <b>High Expectations Environment</b>   | <b>3.02</b>   | <b>3.02</b> |
| Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher   | 3.10          | 3.17        |
| Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable   | 3.07          | 3.14        |
| Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work   | 2.86          | 2.83        |
| Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)  | 2.95          | 3.06        |

| eleot® Observations  |               |             |
|--|---------------|-------------|
| <b>Total Number of eleot® Observations</b>   | <b>78</b>     |             |
| <b>Environments</b>  | <b>Rating</b> | <b>AIN</b>  |
| Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning   | 3.14          | 2.89        |
| <b>Supportive Learning Environment</b>   | <b>3.42</b>   | <b>3.61</b> |
| Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful                          | 3.39          | 3.66        |
| Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)  | 3.13          | 3.49        |
| Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks   | 3.54          | 3.66        |
| Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher  | 3.61          | 3.66        |
| <b>Active Learning Environment</b>   | <b>2.97</b>   | <b>3.08</b> |
| Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and the teacher predominate                                  | 3.12          | 3.34        |
| Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences  | 2.58          | 2.80        |
| Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities   | 3.28          | 3.43        |
| Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments            | 2.90          | 2.74        |
| <b>Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment</b>  | <b>2.88</b>   | <b>3.14</b> |
| Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored           | 2.75          | 3.20        |
| Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work | 3.26          | 3.37        |
| Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content  | 2.98          | 3.37        |
| Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed  | 2.52          | 2.63        |
| <b>Well-Managed Learning Environment</b>   | <b>3.36</b>   | <b>3.58</b> |
| Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other  | 3.59          | 3.86        |
| Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others  | 3.54          | 3.83        |
| Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another  | 3.03          | 3.09        |
| Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions   | 3.29          | 3.54        |
| <b>Digital Learning Environment</b>  | <b>1.70</b>   | <b>1.50</b> |
| Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning                         | 1.81          | 1.60        |
| Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning   | 1.80          | 1.46        |
| Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for learning                          | 1.49          | 1.46        |

## Assurances

Assurances are statements accredited institutions must confirm they are meeting. The Assurance statements are based on the type of institution and the responses are confirmed by the Accreditation Engagement Review Team. Institutions are expected to meet all Assurances and are expected to correct any deficiencies in unmet Assurances.

| Assurances       |          |       |  |
|------------------|----------|-------|--|
| Met              | <b>X</b> | Unmet |  |
| Unmet Assurances |          |       |  |

## AdvancED Continuous Improvement System

AdvancED defines continuous improvement as “an embedded behavior rooted in an institution’s culture that constantly focuses on conditions, processes, and practices to improve teaching and learning.” The AdvancED Continuous Improvement System (CIS) provides a systemic fully integrated solution to help institutions map out and navigate a successful improvement journey. In the same manner that educators are expected to understand the unique needs of every learner and tailor the education experience to drive student success, every institution must be empowered to map out and embrace their unique improvement journey. AdvancED expects institutions to use the results and the analysis of data from various interwoven components for the implementation of improvement actions to drive education quality and improved student outcomes. While each improvement journey is unique, the journey is driven by key actions.

The findings of the Engagement Review Team will be organized by the Levels of Impact within i3: Initiate, Improve and Impact. The organization of the findings is based upon the ratings from the Standards Diagnostic and the i3 Levels of Impact.

### Initiate

The first phase of the improvement journey is to **Initiate** actions to cause and achieve better results. The elements of the Initiate phase are defined within the Levels of Impact of Engagement and Implementation. Engagement is the level of involvement and frequency stakeholders are engaged in the desired practices, processes, or programs within the institution. Implementation is the degree to which the desired practices, processes, or programs are monitored and adjusted for quality and fidelity of implementation. Standards identified within Initiate should become the focus of the institution’s continuous improvement journey to move toward the collection, analysis and use of data to measure the results of engagement and implementation. A focus on enhancing the capacity of the institution in meeting the identified Standards has the greatest potential impact on improving student performance and organizational effectiveness.

### Improve

The second phase of the improvement journey is to gather and evaluate the results of actions to **Improve**. The elements of the **Improve** phase are defined within the Levels of Impact of Results and Sustainability. Results represents the collection, analysis, and use of data and evidence to demonstrate attaining the desired result(s). Sustainability is results achieved consistently to demonstrate growth and improvement over time (minimum of three years). Standards identified within Improve are those in which the institution is using results to inform their continuous improvement processes and using results over time to demonstrate the achievement of goals. The institution should continue to analyze and use results to guide improvements in student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

### Impact

The third phase of achieving improvement is **Impact** where desired practices are deeply entrenched. The elements of the **Impact** phase are defined within the Level of Impact of Embeddedness. Embeddedness is the degree to which the desired practices, processes, or programs are deeply ingrained in the culture and operation of the institution. Standards identified within Impact are those in which the institution has demonstrated ongoing growth and improvement over time and has embedded the practices within the culture of the institution. Institutions should continue to support and sustain these practices that are yielding results in improving student achievement and organizational effectiveness.



## Findings

The findings in this report represent the degree to which the Accreditation Standards are effectively implemented in support of the learning environment and the mission of the institution. Standards which are identified in the **Initiate** phase of practice are considered Priorities for Improvement that must be addressed by the institution to retain accreditation. Standards which are identified in the **Improve** phase of practice are considered Opportunities for Improvement that the institution should consider. Standards which are identified in the **Impact** phase of practice are considered Effective Practices within the institution.

| I3 Rubric Levels                                | STANDARDS  |
|---|--|
| <b>Initiate</b><br>Priorities for Improvement   |  |
| <b>Improve</b><br>Opportunities for Improvement | Standards 2.7, 2.11<br>Standard 3.5  |
| <b>Impact</b><br>Effective Practices            | Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11<br>Standards 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 2.12<br>Standards 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8 |

## Accreditation Recommendation and Index of Education Quality® (IEQ®)

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

AdvancED provides the Index of Education Quality® (IEQ®) as a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of standards and review criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus. The IEQ is comprised of the Standards Diagnostic ratings from the three Domains: 1) Leadership Capacity; 2) Learning Capacity; and 3) Resource Capacity. The IEQ results are reported on a scale of 100 to 400 and provides information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria. Institutions should review the IEQ in relation to the Findings from the review in the areas of Initiate, Improve and Impact. An IEQ score below 250 indicates that the institution has several areas within the Initiate level and should focus their improvement efforts on those Standards within the Initiate level. An IEQ in the range of 225-300 indicates that the institution has several Standards within the Improve level and is using results to inform continuous improvement and demonstrate sustainability. An IEQ of 275 and above indicates the institution is beginning to reach the Impact level and is engaged in practices that are sustained over time and are becoming ingrained in the culture of the institution.

Below is the average (range) of all AIN institutions evaluated for accreditation in the last five years. The range of the annual AIN IEQ average is presented to enable you to benchmark your results with other institutions in the network.

|                        |        |                             |                 |
|------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Institution IEQ</b> | 338.06 | <b>AIN 5 Year IEQ Range</b> | 278.34 – 283.33 |
|------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|-----------------|

## Insights from the Review

The Engagement Review Team engaged in professional discussions and deliberations about the processes, programs and practices within the institution to arrive at the findings of the team. These findings are organized around themes guided by the evidence, examples of programs and practices and provide direction for the institution's continuous improvement efforts. The Insights from the Review narrative should provide contextualized information from the team deliberations and provide information about the team's analysis of the practices, processes, and programs of the institution from the levels of Initiate, Improve, and Impact. The Insights from the Review narrative should provide next steps to guide the improvement journey of the institution in its efforts to improve the quality of educational opportunities for all learners. The findings are aligned to research-based criteria designed to improve student learning and organizational effectiveness. The feedback provided in the Accreditation Engagement Review Report will assist the institution in reflecting on its current improvement efforts and to adapt and adjust their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

The Engagement Review Team identified a number of themes reflective of the Houston County School District's continuous improvement process. These included many strengths and opportunities that offer perspective and guidance as the process proceeds. The team conducted interviews of key stakeholders, classroom observations and reviewed numerous artifacts that substantiate the evidence cited in support of the identified themes.

Data are collected, analyzed and used extensively with fidelity in curriculum and instruction decision-making at the system and building levels. The systemic use of data by professional learning communities (PLC) was noted in interviews with system and school leadership, as well as provided in a PLC overview document. In focus interviews with teachers and staff, it was learned that PLCs use standard and item analysis, Lexile and literacy data, Response to Intervention (RtI) progress monitoring and behavioral and attendance data to organize flexible groups of students and to form units, performance tasks and assessments. In their interviews, leaders and teachers confirmed that the use of data in the process of addressing individual student needs remains a work in progress. The AdvancED eProve™ Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) observations indicated overall alignment of instruction with Georgia Standards and learning goals. Eleot® results of classroom observations confirmed this with the item, "Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs," receiving a 2.15 rating out of a possible 4.00. While several students confirmed in their interviews that they are able to track their own progress in Accelerated Reading (AR), eleot® observations in the Progress Monitoring Environment with an overall rating of 2.88 pointed to the opportunity to increase student involvement in higher levels of monitoring of their own learning performance and how they are being assessed. Several teachers corroborated the value of such student opportunities to be involved in progress monitoring.

The system has established and implemented protocols and strategies to monitor and adjust programs and practices to assure and sustain their effectiveness over time. In his interview, the Superintendent shared the extensive process used in developing the Houston County School District (HCS D) Improvement Plan (the Plan) each year. He noted, and internal and external stakeholders corroborated, that they have considerable and formal input to the Plan, largely through a HCS D Comprehensive Needs Assessment. The team reviewed both documents and noted that data, including that over time, was largely represented. These included the Statewide Longitudinal Data System Dashboard (SLDS), the Georgia Growth Model, graduation rates, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), the Houston At-Risk Profile (HARP) and the Literacy Inventory. In interviews with governing board members, the team learned of their extensive involvement with, and deep understanding of, the Plan. While the Plan is monitored throughout the year, formal retreats for its development, implementation and review are held twice per year, starting with the Leadership Summit in June. Each school building also develops an annual Improvement Plan and utilizes a formal review and adjust process.

High expectations for student learning are articulated by the governing board and leadership at all levels, as

documented through the system Improvement Plan practices. As the team was apprised of high learning expectations by the governing board, superintendent and leadership at all levels, it observed uneven evidence of practice in its school visits. Overall, the eleot® High Expectations Environment rated a 3.02. However, learner abilities to demonstrate and/or describe high quality work achieved a 2.86 rating. In addition, “Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences,” was rated at 2.58. Teachers acknowledged that there are structures and processes in place to gather, collect and analyze assessment data, individually and in their PLCs, to design and implement high expectations experiences for learners. However, there is not clear alignment between observed classroom practices and the focus group interview intentions regarding consistent implementation of high expectations. The system is encouraged to continue its strategies to ensure the instructional framework is implemented, teachers provide specific feedback to students using the language of the standards and students can articulate their learning targets and essential standards.

The extensive involvement of internal and external stakeholders in decision-making, as well as in providing feedback and input, is a critical component in the planning and operations processes of most aspects of the HCSD. Through focused interviews with the governing board, Superintendent, leadership and teachers, it was broadly articulated that involvement at all levels is promoted and expected. In addition, students, parents and community partners confirmed their participation is widely invited and encouraged. The opportunities for such involvement are varied from formal, as in the case of the system and school Improvement Plans’ development and review; required, as in the case of federal and state compliance; and voluntary, as in the school advisory committees and classroom support. In their interview, community partners spoke of their extensive involvement with the Career Academy programs as advisors, sponsors of school events, in collaboration by providing dual-credit opportunities for students, providing entry-level jobs and partnering on building shared facilities, such as the HCSC/County tennis courts. They articulated their attendance at the Superintendent’s annual State of the School System address, from which they appreciated gaining an understanding of the College and Career Readiness Index (CCRPI), milestone scores and graduation rates. High school students spoke of all of their school staff welcoming their input and their overwhelming interest in student activities. Parents and students spoke highly of the District and the schools’ efforts to communicate through Infinite Campus, student ownership of grades, robo-calls, ClassDojo, social media, parent conferences scheduled their convenience, phone calls and invitations to participate on committees. Parent survey results corroborated stakeholder involvement and expectations.

A shared set of beliefs and values guide the decisions that are made at all levels of the organization and are manifested in the actions of the staff. These are:

Safety is our number one priority.

Failure is not an option. We do expect that all children can learn.

We will not be satisfied until all of our schools meet or exceed the highest academic standards.

We are committed to determining what each child needs to fulfill his or her potential.

We take responsibility for learning, not only for our students but also for ourselves.

We are not afraid of change and will embrace change that is research-based and proven to be effective.

The HCSD motto of, “All Means All,” was heard loudly and clearly in every stakeholder group that was interviewed. For each of the above statements, the team was provided and sought evidence of its embeddedness. In interviews with system and school leadership and staff, in addition to parents and students, all respondents articulated safety as most important. As part of its school visits, the team observed safety practices in place, such as controlled entries, exceptional maintenance, food preparation and serving and respectful student interactions. The governing board, leadership and staff all voiced that they believe all children can learn. The team observed in teacher and student interactions that every student’s mastery was important. They observed that grouping and tutoring strategies were employed in order to meet students where they were. Before school, during and after school help was provided. PLCs provide opportunities for staff to consider special interventions, as indicated. The team reviewed SLDS data in its quest to learn how the system is tracking its schools’ progress. It then learned in leadership interviews of focused resources, such as special federal and state funds that might be used to support schools that are performing below expectations. The team reviewed the system’s MTSS RtI Tienet Training materials which are an example of its desire to provide HCSD students with exemplary invention services and staff with the tools to deliver them. In interviews with leadership and teachers, it was learned that professional learning is a critical element of supporting staff at all levels and in all areas. A review of the strategies used in support of

strengthening PLCs was done by the team. The Summer Summit and its implementation of the Improvement Plan are evidence of the organization’s willingness to embrace change. A review of the Summer Summit development and substance indicates a research-based process with broad stakeholder involvement.

The Houston County School District is to be commended for the many excellent programs and practices that are occurring for learners, their families and staff. The team wishes the school community the best as it proceeds on its journey of continuous improvement. It is expected that these insights provide some guidance as the system and schools consider next steps on their journeys. As it does so, it will fulfill its mission, “to produce high-achieving students.”

## Next Steps

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

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

## Team Roster

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

| Team Member Name              | Brief Biography  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| John Sedey,<br>Lead Evaluator | John Sedey has been a teacher, school and district administrator and educational consultant. Since retiring from public school administration, he has been in private practice, primarily consulting to an intermediate school district, a community college, three alternative schools and four charter schools. He is the Executive Director of an education non-profit corporation. Mr. Sedey has provided leadership to career and technical education, guidance and social services, assessment and testing, student data systems, alternative education, state and federal program administration, education-business partnerships and environmental education. He has been a senior developer for one of the eleven New American Schools Development grants. In his advocacy for college and career readiness, he has consulted to federal and state departments of education. He holds a bachelor’s degree in history and business, a master’s degree in education administration and has done additional graduate work, including that as a Bush Public School Executive Fellow. He has led more than a hundred AdvancED reviews in 28 states since 2008. |

| Team Member Name         | Brief Biography  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Arthur Blevins           | <p>Arthur Blevins graduated from Keith High School and attended Alabama State University in Montgomery, Alabama. There, he received his bachelor's and master's degrees in Elementary Education and an Educational Specialist in Administration and Supervision from Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee. Currently, Arthur is serving his seventh year as a principal of Pate's Creek Elementary. He has twenty-one years of experience in education. Arthur taught for eight years, served as a curriculum specialist for three years and assistant principal for four years. All these experiences have been great and helped him grow as a professional. Arthur believes: "All children can learn, and it is our job as educators to ensure that they do. Children should be taught how to think and not what to think."</p>   |
| Robert Costley           | <p>Robert Costley is a veteran of the United States Navy, serving on two aircraft carriers (USS Ranger and USS Constellation) from 1992-1994. After completing his bachelor's degree in English at the University of West Georgia in 1998, he began his educational career as an English teacher at Central High School in Carrollton, Georgia, where he also coached football and wrestling as he earned his Master's Degree in Education Administration from Jacksonville State University. In 2002, he became Assistant Principal of Carrollton Junior High School; and while serving at CJHS, he earned his Specialist's Degree in Education Administration from Jacksonville State in 2003. In 2005, he was named principal of Rome Middle School in Rome, where his students and staff earned the Georgia Department of Education's Silver Award in Academic Achievement. Since that time, Robert has served as school superintendent in two Georgia counties, Habersham (2008-2011) and Butts (2011-Present).</p>   |
| Carol Deweese            | <p>Mrs. Carol Deweese received her education from Mississippi State University and Delta State University and served in the field of education from 1983-2014. She has teaching experience at the elementary and high school level in both public and private sectors of education. She also taught Adult Computer Education through a Community College Workforce Development Center. The last ten years of her career were in the District Office where she served as a Technology Specialist then Instructional Technology Coordinator until her retirement in December 2014. She is IC3 certified, a certified Promethean Trainer, has completed PowerSchool University and has been a certified Apple Foundations Trainer. Since retirement, Carol serves as an AdvancED Lead Evaluator and has served on numerous AdvancED review teams.</p>   |
| Dr. Shelia Garcia-Wilder | <p>Dr. Garcia-Wilder is the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning in Valdosta, Georgia. In that position, she provides leadership in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional learning and federal programs. She is well versed in district strategic planning and school improvement planning for five elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school in the district. Dr. Garcia-Wilder holds a doctorate in educational leadership from NOVA Southeastern University. She also holds a Master of Education (M. Ed) and Bachelor of Science (BS) degrees in Elementary Education. Dr. Garcia-Wilder has over 27 years of experience at all levels: teacher, assistant principal, state director, director of school improvement specialist, turn-around principal, undergraduate, graduate associate professor and has written certification test questions for Educational Testing System (ETS), Teacher and Leader Certification Test and the new GACE Leadership Certification Test. She has served on districts' accreditation review teams throughout the state.</p> |

| Team Member Name     | Brief Biography   |
|----------------------|---|
| Dr. Phyllis Gilworth | <p>Dr. Phyllis Gilworth has a bachelor’s degree in Music Education, a master’s degree in Guidance and Counseling and a PhD in Education with a specialization in Leadership in Educational Administration. She has teaching experience at all levels k-12 in rural, suburban and urban settings. Dr. Gilworth’s counseling experience includes elementary school students and at-risk students in the alternative school setting as well as adults in the community setting. Dr. Gilworth’s administrative experience includes: Assistant Principal in charge of all discipline and curricular issues at a high risk, urban middle school, Assistant Principal in charge of Guidance, Director of Instructional Programs and Assessment and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at an affluent suburban district in Northwest Indiana. Dr. Gilworth has extensive experience serving on School Improvement Teams and particularly enjoys issues relative to curriculum, teaching and learning. She has participated on numerous AdvancED accreditation teams, serving in multiple roles, both in her home state of Indiana, as well as nationally.</p>  |
| Dr. Brian Simon      | <p>Brian Simon was educated in the Atlanta Public School System and later attended Savannah State College in 1988. He majored in History and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1993. After graduation, Brian was hired at A.E. Beach High school in Savannah, Georgia, as a Social Studies teacher. After ten years of coaching and teaching at Beach High School, Brian was hired as the Social Studies Facilitator for Corporate Academy of Savannah and Assistant Men’s Basketball Coach of Savannah State University. After completion of his second year of Head coaching, he was summoned to return back to A.E. Beach High School to become the Assistant Principal 2006-2007. In 2007 he was hired by the Jasper County School District as the principal of the new Ridgeland High School in Ridgeland, SC. where he served until 2010. In 2011, he was named the principal of Jackson Heights Elementary School. Later in 2016, Dr. Simon was named the principal of the New Martha R. Smith Elementary School in Jesup, Georgia. While in these positions, he attended Cambridge College in Massachusetts to receive his Master of Education in Education Administration, Advanced Graduate Studies degree in Leadership and Doctorate in Educational Leadership.</p> |
| Debra Strickland     | <p>Debra Strickland is from a small town in South Alabama. Debra received her bachelor’s in Elementary Education from Troy University in Dothan, Alabama in 2007. She later attended Auburn University Montgomery where she received her master’s degree in Educational Leadership. Currently, Debra is serving her second year as the principal of Elba Elementary. She has ten years of experience in education. Debra taught for several years and served as a curriculum specialist for two years before becoming principal. She has a passion for educating young minds and fostering the development of the whole child. She specializes in curriculum and instruction at the elementary level.</p>   |

## References and Readings

- AdvancED. (2015). *Continuous Improvement and Accountability*. Alpharetta, GA: AdvancED. Retrieved from <http://www.advanc-ed.org/source/continuousimprovement-and-accountability>
- Bernhardt, V., & Herbert, C. (2010). *Response to intervention and continuous school improvement: Using data, vision, and leadership to design, implement, and evaluate a schoolwide prevention program*. New York: Routledge.
- Elgart, M. (2015). *What a continuously improving system looks like*. Alpharetta, GA: AdvancED. Retrieved from <http://www.advanc-ed.org/source/what-continuously-improving-system-looks-like>
- Elgart, M. (2017). *Meeting the promise of continuous improvement: Insights from the AdvancED continuous improvement system and observations of effective schools*. Alpharetta, GA: AdvancED. Retrieved from <http://www.advanc-ed.org/sites/default/files/CISWhitePaper.pdf>
- Evans, R. (2012). *The Savvy school change leader*. Alpharetta, GA: AdvancED. Retrieved from <http://www.advanc-ed.org/source/savvy-school-change-leader>
- Fullan, M. (2014). *Leading in a culture of change personal action guide and workbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hall, G., & Hord, S. (2001). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2006). *Sustainable leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kim, W., & Mauborne, R. (2017). *Blue ocean shift: Beyond competing*. New York: Hachette Book Group.
- Park, S, Hironaka, S; Carver, P, & Nordstrum, L. (2013). *Continuous improvement in education*. San Francisco: Carnegie Foundation. Retrieved from [https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/carnegie-foundation\\_continuous-improvement\\_2013.05.pdf](https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/carnegie-foundation_continuous-improvement_2013.05.pdf)
- Sarason, S. (1996). *Revisiting the culture of the school and the problem of change*. New York: Teachers College.
- Schein, E. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Von Bertalanffy, L. (1968). *General systems theory*. New York: George Braziller, Inc.





**advanc-ed.org**

**Toll Free: 888.41EDNOW (888.413.3669) Global: +1 678.392.2285, ext. 6963**

**9115 Westside Parkway, Alpharetta, GA 30009**



## **About AdvancED**

AdvancED is a non-profit, non-partisan organization serving the largest community of education professionals in the world. Founded on more than 100 years of work in continuous improvement, AdvancED combines the knowledge and expertise of a research institute, the skills of a management consulting firm and the passion of a grassroots movement for educational change to empower Pre-K-12 schools and school systems to ensure that all learners realize their full potential.

---

*©Advance Education, Inc. AdvancED® grants to the Institution, which is the subject of the Engagement Review Report, and its designees and stakeholders a non-exclusive, perpetual, irrevocable, royalty-free license, and release to reproduce, reprint, and distribute this report in accordance with and as protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States of America and all foreign countries. All other rights not expressly conveyed are reserved by AdvancED.*