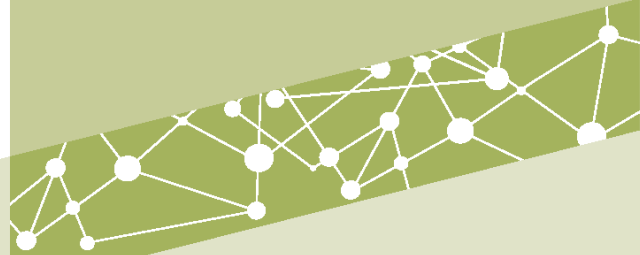


March 11 - 14, 2018



AdvancED® Engagement Review Report



AdvancED® Performance Accreditation

» Results for:

Cook County School System
1109 N. Parrish Avenue
Adel, Georgia 31620

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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 that helps to focus and guide each institution’s improvement journey. Valuable evidence and information from other stakeholders, including students, also is obtained through interviews, surveys and additional activities.

As a part of the Engagement Review, stakeholders were interviewed by members of the Engagement Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's learning environment and organizational effectiveness. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the Engagement Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Groups	Number
Board Members	5
Superintendent	1
Administrators	12
Instructional Staff	65
Support Staff	44
Students	31
Parents/Communities	27
Total	185

Once all of the information is compiled and reviewed, the team develops the Engagement Review Report and presents preliminary results to the institution. Results from the Engagement Review are reported in four ratings represented by colors. These ratings provide guidance and insight into an institution's continuous improvement efforts as described below:

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

Color	Rating	Description
Green	Meets Expectations	Pinpoints quality practices that meet the Standards
Blue	Exceeds Expectations	Demonstrates noteworthy practices producing clear results that exceed expectations

AdvancED Continuous Improvement System

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. AdvancED identifies three important components of a continuous improvement process and provides feedback on the components of the journey using a rubric that identifies the three areas to guide the improvement journey. The areas are as follows:

Commitment to Continuous Improvement	Rating
The institution has collected sufficient and quality data to identify school improvement needs.	Emerging
Implications from the analysis of data have been identified and used for the development of key strategic goals.	Emerging
The institution demonstrates the capacity to implement their continuous improvement journey.	Meets Expectations

Continuous Improvement Journey Narrative

The Cook County School System, located in Adel, Georgia, served approximately 3222 students in Pre-K to twelfth grades. The system was composed of one primary school (grades PK – 2), one elementary school (grades 3 – 5), one middle school (grades 6 – 8) and one high school (grades 9 – 12).

The Engagement Review Team (Team) determined that the system is deeply-rooted in school and community pride. A newly-appointed superintendent will assume leadership in July 2018. Stakeholders indicated that the incumbent superintendent provided stability during a period of economic hardship and uncertainty. He has fostered the development of community and business partnerships to support continuous school improvement and the academic success of students. Progressive leadership has led to the provision of technological tools and the development of professional learning plans systemically to ensure that students and staff have access to state-of-the-art resources to enhance teaching and learning.

System staff indicated a commitment to maintaining and pursuing various initiatives to foster high levels of student achievement. One strategy included becoming a Strategic Waiver School System (SWSS) in 2015. As a result, the system received flexibility in the form of waivers of certain state laws, rules and guidelines in exchange for greater accountability for increased student performance. The Cook County School System has utilized this flexibility to (a) modify the school calendar, including additional release days for professional development; and, (b) extend the school day to increase instructional time. However, the Team determined the need for a comprehensive, data-driven review of existing board policies. Such a review would help identify additional areas in which the SWSS contract could be used to assist the system in further meeting the diverse needs of learners and the staff. The Team did not find evidence of a well-defined process for reviewing, revising and developing board policies.

The Team was informed that the five-member school board met bi-monthly and had been certified as a Quality School Board by the Georgia State School Boards Association. The Board participated in various training sessions offered by the Coastal Plains Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) and the Georgia School Boards Association.

System staff indicated that the continuous improvement process began with the comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) in the spring of 2017, followed by several summer school improvement sessions that resulted in updated school and system improvement plans. Although the Team found limited involvement of external stakeholders in these planning sessions, the system's System Quality Factors Report stated, "Our system relies on teacher, student, parent, and community surveys to guide our focus on student achievement and success. Survey data as well as individual comments show a strong indication that stakeholders are engaged and committed to the work of the Cook County School System."

System and school-based staff agreed that the CNA completed in the spring of 2017 revealed the need for the system to provide clear direction for all stakeholders. It also provided guidance to assist in determining goals for the District Improvement Plan. Two overarching needs were identified as the focus for the 2017 – 2018 District Improvement Plan. They were the supervision and monitoring of the coherent instructional system; and the achievement gap between black and white students in English/language arts (ELA). These needs served as the basis for developing the system's District Improvement Plan.

The Team was informed that the plans were implemented, and the goals were monitored throughout the year. The system's System Quality Factors Report stated, "Our district goal is to begin using a short term action plan process where improvement actions and goals are monitored on a 60 to 90 day timeframe."

One system level staff member stated, "The new CNA process was overwhelming but good for the district." A staff member also stated, "There's value in the {AdvancED} process."

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**. Point values are established within the diagnostic and a percentage of the points earned by the institution for each Standard is calculated from the point values for each Standard. Results are reported within four ranges identified by the colors representing Needs Improvement (Red), Emerging (Yellow), Meets Expectations (Green), and Exceeds Expectations (Blue). The results for the three Domains are presented in the tables that follow.

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

Learning Capacity Domain

The impact of teaching and learning is the primary expectation of every system and its institutions. The establishment of a learning culture built on high expectations for learning, along with quality programs and services, which include an analysis of results, are all key indicators of the system's impact on teaching and learning.

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.1	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the system.	Emerging
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation and collaborative problem-solving.	Emerging
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.	Emerging
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.	Meets Expectations
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is aligned to standards and best practices.	Emerging

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.	Meets Expectations
2.8	The system provides programs and services for learners' educational future and career planning.	Emerging
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.	Meets Expectations
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.	Needs Improvement

Resource Capacity Domain

The use and distribution of resources align and support the needs of the system and institutions served. Systems ensure that resources are aligned with its stated purpose and direction and distributed equitably so that the needs of the system are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The system examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, and system effectiveness.

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.	Meets 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.	Needs Improvement
3.5	The system integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.	Meets Expectations
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.	Emerging
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.	Meets Expectations

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®)

Results

The 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. 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. Classroom observations are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes. Results from eleot are reported on a scale of one to four based on the degree and quality of the engagement.

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	44
Environments	Rating
Equitable Learning Environment	3.09
Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs	2.52
Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	3.57
Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner	3.89
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	2.36
High Expectations Environment	3.00
Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher	3.11
Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	3.25
Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work	2.66
Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	2.98
Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning	2.98
Supportive Learning Environment	3.61
Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful	3.70
Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	3.18
Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks	3.75
Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher	3.80
Active Learning Environment	2.99
Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and the teacher predominate	3.32
Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences	2.59
Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities	3.36
Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments	2.70
Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	2.99
Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored	2.66
Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work	3.50
Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content	3.23

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	44
Environments	Rating
Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed	2.57
Well-Managed Learning Environment	3.53
Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other	3.86
Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others	3.70
Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another	3.16
Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions	3.41
Digital Learning Environment	1.95
Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	2.07
Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	2.32
Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for Learning	1.48

eleot® Narrative

The Engagement Review Team conducted 44 classroom observations using the eleot classroom observation tool. The system's overall average score was 3.06 on a four-point scale.

The Supportive Learning Environment received the highest average rating of 3.61. The Well-Managed Learning Environment placed second, with an average rating of 3.53. Ranking third was the Equitable Learning Environment, with a 3.09 average rating. The High Expectations Learning Environment ranked fourth, receiving an average rating of 3.00. The next highest rated areas were the Active Learning Environment and the Progress Monitoring Learning Environment, both receiving an average rating of 2.99. In last place was the Digital Learning Environment, with an average rating of 1.95.

The highest rated items showed, "learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner," and that they "speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other." In addition, the ratings revealed that learners "demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others." The ratings also indicated that "learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teachers" and "demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful." Students were compliant, on task and felt comfortable asking the teacher or peers for assistance. They were provided support by their teachers and their peers to understand content and accomplish tasks.

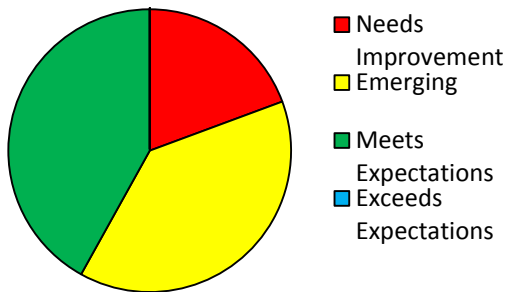
One of the lower rated items revealed that learners had few opportunities to develop empathy, respect and appreciation for differences in abilities, backgrounds and cultures. Other lower rated items indicated the need for more opportunities for learners to "make connections from content to real-life experiences." In addition, Team ratings denoted that students had minimal opportunities to use digital tools and technology to gather and use information for learning, to conduct research and/or create original works, or to communicate and collaborate for learning. Although technological tools were available for use in most classrooms, the Team did not observe many opportunities for students to use these tools to enhance the instructional program.

Students were observed using class time purposefully. They were actively engaged in the learning activities, demonstrated a positive sense of community and took risks without fear of negative feedback. They received and responded to feedback to enhance their understanding of the concepts presented.

The eleot data confirmed statements shared during interviews with various stakeholder groups, validating the caring, family environment referenced during interview sessions. Students were generally provided positive learning experiences by teachers who demonstrated support, care and concern for their success and well-being.

Findings

The chart below provides an overview of the institution ratings across the three Domains.



Rating	Number of Standards
Needs Improvement	6
Emerging	12
Meets Expectations	13
Exceeds Expectations	0

Improvement Priorities

Improvement priorities are developed to enhance the capacity of the institution to reach a higher level of performance and reflect the areas identified by the Engagement Review Team to have the greatest impact on improving student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Improvement Priority #1

Develop, implement and evaluate a systematic, collaborative process for reviewing and revising the system’s mission and vision statements, including representatives from all stakeholder groups in the process. (Indicators 1.1 and 1.2)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.1

Evidence:

A review of artifacts, interviews with stakeholders and staff presentations indicated the need to design and implement a systematic, documented process for the development and review of the mission and vision statements. During stakeholder interviews, some board members stated that the system’s mission and vision had not been updated for at least five years. Statements made during the system’s Improvement Journey Presentation and interviews with internal stakeholders revealed that the process of reviewing the vision and mission statements was driven by school staff rather than the system-level staff. This process was confirmed during the superintendent’s interview.

Discussions with board members, parents and community members revealed a strong perception of the mission of the school system as increasing the graduation rate and preparing students for college and career readiness. However, the mission statement provided for the Team stated, “Cook County Schools will provide exemplary education to all students in a safe and positive environment.” The Team found that all schools had the same vision and mission statements as the system but different belief statements. There appeared to be a process in place for reviewing the belief statements at some schools.

A review of the mission and vision statements revealed that they did not contain measurable expectations for student learning. Interviews with instructional and support staff, district leaders, parents and community members revealed a lack of alignment between stakeholders' current shared beliefs about teaching and learning and the system's current vision and mission statements. The system's System Quality Factors Report stated, "An area of growth for our system is the alignment of expectations, decisions, and actions toward continuous improvement by all personnel." The Team found no evidence of a process for reviewing and revising the statements.

Improvement Priority #2

Design, implement, communicate and evaluate a comprehensive system for the collection and analysis of qualitative data from all stakeholder groups.

(Indicator 1.10)

Evidence:

A review of artifacts and interviews with stakeholders indicated that the system solicited qualitative data from parents, staff, students and community members. Data were collected through surveys, focus groups, committees, school councils and occasional public comments at board meetings. Statements during interviews and a review of administrative meeting minutes verified the use of professional learning communities (PLCs) to solicit input from internal stakeholders. However, the Team found no evidence of a comprehensive data analysis and reporting process.

Parents, staff, and community members who participated in surveys, focus groups and committees shared that results of data collection and analysis were not reported to participants or communicated to relevant stakeholder groups. In addition, parents and community members stated that they were unsure of how their input was used in the decision-making process at either the school or system level.

Observations of board meetings provided little evidence of public discussion for input in decision-making. Board members stated that there was not a protocol or systematic process for providing feedback from surveys or other sources of input to the Board.

Improvement Priority #3

Establish, implement and monitor a formalized quality assurance process with written processes and protocols to ensure validity, consistency and effectiveness of programs and initiatives with the overall purpose of improving student learning.

(Indicators 1.11 and 2.12)

Primary Indicator: 1.11**Evidence:**

A review of artifacts and discussions with stakeholders disclosed that there was no formal process in place to ensure the effectiveness of programs and initiatives implemented in the Cook County School System. Although the Team did find a copy of the system's Quality Assurance Process, measures to ensure that programs and initiatives met targeted goals were not included. A review of various documents revealed the lack of evaluation components to provide useful data to enhance the efficacy of programs. In addition, the Team found minimal evidence of formalized, written procedures and protocols for many of the daily operational activities of the system.

Improvement Priority #4

Devise a written recruitment and retention plan for attracting and retaining a diverse representation of professionally qualified teachers and leaders as well as other support staff.

(Indicator 3.4)

Evidence:

Statements during interviews with the superintendent and principals revealed that leaders attended job fairs, (including those held at historically black colleges and universities) and advertised vacant positions on the Teach Georgia website. However, the Team found no evidence of a written recruitment and retention plan to attract and retain a diverse representation of professionally qualified teachers, leaders and support staff. Statements from stakeholders and observations during interview sessions indicated that employees and key stakeholders were not representative of the diversity of the student body nor the greater community.

Some support personnel indicated that exit interviews were not conducted at the system level to identify reasons for teachers and/or leaders exiting the system. However, school and system level staff shared that the system had furloughed employees for the past nine years, did not pay into social security and did not offer a formal program to train aspiring leaders, all of which may have led to teachers and leaders transferring to other districts. A statement on the Teacher Inventory Report receiving one of the lowest ratings was, *“I have/had access to induction, mentoring and coaching programs designed to meet my individual professional learning needs.”* In addition, financial hardships prevented the system from offering signing bonuses. However, the system had reinstated the two percent annuity match for those employees contributing at least four percent in an annuity.

Accreditation Recommendation and Index of Educational Quality™ (IEQ™)

The Engagement Review Team recommends to the AdvancED Accreditation 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 and the results of eleot classroom observations. 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.

Institution IEQ	281.81
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Conclusion Narrative

The Cook County School System has established a positive, caring culture while focusing on its mission of “providing an exemplary education to all students in a safe and positive environment.” When asked to provide one-word descriptors of the Cook County School System, stakeholders responded with such terms as growing, improving, connected, team, working, advancing, accommodating, forward-thinking, innovative, caring, warm, efficient, quality, pride, progressing, cooperative, collaborative, connected, improving, great, faithful, engaging, community, involved, teamwork, striving, nurturing, analyzing, positive, family, excellence, supportive, loving, great, inspiring, exciting, dedicated, empowered, happy, resilient, student-centered, involved, focused, perseverance, hard-working, safe-haven.

The system’s governing board consisted of five elected members. Staff indicated that the Board of Education worked as a cohesive unit, performed their duties responsibly and functioned effectively. The Team found evidence to suggest the Board operated legally and ethically and adhered to a code of ethics. The board members

completed training through the Georgia School Boards Association. Additionally, information sessions were provided to the Board by system staff on selected topics, such as interpreting the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) and budgeting. The roles and responsibilities of the Board and superintendent were clearly defined in the board policy manual.

The Team found that system administrators were held to high expectations. The system's System Quality Factors Report stated, "Over the past two years, the district has worked to change the perception held by some educators that some students are incapable of mastering rigorous content and incapable of increasing Lexile levels. The district has set high expectations for all students, teachers, and school level administration." The Team determined that the system had, in fact, begun to work toward increasing the rigor in the instructional program.

Although new and aspiring school leaders were afforded leadership opportunities through job-embedded training, informal support systems and training provided by the local Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA), the Team found no evidence of a formalized training program for new leaders. However, school and district-level administrators regularly participated in professional learning communities.

The state-mandated Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) and Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) were used to identify potential leaders and to design individualized leadership development experiences. Academic coaches were assigned to all schools to build capacity for teacher leaders. In addition, the system allocated resources to fund stipends for teacher leaders who assumed administrative duties at the school level. School administrators and grade-level chairs were allowed release time to develop leadership skills in curriculum and instruction through the local RESA. The Team determined the need for a formal succession plan to strengthen the leadership capacity of the system.

Information shared during the superintendent's Institution Overview Presentation and evidence obtained through observations and interviews with internal stakeholders revealed that several new initiatives, instructional programs and protocols had been implemented within the last few years. A review of various documents revealed that the system made several efforts toward addressing instructional effectiveness and increasing the level of academic rigor systemwide. Both instructional and administrative staff were provided training in the use of professional learning communities (PLCs) during the 2017- 2018 school year. The PLCs provided teachers the opportunity to meet in grade level and/or content area groups to collaborate on instruction, analyze student data, discuss instructional strategies and discuss lesson planning. In addition, PLCs for administrators included training for principals to assist them in becoming instructional leaders as opposed to managers in their respective schools.

The system also implemented screeners for reading and math using Classworks and the Reading Inventory online assessment program. The screeners provided a platform for teachers to collect student data. The data collected allowed the system to support the implementation of flexible learning time (FLIP time) in third through fifth grades. This learning time focused primarily on reading skills and specifically targeted the achievement gap between African American and white students. In addition to addressing reading deficits, it correspondingly allowed students to work on enrichment skills in reading as well. In other Cook County schools, the screeners were used in the Response to Intervention process. The system hired four academic coaches to support teachers with instructional planning, differentiation of instruction and data analysis.

A review of artifacts, statements made during interviews and observations during school visits disclosed that a systemic advisory process was not available for all students. The Team found no evidence of a formal advisory or mentoring program designed to meet the social and educational needs of students at the primary, elementary and middle schools. Discussions with students confirmed that the high school had a fully functioning advisory program scheduled for 30 minutes each day.

Although the system had experienced many years of financial distress, the Board and administration were confident that the county was experiencing economic growth and would make the final payment on the high school debt in 2018. The increase in finances allowed the system to allocate additional resources to better meet

the needs identified in the District Improvement Plan.

An analysis of the needs assessment and a longitudinal review of Lexile scores in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11, revealed that a deficit existed between the Lexile scores of students in Cook County as compared to other students in the state of Georgia. Therefore, literacy had become a systemic focus. To close the gap in achievement, resources were allocated to purchase various instructional materials, including a new reading curriculum for several grade levels the Georgia Center for Assessment's Assesslets to monitor writing across all grade levels and numerous software materials to support classroom instruction. In addition, the system applied for and received an Early Learning Literacy mini-grant in partnership with the Cook County Boys and Girls Club and the Cook County Family Connection.

In addition to providing academic coaches, increasing professional learning and improving literacy as system targets, the system also worked to incorporate technology in the instructional program. The objective was to provide Chromebooks on a 1:1 basis for students. Statements during interviews and observations during classroom visits confirmed that computer labs, SmartBoards and Chromebooks were readily available in all schools. Staff indicated that all Georgia Milestones Assessments were administered online. The system provided technology specialists at all schools, with a part-time position at Cook Primary School. Funding through the Connections for Classrooms grant assisted the system in providing the high-speed broadband access required for digital and blended learning. System level staff indicated they had made concerted efforts to involve stakeholders, community members and local businesses as partners in enhancing the use of instructional technology. It was also shared that teachers were continually being trained to integrate technology in the instructional program.

The Team found many positive programs and activities being implemented in the Cook County School System. System and school leaders are applauded and encouraged to continue to work collaboratively to realize their vision to "stimulate learning and creativity that will prepare students for success and lifelong learning."

Next Steps

The results of the Engagement Review provide the next step to guide the improvement journey of the institution in their 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 their current improvement efforts and to adapt and adjust their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

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 Improvement Priorities 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 your 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 eleot® 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
<p>Dr. Rozalyn P. Wright Lead Evaluator</p>	<p>Dr. Rozalyn 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 relocated to Naples, Florida, and served as director of diversity prior to assuming responsibilities as executive assistant to the superintendent for Collier County Schools. She retired from the Collier County School District in 2008 and, subsequently, established ZORAD Consultative Services, LLC. She has served as Chair of the Florida State SACS Committee and was the 2005 Florida recipient of the John M. Davis Distinguished Educational Achievement Award. Dr. Wright has conducted numerous and varied accreditation reviews and has supervised instructional and administrative interns for several universities. She currently serves as Lead Evaluator for school and system Engagement Reviews.</p>
<p>Mrs. Shakina Champion Team Member</p>	<p>Kina M. Champion serves at the School Governance Coordinator for the DeKalb County School District's Office of Accountability. After working both domestically and internationally in the non-profit sector, Champion began her career in education as a researcher with the Chicago School Readiness Project at the University of Chicago. Her research has been published in the peer-reviewed journals <i>Early Childhood Research Quarterly</i> and <i>Early Education and Development</i>. Champion taught middle school mathematics and science in Atlanta Public Schools as a Teach for America Corps Member. She later served as an Instructional Coach with Atlanta Public Schools, School Governance Manager with Fulton County Schools, and Director of Teaching and Learning with Teach for America—Memphis. Champion holds a BA from Howard University, a Master of Public Studies from the University of Chicago and an Ed. S. in K-8 Mathematics Education from the University of Georgia.</p>

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
<p>Mrs. Vanessa Denison Team Member</p>	<p>Vanessa Denison is the Instructional Supervisor/Assistant Principal at South Effingham Middle School in Guyton, Georgia. Her administrative duties include the creation of master schedules, overseeing student schedules, maintaining school budgets, and the overall management of curriculum and instruction. Mrs. Denison earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education from Armstrong Atlantic State University, her Master of Science Degree in Elementary Mathematics from Walden University, and her Education Specialist Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Lincoln Memorial University. This is her fourteenth year in education and her third year as an administrator. Prior to becoming an administrator, Mrs. Denison taught fourth and fifth grades at Blandford Elementary School for 10 years. It was at Blandford Elementary that she was selected as the Lead Team Member for their AdvancED visit in 2015.</p>
<p>Ms. Kimberly NeSmith Team Member</p>	<p>Kimberly NeSmith is the Director of Teaching and Learning for Pelham City Schools. She has been employed at her alma mater for 17 years, during which time she has been a high school business education teacher (2009-2010 Teacher of the Year), tennis and cheerleading coach, FBLA sponsor, CTAE department chair, school nutrition director, teacher support specialist, and RTI coordinator. In her current position, she coordinates curriculum, professional learning, testing, and federal programs for the district. Kimberly graduated from the University of Georgia with a BBA in finance. She continued her graduate education at Albany State University, receiving a MBA and an Ed. S. in Administration. Ms. NeSmith has a strong desire to improve student achievement through data analysis and has served as the Improvement Implementation Coordinator for Pelham City’s team at the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement for two years. She is also interested in the financing of schools and often participates in grant opportunities to ensure more funding to the system. The 2017-2018 school year begins her work with AdvancED.</p>
<p>Mrs. Elizabeth Young Team Member</p>	<p>Elizabeth S. Young is a retired principal of the Duval County School System of Jacksonville, Florida. She retired after working for 35 years in the system. She was employed for 15 years as a classroom teacher, teaching 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades. She was also a primary resource teacher working with kindergarten students testing, diagnosing and designing plans to assist with their learning. She graduated from Florida Memorial University of Miami, Florida, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education and from Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University of Tallahassee, Florida, with a Master of Education Degree in Administration and Supervision. Elizabeth also worked as the Director of Constituent Services where she functioned as the liaison between designated schools and the parents. She has worked with AdvancED for over 20 years as Team Member and Lead Evaluator. She finds it quite rewarding to see the work that is being done by the stakeholders in schools as they work to utilize best practices leading to improved student learning and organizational effectiveness.</p>



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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.

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